On the first anniversary of my service as your president, I want to thank the entire Queens College community for receiving me so warmly. Since I arrived last July 1, you have been welcoming from the outset, beginning with the video of students greeting me in multiple languages. After meeting so many students, faculty, alumni, and staff virtually, I’m deeply delighted to be meeting more of you safely—in person on our beautiful campus. Thank you for all you have done to help yourselves, your families, and your community cope with the challenges of the past year.

Building Our Future

The college is emerging from the pandemic with a comprehensive strategic plan that will strengthen our institution and bolster our role in revitalizing Queens—the world’s borough—and the rest of our great city. In advance of the plan’s release later this summer, allow me to say it was created in a process that was unprecedented in the best sense, involving hundreds of participants. The working groups, totaling six dozen members, considered the curriculum; diversity, equity, and inclusion; faculty scholarship and creativity; fiscal sustainability; and student success and student life. We held nearly a dozen town halls over the past fall and spring semesters to obtain college community input during the past academic year. Special thanks to our extraordinary consultant Anna Pond for helping us develop and implement such a high level of college community involvement and to all of the administrative offices supporting the technology and communications needs.
A key part of the strategic plan is the development of dedicated Business and Arts Schools, as I had the privilege of announcing in my first State of the College Address. By pooling the extensive expertise of QC faculty, staff, and our partners in the Borough of Queens, the schools will create new synergies, offering our students the education and experience that help people build rewarding careers. I look forward to implementing these plans.

Meanwhile, I’m proud of all that the college has achieved in the past year. The remote campus was a lively place, with numerous virtual lectures, exhibitions, performances, exercise sessions, networking opportunities, and more. We adjusted to COVID-19 conditions rapidly and were one of three colleges featured in a story on “CBS Sunday Morning,” the most popular Sunday news show, about higher education during the pandemic.

The Office of Communications and Marketing launched a video series, **Big Ideas**, to showcase QC faculty and their research. Expanding on the topics, library staff pulled together research guides for each video.

**We Made It Through the Challenge**

I remain deeply grateful to the Queens College Foundation, which issued emergency allocations to support needs such as student scholarships and the Knights Table Food Pantry. In turn, the pantry, which reduces food insecurity among CUNY students, supplemented its on-site services with Turn the Table on Hunger, a mobile initiative that scheduled stops around Queens. With the help of federal support, we provided students with loaner devices for access to remote learning, and assistance with daily living expenses. I’d like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the staff in the offices of Academic Advising, Academic Affairs, Admissions, Counseling, the Bursar, the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program, the QC Hub, Information Technology and Student Affairs, who devoted themselves to helping our students adjust to and succeed in their education.

The Queens College Gala made its online debut on May 19, with the help of an all-star alumni lineup including comedians Jerry Seinfeld, Ray Romano, and Ted Alexandro; actress Fran Drescher; celebrity chef Lidia Bastianich, who gave me a cooking lesson; and 1010 WINS reporter Juliet Papa. The gala raised $825,000.
I had the pleasure of recognizing outstanding students at a virtual Baccalaureate on Tuesday, June 1. They shared the limelight with guests Jerome Chazen, chair of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, and Vita C. Rabinowitz, former interim chancellor of CUNY, each of whom received the Queens College President’s Medal, the college’s highest administrative honor. Two days later, on June 3, QC held its 97th Commencement virtually, with compelling speeches by alumnus and Congressman Adriano Espaillat and former QC faculty member Miriam Rafailovich, a distinguished professor at Stony Brook University in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering. Espaillat received the President’s Medal; Rafailovich received an honorary doctorate of humane letters. Most important, degrees were awarded to more than 5000 students, who completed their coursework in challenging circumstances. A three-minute Commencement highlights video can be found here.
Even though the pandemic sidelined team sports, the college honored scholarships granted to athletes. In the spring, several Knights teams went back into action. In shorter than usual seasons, the baseball team qualified for the first round of the East Coast Conference (ECC) playoffs; the men’s and women’s tennis teams won their respective ECC Championships and qualified for the NCAA tournament.

Better facilities are on the sports forecast. On June 16, I joined borough and university leaders at the construction site of the college’s soccer field and track renovation to mark $9.3 million in improvements. The project, which began in January 2021, reflects the strong support the college receives from elected officials.
Breaking ground are, from left, Queens College Athletics Director Robert Twible, Student Association President Zaire Couloute, Queens Borough President Donovan Richards, Queens College President Frank H. Wu, City Council Member Francisco Moya, State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, City Council Member James Gennaro, Special Counsel for Ratepayer Protection and former City Council Member Rory Lancman, CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, and student athlete Shannon Gibbons.

The Marvin Hamlisch International Music Awards Ceremony aired live on March 22. During the ceremony, which commemorates celebrated composer-conductor-pianist Hamlisch ’69, a galaxy of celebrities presented prizes to aspiring composers around the world. The evening featured performances by QC students and graduates; Aubrey Johnson (ACSM) directed a choir of alumni from the jazz program in an outstanding rendition of The Spy Who Loved

Metheme song, “Nobody Does It Better.”

Serving the Greater Good

Queens College continued its long history of participating in public life. More than a thousand people, yours truly among them, received the single-shot Johnson and Johnson treatment at the pop-up vaccination site on campus on the weekend of April 10-11. With amNYMetro, QC co-hosted a virtual forum with mayoral candidates. Last fall and again this month, the college served as an early voting location.

With profound sadness, we created a document to pay tribute to members of
the QC community who passed away of pandemic-related causes. I extend our deepest condolences to all who lost loved ones. We are planning a campus event to bring us together to honor their memory.

In a period that saw horrifying violence against people of color, the college offered free, interdisciplinary programming for Black History Month, and Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. I was moved when students, faculty, and staff joined local officials and me in Flushing on May 2 in an anti-hate rally organized by Queens Borough President Donovan Richards.

With President Wu at the Flushing rally (clockwise from left): Congressmember Grace Meng; Queens Borough President Richards; State Senator John Liu, behind President Wu; Congressmember Gregory Meeks, in the back, toward the right; New York State Attorney General Letitia James.
AVP Jeffrey Rosenstock and Assemblyman Khaleel Anderson, a Queens College alumnus, join QC students, faculty and President Wu at the rally.

That event addressed attacks and bias directed toward Asian Americans as well as Blacks and Jews, with an emphasis on how coalitions advance our shared principles. Speaking of our borough president, he announced new capital funding for CUNY campuses in Queens during one of his frequent visits to our campus, including $1.25 million to renovate the lab kitchen for FNES’s food science and management program. As befits a proudly diverse community, QC celebrated Women’s History Month in March and in June observed Pride Month. I just recently had the pleasure of meeting members of CUNY’s wheelchair basketball team, which holds practices and clinics in FitzGerald Gym. This is a campus where everyone should feel welcome.
Queens College has remained safe and secure due to the nonstop efforts of our essential employees. Next week, my wife, Carol Izumi, and I will personally host a "thank you" luncheon. The folks who maintained our campus, including from Public Safety, Buildings and Grounds, the Rosenthal Library, and Information Technology, deserve our enduring gratitude. For August 2 and 3, we are planning welcome-back events. During July and August, I will hold a series of listening and briefing sessions to address questions and concerns; we’ll share the dates as soon as they are confirmed. (While I’m on the subject, I want to remind everyone that ALL fall semester classes, whatever their format, will begin the first day online.)

I will continue our year-long program of meeting regularly with city, state, and federal officials to advocate for the funding we need to offer the best possible education and to further augment our facilities and technology. Similarly, we will build on our extensive community outreach, working with civic, educational, and religious organizations to spread the word about new opportunities at QC.

Your Role Helping Us All

There is no shortage of incentive programs to encourage people to get vaccinated. New York City has a variety of giveaways for individuals who receive their first shot at a city-run location. Never been to the Empire State Building? Through July 4, you can be vaccinated on the 80th floor and then ride up to the 86th floor, with its outdoor deck, and enjoy the view for free. CVS is doing its part, too. Through July 10, people who have been vaccinated or schedule vaccinations from CVS Health are eligible to enter a with more than 1,000 prizes that range from coupon booklets to travel packages.

I appreciate a freebie as much as the next person. But as far as I’m concerned, the greatest reward for vaccination is that it has allowed me to engage in activities that I’ll never again take for granted, such as visiting friends, talking to colleagues in person, having dinner in a restaurant, or voting at our on-campus election site in the Student Union. If you haven’t been vaccinated, please make plans to do so. The QC community is counting on you.

My life has changed since my vaccination. I have been enjoying nearby Flushing Meadows Corona Park, where I see families of all backgrounds holding picnics and barbecues. Children and couples ride bicycles; crowds gather to play and watch cricket and soccer; dog owners are out for a stroll with pets; vendors hawk their refreshments. Thanks to the development of effective preventive measures against COVID-19, all of these people are able to resume social activities with the confidence that they and their loved ones are protected and safe.

Thank you again for your support during the past academic year. May we together return to campus with renewed energy and vitality as we begin a new year at Queens College.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Stay safe and well!
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