John Verzani

College of Staten Island

March 11, 2021

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York,

I write to inform you of troubling developments at the College of Staten Island.

On March 3rd, the President of the College announced his intent to hold a referendum on a wholesale replacement (https://csi-covid19.github.io/CCFS/Mar-SpecialMeeting/CSI-proposed-plan-3-3-2021.pdf) of the current governance plan of the college. His replacement so out of line with the spirit of shared governance, there is not one “elected” member of the executive committee of the primary proposed body (The College Senate) from the faculty or Professional Staff. As well, the critical decisions on faculty status are left to a body with just 5 of 15 voting members being faculty. This entire plan clearly retribution for the faculty publicly expressing their many concerns about his leadership. In a previous letter to the board last spring, I detail many of these.

In addition to its numerous troubling attempts to stifle input on key college issues, equally concerning is his proposed process of allowing just 20 days to vet and consider this document followed with a vote to be held during a faculty break.

The president does have the authority to propose a referendum under the current board-approved governance plan (https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/governance-plans/) in particular Article V, Section 1 on Amendments specifies:

A proposal to alter any provision of Articles I through III may be initiated by the President or by a two-thirds vote of the College Council. Such proposals shall then be submitted to a referendum of the instructional staff. The proposed amendment is to be deemed adopted if approved by a majority of those voting (provided that at least 30% vote), by the President, and by the Board of Trustees.

What should be troubling to the board, is despite adoption requiring a *successful* referendum including two conditions, the president has announced in at least two meetings that he feels unbound by the results of the referendum and will take this to the board regardless. This despite a board approved plan assuring a) that voter intimidation tactics will not suppress the vote in total, and b) a reasonable proportion of campus buy-in has been reached on any proposal.

In my dealings with members of the board these past years, I know the serious-minded nature of the board. I would ask that the president be firmly reminded that any plan with a failed referendum from the College of Staten Island will not be considered for the agenda of the Committee of Faculty, Staff and Adminstration or the agenda of the CUNY Board, as no action it could take would allow the adoption of such a governance plan for legal reasons.

Sincerely,

John Verzani

Chair, College Council of the College of Staten Island

Executive Committee member University Faculty Senate

Faculty Representative to Committee on Audit (alternate), Committee on Fiscal Affairs, Subcommittee on Investment