

PRESIDENT'S MAY 2020 REPORT TO BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The philosopher Confucius is credited with the saying, “The [person] who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.” This is a process of repeating our efforts, day in and day out, to chip away at stone-like obstacles until we reach success. It’s important to identify that we move our mountain each time a stone is shifted. There is significant success in the process, not just once all rocks have been displaced and each obstacle overcome. We are now completing the final Senate meeting of the academic year. We have moved many many stones so far. You may be looking forward to the Summer sessions and Fall semester and thinking that there is so much more to come; so far for us to travel. You are likely mentally and physically exhausted. But I would like to take this moment to remind you that the road we have walked thus far is littered with the stones we have already removed from our mountain. Congratulations and thank you to each of you for the incredible work you have accomplished in moving mountains for the benefit of our students, their children and families, and for one another.

Despite our current pandemic landscape, the Senate has continued its work. Thank you to all members who have served and those who participated as guests and observers. Please join me in specially thanking Professor Roni Ben Nun for strong leadership and ardent advocacy in his first year as Senate Chairperson.

This academic year has been a busy one. The BCC COACHE Implementation Committee has been active and recently provided me with their report and recommendations for the future. These recommendations were based on survey results, best practices from COACHE, consultations with a variety of campus stakeholders, and the Faculty Council Task Force reports. I have accepted all of their recommendations and they will continue to work in the Fall 2020 semester. Please join me in thanking Committee co-chairpersons Katherine Acevedo-Coppa and Roni Ben Nun, along with Committee members Grisel Acosta, Chris Efthimiou, Monique Guishard, Franklin Moore, and Jessenia Paoli. I have asked all members to continue to serve moving forward with Dean Luis Montenegro serving as Committee chairperson.

Summer is upon us. Bronx Community College, as with all other CUNY institutions, will be offering Summer courses in a completely online modality. Registration is underway. To date, 2,296 students are currently registered for Summer classes. Fall enrollment is also taking place. To date, BCC has approximately 2,400 FTE for the Fall 2020 semester. At this time, the University has not yet made a final determination about the modality for the Fall. As soon as we know whether we will be live, online, or hybrid, we will share widely. While many students, faculty and staff may want to return back to live classes and regular business, we have to be thoughtful about the health and safety of all of those in our community.

Whether we begin the Fall semester in person or transition back to full on-campus functionality at another time, both CUNY and BCC are focused on ensuring that there is a clear and widely-discussed plan for returning to campus. To this end, two Task Forces are being established at the University level and one at BCC. At CUNY, these groups are the Coronavirus Planning Task Force and the Academic and Student Support Task Force. Please reference the May 8, 2020, letter from Chancellor Matos Rodríguez (included with this report) for more information on the scope and composition of these two groups.

At BCC, I have established a local Task Force called the Re-Occupancy Advisory Committee (RAC). This Committee will begin its work immediately and operate from now until the start of the Fall 2020 semester. We will reassess the need for the Committee to continue its work at the start of the semester. RAC will be charged with a number of tasks; including, but not limited to, the following:

- Reviewing plans for campus re-occupancy;
- Consulting on any survey instruments that solicit feedback from the campus community on re-occupancy;
- Consulting on proposed on-campus health and safety measures;
- Consulting on faculty and staff issues and concerns; and
- Consulting on space use and service offerings.

At this time, I anticipate the Committee will have the following composition, but the membership has not yet been finalized at this time. Once the Committee is fully composed, we will share the details via BCCBroadcast. Please also be assured that there will be opportunities for all members of the campus community to provide feedback and raise concerns.

- Two (2) members of senior administration – Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs Lester Sandres Rápalo and Vice President for Administration & Finance Kay Ellis
- Two (2) department chairpersons – Michael Miller and Kenya Harris
- Two (2) members of the higher education officer series (HEOs) – Chene Dennis and Albert Robinson
- Two (2) members of the faculty – Yasmin Edwards and Jordi Getman
- One (1) college laboratory technician – to be named
- One (1) student – to be named

In an ongoing effort to maintain transparency and timely share information, two virtual town halls were held – one for students on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, and another for faculty and staff on Thursday, April 30, 2020. Thank you to all who participated. We have scheduled another virtual town hall meeting for Thursday, May 28, 2020, during club hours (between noon and 2pm). More details will be forthcoming via BCCBroadcast. Thank you for all of the constructive feedback both before and after the town halls. Wide participation and collaboration help BCC improve.

In other exciting campus news, on April 23, 2020, Dr. Neal Philip (Chairperson for the Chemistry, Earth Sciences, and Environmental Sciences Department) and Professor Paramita Sen hosted “Earth Day 50 – Sustainability Videoconference: Sustainability in the Face of a Pandemic”. This international conference had over 300 participants. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Lester Sandres Rápalo, Vice President for Student Success Irene R. Delgado, and I joined the Ambassador of El Salvador, Dr. Carlos Garcia, who presented on “The Impact of the Pandemic on Higher Education.” On May 7, 2020, we also hosted a STEM Workshop for Green Schools in India via videoconference. Over 400 students and teachers listened in on Weather Monitoring, Atmospheric Pollution and Global Warming. This was an exceptional opportunity to contain to raise BCC’s profile on a world stage. We look forward to additional international partnerships across the globe in the future.

Please continue to check the BCC website and your BCC email account for updates. We are using these avenues, along with our social media, to share as much information about CUNY and BCC as possible. Thank you again to all members of our campus community for moving your part of our mountain. We could not be successful without the contributions of each and every one of you. Should you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me (thomas.i@bcc.cuny.edu) or my Deputy Karla Renee Williams (karla.williams@bcc.cuny.edu).

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President