The beginning of the Fall 2021 semester finds me—and I hope, many of you—spending time on our beautiful campus. I know that college life isn’t completely back to normal, but following the science and complying with COVID protocols helps us keep each other and our families and friends safe. Most of you are vaccinated, but if you haven’t yet gotten your vaccination, I encourage you to watch this video the Office of Communications and Marketing produced in collaboration with student, faculty, and administration leaders. It is one of a series to be made available in the coming weeks.

In accordance with CUNY’s new, temporary mask mandate, we need to mask up indoors and, when social distancing isn’t possible, outdoors. The mandate is detailed in this message, which also provides information about the FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccine and the implications of that decision for unvaccinated students. Check your emails for continuous updates and information about upcoming campus briefings.

The summer was rewarding for the Queens College community.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mexico’s consul general for New York, Jorge Islas Lopez, on campus in July. The consulate, located in Manhattan, serves Mexican constituents in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.
L to R: Jeff Rosenstock, assistant vice president, External and Governmental Relations, QC; Julia del Palacio, director of Strategic Partnerships, QC; Carlos Gerardo Izzo, consul for Press and Public Affairs, Consulate General of Mexico in New York; Frank H. Wu, president, QC; Miguel Gleason, executive director, Mexican Cultural Institute of New York; Jorge Islas Lopez, consul general, Consulate General of Mexico in New York; Żadia Feliciano, associate professor of Economics, QC; Jay Hershenson, vice president, Communications and Marketing, and senior advisor to the president, QC.

Mexican Consul General Jorge Islas Lopez tours The Summit . . . and meets Regina Bain, director of the Louis Armstrong House Museum.

Our summer camp resumed in-person operations, bringing children and teens to campus to take part in sports, performing arts, and academic enrichment.

Volunteers with the Department of Family, Nutrition and Exercise Science tended an organic garden that donated lots of produce to a local soup kitchen. On a harvest day earlier this month, FNES gave away fresh vegetables and herbs on a first-come, first-serve basis, while the Knights Table Food Pantry
I’m sure everyone is proud of the success of the CUNY Service Corps, which placed more than 4,000 students in paid, eight-week positions with small businesses, schools, and community-based organizations. Four hundred eighty one of those students—11.7 percent of the total—came from QC. Congratulations to Taruna Sadhoo, director of the CUNY Service Corps at QC, and her team for vastly exceeding their original goal of enrolling 175 students in this initiative.

There is more exciting news about QC people.

Former QC women’s volleyball player Nicky Nieves is competing in the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo for Team USA from today through September 5. Nieves, who was born without a left hand, will compete in sitting volleyball—a form of the sport in which all players are seated on the court instead of standing. Nieves will be looking to capture her second gold medal, having been on the 2016 gold-medal winning team in Rio. You can watch her and the rest of Team USA live on NBColympics.com. We wish Nicky the best of luck, and we hope she can bring home the gold!. Learn more about Nicky Nieves.

Effective tomorrow—Wednesday, August 25—Nathalia Holtzman has been appointed interim associate provost for Innovation and Student Success, succeeding Eva Fernández. Holtzman joined Queens College as an assistant professor in 2005; she has been serving as the chair of the Biology Department since 2020 and for five years prior to that was the associate director of the Center for Teaching & Learning.

As Queens College president, I rejoice in the appointment of Daisy Cocco De Filippis as president of Eugenio María de Hostos Community College, CUNY. Daisy—
I have the great pleasure of issuing presidential awards to outstanding faculty. I hope to be able to present these honors, each of which is accompanied by a $2,500 prize, in person at my State of the College address in October. Four full-time faculty—one from each school—will receive President’s Awards for Excellence in Teaching: Jacqueline Darvin (Education), James Vacca (Social Sciences), and Scott Wilson (Math and Natural Sciences), Marianna Zinni (Arts and Humanities). Similarly, I will give President’s Awards for Excellence in Teaching to adjuncts Deborah Gruber (Education), Marcella Mandracchia (Arts and Humanities), Akina Nakayama (Math and Natural Sciences), and Chihiro Shibata (Social Sciences). Schiro Withinachchi (Economics), will receive the President’s Faculty Diversity and Inclusion Award. I warmly congratulate all nine faculty members for their exceptional work.

There is comfort in annual college rituals, whether they occur virtually or, as students like to say, IRL. Last week was particularly busy. Faculty and staff partook of Welcome Back Breakfasts in the dining hall on
Monday, August 16, and Tuesday, August 17, stopping afterward at a QC Fair to pick up complimentary college swag and other items.

Our second annual Ubuntu event, an orientation for first-year students of color, was held on YouTube on Wednesday, August 18, and on the Quad the following day. Dwayne Jones (Student Development and Leadership) and Soribel Genao (Educational Leadership) were among the speakers. The menu included icebreaker activities, community-building exercises, a Q&A, and on Thursday, August 19, lunch.

Dwayne Jones  
Soribel Genao

Today—Tuesday, August 24—Welcome Day takes place on YouTube and the Quad simultaneously, giving incoming students the chance to meet each other on two platforms, learn about college clubs, and enjoy performances by guest artists.

Next week, Veteran Support Services will host its orientation on Wednesday, September 1, from 12:15 to 1:15 pm. QC is proud of its ranking by Victory Media as a Military Friendly School—part of the college’s efforts to make all students, whatever their background, to feel welcome and valued.

In closing, I share thoughts for food. It’s not possible, yet, to set up standard cafeteria services. However, as of yesterday, grab and go options are available at five campus locations: the Main Dining Hall, the Student Union, the Kiely Kiosk, the Library Kiosk, and the Science Building Kiosk. For the days and hours, please visit this web page.

So, when you are on campus, have a snack, be safe and healthy. As well, do patronize our local food outlets near the campus. Have an enjoyable and productive semester.

Sincerely,

Frank H. Wu
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