

Remarks from All-College End of Semester Gathering  
Tuesday, May 11, 2021

My Dear Colleagues and Students,

Before we begin, I'd like to ask us all to take a minute to reflect on the sad news of the recent passing of Director Isabel Li. Say a brief prayer or pause for a moment so that we share in the loss together. Thank you.

I am so happy to be here with you, to see some of you, albeit virtually, as we claim the day, the conclusion of a semester and a year that tested our best intentions and saw us navigate towards true north in the face of incredible challenges for humanity. This year we continued to operate in a mostly online environment. Our main concern was the safety and health of our students, faculty, staff and administration and the continued high quality of instruction and student and academic support services. This is how we live our values at Hostos. We have been sharing in the Hostos Weekly/Semanario Hostosiano about our collective work, work you all have contributed. You know how we have organized and worked diligently and creatively on so many fronts to be supportive to our students, our academic programs and ourselves. Hostos academic life and student life has been supported by multiple workshops by OAA and SDEM, discipline-based department sponsored and political engagement and debates, book discussions and faculty book presentations, Honors presentations, candid conversations, respecting diversity events, Veladas Hostosianas/Hostos Culture Talks including Black Lives Matter and Black at Hostos townhall and talks, Puerto Rican and Dominican Heritage celebrations, including the Dominican Studies International Conference, Women's History month and a significant number of community artistic free of charge events offered by the Hostos Center for Arts and Culture and educational workshops conducted free of charge for community members by our colleagues in CEWD. This work has been supported as well by those on the ground, our generous laborers, custodial staff, IT and Instructional Technology, Conference Center and Public Safety colleagues. Thank you, mil gracias, does not begin to express the gratitude and the pride I feel in our "manos a la obra/All hands on deck" approach.

Continued generous and collegial work in the process of writing of our 10 Year Self-Study report to be submitted to Middle States in draft next semester is moving forward in an effective and timely manner, thanks to our Self-Study Steering Committee co-Chairs Professor Nelson Nuñez Rodríguez and Professor Kate Wolfe, ably supported by Assistant Dean Babette Audant and our OIERA colleagues with exemplary support from Professor Kate Lyons' writing skills in concert with a significant number of colleagues (100+) who so willingly are serving and contributing in the Working Groups.

Planning has been also supported this year by the various reports from our OIERA colleagues on our Operational Plan and in the multiple meetings of committees designed to assess, break down the walls of silos as exemplified by the collaborations of SDEM and OAA and our Career Services Director Lisanette Rosario and DIA Development Officer Idelsa Mendez, also co-chair of a Committee Advisory Council roundtable on creating mentorships, internships and job

opportunities for our students, and so much more. Additionally, as OIERA begins to assess the outcomes of our current Strategic Plan, we will be using that assessment to inform the setting of goals for the Academic Year 2021-2022 Operational Plan.

Briefly envisioning work in support of our students this academic year, we are putting intentionality at the forefront when it comes to the students' onboarding and continued progress from orientation, advisement, career educational opportunities tied to employment, academic programs' mapping, transferability with special emphasis on frequent touchpoints and assessment of students' progress. There is so much more to discuss in the coming months.

I offer a very heart-felt, de todo corazón, thank you to our wonderful students, honorably represented by a very kind and talented SGA leadership, to be recognized in the person of our very own Brian Carter. Students have risen from the challenges, and the disappointments of not being able to hold so many expected activities and celebrations, to think of one another and to chart a course of generosity and creativity by means of a number of online activities, encouraging classmates to practice healthy habits, maintain serenity and speak out for social justice. Bravi! Congratulations, enhorabuena, auguri and so much more to our graduating SGA leaders. We celebrate you and all of our students as we also encourage and support the next phase of your journey.

The faculty, staff and administration have shown their mettle, in so many incredibly generous ways. Academic Affairs has worked so diligently. Acting Provost Charles Drago has kept the academic side moving forward in collaborative ways, including working on the design of new two + two opportunities for our students, academic program reviews, evaluations of life experience and other prior knowledge for college credit and many other initiatives. The College-wide Senate, ably guided by Professor Ernest Ialongo stayed focused on moving curriculum and programs forward and on staying engaged in the life of the College, contributing collegially to our commitment to students and one another. All of us, just think of our collective work, consider what it takes to support students during a pandemic in a generous and sound educational environment that will be evident when we grant more than 1189 awards at Commencement this year. Bendiciones!

The presentations this afternoon by colleagues, including updates from the SGA and College-wide Senate, Administration and Finance, Academic Affairs and Student Development and Enrollment Management will encourage us to recognize how each of us did our part this semester, and take lessons learned to integrate to the work that there is still to be done.

Reports from Senior Vice President Rodríguez-Chardavoyne indicate that we will finish academic year 2020-2021 in the black, numbers will be confirmed in November. She will elaborate more on our budget later on in the program. We owe SVP Rodriguez Chardavoyne a debt of gratitude for her excellent work and dedication, assuming the responsibility of two divisions, at a time of powerful personal loss. Out of her sense of care for all, the John Chardavoyne Endowed Scholarship was established. Mil gracias, bendiciones. Dedication to Hostos and our students does not get any better. SVP's oversight of SDEM has been supported

generously by a number of colleagues. I offer sincere words of appreciation for our colleagues in SDEM, recognized this afternoon in the persons of Assistant Dean Johanna Gómez and Director Fabian Wander.

We have digital commencement to look forward to on May 28 at 2:00 PM and another year of successful completions, as we consider the drop in enrollment this year. It took tremendous perseverance, determination, grit on the part of students, faculty and staff, and yes, it deserves to be said again. At this moment Mr. Primak reports to our Commencement Committee that 1,189 students will receive awards, and that potentially the number could be higher. Final numbers to be submitted by August 1. Again, congratulations, well done, wonderful persistence, perseverance and triumph of the spirit, the intellect and the heart.

This commencement we will be honoring our Valedictorian Ishrat Zahan and Salutatorian Taisiia Smekalenkova. An Honorary Associate Degree in Humane Letters will be presented to former Congressman Jose E. Serrano, for his exemplary support of Hostos Community College for many decades. Presidential Medals in recognition of generous and effective college and community service will be presented to our student Maya Joy Abdousala, Professor Nelson Nuñez Rodríguez, Professor Kate Wolfe, Director Frank Virone and community member Dr. Rafael Lantigua. Congratulations to all, outstanding!

This afternoon recognitions will be presented by divisional leaders to eight colleagues\* who have served Eugenio María de Hostos Community College with dedication and distinction for 40 or more years, supporting Hostos' ongoing struggle, persistence and determination to provide the South Bronx with quality, affordable education. These colleagues are: Prof. Linda Hirsch, English, 46 years; Prof. Nieves Aguilera, Nursing, 46 years; Prof. Lewis Levine, Language and Cognition, 43 years; Prof. Cynthia Jones, English, 43 years; Prof. Mildred Rabry, Language and Cognition, 43 years; Prof. Norma Peña de Lorenz, Language and Cognition, 42 years; Prof. Alida Pastoriza, Dental Hygiene, 40 years; Mr José Santana, IT, 40 years. We will be presenting our colleagues with tokens of appreciation in the form of a framed certificate and a book by Eduardo Galeano. Recipients may select an English or Spanish version The Book of Embraces or El libro de los abrazos. Felicitaciones, mil gracias y bendiciones.

(\*This paragraph has been revised based on new information received.)

A special thank you to Chairman Jose Sánchez Kinghorn and all the members of the Hostos Foundation for your generous and constant support of our students. A special thank you as well to Acting Dean Susan Pinamonti, for a successful fundraising year that saw the Division of Institutional Advancement exceed goals by 15%. I offer a special thank you to Associate Dean Ana García Reyes for her development work over the years with the Nasry Michelen Foundation that culminated this year with the establishment of the Dr. Nasry Michelen Endowed Scholarship for students in Allied Health and Public Health. The commitment of the Michelen Foundation also extended to bringing in partnership with Hostos "The Dr. Nasry Michelen Allied Health Lecture Series," offering this past semester two important lectures: one on mental health during the pandemic and the other on our senior population in the pandemic.

A special note of appreciation for Prof. Yoel Rodríguez's leadership and contributions as co-chair of the Committee on Sponsored Programs and Grants, and his exemplary role in encouraging and supporting a culture of grants' writing and research in our faculty and staff.

For their continued support and care, I thank members of the President's Extended Cabinet as well as my very supportive staff in the President's Office, Victor Santana and Estel Ortega Frederick. I must offer a very special thank you to Cabinet member and Director of the President's Office Diana Kreymer for her incredible work ethic and her generous support of all of our work. Obrigada.

Dear colleagues and students, as you have experienced and I have tried to capture in words, this is a powerful time for us: rising to significant challenges and achieving meaningful results. This is also a time that requires commitment, patience and an open and creative mind, as challenges and innovative responses to challenges are a critical part of what it takes to live a reflective and engaged professional life. We are managing at this time in an ever-evolving landscape of planning opportunities to overcome the pandemic and to restore and re-create a college experience for our students, support for our communities and the growth of the college in a safe environment, following all guidelines provided by the CDC, the State of New York and CUNY Central Administration. As I write these words I just received the news of Governor Cuomo's announcement of a vaccination requirement for SUNY and CUNY students attending classes on the ground in the fall. We continue to plan in an ever-evolving landscape in preparation for our post-pandemic vitality, mindful, always, of everyone's health and safety.

When I addressed the Hostos Community Advisory Council this past March, as we assessed progress in our goal to strengthen community connections and create opportunities for our students by working with each other and envisioning new projects, I reflected on Pablo Neruda's Nobel Laureate speech: his understanding of the connection we have with others and the responsibility we have to one another, as we try to move forward as human beings in this life's journey. I close my welcome remarks this afternoon by sharing that brief excerpt from Neruda's speech, words some of you have heard me read before:

All paths lead to the same goal; to convey to others what we are...  
but in this dance or in this song, there are fulfilled the most ancient  
rites of our conscience in the awareness of being human and of  
believing in a common destiny.

I wish us all a rewarding end of the semester and academic year, and joyful opportunities to support and encourage our students and each other's journeys.

Mil gracias y bendiciones, Daisy

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Ph.D.  
Interim President  
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