**March 11, 2021**

**The Department of English**

**College of Staten Island, City University of New York**

**Statement of Opposition to President Fritz’s Proposed CSI Governance Plan**

The principles of academic freedom and shared governance have defined the modern University and ensured its integrity for over one hundred years. The American Association of University Professors first published its “Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure” in 1915. Its “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” appeared in 1920. Academic freedom assures that faculty may pursue their research and teaching free of fear or favor. Shared governance further protects that principle by assuring that curricular and other decisions that go to the heart of the intellectual life and health of the institution are shared with faculty, who have the subject matter expertise and pedagogical experience to build a strong curricular foundation for students. The premises of these documents have been reaffirmed and adopted by most major scholarly and academic organizations time and again. All efforts at the College of Staten Island, instructional or otherwise, should be undertaken with these principles in mind. Anything that undermines them has no place in this institution.

President Fritz’s proposal violates these principles in both process and content, jeopardizing the well-being and reputation of the College of Staten Island.

In his haste to push the proposal forward, he has bypassed existing structures including the Institutional Planning Committee and the Bylaws Committee when they stand ready to engage in governance revision. He seeks to remove faculty from positions of authority in standing committees, especially in matters of curriculum, instruction, and research, trampling on the principle that the intellectual life of a university is the charge of the professional scholars and educators who staff it.  His proposal threatens a strong tenure and promotion system, the very thing that is essential to protecting academic freedom and preventing intimidation and arbitrary dismissal.

When a university abandons its commitment to academic freedom and shared governance, it ceases to be a credible institution of higher learning. The English department rejects the current effort to circumvent established processes and meaningful consultation, and to curtail faculty voice and participation in channels of governance. We demand President Fritz respect the tenets of shared governance, rescind the current unilateral proposal, and open a meaningful and collegial conversation about governance structures using those procedures currently in place at CSI.