

President's Monthly Update
April 2025

Dear College Community,

I appreciate your commitment to York College which is so evident in the many ways you contribute to the myriad of requests to participate, to attend, and to volunteer at the myriad of events and activities happening at York. Last month was no exception.

Thank you to:

- Everyone who participated in our Mission, Vision Values Town Hall sessions as well as the MSCHE forums with Dr. Tiffany Lee. As you know we have received positive feedback regarding our Self Study design, which now sets the stage for our efforts this coming fall.
- Prof. Timothy Paglione for hosting an ultra-informative and consciousness-raising Spergel Lecture with Dr. Ravi Kalyanaraman, the Director of the Forensics and Innovative Technologies group at Bristol-Meyers Squibb.
- Our Performing and Fine Arts faculty, staff and students for a vibrant PFA Day and to the Prof. Tom Marion and all faculty and staff mentors who helped prepare our outstanding student actors and actresses who performed Tori Simpson's play, *If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must be a M****Fer*. It was a wonderful performance and I can't wait to see what is next in the York Playbill.
- The Campus Environment & Facilities Committee, Joery Francois and Marcia Comrie for resurrecting the beautification of the campus in honor of the late Prof. Susan Austin and alumna Prof. Winsome Smikle of the Department of Behavioral Sciences who devoted many of her non-teaching hours to lovingly caring for the plants.
- College community for participating in our observance of Denim Day and Administrative Professionals Day.
- Our faculty, staff and students who represented the College at the Mental Health Summit at John Jay College; and a special congratulations to all 18 York students who graduated from the 5th Gumbo Coalition Class sponsored by Resorts World International.
- Office of Academic Affairs for an awesome Spring Symposium. Presentations by Profs. Anthony Sparacino, Adedeji Olugboja and Stephanie Store were both informative and inspiring, so much so that I invite everyone to join our walking group which will kick (step) off in June. On Wednesdays we will take advantage of our \$8.1 million, NCAA certified field. Michelle Hardy is putting the final organizational touches on the initiative so more information will be forthcoming.

Governance

To date, Senate has received reports from five out of eight Governance committees (Curriculum, Library/ Tech, Campus Environment and Facilities, Resource committee and Elections). I hope that we will have updates from the remaining committees at our next Senate meeting as I have shared with the Senate the importance of annual updates on Senate committee goals, priorities and recommendations that may be passed on to the next cohort of committee members. Governance is so important that there is whole MSCHE standard devoted to it which involves not only the CUNY board of trustees, but governance at the campus level as well.

Relatedly, as part of our effort to improve overall operations, there is a need to develop a standard calendar of meeting times for our Senate committees, but all key college committees. I shared at the last senate meeting my intentions to convene a small, but mighty committee inclusive of students, or a representative from Student Activities, chairpersons, and representatives from governance committees to develop a calendar for the coming year. Thank you to those who answered the call to serve on the committee. I have cast an additional net to finalize additional committee members. Once the membership is solidified I will share with the college community.

Enrollment

With regards to enrollment, as of May 9 we are 7% ahead of where we were last year in terms of total enrollment; 13% ahead with graduate enrollment, 2.5% ahead in transfer enrollment, and down 3.6% in freshman enrollment. As you know, enrollment and retention are critical priorities for the college. While I know we cannot enroll our way out of our deficit, increase in headcount and FTEs can make a difference in terms of available resources and planning. Most importantly, however, increasing enrollment and retention helps us to further actualize our mission and ensure more students avail themselves of the opportunity to gain and benefit from a York education.

Reorganization

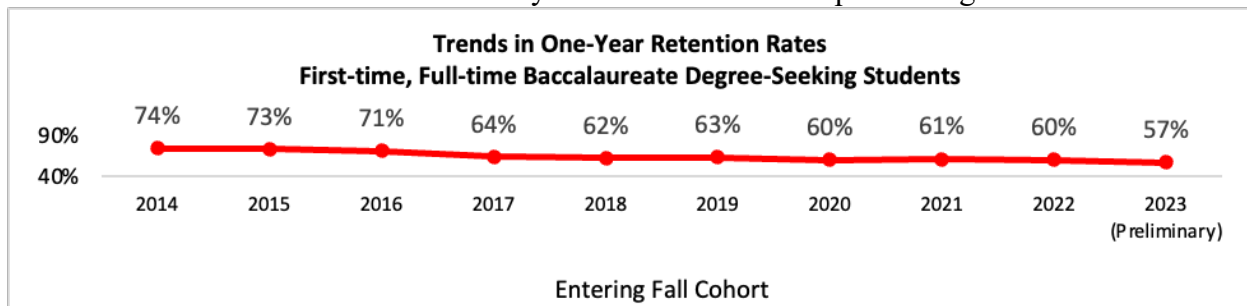
Having had the opportunity to observe and experience York operations for the past 14 months, my recent appointment as president now affords me the opportunity and ability to engage in more long-term planning.

As you all know, from 2019 to 2023, York College experienced a trend of decreasing enrollment. While many of our counterparts were rebounding from COVID, York continued to decline.

Total Enrollment

Fall 2019: 8837
Fall 2020: 7784
Fall 2021: 7027
Fall 2022: 6446
Fall 2023: 6161
Fall 2024: 6174

Retention rates have also been on a steady decline which also impacts our graduation rate.



In addition to the deleterious effect of the pandemic on enrollment and retention, like many other areas in the college, there are significant staffing gaps in the division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. There is a need for both a comprehensive assessment of Enrollment Management, increased focus on retention efforts, and restructuring to sharpen our focus on these critical areas. To this end, the Division will be reorganized into two separate units: *Student Affairs*, which will continue to be led by VP Karen Williams and *Enrollment and Retention Management*, which will lead by a new VP of the area. A search will be launched.

With the reorganization of the division, comes a new area of oversight for Student Affairs. As you may know, last year oversight of Athletics was moved from the President's Office to the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Effective May 29, 2025 responsibility for leading Commencement planning will also be moved from the President's Office to Student Affairs. As our most significant time of the year, Commencement will continue to require the participation of representatives from many offices across the college. The members of 2026 Commencement Steering Committee and all related subcommittees should be determined no later than June 15th.

Since 2023, Commencement has been held at UBS Arena. While the venue has been able to accommodate our needs in grand style, it is no longer fiscally prudent to hold commencement at this location. It is imperative that new locations be scouted and evaluated and a decision about the 2026 be made by September 2025. I thank VP Williams and her team for their leadership and tireless commitment to the success of our students.

Facilities/Budget

You know what they say, where we are going is closer than where we are coming from. We hoped for Spring, but we are almost at summer, and although the Cardinals' Kitchen is not open for business, we are getting closer to that day. Most of our equipment has been installed, our vendor has been selected, and the University is in the process of reviewing the contract. In April, we also cut the ribbon on our new Graduate Student Lounge located in 4G02. Graduate students can obtain the code to enter from their respective departments.

The FY2026 New York State budget has been enacted. Among the major highlights is an additional \$34 million in senior college general operating support which fills the gap in funding for the FY2026 PSC contract costs. There are several college-specific allocations but none for York College. You should know that my intent is to advocate to our elected officials every opportunity I get for the funds to ensure that our Academic Village comes to fruition. Under President Keiz's administration, Assemblywoman Vivian Cook awarded us \$40 million, but factoring inflation we will need at least another \$200+ to fully fund the project.

As you recall, last year I asked for input regarding our potential occupancy of a proposed affordable housing/mixed-use facility on campus. Given the deadline for submission of information and the lack of a permanent president to make such a final decision, the proposed project did not move forward. It is now even more important that we get our Academic Village off the Gold Sheet and into action.

While Governor Kathy Hochul's new Opportunity Promise Scholarship, a new program that will allow adult New Yorkers to receive free community college tuition for pursuing degrees in high-demand fields (plus an additional \$5.3 million for general operating support) is good news for community colleges, we should be aware that this new program may have implications on our ability to attract and recruit adult/reconnect students.

Funding initially included in the Governor's Executive Budget for student success programs like CUNY ASAP and ACE, and AI research is included in the enacted budget.

I look forward to seeing you at all the end of the year college and department celebrations including:

- Deans' List Awards Ceremony for students: May 15, 2025
- The Yemmys Faculty Awards: May 20, 2025 (**The 1st Annual Yemmy Awards (The Yemmys)**, Like, but only better because we are recognizing York's outstanding faculty)
- Commencement on May 28, 2025