

Please Note: The following is the script from which President Peruggi delivered her convocation address. It is not a transcript. There were times during the speech when the president departed from her prepared remarks.

**KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
2011 SPRING SEMESTER CONVOCATION
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2010, 9:30 A.M.**

Good morning. I'm going to keep my remarks at today's convocation rather brief, because we have a wonderful guest speaker in Dr. Uri Treisman and I want to be able to give you as much time as possible with him. So, welcome back to – dare I say it – the Spring Semester. Considering the terrible winter we experienced and our tight schedule, I think that we were very fortunate that we only lost one day of classes. Of course, the fact that we were able to continue our operations without interruption was the result of the extraordinary efforts of the people in our Department of Buildings and Grounds. Our custodians, laborers, power plant, and maintenance crews made it to campus when it was nearly impossible for the rest of us to do so. Then, in the cold and wind and snow, they set about the task of clearing our roadways, sidewalks, and parking lots. This was an incredible effort and I would like to thank all of our B&G people and their supervisors – Campus Facilities Officer Anthony Corazza, Chief Superintendent Tom Brzozowski, and Superintendents Zeco Krcic and Jim Weaver – for helping us get through this difficult winter.

This winter also marked an important milestone in the lives of many members of our Kingsborough community – of employees who have now become retirees. As many of you know, in an effort to reduce the payroll budget, the City and State offered a retirement incentive. The largest number of Kingsborough faculty and staff to retire in any one year chose to bring to a close their KCC careers in January. Fifty employees – 32 from the instructional staff and 18 from the support staff – retired. Their total years of service amounted to 1,388 years. This is a wealth of experience that will be sorely missed. Because there is a hiring freeze in effect, this large number of retirements has caused the college certain serious difficulties. But despite the freeze, the University is permitting us to hire new faculty and we are now beginning to fill those positions. The following individuals have recently been appointed:

- Maya Jimenez and Lynn Foster in Art
- Alison Better and Toni Seddio in Behavioral Sciences
- Marie McGovern in Biological Sciences
- Joseph Musicus in Business
- Yuanji Yin and Elroy Esdaille in English
- Vincent Cuccio in Communications and Performing Arts
- Juan Franquiz in Health and Physical Education
- and, Wendy Chu in the Library

If you happen to be in the theatre this morning, please stand and be welcomed by the rest of the Kingsborough faculty and staff.

Retirements have also taken their toll in the ranks of the academic department chairpersons. Marcia Babbitt of the English Department, Richard Graziano of Tourism and Hospitality, Ed Martin of Business, and Sam Scherek of Health and Physical Education all decided to retire. As a temporary measure to provide uninterrupted leadership of these important departments, I have appointed the following individuals as acting chairpersons:

- In English, Eileen Ferretti;
- In Tourism and Hospitality, Anthony Borgese;
- In Business, Jeffrey Lax; and,
- In Health and Physical Education, Donald Hume.

Departmental elections will be held in the near future to fill these chairperson vacancies on a permanent basis.

Throughout last fall's elections and continuing right up to today – and, I suspect, for a good time to come – the major topic of discussion on local, state, and national levels has been government spending. Whether as a matter of political philosophy or as a matter of economic necessity, everyone seems to be in a budget-cutting mode. Because our college's budget to a large extent depends on appropriations from New York State and New York City, our college is not immune to these cuts. As you know, the major funding components of our operating budget are student tuition, a New York State appropriation (mainly through a per full-time equivalent student, or "FTE," allocation), and an appropriation from New York City. Currently, the State Executive Budget – the one proposed by the governor – recommends a reduction in community college base aid of 10% on the per FTE rate for next year. As a result, the rate would decline by \$226 from last year – which, by the way was the lowest FTE rate since 2005. Since we register about 11,000 FTE's, the new rate would result in a \$2.5 million reduction in our budget. In addition, and compounding the pain, New York City has proposed reductions on the six community colleges of \$16.3 million in fiscal year 2012. This is on top of a \$9 million reduction in the current fiscal year. Unfortunately, as government funding for public higher education declines, the financial burden for supporting our colleges shifts more and more to tuition revenue. That is why last November the CUNY Board of Trustees authorized a tuition increase of 5% effective this semester – an unfortunate move, but necessary to avoid some dire consequences.

So, where does that leave us today and what is the outlook for next year? Fortunately, because of a number of factors – including the tuition increase, the hiring freeze, our ability to rollover funds that we prudently saved from last year's budget, and some careful management of our current spending – we look fine for the rest of this year. And though we're not terribly happy – especially about raising tuition – we know it's needed. As is usual at this time of year, it's just a little too early to tell exactly where things will eventually fall out regarding the next fiscal year. Already, over the President's Day weekend, our Government Relations Director Lavita McMath and I, and several Kingsborough students were in Albany meeting with legislators to talk about restoration of funding. Regarding the City portion of our budget, we are

now at the usual negotiating stage of the process when we are both providing public testimony and also talking privately to the members of the City Council as they modify the Mayor's proposed budget. In the months ahead – along with our colleagues from CUNY, our wonderful KCC students, and of course your letters and email – we will continue to advocate for a positive budget outcome. Meanwhile, we'll be careful in our hiring and we will be somewhat frugal in our spending so that we can roll over to next year's budget the maximum amount that we are allowed by the City. You should also know that our Chancellor has stated repeatedly that we will absolutely not resort to retrenchment to balance our budget. As has been our guiding principle in many years of tight budgets, we will always sacrifice things before people.

Of course, it's impossible to gauge how sufficient our budget is without at the same time looking at our enrollment. We've now completed our first week of Spring Semester classes, and it seems that our enrollment has stabilized – albeit at a very high number. We've pretty much reached the capacity of students that our current staffing and facilities can accommodate effectively, which is just about a 15,000 student headcount excluding College Now. Working from a large base of continuing students from the fall semester, we anticipated that our spring semester enrollment would be large, and we took appropriate steps to manage a very heavy registration. As we did during the registration process for the past two years, a special committee met on a weekly basis to monitor the progress of registration and to control the numbers of students to ensure that we were capable of providing classes and educational services of high quality to all students who were admitted and registered. Looking at the numbers, our spring semester enrollment excluding College Now is 15,010, which just about the same number as last year. I would like to thank not only all of the members of the Enrollment Management Committee, chaired by Dean Friebe, but also all of you who work so hard this semester and throughout the year to test, advise, and register our students.

It's become customary for me at our spring convocations not only to provide some sense of where the college currently stands in terms of budget and enrollment but also to review some items of note that occurred in the fall and winter. So, let me begin a review of some selected news of the last six months...

At the end of the Fall Semester, I had the privilege of accepting a "Hero Award" presented by the Robin Hood Foundation to Kingsborough Community College for our innovative work in learning communities. Not only did we receive a lovely plaque, but accompanying it was a check for \$50,000 to further our work. Make no mistake, this award is truly a testament to the many faculty and staff who have creatively embraced working with our students in learning communities. The results of that work have been outstanding. Studies conducted by MDRC have demonstrated our success in accelerating student progress. And, I am firmly convinced that the influence of learning communities has contributed to our achievement of the highest retention and graduation rates among the CUNY community colleges.

Speaking of the Robin Hood Foundation, I'd like to give you some background on its connection to Single Stop USA, which is now an integral part of the services that we provide to our students. Single Stop began in 2001 as a project of the Robin Hood Foundation in New York City. Its major premise is that every year more than \$65 billion allocated to provide resources

such as food, child care, and medical services to millions of struggling families goes unused. Single Stop aims to change that by helping individuals make the connections to the services that can assist them and to which they are entitled. In 2007, Single Stop became a national not-for-profit organization and has grown into a major force in building economic security with a special emphasis on community colleges. I am proud to say that Kingsborough Community College was the first community college to establish an on-campus office of Single Stop. Recently, Single Stop USA received a \$1.1 million grant from the White House Social Innovation Fund to expand its services to additional low-income community college students. The funds will enable Single Stop to help at least 3,000 more students per year overcome financial barriers to stay in school. I am very proud of the work that Single Stop is doing for our students and am pleased that Kingsborough's work provided the connection and the results that enabled Single Stop to expand nationwide. A special thank you goes to Heidi Lopez and Tom Friebel for spearheading the Single Stop effort here.

In another grant funded project, we've been continuing our work on our program entitled, "The Community College Jigsaw: Putting the Pieces Together." You may recall that we proposed that though most colleges have instituted a wide range of best practices, we've realized that no single program effectively remedies the many challenges that face today's community college student. Like a jigsaw puzzle, the many individual pieces must fit together to form a coherent whole. To advance our concept of improving the combined impact of an array of individual programs through enhanced development, coordination, and communication, we have received a substantial grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. We are now in the first year of the three-year project and we have identified and are working with four very different community colleges – one each in California, the greater-Chicago area of Illinois, rural North Carolina, and Connecticut. This year's activities will culminate in a conference involving all of these schools here on our campus this summer. I want to acknowledge the work of Vice President David Gomez, Provost Stuart Suss, Rachel Singer, Marissa Schlesinger, and Elizabeth Sergile in this effort.

Since we last met as a group at the beginning of September, there has been a great deal of grant activity at the college. At the center of this activity, assisting faculty and staff in the preparation of their proposals, has been our Office of College Advancement. Kingsborough has been awarded approximately \$1.7 million from government, corporate, and foundation funders in the past six months. Funders have included the U.S. Department of Education, New York State Education Department and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the Richmond County Savings Foundation, the TD Bank Charitable Foundation, the CUNY Workforce Development Initiative, the Khym Foundation, and the Robin Hood Foundation. Recently, Professors Kate Garretson and Bailin Song of the English Department received \$22,000 from the CUNY Central Office of Academic Affairs for their Chinese Learners of English Project, and Associate Provost Reza Fakhari was awarded \$50,000 from CUNY Academic Affairs in a competitive RFP process to expand hybrid – that is, blended face-to-face and online – course offerings.

Authorship of grants is a commendable activity, but it is time-consuming and requires meticulous attention to numerous details and adherence to deadlines. While we encourage faculty research and student development programs through grant funding, we also know that it's

not easy. For the second year, we are offering the Presidential Grant Fellows Program designed to encourage the submission of competitive grant proposals in all academic and student support departments. The Presidential Grant Fellows Program will provide training, one-on-one guidance, and monetary support to selected faculty and staff members. Details on how to apply for this program can be obtained through our Office of College Advancement and I believe that there is an information sheet about program available in the lobby.

In addition to the Grant Fellows Program, I also want to remind all of you about the President's Faculty Innovation Awards, which are being offered again this year. Through this program, we are offering modest support to a small number of creative faculty proposals. You received the official call for proposals by email this week and you can find specific instructions attached to that memo. The deadline for submissions is soon – March 28. I know that there is a lot of interesting work taking place among our faculty, so I urge you to look into this program as a possible means of support for that work.

One of the most interesting projects undertaken at our college in the past few months has been the “15 to 45 Credit Initiative.” The project emanated from a retreat for administrators in 2009 when we began to look at all the different ways we try to support our students. While we felt we had a good approach and supports for freshmen and good supports for those almost finished, we felt we needed to look at those services available to students who had earned between 15 and 45 credits. A task force was assembled representing faculty and staff from many areas campus-wide. After working for a little over a year, the committee has now produced a report with detailed recommendations, one of which is a terrific progress-to-graduation “road map” for students. This comprehensive check list of milestones should be very helpful to students as they navigate their way along their academic paths. There were 21 people on this committee, so I won't mention all of their names right now – but I have written to them and want you all to know how appreciative I am of their excellent work.

Another committee to be commended is the one writing our Periodic Progress Report for Middle States. That project is being headed by Dean Rick Fox and Professor Janine Graziano-King. The final draft of that report is now complete, will soon be circulated for comments to our Kingsborough committee of reviewers, and will be submitted to Middle States in June.

Our Office of Finance and Administration has taken some steps to improve the surroundings in which you work.

- In an attempt to make it easier for students and guests (and, I daresay, some of our faculty and staff who don't stray from their offices very much) to find their way around campus, we are beginning a project to install a new system of signage around campus. The last system didn't work so well so we're trying again!
- The site lighting outside of the Academic Village is being upgraded to improve safety in the adjacent sidewalks and parking lots at night.
- And it's important that you be aware of the fact that recently the CUNY Board of Trustees approved a Tobacco Free Campus Policy. This policy requires that a local committee be constituted to plan for its implementation which will

prohibit smoking both indoors and outdoors throughout the campus. The policy must be fully implemented by fall 2012.

I've now brought to your attention some of the things that have been happening here on campus, but Kingsborough Community College activities take us beyond our campus gates as well. Two offices that are responsible for both on-campus and off-campus programs are our Office of Continuing Education and our Center for Economic and Workforce Development.

The Office of Continuing Education is about to embark on a contract program with a charter school in the Rockaways to deliver after-school programs on their site modeled after the successful College for Kids program. Right here on campus, Continuing Education will be expanding its vocational certificate courses to include Event and Meeting Planning, legal proofreading, administrative assistant, and tax preparation.

Education has been called the lifeblood of economic growth, and that principle has not been lost on our college. Our Center for Economic and Workforce Development, now well-established as an important player in economic initiatives in our community, has recently developed two new noteworthy programs that combine credit and non-credit elements. The first places us in the midst of the world of agriculture right here in Brooklyn. In a collaboration with the Active Citizen Project, our Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Office of Buildings and Grounds, and Office of Continuing Education, will be developing an urban farm, consisting of 60 raised beds, between T1 and T2. Professor Babette Audant will lead this grant-funded initiative that will farm high yield produce and introduce new certifications to KCC students and faculty. The second is a function of the Institute for Virtual Enterprise and has received significant support from IBM. The IVE has introduced a KCC-led leadership credit/non-credit curriculum at three CUNY institutions. This spring, more than 300 CUNY students representing 18 CUNY campuses are enrolled. Student leadership projects will be themed to address the challenges of urban life.

For the past several years, every convocation speech that I have presented has made some mention of CUNYfirst, the University's new technology to modernize and upgrade all of our business management, student information, and human resource systems. This is being done through a transition to an Oracle/PeopleSoft based system. If you put those CUNYfirst segments of my speeches from years past together, you could probably write another scene for "Waiting for Godot." I kept on saying that it's coming, it's coming, but it never really came. Certain parts of it were implemented but for the most part changes were not noticed by very many people. Ladies and gentlemen, that's about to change. A few months ago, Queens and Queensborough rolled out the Campus Solutions portion of CUNYfirst which involves all student records and activities and touches Bursar, Admissions, Registrar, Financial Aid, Information Technology, Academic Advisement, Academic Scheduling, and faculty. Well we're next! Kingsborough, along with the rest of the CUNY community colleges, will implement Campus Solutions in the coming year. Next year at this time, students will be registering for their classes in CUNYfirst and we will be providing all services to them using the new technology. And, faculty, what you did in SIMS or in the eGrading system, you will be doing in CUNYfirst. Now, I'm not going to sugar-coat this. The transition process will not be easy and there will be bumps along the implementation road. Very seldom do you fall in love with new technology right out of the box.

Think of the last time you changed cell phones or when our IT department upgraded your computer to the latest version of Microsoft Word. Chances are, you weren't terribly happy until you got used to it. The same will be true with CUNYfirst. It's going to take tremendous cooperation and probably a good deal of understanding on the part of all of us to get this job done. The first thing that's going to be asked of you is to claim an account. And, as a demonstration of that process, I believe that a couple of stations have been set up in the lobby to show how it is done. I urge you all to pay close attention to all of the communications that will be coming out about CUNYfirst in the weeks and months ahead.

Before turning over the stage to our guest speaker, I'd just like to remind you of some important dates coming up in the semester ahead.

- On March 9 from 11am to 2pm, our Counseling Center is holding an open house to familiarize faculty and staff with the mental health services available to our students.
- Our next College Council meeting is on Tuesday, March 22.
- Kingsborough will host its first annual "Enough Is Enough" campaign April 4 through the 7. The "Enough is Enough" Campaign is a national effort to address rising societal violence resulting in school and campus tragedies ranging from bullying to campus shootings.
- Kingsborough's sixth annual Eco-Festival will take place April 13 through 15. The theme of this year's event will be "Sustaining Waters."
- Looking ahead to the end of the semester, Awards Night is scheduled for Monday evening June 13 and commencement will be held on Tuesday, June 14.
- And, finally, though it takes us beyond graduation and into the summer session, our fifth annual "Seaside Splash" fundraiser will be held on Wednesday, June 22. This event, sponsored by the KCC Foundation, is used to provide student scholarships and support. After several years of unfortunate weather experiences, we have conceded defeat to the forces of nature and, although we intend to hold our reception outdoors and seaside, we are planning our dinner and dancing to take place in the dry and climate-controlled Rotunda.

Especially over the last few years, we seem to be continually confronted with the words, "We're going to have to learn to do more with less."

Just once in my career, I would hope to someday be presented with the alternative, "Here's the funding that you said you needed, now go out and show us what you can really do."

Realistically, I suspect that this is never going to happen. So, I guess we will try, in the words of the famous British World War II poster, to "keep calm and carry on."

There is nothing more important than equipping our students with the information, attitude, and skills they will need to lead happy and productive lives. Their success determines the future of our city and our country.

Do we have the creative ability necessary for the task? I think we do.

Are we committed to the endeavor? I think we are.

Will we succeed? I think we must, for the alternative is unthinkable.

I wish you all a productive spring semester. Thank you.

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Now, it's my pleasure to introduce this morning's guest speaker. Dr. Uri Treisman is Professor of Mathematics and of Public Affairs and the Executive Director of the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas-Austin.

A brief selection of his many awards and honors includes:

- Being named a McArthur Fellow;
- Receiving the Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Higher Education;
- Being named "Scientist of the Year" in 2006 by the Harvard Foundation for his outstanding contributions to mathematics;
- And being described by the magazine *Black Issues in Higher Education* as one of the outstanding leaders in higher education in the 20th century. I understand that he's now working on something for this century.

While working as a senior partner at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, he focused on the improvement of developmental and lower division mathematics and statistics courses in community colleges. I have attended his presentations at numerous conferences and he's always engaging. Today, he'll speak to us about developmental education programs. It's my distinct honor to present to you Dr. Uri Treisman.