

**Karol V. Mason**  
President  
212-237-8600 | [president@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:president@jjay.cuny.edu)

---

February 2, 2021

To: The John Jay College Community  
Re: Welcome Back

As the new spring semester at John Jay has officially started, I'd like to offer a warm welcome back to our returning students, faculty, and staff, and extend a special welcome to all of our new students. We may not be in the same room as we continue our exploration of justice-focused issues, but the support and spirit of our John Jay community still carries a lot of weight.

Even through difficult times, we've always risen to the challenge and exceeded conventional expectations. Case in point, our continued progress on our [Vision for Student Success](#), which is now squarely incorporated into our [Strategic Plan](#). These [updated slides](#) reflect ongoing and incredible progress, and these results are a testament to all the good work that's occurring at John Jay. Understanding that these numbers reflect our collective commitment to student success, everyone in our community should celebrate them.

Our steady rise in retention and graduation numbers is not only thanks to the incredible perseverance of our students, faculty, and staff, but it has been supported by the record-breaking fundraising we've accomplished together even during an unprecedented year. Nearly \$4.8 million was raised last year to support our students' success, which is an increase of 37 percent. To learn more about these incredible efforts, please read our Institutional Advancement team's [Impact 2020](#) report.

In the wake of the disturbing events that have taken place in our country, the call to create [culturally responsive, inclusive, and anti-racist curriculum](#) has taken on a stronger urgency. Our students have advocated for these new curricular approaches. Being a Hispanic- and Minority-Serving Institution further necessitates our leadership on these issues, and as the only justice-focused college in the United States, we have a duty to reimagine public higher education in a way that demonstrates inclusivity. Though this call to action has been part of our College's strategic plan, members of our faculty have recently engaged in thoughtful conversations that may challenge us—speaking with students and faculty alike—to draft goals, plans, and priorities focused on a new framework. We will continue to engage the community in this difficult yet necessary work.

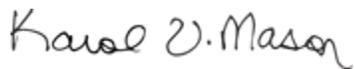
Furthering our commitment to reflection and improvement, John Jay will be entering a two-year, self-study assessment as a part of our regular accreditation process. Like all institutions of higher education that receive and provide federal financial aid, John Jay is accredited by an independent body, in our case, the [Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#) (Middle States). To achieve accreditation, John Jay must demonstrate that it meets the [standards](#) set out by Middle States concerning the quality of the education we provide, and the way that we manage our institution and resources. During this self-study, John Jay faculty, students, and staff will be working together to engage in a comprehensive assessment of our priorities, while also identifying opportunities for improvement and innovation. I'm grateful for the leadership of our Middle States Self-Study Co-Chairs Allison Pease, Ned Benton, and Jim Cauthen, as well as all the members of the accreditation Self-Study Steering Committee for their commitment to this important process.

In closing, I'd like to direct everyone's attention to an event coming up on Thursday, February 4, at 6:00 p.m., our [2021 Educating Fierce Advocates for Justice Virtual Benefit](#). For the first time ever, we're holding this event virtually and inviting everyone in our community to join us. The Virtual Benefit will honor those whose advocacy and leadership make our communities, country, and world a more just place. The funds raised are critical to

supporting our students' success as we send a new generation of justice-focused leaders into the world. This year, we honor our Champion of Justice Award Recipient, Investor and Philanthropist Clara Wu Tsai; recognize our Community Leadership Award Recipient and Presenting Sponsor, BNY Mellon; and feature the following speakers: Darren Walker, President of Ford Foundation; Van Jones, CNN Commentator; and DeRay Mckesson, Educator, Activist, and Author. There is no cost to join, and I welcome our entire community to [register](#) and join us at the Benefit.

As we begin the [celebration of Black History Month](#)—acknowledging the vital contributions African-Americans have made that profoundly shaped the fabric of our country—let's continue to remember the message of service so many of our Civil Rights giants urged us to demonstrate. As Dr. King said, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve." I'm frequently uplifted learning about all the ways our students, faculty, and staff reach out, encourage, and help one another throughout their day. Please continue to offer and receive that support. Never be afraid to ask for help, and keep striving for excellence. Best wishes for a successful spring semester.

Warmly,



Karol V. Mason  
President

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**  
524 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019 | [www.jjay.cuny.edu](http://www.jjay.cuny.edu)

