The fall semester has arrived, bringing everyone back to school, albeit off campus. As a newcomer to Queens College, I’ve been taking particular pleasure in this week’s events for first-year students. Ubuntu, held on Monday, August 24, marked the debut of a resource fair and networking opportunity focused on the Black student experience. On the following day, the college’s annual Welcome Day conveyed the excitement of a new beginnings. I can’t imagine a better way to start college. Thanks and congratulations to the administrative and academic staffers whose teamwork resulted in two successful events.

As noted previously, the overwhelming majority of courses and services are being conducted in remote mode, as are interactive discussions of interest to members of the campus community. Briefings on campus operations were held for faculty and staff last week; three more will be held on consecutive Thursdays—August 27, September 3, and September 10—from 6 to 7 pm. I am grateful to Chief of Staff Meghan Moore-Wilk and the members of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Reopening for creating a plan to keep everyone as safe as possible, while allowing campus access under strictly limited circumstances. A Town Hall on Diversity is scheduled for September 2 and a session on international population concerns will take place on September 9.

Speaking of virtual meetings: Zoom is now available to all active QC students, faculty, and staff, with technical support around the clock. Each meeting can last as long as you want, and up to 300 people can attend. For instructions on accessing your account, please see this helpful mailer from IT.

In other positive developments, CUNY received a significant gift from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and allotted $300,000 to QC to support adjunct faculty in 40 sections. English 110 and high-demand sections in Anthropology, History, and Philosophy are included. To help students learn fundamentals needed for STEM subjects, I’m allocating $70,000 for adjuncts in 100-level math sections.

Despite nationwide economic turmoil, QC’s Office of Institutional Advancement reports that total fundraising, including bequests, is up $1 million compared to the previous fiscal year. We increased our total net assets by $3 million, for a total of $85 million.
I’m delighted to welcome Deirdre Flowers and Regina Bain to the QC community. Deirdre has been named interim director of the Africana Studies Program and will work to expand its offerings; additionally, as a member of the History Department, she will teach courses in U.S. and African American History. A specialist in African American women in education, she is an alumna of Hampton, Syracuse, and Columbia Universities. Regina is the new executive director of the Louis Armstrong House Museum. She previously worked at The Posse Foundation, a nonprofit that identifies, recruits, and mentors students who have leadership potential and come from diverse backgrounds. As associate vice president of Posse and deputy to its chief operating officer, Regina helped to train executive directors and replicate programs to major cities. She holds a BA and an MFA from Yale. I thank Jeffrey Rosenstock, QC’s assistant vice president for external and governmental relations, for serving as LAHM’s acting director for the past year. I was delighted in chatting with Regina to discover I had seen her perform on stage! Twenty years ago, she was in the cast, all African American, for the Oedipus trilogy. Starring Avery Brooks, the production later toured Europe. I had saved the Playbill. So I was able to prove to Regina that I had been there for a compelling drama.

The pandemic has crippled the economy and worsened the job outlook for many. In response, chief executives from 27 of metropolitan New York’s largest employers have formed the New York Jobs CEO Council, under the leadership of Gail Mellow, former president of LaGuardia Community College. The council will partner with educational institutions, community groups, and nonprofit organizations to help members of underserved communities develop job skills. The goal is to hire 100,000 people—a quarter of them, CUNY students—within the next ten years.

All of Queens mourned as former Queens Borough President Claire Shulman (right) and former Assemblywoman Nettie Mayerson ‘78 died within a few days of each other. Homemakers who became activists and then politicians, they led
remarkably long lives—both were in their 90s—dedicated to community service. I wish I’d had the opportunity to know them. Jeffrey Rosenstock will be speaking at a Celebration of the Life and Legacy of the Honorable Claire Shulman on September 3, from 6 to 8 pm. The celebration, hosted by Interim Queens Borough President Sharon Lee and Schneps Media, will be aired by Queens Public Television. QPTV can be found on Channel 34/1995 (Spectrum), Channel 82 (RCN) and Channel 34 (Verizon).

Claire Shulman

Because all of us miss campus, I am closing with a photo taken last week by Kevin Lam of Campus Security. We look forward to a time when all of us can appreciate the beauty of the QC grounds in person.

Stay safe and be well.

Frank H. Wu