Welcome back from spring break! I hope everyone enjoyed their time off, and that members of our community who celebrate Easter or Passover had a meaningful holiday.

The college continued to offer many activities during vacation. Perhaps some of you participated in workouts or classes with Athletics. Events are already back to full swing this week and I urge you to consider participating.

Last night, I had the pleasure of joining the festivities as the Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding (CERRU) held its Tenth Anniversary Celebration on Zoom. CERRU honored CUNY Chancellor Felix V. Matos Rodríguez, whose leadership and unwavering commitment at the college and then at the university has been critical to the center’s success. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Incubator of CERRU is bringing new collaborations to other CUNY campuses, with the help of funding from the New York City Council. It is modeled on programs and training sessions first presented at Queens College.
The annual Susheel Kirpalani Innovation Exchange, an exciting and signature CERRU initiative, has moved online. The fashion show, an exploration of identity, took place yesterday. The Innovation Exchange continues tonight and tomorrow at 6 pm. This evening’s program is a panel discussion of mutual aid and organizing, cosponsored by the Urban Studies Department. Art as Resistance, taking place tomorrow, features presentations by Chloë Bass (Art) and members of the Epic Theatre Ensemble, followed by a talkback with the artists.

The Annual Garcia Center Open House and Thomas Hayden Memorial Chemistry Show, a campus tradition now in its 24th year, will be held virtually tomorrow. Presented in partnership with the Garcia Center for Polymers at Engineered Interfaces at Stony Brook University, this event reaches hundreds of high school students, inspiring many to pursue careers in research and education. The Garcia Center is named after Narciso Garcia, who earned his doctorate in physics at Stony Brook and taught on our campus for 27 years, until his death in 1996. Hayden, the chemistry show’s namesake, served our community for even longer—40 years! He was the director of laboratories for the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry as well as the college’s chief laboratory technician. I can think of no better way to commemorate these two scientists than by encouraging young people to enter STEM fields. I look forward to participating in the program.

Importantly, taking place tomorrow: a New York City Men Teach Town Hall, starting at 4 pm. Eddie S. Glaude Jr.—James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor and chair of African American Studies at Princeton—will speak, his first such engagement at CUNY. Terrence Cunningham of NBC’s “The Voice” will perform. To register for the town hall, RSVP here.

I’d like to call everyone’s attention to the #VaxUpCUNY campaign. The only way to halt the spread of COVID-19 is for everyone to get vaccinated. As of today, all New Yorkers age 16 and up are eligible for vaccination, which is safe and free of charge, whether or not you have health insurance. To learn more, visit CUNY’s redesigned coronavirus web page. New York City residents can schedule their vaccination online at vax4nyc.nyc.gov or by calling 877-VAX-4NYC (877-829-4692).

After a one-week pause for spring break, “Big Ideas,” the video series produced by the Office of Communications and Marketing, will resume its regular schedule on Thursday, April 8. It Is in Your Head: Chronic Pain Affects the Brain, the episode debuting this week, profiles Maral Tajerian (Biology),
who researches what chronic pain does to the brain.

Maral Tajerian

Thursday night, from 8 to 9:30 pm, the Aaron Copland School of Music will present Sing a Song Full of Hope: A Redistribution Model of Musicking with Tesfa Wondemagegnehu, shown live on YouTube. This inspiring QClass explores the Justice Choir Movement, which Wondemagegnehu—a choral director, composer, educator, and performer—co-founded, using music, dialogue, and community activism to address social injustice. For more information, click here or write jane.cho@qc.cuny.edu.

As you know, I have been outspoken in many forums and through media outlets on the preponderance of reported and heinous hate crimes and incidents that are visible examples of the invidious bigotry and discrimination our society must grapple with. I recently penned an op-ed for the New York Daily News on the subject of attacks on Asian Americans. Other examples of my outreach are available under “Announcements” on the Queens College homepage.

On Friday, April 9, from noon to 2 pm, Turning the Table on Hunger—the mobile food distribution effort organized by the college’s food pantry—will stop at 136-17 39th Avenue in Flushing (near Queens Crossing and the Main Street stations for the #7 subway line and Long Island Rail Road). One bag per family will be distributed from the Queens College van. The event is open by appointment only to QC/CUNY students, who must wear a mask and practice social distancing. Students may register here. If you have questions, email knightstable@qc.cuny.edu.

The Knight News will continue its Visiting Journalists Series on Monday, April 12, from 12:15 to 1:30 pm, presenting Katina Paron. She’s the author of A Newshound’s Guide to Student Journalism, a graphic textbook, and an editor of Dateline: CUNY, an outlet for the university’s undergraduate journalists. You can access this event here (Zoom ID 846 9955 6959; Zoom password 435252).

That same day, the LALS-PSCI Speaker Series continues at 12:15 pm with “Brazilian Politics in the 21st Century: From Lula to Bolsonaro,” a talk by Victor
Araújo, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Zurich. Reserve your place by registering. This series is presented in collaboration by the Department of Political Science and the Latin American and Latino Studies Program.

Progress continues on the Strategic Plan for 2021-2026 with the exemplary help of the Steering Committee and Working Groups. I am deeply grateful to the many faculty, staff, students, and alumni for their ongoing diligence and participation. Among the challenges are updating the college’s mission statement. Please watch your email for links to sign up for the six town halls scheduled for next month. Different sessions will be held for department chairs (Monday, May 10, 2-3:30 pm); faculty (Tuesday, May 11, 4-5:30 pm); staff (Wednesday, May 12, 9:30-11 am); students (Thursday, May 13, noon to 1:30 pm); the President’s Council (Friday, May 14, 2-3:30 pm); and alumni, the Queens College Foundation, and members of the community (Monday, May 17, 6-7:30 pm). A draft mission statement will be shared and posted in advance as we continue to benefit from the ongoing input of the college community in this most transparent process.

At the time of this writing, the New York State budget has not been formally adopted in Albany. We are working for restorations and gains in the operating and capital support that CUNY and Queens College have been strongly advocating. I continue to meet with our elected representatives in order to obtain greater investment in the programs and services needed to help our students to succeed. Following the formal adoption of the state budget, city budget hearings deliberations will accelerate. We are already seeking enhancements from the New York City Council and Queens Borough President in accordance with campus needs.

I’d like to take this opportunity to again promote Summer Session. This gives all undergraduate and graduate students the chance to make progress toward their degrees by taking classes online and without commuting to campus. It’s already possible to enroll in more than 550 courses, with more to be added. As for the fall, some combination of remote and in-person classes seems likely, as explained in my recent communication to the college community. This is an evolving situation and I will keep everyone apprised as we learn more and make decisions consistent with public health, CUNY, and state policies.

I’m sure the entire QC community joins me in wishing Alexander Kouguell, ACSM professor emeritus, a belated but sincere Happy Birthday. I had the great pleasure of participating in the celebration where Alex turned 101 on Saturday, March 27.

I wish everyone a productive and enjoyable remainder of the spring semester. Stay safe and well.
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