Advancement professionals across the board, including those at CUNY are facing the impact of the economic downturn. Whether they are contending with underwater endowments or communicating with funders, they share deep concerns. With this in mind, on November 3, 2008 Chancellor Matthew Goldstein invited Robert Kissane of CCS Fund Raising to address the Council of Presidents.

According to Kissane, about 60 percent of all non-profits, including institutions of higher education, see their philanthropic support grow during difficult economic periods. Kissane shared the following strategies for colleges’ advancement efforts:

- Affirm your mission and impact and share it with your prospects
- Develop a short-term action plan that includes year-end giving, personal visits to your top 50 donors and special forums for your alumni
- Increase activity: ask more prospects and ask more often (don’t shy away from asking)
- Keep your long-time donors close and your new donors closer
- Provide leadership and motivation for your development staff
- Open new doors (fewer than 5% of CUNY alumni are giving)
- Try to raise challenge gifts to motivate additional donors
- Share philanthropic information and good news
- Introduce payment flexibility for large gifts
- Explore practical ways to diversify your fund-raising program

A $1-million gift from best-selling crime writer Patricia Cornwell earlier this year, crowning a growing relationship between the writer and college, has helped draw attention to the growing focus on fundraising at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The Cornwell gift, to create a Crime Scene Analysis Academy to train first responders, joined the roster of the College’s top gifts and helped kick off a new campaign designed to support John Jay’s dramatic growth.

In recent years, John Jay has added programs and research capacity and expanded its curriculum, gaining a growing reputation as a national and international leader in the field of educating for justice. Last year, for example, the John Jay Medal was created and awarded to New York State Chief Judge Judith Kaye.

To support the college’s ambitious goals, President Jeremy Travis has declared fund-raising a priority. Last fall, he launched a $5-million challenge campaign. As part of this effort, President Travis and Vice President Tova Friedler recruited 12 new members to the Board of Trustees, including board chair Jules Kroll, a driving force behind the college’s remarkable growth, and Richard Tarlow, who is providing generous support for the John Jay Medal.

In addition to building partnerships with individuals, corporations and foundations for the myriad initiatives under way, the College is emphasizing scholarship support. Two gifts of $150,000 each were raised for scholarships last year.

Several important new foundation gifts have been secured, including a $500,000 two-year grant from the Open Society Institute for the Center on Media, Crime and Justice, a $250,000 gift from the JEHT Foundation to establish the Arson Screening Project at the Center for Modern Forensic Practice and $175,000 from the Dart Foundation to launch the Academy for Critical Incident Analysis.

(Link to Invest in CUNY website (www.cuny.edu/invest) for Mr. Kissane’s presentation and memo re: Underwater Endowments)