Dear College Community,

I can hardly believe we are halfway through the semester. Since the start of the semester, we have had 2 members of the college community who tested positive for COVID-19; a third tested positive, but had not been to campus for more than two weeks. They are in our thoughts and prayers for full recovery. Our COVID Response Team has done an incredible job ensuring that information is communicated to the college, university, and relevant state and local entities; and with support from the Division of Marketing and Communications, timely updates to the College website. Please know that Dean Mitra is the primary point of communication to students regarding COVID-related matters.

We recently activated a number of screens around the campus to ensure that all members of our college community, particularly our Public Safety, Custodial, and Building and Grounds staff, who may not typically access email, are aware of critical updates. A special thank you to our custodial staff for their work in keeping the campus sanitized and to public safety officers for keeping us safe. We continue to discourage your on-campus presence, unless absolutely necessary; and encourage you to follow social distancing protocols while in public spaces.

Since the start of Fiscal Year 2021, Kingsborough as well as all CUNY colleges, have been allocated monthly budgets, for each of the months of July through September. In order to help the campuses financial planning processes, the University has extended the college’s current operating allocation through January 2021, (a seven-month budget) in order to cover the remainder of the fall semester as well as most of KCC’s 2nd module. The revised and extended allocation provides us with the ability to plan for these terms as well as to determine scenarios for the spring 2021 semester. Our budget capacity is also contingent on tuition and fee collections, and thus enrollment levels and collection rates must be factored into our scenario planning. The Division of Enrollment Management in concert with Marketing and Communications, Student Affairs and Academic Affairs are laser focused in their efforts to meet enrollment targets for new students (recruitment and matriculation) and continuing students (retention) for the coming semester and academic year.

Please note the following:

- The University continues to withhold 20% of state funding, both operating aid and financial aid. The state community college enrollment realignment of -5.4 million is factored into KCC funding levels, the effect to KCC is a budget decrease of $940,000.
• The city budget includes $46.3 million in reductions. These reductions are also factored into the college’s budgets, the effect to KCC is a budget decrease of $8,056 million.
• Fall semester academic special program/lump sum allocations will be issued shortly, these funding levels will also undergo adjustments to correspond to state and city budget actions.
• The University is awaiting a decision with regard to federal stimulus support for state and local municipalities that would help mitigate some of the expected budget reductions.

VP Rios will also provide budget and facility-related information in his monthly update. As promised, to ensure a steady flow of information, all vice presidents have begun to send monthly updates to the college community. Colleagues, I know ZOOM meetings are not the same as walking in the halls, or popping into offices to talk to each other, but I thought it important to provide a forum (especially at this time) for us to connect with each other and for you to be able to ask questions. Earlier this month, I was excited to host our first Community Chat (staff edition) to provide the college community with an additional space to receive information, discuss issues and ideas to move the college forward. There were 60 people in our Community Chat.

It is clear from our Chat that there is grave concern about our students, especially with regards to their level of engagement. Given the amount of time students spend online in classes or doing coursework, student engagement in online extra-curricular events and activities is low. Student Life is actively seeking ideas and input as to how they can increase student engagement.

Father Michael Tedone offered that students are struggling and missing personal connections and contacts. He shared that many are parents that have lost jobs; home schooling with children has been an added stressor; and that even though they are learning to turn disadvantage into advantage, we must continue to support them. Gavin Ireland also shared that international students are stressed because of the financial burdens they are facing. Also, many have not been home in months, and are not sure if or when they will be able to go home.

On the Chat, we talked about the amount of emails students receive and that they are not reading a lot of their emails. We discussed looking at the times when emails are sent and, if needed, adjusting these times to match student patterns. We also discussed the chat function on the website, and the KCC APP and how we can use these platforms to better support students.

As you know the University has authorized campuses to use Cares Act funds that have been earmarked to increase health and wellness services on campuses. There is a growing mental health crisis in the United States which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and manifested in many of our students as they seek to deal with personal
trauma. As part of this, we have evaluated our existing services and are developing a plan regarding how we will use the $248,000 that has been allocated for this purpose.

We know student needs run the spectrum of areas such as food and housing insecurity, inability to pay for school and other emergencies that impact their persistence. I am asking you to make a donation to our Annual Fund (http://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/colladvancement/AnnualFundAppeal/index.html) and on CUNY Tuesday (December 1st) to make an indelible difference for our students and our college.

Colleagues, the engagement of our campus community in the life of the college is important. Formats may have changed, but we want the level of engagement to be as high as it has been in the past. Whether it is the Diversity Symposium, a guest speaker or sending in pictures for Spirit Day or Pink Fridays, your participation is what makes it special. We are actively planning our celebration of veterans for Veteran’s Day and our Season of Thanks celebration for our hard-working staff. We will have a virtual holiday party and my office will be assembling a small but mighty committee to help with planning. One needs only look to email, to see the many departments, offices and programs that continue to host events and provide programming that is consistent with our strategic priorities. I know for some of us there is significant online and Zoom fatigue, but I ask that you please to support your colleagues, and therefore the college by participating/attending the of great programs that your peers have worked tirelessly to organize.

Finally, I was asked on the Chat what the future will look like. For Spring 2021 we should anticipate continued virtual learning and remote operations. In a post COVID world, I am not sure what “work” might look like (if remote work will still be an option) but I do know that for the immediate future that the health and safety of the college community will continue to be our highest priority.

Thank you for doing an extraordinary job in at a time where everything is far from ordinary.

Many thanks for your time and attention,

Schrader