President’s State of the College Address Looks to Challenges Ahead

On November 2, members of the campus community were invited to attend a combined program in LeFrak Concert Hall, which included the President’s Awards for Excellence in Teaching followed by President Félix Matos Rodríguez’s first State of the College Address. Awards which were presented to eight full-time and part-time faculty.

The presentation included comments from students lauding the individual awardees and the president noted how some of their observations with respect to the impact these teachers had on their academic experience could be projected to Queens College faculty as a whole. Adding a personal observation, he said, “Hearing the comments of the students makes me think about my teachers in high school and college and my mentors in graduate school who taught me the importance of a university and a college as a place of critical inquiry and the importance of critical inquiry in sharing with the larger society.”

Following the Awards, President Matos Rodríguez launched into a 60-minute State of the College presentation during which he shared his confidence that given a strong faculty, excellent programs, motivated students, and a documented history of achievement, Queens College has a solid foundation upon which to build, despite increasingly challenging circumstances.
Jay Hershenson Appointed Vice President for Communications & Marketing

Effective January 2, Jay Hershenson will be returning to Queens College in the capacity of Vice President for Communications & Marketing and Senior Advisor to the President. Hershenson, who currently serves as Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations and Secretary of the CUNY Board of Trustees, is a familiar face on campus as he earned his undergraduate (‘76) and graduate (’87) degrees from QC, and was often a speaker at the college’s commencement ceremonies.

A Jackson Heights native, Hershenson is well-known throughout New York City for his devotion to the development and improvement of CUNY, and for his commitment to equal access and opportunity for students from all ethnic and racial groups and of all sexualities. He has received numerous awards for his advocacy on behalf of the City University.

Jay Hershenson

Supplemented by visual elements, he reviewed the current status of the college within the context of the four goals of the five-year Strategic plan with particular emphasis on its 2016-17 priority goals: facilitating student success; supporting faculty and staff excellence; weaving campus, community, and global connections; and strengthening operational capacity and infrastructure. He particularly stressed how what is known now will inform efforts to meet such pressing challenges as maintaining enrollment and adequate funding in an era of shrinking resources.

By being as transparent as possible in reviewing the state of the college with respect to trends in recent years in enrollment, student demography, curriculum, funding, and other defining criteria, the president said the campus collectively would be better positioned to creatively exploit opportunities which might arise that could help the college achieve its strategic goals. He offered the example of revenue being generated by creatively marketing campus locations for television and film shoots that can be used to address infrastructure needs.

Citing budget cuts the last two years and less money coming from government sources, Matos Rodríguez stressed, “Even in a tough time we’re putting our money mostly into students, teaching, and the faculty.” He shared his intention to bring in consultants from the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges to advise on ways QC can increase revenue streams in a manner appropriate and consistent with being a public higher education institution.

“We are in a perfect moment of reflection in the Middle States process,” Matos Rodríguez observed at one point, thanking those who participated in the self-evaluation working groups. Then, helping prepare the campus for the accreditation team’s campus visit in April, and perhaps for tackling the challenges he outlined, he reminded, “We’re not over, yet.”

In an effort to ensure opportunities for input from audience members, the president allocated time at the end of his presentation for questions from the audience. These included queries about the new bookstore, better access for disabled students across campus, improving career services and the process by which students evaluate their professors. A question regarding donor funding prompted him to share a donation in the works from a tech entrepreneur’s foundation which will allow QC to provide full tuition and housing at The Summit for four years for 50 low-income students: “a phenomenal opportunity to give an in-residence experience to 50 students,” said Matos Rodríguez. He also talked about the need to engage donors to fund graduate fellowships, noting that while the neediest of undergraduates at least have TAP and Pell grants, needy graduate students have none of these resources. He concluded the presentation by inviting attendees to join him for a reception in the Atrium of the Music Building.

Video of the president’s State of the College address and Question and Answer session can be found at https://youtu.be/I_ oxWQtT10L. Video of the presentation of the President’s Awards for Excellence in Teaching is at https://youtu.be/aCEwpDiMBb8. QC’s Strategic Plan webpage at http://www.qc.cuny.edu/about/strategic%20plan/Pages/default.aspx offers both the Queens College Strategic Plan (2015-2020) and Strategic Plan Priorities (2016-2017) in pdf.

Part-time: David Miller (Mathematics) began his academic career as an English major, allowing him to hone the communications skills that, combined with an easygoing manner, makes him a natural teacher, one to whom students gravitate. He has inspired many students to pursue a career in math or science.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Full-time: Aaron Freundschuh (History). His research deals with urban history, modern criminality, and policing, with an emphasis on contemporary Paris.

Part-time: Lawrence Cappello ’09 is a PhD candidate (History) at the Graduate Center. His work centers on American social, cultural, and political history, with an emphasis on the history of privacy. One student wrote that he contributes an untold amount to the intellectual pool of Queens College.

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EDUCATION

Full-time: Limarys Caraballo (SEYS) was cited among other things for her Complicated Conversations workshop series, which allows undergraduate and graduate students and faculty to explore issues related to diversity, social justice, and education within the larger society.

Part-time: Pamela Gershon (ECP) was cited for her preparation of school psychology professionals, noting that she “provides a welcoming learning environment, holds high expectations for her students, and they respond.”

MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES

Full-time: Krzysztof Klosin (Mathematics) was cited for his ability to convey the heart of mathematics at an elementary level without sacrificing its depth.

Part-time: Pamela Gershon (ECP) was often a speaker at the college’s ‘76 and graduate (’87) degrees from QC, and was often a speaker at the college's Commencement ceremonies.

Jay Hershenson

for his devotion to the development and
Two 2016 Grads Named Excelsior Service Fellows

Jesula Prophete and Jewell Mason, who both graduated from Queens College in June with master’s degrees in Urban Studies, share a passion for public service. And now these high-achieving women are receiving valuable career experience as New York State Excelsior Service Fellows.

Begun by Governor Andrew Cuomo in 2013, the initiative brings the brightest graduates into state government with the goal of cultivating the next generation of leaders. The highly competitive program draws from leading colleges, including QC, Baruch, Columbia, and Barnard, to name a few. Excelsior Fellows work alongside senior members of the administration and have the opportunity to deal with a range of important issues.

Prophete has been assigned to the Office of Communications at the Department of Motor Vehicles, where she is working on policies and statewide campaigns to promote organ donation. “This lifesaving program is very personal to me because one of my loved ones is living with a chronic liver disease,” she says.

Mason is based in the Business Services Center of the Office of General Services, an agency that provides essential support, including design and construction services, to other state agencies as well as local government and the public. “Here I can increase my knowledge and hone my skills in many areas such as project management, supervision and leadership, finance, and human resources,” she says.

JESULA PROPHETE was born and raised in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where she attended high school and received undergraduate and law degrees. A mother of two boys, ages 19 and 5, and a three-year-old girl, she moved to New York in 2012 to join her husband and pursue graduate study at QC. She left behind her job as public information officer and radio producer at the United Nations Mission in Haiti.

“Queens College is an inspirational place,” says Prophete, who is particularly interested in women’s health issues and understanding the social barriers that prevent comprehensive care. “What’s most important is the passion of public workers to improve the lives of others. My professors taught me that public service is more than getting a paycheck from the government. It refers to the ability to provoke change; to make the impossible happen; to give hope.”

“Jesula is serious, steadfast, and incredibly hardworking,” says Dana-Ain Davis (Urban Studies), who recommended both young women as Excelsior Fellows during the application process.

A resident of Baldwin, Long Island, JEWELL MASON impressed Davis with her initiative. “She asked me for approval to attend winter intersession classes in Greece through Study Abroad, and during a busy time got it all together,” Davis says.

While Mason was working toward her BA in Urban Studies at QC, she interned for New York City Council member Daniel Dromm and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. Later as a graduate student, she received a CUNY tuition waiver for several classes; in turn, she worked 20 hours a week at Queensborough Community College, helping students in the International and Study Abroad offices.

“My lifelong goal has been to help people through government service,” says Mason. “I’m especially drawn to the great diversity of the city and, as a woman of color, the chance to help minority populations. After this fellowship ends, I hope to continue to work in New York State. As long as I’m in public service, I’ll be happy.”

2016 Hall of Fame Class

Six stellar former student-athletes and coaches were inducted into QC’s Athletics Hall of Fame during the fifth Annual Hall of Fame Dinner and Golf Outing on October 14. Also at this year’s ceremony, the Madden Award, which recognizes an outstanding former student who excelled in athletics or contributed to the professional field of sports, was presented to Emmy Award-winning sportscaster Howie Rose ’77. The inductees are (l–r) Derek Ellingson, 1996–98 Men’s Swimming and Water Polo; Anna V. Bondarenko, 2003–05 Women’s Volleyball; Louis J. DeBole, 1957–60 Baseball; Madden Award Winner Howie Rose; Ed Wolfarth, 1960–65 Men’s Golf; Shonda Holder, 2001–04 Women’s Basketball; and Shaun Bertin, 2002–06 Men’s Basketball.

A Fiddler Celebration

On Sunday, November 6, alumni, faculty, students, and theatre lovers were treated to a special benefit performance of Fiddler on the Roof, starring six-time Tony Award nominee Danny Burstein ’86. Following the performance, the QC attendees met Burstein and other cast members for a special reception and discussion. All proceeds from this event will benefit the college’s spring production of Damn Yankees. (L–r: Drama Professor Charles Repole, Danny Burstein, and Fiddler lyricist Sheldon Harnick.)
Landmark Piano Solo Gets Novel, Four-handed Performance

Nearly 80 years after its first documented performance, Charles Ives’ Concord Sonata may have made its debut as conceived by the composer. In a historic event co-sponsored by the college and the American Festival of Microtonal Music at LeFrak Concert Hall on Friday, November 11, two pianists—using instruments specially tuned for the occasion—played the piece as it was originally envisioned.

Writing at the turn of the 20th century, Ives was an advocate of experimental tuning and harmony. Historians theorize that during parades in Danbury, Connecticut, where his father was a bandleader, Ives got used to hearing multiple themes sounding at the same time. New England influenced him in other ways, too. The Concord Sonata’s four movements are dedicated to prominent thinkers from the region, including Emerson and Thoreau.

Last month’s sonata presentation rested on the scholarship of Johnny Reinhard, executive director of the American Festival of Microtonal Music, who observed that Ives stipulated different pitches for notes that are usually seen as synonymous, such as D-sharp and E-flat. “Ives used spellings that make no sense if the goal was for one pianist to play the piece on a single piano,” explains Joel Mandelbaum, music professor emeritus, who planned this concert with Reinhard.

Therefore, the sonata score was split into two complementary parts. “The first piano has about 80 percent of the music, corresponding to all the white keys and the notes written as sharps,” Mandelbaum continues. “The second piano, covering the flats, has the other 20 percent of the notes.”

Pianists Gabriel Zucker and Erika Dohi, accomplished soloists and chamber musicians, faced the technical challenge of relearning a familiar piece and reassembling its fragments in a seamless manner. On short notice, sophomore Erin Keppner stepped in as a substitute to cover the flute part, with its specially inflected notes.

“The concert was a splendid success, with over 100 people in the house, many of them students,” reports Mandelbaum. “The knowledgeable Ives scholars on our faculty were pleased with the performance in the special tuning.”

One of those scholars is Eric Chernov, who wrote his doctoral dissertation at the CUNY Graduate Center on Ives. “The modified Pythagorean tuning worked particularly well in several of the slower sections,” Chernov says. “Based on my Ives research—though it is pure speculation, of course—I believe he would have been very much in favor of the performance. There is ample circumstantial evidence to draw this conclusion.”

For all the skill and talent the musicians displayed, the most virtuosic performance may have been that of the piano tuners, Andrew Saderman and his assistant on this project, David Meeting. On the Friday of the concert, they spent half the afternoon adjusting a pair of Steinways as needed for the Ives. “They were more nervous than the pianists,” says Mandelbaum. Afterward, Saderman and Meeting needed days to restore the pianos to conventional tuning.

Composer of the Year Award to Smaldone

Edward Smaldone (ACSM) was named the 2016 Composer of the Year by the Classical Recording Foundation at their 14th Annual Awards Concert and Benefit Gala on November 7. Smaldone, who was director of the Aaron Copland School of Music from 2002 to 2016 and is currently its associate director, has also received the Goddard Lieberson Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters as well as grants and awards from ASCAP, the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo Corporation, and others. His recordings include Scenes from the Heartland and Rituals Sacred and Profane. Smaldone earned both his BA (’78) and MA (’80) from Queens College.

Breakfast with the President

President Félix Matos Rodríguez held a state-of-the-college meeting with donors on November 22 at the University Club in Manhattan. Also on hand were QC Foundation Chair Barry Bryer (r.) and 2016 graduate May Yuan, who talked about her decision to transfer from Wellesley to QC and the difference QC scholarships made in her education. Yuan is now studying for her master’s degree at Columbia.

Discerning Black Lives

The topic of this year’s Innovation Exchange held by the Center for Ethnic, Racial and Religious Understanding (CERRU) was Black Lives Matter. Audience members engaged in an extended question-and-answer session with panelists, and later broke into working groups along themes such as “Know Your Rights,” “Black Lives Matter: How to Build a Movement,” and “Navigating Marginalization on College Campuses.” The panelists, pictured above with President Matos Rodríguez, included (l–r) Autumn Marie, an activist and member of Black Lives Matter NYC; Kerri Ann Smith, assistant professor of academic literacy at Queensborough Community College; Aysa Gray, CERRU’s fellowship coordinator; and Kirk Burkhalter, a retired NYPD detective and law professor at New York Law School.
On November 9 Queens College hosted a Veterans Day luncheon in which five veterans were honored for their service to their country. Front row: Army Air Corps veteran Robert Lesser, State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, Army veteran Etienne Gullit, President Matos Rodríguez, Councilmember Rory Lancman, and Assemblywoman Nily Rozic; back row: Army veteran Greg Van Brackle (OIT), Marine Corps veteran and QC graduate Edie Argueta, Army veteran Tamara Perkins, Dennis Torres (Veteran Support Services), Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz, and Sandra Lee (from Amalgamated Bank, which sponsored the luncheon).

College Salutes Top Students

The Queens College Academic Excellence Awards Ceremony, held on November 3, recognized students from last year’s Dean’s List. In order to be eligible for the ceremony, full-time students must have made the Dean’s List for both fall ’15 and spring ’16. Part-time students with a minimum GPA of 3.5 in two consecutive fall and spring semesters were also honored. The keynote address was given by Dr. Marc A. Dichter ’64, who received the President’s Medal for his contributions to understanding epilepsy, Alzheimer’s, and other diseases.

At the ceremony (l–r): Ross Wheeler (Honors & Scholarships), Lori Yamato (Transfer Honors Program), THP students Rogein Harripersad and Asheka Lawrence Reid, and Clare Carroll (Honors in Humanities).

Part-time Faculty Get a Space of Their Own

Adjuncts looking for somewhere to work, warm up food, or simply relax among colleagues, now have a lounge: King Hall 109, a two-room suite accessible by QC Card 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The lounge has 10 workstations (eight equipped with Dells, two with Macs), a printer, a copier, and a shredder. There are creature comforts associated with office life—a refrigerator, a toaster, and a microwave—as well as sofa seating and tables. For more information about King 109, visit http://ctl.qc.cuny.edu/adjunct-space-kh109/.

The computers and amenities come from the adjunct lounge that was located in the Temp II trailer and closed in the summer of 2015 to accommodate the Tech Incubator. “It took us a year to open the new space, mainly because of the installation of the swipe-card system,” says Rowena Li, coordinator of special projects for the Center for Teaching and Learning. “No such system existed in King Hall, so we had to wire the system and order and install the swipe-card hardware. Many thanks to OIT and Telephone Services.”

Additional adjunct space, with two Dell computers, a SMART board, and reconfigurable seating, exists in Queens Hall 325, a large room that doubles as a meeting facility. To see when Queens 325 isn’t booked, check the calendar at http://ctl.qc.cuny.edu/qh325open.