As we continue to work on the challenges and opportunities at Queens College this semester, I am eager to report on several developments and observations that might be of interest to you.

I’m pleased to announce that that we are making progress toward establishing a new 2021-26 Strategic Plan for Queens College. I have appointed a Steering Committee, with faculty, students, staff, alumni, and Queens College Foundation membership. I am leading the steering committee, which held its first orientation with our consultant, Anna Pond. There are five working groups: Curriculum; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Faculty Scholarship and Creativity; Fiscal Sustainability; and Student Success and Student Life. The membership of the five working groups is drawn from multiple campus constituencies and includes deans of each school, faculty members, department chairs, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, members of the Queens College Foundation, and others. Each working group has an elected faculty co-chair. You can find lists of the committee and working group members and a PowerPoint presentation from the Steering Committee orientation at the new Strategic Plan webpage.

Inquiries are welcome via the webpage. To include the college community in the strategic planning process, the Steering Committee will be holding a series of virtual town halls. Please stay tuned to your emails for the dates.
The rituals that help link a community together are even more important when we can’t gather in person. For this reason, I found my first Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony at QC to be a deeply moving experience. Our keynote speaker Rick Cortez ’72, CEO of Broadmark Asset Management, epitomizes what a Queens College education enables people to accomplish. The stars of the occasion were the Dean’s List Scholars, Provost Scholars, and Presidential Scholars, who excelled in their courses despite all the upheaval of last spring. To rephrase an old line about New York, “If you can succeed now, you can succeed at any time.” A big thank you to all the administration and faculty members who helped to create the first virtual Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony in the history of Queens College.

I have been meeting virtually with many of the key elected officials and stakeholders whose support for QC is longstanding and vital to our ongoing efforts. I have been enormously impressed and encouraged by their understanding and appreciation of our educational mission and its importance to their constituents. They include Congresswoman Grace Meng, State Senator Toby Stavisky, Assembly Members Nily Rozic and Danny Rosenthal, Interim Borough President Sharon Lee, and City Council Members Rory Lancman, Barry Grodenchik, Peter Koo, and Karen Koslowitz, chair of the Queens delegation. In early October, I met with the Queens delegation of the City Council and will continue to make the rounds of elected officials. I also recently met with the Queens College Community Advisory Board and expressed how grateful we are for their continued support and involvement in our efforts during these difficult times. Additionally, I had an opportunity to speak with the principals of Townsend Harris and John Bowne, our two neighboring high schools. We have plans in place to continue our outreach to community, business, labor, religious, and educational leaders in order to strengthen connections with the college.

Today, of course, is Election Day. Voting is a fundamental right of our democracy and ought to be exercised faithfully. I am sure that many of you submitted absentee ballots or visited the early voting site for your district. If you haven’t, remember that every vote counts. I’m happy to note that voting sites have accessible entrances, privacy desks for
wheelchair users, and other ADA accommodations for people with disabilities. If you need help, ask for the site’s disabilities coordinator. Please don’t miss your chance to help determine who will lead the United States of America for the next four years and who will represent our community in the legislative halls of Albany.

Whatever the outcome of this election, Queens College and all of CUNY face significant challenges in the next fiscal year. I am grateful to Vice President for Finance and Administration William Keller and AVP for Finance and Budget Joseph Loughren for creating their virtual Budget 101 presentation, which has been shared with my cabinet, the college-wide personnel and budget committee, numerous offices, and the Knight News. The presentation will evolve as the year proceeds; I am confident that Bill and Joe will continue to keep us informed. I encourage offices and departments that haven’t yet seen Budget 101 to make arrangements to do so.

I recently had the opportunity to accompany Zeco Krcic (AVP, Facilities Planning and Operations) on a walk around campus to meet some of the many people responsible for keeping our facilities operational and safe.

We met with one of our chief engineers, Brian Grad, plant watch Stationary Engineer Frank Love, and plant tender Salvatore LaMonico, who were on duty that day. We then visited with Hans Jurgen Dryer, our laborer supervisor, and chatted with several laborer team members: Anvil Black, David Arizmendi, Chuck Siebert, Carlos Zegarra, and Mark Miceli. We also met plumber assistant
Charles Reeves, oiler Derrick Soogrim, and thermostat repairman Ronald Wroblewski. At the Custodian Services area I met Gloria Roberts and Cutie McCray, our two custodian supervisors. Our next stop was the main Buildings and Grounds office in Kiely Hall where we talked with B&G’s client representative, Providenza Anteri.

Later, at the DASNY building, we encountered Phillip Kump and Phillip Picinic, and I thanked them and all members of the DASNY team for their efforts and collaboration with our campus and CUNY on all of Queens College’s capital program projects.

Returning to Kiely, we visited the Campus Planning Design and Construction office, where I thanked our two project managers, Amparo Barrera and Kelston Saul, for all their past and ongoing efforts with in-house and capital campus projects. Our beautiful campus requires great diligence in maintenance and enhancement. I again thank all involved in keeping our college safe and sound.

President Frank H. Wu and AVP Jennifer Jarvis urge you to get your flu shot and wear masks.

Amid news of rising infection rates in much of the country, I urge everyone to take every necessary precaution. Fall is beautiful in Queens! I hope everyone takes the time to walk around and enjoy the crisper air—while wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing, of course. Our new initiative builds on the CUNY MaskUp Campaign. We call it “Queens College Smart” and encourage you to “MaskUp, Get a flu shot, Be healthy.” Information on how to get your free flu shot is available here.
A special and profoundly grateful thank you to Chief of Staff Meghan Moorewilk and the Ad Hoc Working Group and Provost Elizabeth Hendrey for their incredible diligence in coordinating safe access to the campus. They are doing a great job with the exemplary help of Public Safety, B&G, and ITS. Much appreciation is due for the efforts of Sandra Mew, Sayashmini Madhow, and Sylvia Hernandez.

While we are operating 99 per cent virtually, approximately a thousand visitors have been safely coming to campus each week at different times, including essential staff, faculty, and contractors working on capital campus improvement projects, and a small cohort of students in our science labs, art studios and music rooms. Careful processing of unique visitors has been handled superbly. Like all of you, I’m looking forward to the time when all visits to Queens College can occur without the need for the elaborate safety procedures our administrative team had put in place.

Finally, as the month of Thanksgiving is upon us, let me wish all of you the very best as we look forward to being with family and friends. I remain inspired by the energy, ambition, and talents of our community, so richly on display at the Academic Excellence Ceremony. We have much to be grateful for. Be safe and healthy as we go forward together.

Stay safe and be well.

Frank H. Wu

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