

President's Monthly Update
June 2025/ July 2025

Dear College Community,

I hope this email finds you in great health and spirits and that you have found time to do the things and see the people that bring you the most joy. Salient updates are as follows:

Enrollment

Last week, we held a very successful New Student Orientation with over 500 students in attendance. The final tally will be forthcoming, but the attendance does exceed last year's NSO attendance, which was 384.

We are 15 days away from the start of the semester and we continue to make every effort to enroll and register students. Welcome Wagons are in full swing, a York Opportunity Network focusing on organizations serving men was held in July, and SAEM staff continue their efforts of recruiting, advising and registering students.

As of August 8, our overall enrollment headcount was 0.5% (3,774) over last year (3,756) at the same time. Similarly, we are 0.9% up in overall FTEs. Continuing students are also up 4.7%; new graduate students are up 24.6%, and continuing graduate student enrollment is identical to last year at this time at 134 students. However, First-time freshman enrollment is -4.5% below last year; as is transfer entrants at -12.2%. Thank you, VP Hoeffner for keeping us all in the loop with weekly enrollment updates.

Hello and Farewell

I am pleased to share with you that Dr. Johana Rivera will be joining York College as the Vice President for Enrollment and Retention Management. Dr. Rivera demonstrates all the desired and requisite qualifications for this position. She has worked in CUNY for over 30 years across the spectrum of institutions, community, comprehensive and senior colleges in a variety of roles: Registrar, Executive Director of Enrollment, Associate Dean for Student Development and Enrollment Management, and Vice President for Enrollment Management. She has also served as an Interim Director for College Discovery and Admissions. In these roles, she has actively engaged in and is adept at strategic planning, budgeting/financial management, assessment, technological innovation, as well as collaborated with many, if not all, institutional office and departments such as Academic Affairs, Workforce Development, Financial Aid, academic departments, Institutional Research and Marketing/Communications to name a few.

Among her many accomplishments was increasing KCC's enrollment 20% over five years (Fall 2020 to Fall 2024) and achieving a 25.6% LatinX identification rate, which paved the way for them to become a Hispanic-serving institution. I believe that her experience will serve York College as well we grapple with less-than-optimal enrollment trends, and full-time/ first-time freshman one-year retention rates that are below the Senior College average 60.2% vs 73.5% (Fall 2020), which also affects our graduation rate, which is below 40%. As you know, not only is our Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) reaccreditation visit on the

horizon for 2027, but the college has been required to submit a Supplemental Information Report to the due to our low-graduation rates.

I have had the fortune to both work with Dr. Rivera at Medgar Evers College and hire her at Kingsborough Community College, so I am confident that she has the needed leadership, strategic planning, and collaborative skills to positively impact enrollment, retention and student outcomes at York College. Her references also spoke highly of her understanding of enrollment and related policies and procedures, collaborative nature, leadership skills, use of technology and innovation to improve services, and her ability to work well with faculty, staff and students. Thank you to the Search Committee and all those who participated in various forums and provided feedback.

In sum, while I know we cannot enroll our way out of our deficit, increased focus on enrollment and retention and expert leadership is one way we can make a marked difference in both student and institutional outcomes. Please note that until such time as she receives Board of Trustees approval (October 2025), Dr. Rivera will be appointed as an Interim VP. Her start date is August 20, 2025. Please join me in welcoming her to York College.

Join me congratulating Interim Associate Provost Dr. Maureen Becker on her appointment as the interim University Dean of Health and Human Services. Maureen joined York College in 2018 and during this time has served as Dean of the School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs, as well as the Interim Dean of the School of Business and Information Systems. She effectively managed both Schools, forged relationships with industry partners, helped to develop certificate programs, secured funding for many initiatives and programs. Her commitment to students and faculty are unmatched and we are richer in so many ways because of her. CUNY is gaining a true star. More information will be forthcoming regarding who will assume her responsibilities as well as a celebration in her honor.

Facilities

As VP Rios shared last week, we are in the midst of our much-needed restroom rehabilitation project. The first phase began in the HPE building and is almost complete; however, the second phase will involve the Academic Core building. As such, there are necessary relocations that need to occur. Some of these relocations will be temporary, while others will be permanent. I don't need to tell you that we have outgrown our space. The need for a new building is as important now as it was in 2011 when the construction of the Academic Village and Conference Center was proposed. Know that bringing the Academic Village to fruition will be a centerpiece of my discussions with our elected officials and the central office for the foreseeable future. In the interim, we will continue to ensure needed upgrades to our college campus. This summer we have made incredible headway in our campus refresh efforts. From power washing, to painting, to removing decades-old maps, to installing more screens, to new welcome mats, I want to take this opportunity to thank our laborers, IT and custodial staff for their incredible work over these past few weeks. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to complete important projects. We believe these upgrades will significantly enhance the campus experience for everyone.

The Cardinal Kitchen is ready for business, but first we have to finalize the business of contracts, which is taking a bit longer than expected. Our goal is to have doors to our new cafeteria open in time for the start of classes. We will have a formal and celebratory ribbon cutting soon after.

June was A Big Deal!

Our graduates were treated to an incredible send-off! In addition to awarding an Honorary Doctorate to Adelaide Sandford, who was unable to join us, F. Carlisle Towery was presented with the President's Medal in recognition of his decades-long dedication to Southeast Queens and York College, we heard from Ngawang Tendrel Samdrup, Class of 2025 valedictorian and we recognized Sabina Yagudaeva, this year's salutatorian who graduated from York's BS/MS Occupational Therapy program. Our Master of Science in Nursing Program celebrated its first graduating cohort, and celebration events were held for Teacher Education, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, and a number of other programs.

In June, we also kicked off Walk it Out Wednesdays (WOW) and, except for days with heat advisories, many faculty and staff made their way to the track to get their steps in. Thank you to Michelle Hardy for organizing WOW and ensuring that we stayed hydrated. Michelle also helped to organize our end of the semester Afternoon of Fun for faculty and staff featuring lunch and This or That a live game show.

Governmental Relations

NYS Senator Leroy Comrie, a well-known and frequent visitor to our college, recently took a special tour of the campus to see the exciting new renovations and beautification efforts underway. His regular visits have made him a familiar and valued friend of the college community.

During his visit, we had the opportunity to showcase the various upgrades that are enhancing the campus environment. We are deeply grateful for Sen. Comrie's continued support and commitment to our institution, which plays a vital role in helping us grow and improve the experience for all students, faculty and staff.

In July, I provided testimony at the City Planning Commission's public meeting. In addition to supporting Council Member Dr. Nantasha Williams' proposal to establish a Downtown Jamaica Oversight Task Force, I also requested funds for the upgrade of our Library through the development of a Library for the Future.

Kudos Corner

Kudos to:

- Professor Jillian Abbott on her receipt of a grant from the Queens Arts Fund to support her film project "Urban Garden, a short documentary centered on Two Coves Community Garden in Astoria, Queens.
- Provost Derrick Brazill for being honored by Queensborough President Donovan Richards at this year's Pride Month Celebration
- Randall Houston, Admissions Counselor and York Alum, for his exceptional coordination of and serving as the Emcee of the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning Be You Pride event.

- Shayla Pruitt, July Employee of the Month, was recognized for consistently delivering outstanding performance, and going above and beyond to support the department's goals and objectives. As a Student Life Manager, she approaches her work with dedication, efficiency, and a strong commitment to student success. Shayla plays a key role in ensuring smooth day-to-day operations, proactively addressing challenges, and providing exceptional service to students, faculty, and staff.
- Dr. Juana Ramos, an Associate Professor in the Department of World Languages, Literatures and Humanities, on the recent publication of her poetry collection: *Una Conversacion pendiente/ Unfinished Conversation*.
- Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, chair of York College's Department of Social Work, has been appointed to a three-year term on the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Board of Accreditation (BOA), beginning July 1, 2025. This marks a historic first for York College, as Dr. Rodgers becomes the first representative from the college's 40-year-old social work program to join this prestigious national body.
- Professor Michael Sharpe for his article on the pressing immigration issues in the United States which was published in *DevlSSues*, a Dutch publication.
- Professor Scott Sheidlower on his election as Faculty Caucus Chair. Thank you, Professor Chirico for your leadership and service to the college.
- Dr. George White, Jr. on his appointment as interim (pending approval from the Board of Trustees) Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. Dr. White brings to this role a distinguished record of academic leadership, scholarship, and service.
- Nicole Williams, June Employee of the Month, who was recognized for her exceptional dedication, reliability, and teamwork. Known in the Finance and Administration department for going above and beyond, Nicole consistently supports her colleagues and contributes to the success of the entire college. Her strong communication skills, collaborative spirit, and leadership have made a lasting impact on projects and team dynamics.
- York College Office of Public Safety for receiving the Queens EOC 2025 Service Excellence Award at their 34th Annual Graduation Ceremony.

As much as I am enjoying the summer, I am looking forward to my favorite season: a new academic year! There's nothing that compares to the energy of the campus with (new and returning faculty, students and staff) during the first days of the semester. I look forward to seeing you at Convocation on August 28th at noon, where I will also have my formal investiture ceremony.

CVS