President’s Report to the College Community
January 2021

Dear College Community,

I am grateful to enter another year with you and with more opportunities to help students reach their academic and professional goals. Despite the ongoing effects of the pandemic and national tensions that are seemingly tearing at the fabric of our country, I remain optimistic about the work that we do as educators. What we do makes an indelible difference for so many.

This past week, I was humbled to participate in the College’s observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day. On this day, as we paused to remember the six million victims of the Holocaust, we learned even more about some of them because of the personal stories and histories that our faculty and staff shared. Listening to them as they shared their stories, served as a deep reminder of the depths of the human experience, (depths that we don’t often see or even know about) and the importance of treating each other with respect. As I indicated in my message to the campus, anti-Semitism and intolerance for what makes us different have no place in the fabric of humanity, nor I may add at Kingsborough. This year, we will continue the work of the Climate Committee in addressing long standing concerns and issues.

This month we witnessed history in the making. Among the many historical moments, Rachel Levine, Assistant Secretary of Health became the first openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Pete Buttigieg, recently confirmed as Secretary of Transportation, became the first openly gay Cabinet nominee in U.S. history. Georgia welcomed both Jon Ossoff as its first Jewish senator and Raphael Warnock as its first Black senator; and after 232 years, Kamala Harris’ became the first woman, first woman of color, first Asian American and the first Black American to be the vice president of the United States serves. Her historical accomplishment serves as a fitting introduction to our celebration of Black History Month throughout the coming month. I hope you will participate in one of the many programs organized by members of the planning committee.

Thank you for completing the 2020 Faculty and Staff Satisfaction Survey. I initiated the survey in 2018, to help to identify areas in need of attention and improvement. The survey was administered in December, and results were shared with Senior Staff members earlier this month. I am pleased to see improvements over last year as well as 2018. The results of the Survey, including all comments, will be shared with the college community in the coming weeks. We plan to discuss salient items along with COACHE recommendations and planned activities at Convocation. In the spirit of assessment, and using data to drive improvements, we
take the results of the survey seriously and have already implemented some measures to address areas of concern.

In response to the feedback regarding the lack of attention to faculty accomplishments, the Office of Communications and Marketing (OCM) launched the Ovations program to highlight the outstanding work of our faculty. A website (https://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/ovations/index.html) was developed to facilitate the submission of information. OCM staff will then develop stories for internal/external sharing. Check out the Ovations site for highlights of Profs. Bob Blaisdell, Maureen Fadem, Jose Nanin and Daniel Kane.

In January, we also made significant progress in our efforts to review and improve our governance plan. The College Council had the opportunity to meet Dr. Allison Buskirk-Cohen, the finalist for the position of Governance Review Consultant. The session was designed to give Council members an opportunity to meet her and get a preliminary sense of her approach to the review process and goals. We are currently taking the next step to secure her services.

As you know, the Chancellor has indicated that we will return to campus in the Fall. To this end, this month the KCC Forward Committee began the work to develop a plan for our return. Ultimately, this work will involve not only the members of the Forward Committee, but each one of us. Members of the college community may be called upon to provide information for aspects of our plan. Should you be called upon, I ask that you be responsive. Given the fluidity of matters surrounding the pandemic (infection rates, testing, vaccinations) we do not have definitive information in a number of areas. However, the Committee is agile and will plan for multiple and potential scenarios. Know that as soon as any pertinent information regarding university/college policies or protocols becomes available, we will share it with you. We will also continue to update the website banner on the homepage (kbcc.cuny.edu) with pertinent information as it becomes available. Many thanks to the Forward Committee for their continued commitment to this work and the health, safety and success of all members of the college community. Please be advised that the campus entry protocols remain in place. Even if you have been vaccinated, you are required to complete the Everbridge survey prior to entering campus. As a reminder, Prof. Ryan McKinney and Interim VP Tasheka Sutton Young serve as the chairs of the Forward Committee. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact them.

Student enrollment and its effect on the fiscal health of the college continues to be an area of attention for the senior staff and I. As you can see from the weekly Enrollment Management reports, we adjusted our enrollment target due to the volume of students who have significant and outstanding debt from the previous semester. We are working diligently to identify funding to support students and are
conducting outreach to encourage students to develop payment plans, and for students who have no balances, encouraging them to register as soon as possible.

We have been fortunate to have a schedule that has allowed us to continue enrolling students long after most of our peers have started the semester. However, and given the impact the pandemic has had on the community college sector, this year a few colleges are launching a second spring semester in March. We do not yet know the impact this will have on our overall enrollment. But we do know this: KCC is a special place that has always had a special way with students. Our outstanding student supports, amazing staff and incredible faculty have always served to help attract students and fuel our retention and graduation rates which stands head and shoulders above many of our community college sector peers. As we count down to the start of the semester, let us be ever vigilant in engaging in the work that makes us special.

Colleagues, I know we are still in the midst of challenging times. I often wonder when we will experience some relief and I hope and pray for better days. Most recently, Amanda Gorman’s Inauguration Poem ‘The Hill We Climb’ and one stanza particular, has brought me great comfort and resolve. I share it here in hopes that it will do the same for you:

For there is always light.
If only we’re brave enough to see it; if only we’re brave enough to be it.
-Amanda Gorman, National Poet Laureate and 2021 Inauguration Poet

President Schrader