

It has been a little over six months since the inaugural convocation of our College's third presidency, and it is my great honor to stand before you here today and report that the state of our college is strong, resurgent, and energized.

You may recall that at Convocation, I expressed my confidence that, in the years ahead, Lehman would increase its impact, expand its reach, and meet its full potential as an engine of opportunity, a vehicle of upward mobility, and a driver of transformative change.

You may also recall how I professed my confidence that, in the years ahead, Lehman would emerge as a national model of how colleges and universities can implement equity-driven policies and practices to better support the millions of students who are coming of age in America today, but -- who because of the color of their skin, the balance of their checking account, their place of origin, or the tenets of their faith -- have not been afforded the opportunities they need to meet their full potential.

Well, you'll be pleased to know that, notwithstanding the turbulent backdrop against which we have been operating during the last half year, I continue to feel confident about our prospects on both fronts.

I realize that the road ahead is a difficult one.

We are increasingly feeling the effects that years of State and City disinvestments in higher education have had on our physical and virtual infrastructure, the workloads of our faculty and staff, and the capacity and affordability of our programs.

And now we are bracing for potentially devastating cuts to federal agencies and programs that directly and indirectly help advance our mission — agencies and programs that work for the betterment of lives, the advancement of scientific knowledge, the engagement of our peoples through the arts and humanities, and the improvement of educational attainment.

Yes, a difficult road ahead... but my confidence remains strong.

First, because Lehman College ably navigated stormy waters in the past yet still managed to be recognized nationally for its role in propelling large numbers of low-income students into the middle class.

Second, because Lehman knows how to extract joy from defiance when facing attacks to the tenets of social justice that sustain its mission. Our college's namesake, Herbert H. Lehman, stood for social justice. And we do too.

And third, because, as the nature, density, and quality of your work in the past year clearly indicates, our College is as resilient as the storied borough of the Bronx, with which it is inextricably intertwined.

So, what has that work here at Lehman looked like?

This is a difficult question to answer within the limited time available to us, particularly if one is interested in capturing the full spectrum of our College's multi-faceted work.

The engineer in me wanted to craft a structured response. At first, I tried to categorize the work by organizational divisions, then by campus constituencies; and finally, by thematic areas.

In all cases, the resulting narrative failed to illustrate the cross-divisional, collaborative way in which we do our work and, to me, seemed to give credence to Clark Kerr's famous characterization of universities being "a series of separate schools and departments held together by a central heating system."

So, in the end I embraced free-association in crafting my response.

Here at Lehman the work of our faculty and staff continues to earn national recognition and top rankings for our undergraduate and graduate programs. Grant revenue reached \$22 million, a 64% increase over the prior year. Research awards included funding for projects in areas ranging from astrophysics, cosmology, and collider physics — to cancer therapy — to geometric compactness theorems with applications to general relativity —to socialization patterns of adolescents during transition out of high school. Our first-ever, college-wide "Discovery, Innovation & Imagination" student scholarship showcase — a celebration of research and creative activities — takes place next month. We are about to formalize a research agreement with two universities in Cuba. And we have made good progress towards developing a Research, Teaching and Learning Commons, establishing a faculty-friendly approach to overhead distribution, and adequately staffing our office of sponsored programs and research.

Here at Lehman a new program for a Master's degree in Organizational Leadership is moving forward, as is the first cohort of our online certification program for teaching gifted and talented students. Our institutional self-study design document has been approved by our liaison to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. A grant from the NYC Small Business Services will allow us to participate in the Tech Talent Pipeline Residency Program. We landed a \$5.7 million grant for our "Pathways to STEM Success" project to increase the number of Hispanic and lower-income students who graduate with STEM degrees. We've signed a memorandum of understanding with both Hostos and Bronx community colleges to guarantee seamless transfer for students coming our way. And, in a public-private partnership with EON Reality, Inc., our School of Continuing and Professional Studies is launching a Virtual/Augmented Reality Training Academy at CUNY on the Concourse, where our Cisco Networking Academy classes continue to take place.

Here at Lehman we continue to exceed our enrollment targets, even as enrollments across the University are flat or declining. Implementation of new software programs and expanded hours in the Counseling, Advising, and Career Development Centers have improved access to services, provided cost-savings, and improved student walk-in experiences. Electronic workflows now support a number of innovative enrollment and student retention plans. And the determined collaboration of academic

departments in opening new sections for high enrollment/high waitlist courses has positively influenced student retention and progression rates.

Here at Lehman our talented and dedicated students, supported by our amazing faculty and staff, are achieving their academic goals and graduating at record levels. Graduation rates for freshmen and transfer students are trending up, particularly for SEEK students who have seen their graduation rates increase by nearly 13 percentage points. Some of our talented students received early Gilman scholarships and secured over a half a million dollars in research awards, scholarships and fellowships for postgraduate studies. Student-athletes — supported by dedicated coaches, two of whom received CUNYAC coaches of the year awards — have also achieved much recognition, including: the 2016 CUNYAC Men's Soccer championship; the women's tennis player of the year and rookie of the year awards; and an Honorable Mention All-American in Women's Basketball. And we expect to grant over 3,300 degrees this year.

Here at Lehman the College's outreach to our Bronx community includes a number of grant-funded initiatives: for a Science Technology Entry Program aimed at secondary students; for the NYC Men's Teach Initiative; and for the Bronx Institute's Project ALPHA. The Adult Degree Program has increased enrollment by 15% and is finding ways to break through the "math barrier" that so often stalls upward mobility. We were selected to participate in the new CUNY Cultural Corp initiative. And, to date, more than \$2 million have been raised through the efforts of our friends in the Lehman College Foundation and the work of our campus community; the Urban Male Leadership Program, for example, recently raised \$30,000 in its first fundraising event for UMLP academic scholarships.

Here at Lehman we completed a \$41 million central heating and cooling plant upgrade project; implemented the first phase of upgrades of faculty office space; and remodeled the Student Health Center. We created four new multi-modal computer classrooms, upgraded technology in the Gillet auditorium, and improved wireless access in Carman and Shuster Halls. We will soon open a food pantry on campus. And the CUNY Board of Trustees approved our request for \$12 million to fully fund the construction of our Nursing Education, Research and Practice Center; work on the 50,000 square-foot state-of-the-art teaching facility will begin next year.

Here at Lehman the newly established CUNY Edge program will provide focused counseling and advising support to students receiving public assistance. Immigration legal services for students and members of the surrounding community were launched in support of the Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute and CUNY Citizenship Now! 24-Hour Library Study Hall was inaugurated for the final two weeks of the Fall 2016 semester, benefitting over 770 students. And Lehman has earned top honors among senior colleges on wireless access, help desk availability, and satisfaction with computer labs, as measured by the most recent CUNY-wide student experience survey.

I could go on and on... about how here at Lehman our faculty and staff continue to make progress in our quest to eradicate educational inequities, thanks to the K-12 programs spearheaded by each and every one of our Schools. How our faculty and staff continue to expand economic opportunities, through workforce and business development programs managed by our School of Continuing and Professional

Studies and our Small Business Development Center. How our faculty members continue to embrace their roles as teacher-scholars — preparing our students for meaningful lives and careers in today’s globalized society; engaging our students in theoretical, applied, and meaningful scholarship; and pushing the frontiers of knowledge in their chosen disciplines. And how we continue to foment cultural engagement through BronxNet, our many distinguished Centers and Institutes, the Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, the Lehman College Art Gallery, Lehman Stages, and the world-class APEX Center, among others.

But you get the point. We are making things happen, getting things done.

It’s ALL happening here... at Lehman College of The City University of New York.

It’s ALL happening here... at the most important, mission-critical senior college of the world’s premier public urban University.

Yes, there are plenty of reasons why I remain confident that we will one day meet our full potential as drivers of transformative change.

But I caution us against allowing the density of activity we engage in and the accomplishments we accumulate along the way to lead us to complacency.

The Equality of Opportunity Project, the organization that recently recognized us for our role in propelling large numbers of low income students into the middle class, has also concluded that the Bronx is “extremely bad for income mobility for children in poor families”; that it is “among the worst counties in the U.S. in helping poor children up the income ladder”; that it “ranks...better than only about 5 percent of counties” in the country. Other organizations have also found that 42 percent of the population in the Bronx is living in “distress,” and that the borough’s “opportunity index” merits a failing grade of D+.

Now, don’t get me wrong. I don’t mean to dismiss this simple fact: the Bronx renaissance is on! The economy here is booming with new jobs in the tech, film and media industries; neighborhoods are bustling with renovation projects; parks are being beautified; cultural institutions are serving diverse communities; and unemployment rates have dropped to historic lows.

Indeed, I celebrate the efforts of all those who have contributed to the forces that have the Bronx moving forward and trending upward. And our College is proud of the role it has played to help chart the path and contribute to where the Bronx is today.

But it is precisely because, as an **anchor institution**, we are inextricably intertwined with the Bronx, that we cannot be lulled to inaction by the seductive sound of our success.

Instead, we must continuously explore ways to expand opportunity and accelerate progress.

As you may imagine, I have been thinking a lot about this in the past several months, reflecting on the hundreds of hours of conversations I've had with our campus community and examining the strategic context in which we operate.

I have come to realize that — in addition to considering the seven institutional standards associated with our accreditation process; the dozens of recommendations made through the College's program prioritization review; the numerous strategic objectives established in the recently approved CUNY Master Plan and CUNY Strategic Framework; and the many dreams and aspirations of each and every member of our campus community — we need a bold, audacious, grand challenge to help organize and resource our work.

A grand challenge that will help us clarify our vision and solidify our identity as the nation's ultimate urban-serving institution.

A grand challenge that will serve as a touchstone for how we think about everything that advances our mission and informs our work, including: curriculum development; teaching modalities; the role of information technology; student services; enrollment management; globalization initiatives; research and creative activities; institutional effectiveness; campus facilities; faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion; staffing levels; professional development; campus climate; campus safety; grants and contracts; institutional advancement; public engagement; cultural engagement; high impact practices; student success; and the myriad issues that occupy our minds day in and day out.

To this end, I'd like to challenge us to double the number of degrees and credentials that our students are expected to earn by the year 2030. Let's double to 90,000 the number of degrees and credentials we award over the next 12 years. 90,000 by 2030— "90 by 30."

Why should we focus on educational attainment?

Because increasing the number of citizens with a postsecondary education leads to reduced unemployment, higher wages, increased civic and voter participation, and improved physical and mental health.

Why should the goal be to double the number of degrees and credentials?

Because doubling the number would directly impact 45,000 additional lives and position us, the only CUNY 4-year college in the Bronx, as the top contributor of postsecondary degrees and credentials in the borough.

Why should we strive to do so within the next 12 years?

Because doing so would dramatically increase the likelihood that children currently attending K-12 schools in the Bronx and the surrounding region would benefit from the value of a Lehman education—either because they will earn a Lehman degree themselves or a parent or relative will do so.

How do I suggest we approach this grand challenge?

In a thoughtful and purposeful way that leverages the collective wisdom of our campus community; that relishes the opportunity to design a way forward that is unconstrained by a zero-sum frame; and, by — in the parlance of the video that preceded my remarks here today — “inspiring and empowering” each other so we can “transform our dreams into aspirations, and our motivations into action.”

To facilitate this approach, in the next several weeks, we will be piloting a crowdsourcing platform, one that I hope will help accelerate our thinking about this grand challenge and result in a way forward that meets the expectations of the academic, administrative, and deliberative bodies of this noble institution. I am confident we can meet this grand challenge.

This is not only a dream, it is what I’d like my Lehman story to be.

So, be rest assured, that in leading us into the second half of our first century, I will heed Aldous Huxley’s words and “dream in a pragmatic way.”

As always, I look forward to the hard, but important work ahead.

Thank you.