President's Report - May 2020

Dear Campus Community,

No one could have imagined that in space of a month the country would shift its focus from the COVID-19 pandemic to global protests because of the death of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others; protests against racism, and policing practices like excessive force; and protests for equality, black lives, and justice. But here we are, at the intersection of global movement, a global pandemic and an undetermined fiscal future at Kingsborough.

From everything I have read and heard on the news the fiscal outlook for the city is bleak. To date we have received neither a budget, nor information on our reduction targets for the next fiscal year from the city or the state. I am pleased to report though that disbursement of 97% of the funds was awarded and disbursed via the CUNYFirst Financial Aid module between May 22 and May 29 to eligible KCC students. The funds were disbursed via direct deposit or check depending on the student’s account information and home address available in CUNYFirst. The awards were primarily based on Pell eligibility. DACA students, and international students were not eligible to receive funds. The Campus was able to have discretionary use of 3% or $152,000 with the mandate that it must be allocated to students and disbursed in the same manner as the other funds. I decided to distribute these funds as emergency funds to students; $25,000 has been awarded to students. We do not yet have the remaining $5 million in CARES funding allocated to institutions. The spending plan as submitted by the Central Office is currently at the state level awaiting approval.

I understand the frustration of both waiting and not knowing. We share in this frustration and like the University are doing what we can to prepare for an impending reduction while trying to maintain academic and business continuity. As I have indicated, it is unfortunate that difficult decisions will have to be made. There is no easy way to do this, and I am mindful of the impact of all decisions on the college community and most importantly individuals. I am deeply moved by your concern and I appreciate all the input regarding budgetary matters and will continue to ensure that we have the appropriate consultative measures, but ultimately budget decisions are my responsibility.

VP Rios has presented and discussed the budget both at the college-wide P&B meeting, at a specially called meeting of all department P&Bs and at College Council. The budget has been available for the past four years and can continue to be accessed at inside.kingsborough.edu/budget.

While I appreciate the groundswell of concern for each other, especially in this uncertain fiscal climate, it is not my practice nor will it be my practice to discuss any personnel matters in open forums including email. In the two years that I have spent at KCC, I have seen the best of exchanges in email, and unfortunately the worse of exchanges that have caused many in our college community to feel insulted and demeaned. I have received many emails from and spoken to many in these past two years who have expressed their concerns, fears of becoming
a target, disgust with some of the threads, and in the ways in which members of our community are treated. What I have read in many instances is antithetical to who we say we are and to our college values. I can no longer sit back and read emails where members of our community speak to each other the way that they do. I have been asked on numerous occasions to eliminate the KBCC Employees email, but it’s still here, because I understand its value and its place in our community as a forum for discussion. In this spirit, I will convene a committee to review, discuss and provide me with recommendations as to how this can best be accomplished. Ultimately, it is my hope that an improved governance plan will include structures that provides us with opportunities for broader engagement and input that will help to move the college forward.

This is what I have spent the last month doing, thinking about, talking about, and doing everything I can to move the college forward. We are at the end of another academic year, and I am coming to the end of my second academic year at KCC. I am focused on our recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as doing our part to ensure that we address the effects of centuries of inequality for African Americans that have manifested itself in higher education with wide equity gaps for minority students. I am equally focused on priority areas that we, both all of you and I identified two years ago. Last month the College Council Executive Committee and I interviewed three potential Governance Review Consultants who will help to guide us in this work. From this group, we agreed on one consultant. However, we await a clearer budget forecast before moving forward with securing their services.

Now more than ever, increasing enrollment, and effective communications and marketing are important. VP Rivera will continue to distribute Enrollment Reports to the campus community. The most recent report shows us lagging behind of where we were this year, but we hope that our new marketing efforts (targeted ads for transfer students, and purchasing time on social media platforms to advertise, improvements to website content and user-friendliness) will result in increased enrollment. Even in these uncertain times, we continue to focus on resource development. Since April, Interim Vice President Tasheka Sutton Young and her team raised $20,000 in emergency funding for our students. The funding is sorely needed, as we have practically exhausted the $75,000 received from the Petrie Foundation for emergency funds for students. Although, we were informed last month that our 2020 proposal for Maritime Technology and Manufacturing Trades would not move forward to the third phase, we currently have 7 grants under review and if we are successful, it will garner us $2,829,557 in funding for workforce development projects. We are awaiting word on the status of our 2020 Health Hub proposal. In the interim, we are looking forward to the hundreds of students who will enroll in our newly approved, fully online Associate of Science in Business Administration!!! With regards to Institutional Effectiveness, the Strategic Planning Committee continues to make progress on the Strategic Plan Framework, and VP Fox and his team continue to work on AES assessment. Given our budgetary constraints, we have decided to end the search for an Assessment Director. Finally, we have turned much of our attention to making necessary facility improvements, but most importantly preparing for the return to campus. We have convened a KCC Forward Committee constituted by faculty, staff and administrators and chaired by Tasheka Sutton-Young and Ryan McKinney to thoroughly think through and plan for the eventual transition back to campus.
This has been a difficult semester, but we are close to the end. And although it marks the close of another chapter, it signals the beginning of many more chapters as we celebrate our graduates at our virtual Graduate Salute on **June 16**. This year we have 666 August 2019 graduates, 668 January 2020 graduates and 1487 June 2020 graduates for a total graduating class of 2821. Our Graduate Salute will consist of pre-recorded messages from me, the chancellor, the valedictorian Jaweria Bakar, the faculty speaker John Acosta and our keynote speaker Congressman Hakeem Jeffries. Almost 871 students uploaded their pictures and quotes to be uploaded as part of the virtual procession.

I hope you will also join tomorrow for our 2nd KCC Social (**6/9**) and at the Awards Ceremony (**6/15**), and throughout the month of June as we celebrate Pride Month with a variety of activities including our Community Pride Vigil (**6/24**).

It’s been a difficult semester, but you went the distance to maintain academic and business continuity and ensure the success of our students. Thank you again for all that you do.

President Schrader