

# The Connected University

## CUNY in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**JAMES B. MILLIKEN**

*Chancellor, The City University of New York*

**Leon M. Goldstein Memorial Lecture**

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**May 9, 2016**

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**Thank you, Michael,** for the introduction and thank you to the Department of History, Philosophy and Political Science for inviting me to deliver this year's Leon Goldstein Memorial Lecture. This is a highly regarded forum at CUNY and I am honored to be part of the tradition. President Goldstein was a legend for the transformation he oversaw here at Kingsborough Community College, and it is appropriate at an event named in his honor to discuss our developing plans for the next phase in the renewal of the nearly 170-year-old City University of New York.

CUNY should take stock of the enormous progress we have made over recent decades, but must also constantly assess the changing demands of the workplace and this restless giant of a city we live in, and determine how we can do a better job of strengthening, adding to and weaving together the many successful programs and attributes of our University to build an institution that will deliver even more successfully on the promise of our special mission. The world is changing, the environment for higher education is changing, our students and their needs and expectations are changing, aca-

democratic disciplines are changing, and so must we. Great institutions, and certainly great universities, understand that they must embrace renewal if they are to continue to be fully relevant and meet their potential.

Today we're well into planning that is providing the opportunity to assess our needs and set forth our ambitions and advance new strategies. CUNY's strategic plan will provide a new framework, outlining what we plan to achieve and how we will accomplish our objectives. This forum gives me an opportunity to talk about some elements of our thinking for a 21st Century CUNY and to invite you to participate with me in our thinking.

Now of course I realize there are challenges to thinking about the future when we have been unable to resolve a long overdue labor contract, but I'm going to ask you to do that today. We all agree that this is our highest priority, and I ended my day Friday with meetings on this subject and I'm leaving here today to meet with the PSC leadership. I am convinced we will find a solution and I am totally committed to that goal. At the same time, we must continue to think about and plan for the students, the city and the state we all serve.

In CUNY's transformation over the past decade, we added many impressive and important new programs – a graduate school of journalism, a graduate school of cinema, a new graduate school of public health and health policy, the state-of-the-art Advanced Science Research Center, and much more. To accelerate our progress in the next decade we will need to continue to innovate in ways that are central to our mission and that have major impact. We also need to leverage our strengths by connecting the many parts and promising initiatives of CUNY in efficient and effective ways. While we made great strides, there is much important work to be done.

I believe much opportunity lies in leveraging the assets of CUNY to make it a truly integrated university, an institution that is much more than an interesting confederation of colleges and programs – much more, in other words, than the sum of its parts. We must do a much better job of connecting our colleges and programs and people with each other, as well as with people and institutions outside the University. A new commitment to connectivity and collaboration will allow us to realize the enormous

benefits of scale that we have not yet achieved, improve opportunities for our students by drawing deeper on the potential of our faculty and others and allow us to benefit from our location in a single, wonderfully diverse, cosmopolitan city. It is a vision of a new urban university that will rely more on connections among our 24 campuses, connections between CUNY and institutions and communities in New York and around the world.

We must begin with a commitment to increase, sharply, graduation rates at our community colleges and senior colleges, ensure that our students are well-prepared for the most promising career paths in the knowledge economy and create more ways to use technology in teaching and learning and guiding our students. We will also provide our faculty with more resources and opportunities for advancing scholarship in their academic fields, collaborate more and better with outside institutions so they can benefit from areas in which we specialize and our faculty and students can benefit from additional talent, facilities and resources, connect with other major universities around the world to collaborate in addressing the grand challenges of a rapidly urban-

izing global population and connect better with our many natural partners, including alumni, foundations and philanthropies who share our goals.

We should begin by seeing the world through the eyes of our students, and this is what lies ahead for them. By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the knowledge economy will require postsecondary education, according to Georgetown's Center on Education and Workforce. Georgetown also estimates that the U.S. will fall 5 million short of those needed numbers. The fastest growing occupations will be health care, community services and STEM-related fields. The simple reality is that diplomas from highly regarded institutions matter now more than they have in the past, and they will matter even more in the future. A college graduate enjoys roughly double the lifetime earnings of a high school graduate, and an even starker contrast emerges from the latest U.S. unemployment data. For those without a high school diploma, the rate was 7.5 percent; for those with bachelor's degrees it was 2.4 percent.

CUNY was created — and, I suspect we would all agree, exists today — primarily to give underrepresented groups, low-income families and

immigrants a pathway to middle class careers by providing a highly accessible, affordable, high quality education. CUNY may well be the single best means of reversing the trend of income inequality in New York City. Our mission is vital today because it makes our economy far more prosperous, gives families the means to be self-reliant, changes the economic arc not only of individuals but of generations and it ensures that New York will remain the financial, business and cultural capital of the nation by providing a constant source of drive and talent.

About 60 percent of New York's high school graduates who go on to college attend CUNY. It is a remarkably diverse group. More than 40 percent were born in another country and roughly 40 percent are the first in their families to attend college. Nearly 40 percent come from households with less than \$20,000 in annual income. As a result, approximately 70 percent of our full-time students pay no tuition because they qualify for federal and state financial aid and other support. About 80 percent graduate with no federal student debt. This is a higher education story that can be told nowhere else in the world. This is who we are and it provides a compelling

argument for support of a CUNY that offers affordable access on an unparalleled scale.

But as you know there is a big difference between access and success. A critical goal for our country and our city is to have the greatest educational attainment levels, not just the highest enrollment numbers. Far too many of our students today fail to graduate in a timely manner. In other words, the connection between their often modest origins and the better life many seek is often broken, so one of our necessary objectives must be to repair it. There can be no underestimating how difficult that is. Nearly 80 percent of our community college students arrive with one or more remedial needs and far too many are unable to get past that hurdle. Nationally, the urban community college graduation rate is about 16 percent, which is clearly unacceptable. As David Kirp, a professor of public policy at Berkeley and good friend of CUNY, wrote in a recent Op-Ed in The New York Times, "If any company had as much trouble hanging on to its customers, it would go out of business."

A great deal of thoughtful work is required to address the remedial needs of our students. And while we have worked closely with the city's

schools, we must deepen our connections to ensure students develop the basic reading, writing and math skills that will prepare them to succeed. One way will be a new program to send successful CUNY students into the city's middle and high schools to coach and mentor the younger students, providing role models and relevant advice.

We will connect with more students with remedial needs before they matriculate, placing them in programs like CUNY Start and Math Start, where immersion has proven effective in getting students over these basic competency hurdles. We are carefully examining how we can assess our students' capabilities and meet their needs in ways that are more flexible, while still appropriately rigorous. Accordingly, we are evaluating proposed changes to math assessment and preparation that consider the interests, needs and intended majors of the students rather than a single approach that may unnecessarily fail too many.

Here, in the spot where College Now was created, I would also say we need to find ways for many more talented high school students to experience college and earn credits before they leave high school.

For too many students, once they enroll in degree programs, many challenges remain. President Herzek gave a thoughtful presentation last week to the CUNY Council of Presidents that made clear why increasing student success can be so challenging. As he explained, the Kingsborough retention rate from the spring to the fall of 2015 was 69 percent. That means Kingsborough lost 3,795 students over the summer. It was sobering to learn that about a quarter of those students had GPAs better than 2.0, owed less than \$1,000 and had more than 20 credits but were forced out due to registration blocks on financial grounds. Another quarter of those students fell out due to the loss of financial aid. In a survey in which Kingsborough students were asked about the greatest stresses they faced, they listed at the top tuition, textbooks and Metrocards for public transit. The fourth item? Food. We should not be losing many of these students, but must develop methods for quickly identifying the impediments and helping students overcome them, and the high touch interventions Kingsborough is implementing, using smart technology, are showing good results.

The cynic has an easy and com-

pletely unacceptable way to improve our numbers – accept fewer students with major challenges. We know that can have an impact on rankings in the prominent national surveys. That might improve attainment results but it would be at a cost of who we are and what has made CUNY such a uniquely important institution. And it would ill serve New York. CUNY has a better idea: we are going to embrace those students who need support and we are going to continue to innovate, energize, and scale up programs that will lead the country in providing paths to student attainment. One of the most successful is certainly our Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, or ASAP. Kingsborough has its own programs that have also shown very positive results and I believe that as we work to become more integrated and collaborative across CUNY we must also encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and risk-taking at the colleges. These are not mutually exclusive approaches. To do otherwise would ignore the reality that good ideas come from many places, especially where the real work of education and student progress takes place.

The best argument for ASAP is its results: it has improved three-year

graduation rates to more than 50 percent – 57 percent for the most recent cohort – compared with slightly more than 20 percent for a comparable group of full-time community college students. It costs us about \$3,700 per student, an amount that has gone down and will continue to decline as we scale up. More important, we are graduating so many more students that our cost per graduate is actually falling. That is why we are now busy increasing the number of ASAP students from about 7,000 this year to 25,000 in 2018. We are also preparing to cover all full-time students at one institution – Bronx Community College – and expanding to a senior college – John Jay – for the first time. John Jay’s experience with its first pilot cohort has been very impressive, and we will look for ways to further demonstrate the success of proven interventions at senior colleges as well as community colleges. This will not be inexpensive and we cannot do this on our own, so this is one more area for worthy investments by public and private partners.

We must also take action to improve student retention and attainment by smoothing and eliminating the friction in the paths from



community colleges to the senior colleges, making it easier to transfer credits from one CUNY college to another, simplifying the financial aid process, and building far more streamlined and efficient connections among colleges so students can take courses on different campuses, when needed. This integration will benefit both our students and our faculty, facilitating collaboration on a much grander scale. ePermit programs and other tools for enhancing institutional permeability can aid students in far greater numbers to obtain the credits they require in a timely way rather than face obstacles.

Among the other elements in our efforts to deliver those benefits is a much-needed upgrade to our Degree Works program, which will help students follow their course requirements more easily and stay on track with appropriate course choices. We are also procuring predictive analytical tools for use across CUNY that will provide early alerts to advisers when problems develop and help them reach students promptly, when assistance can matter most. We will develop strategies to keep more students on full-time tracks, hastening their paths to graduation, and making available

for the first time a systemwide, online course catalog to smooth the way for students taking needed courses at other campuses.

The subject of technology brings me to another strategy currently underused at CUNY for improving access and completion rates — online and hybrid courses and programs. Students are increasingly comfortable with and adept at using technology in all aspects of their lives, and encouraging them to get more of their education this way is natural. We have developed high quality, respected programs, but we've been too slow to expand our offerings and we will accelerate this.

Expansion of online education would give us access to a far greater number of students, whether they live in New York or elsewhere. There is enormous potential here both to bur-nish CUNY's global brand and create a new source of revenue. And it would advance another of our strategic goals of serving more adult learners, who often have credits but not diplomas, and workers seeking midcareer changes that require retooling. Older working adults are a key constituency. Improvement in our remediation programs will help us reach and attract these students, and the expansion

of these efforts, online and in classrooms, will allow us to serve the workers, labor unions and employers of the city. We will create a new center to serve as a portal of entry for these learners and others into the University system.

It hardly need be said that one of CUNY's greatest assets is its location in the most diverse and cosmopolitan city in the country. The city is our classroom, our laboratory, our campus; it is an enormously interesting data set, a mystery to be explored, an artistic opportunity to be seized. It is also a place where most can find the career of their choice, but there is much more CUNY can do to help our students get in the door and demonstrate their talents to employers. Too many employers know too little about CUNY and the talent of our students. We need to connect more effectively with the businesses and organizations where our students want to work, and make it easier for them to connect with CUNY – for internships, jobs, lifelong learning opportunities, and more. In addition, there are rich opportunities for our faculty in working closely with colleagues in the public and private sectors. We need to continue to be responsive to the needs

of the employers our students want to join, and that will mean offering more certificates that have value in the market, as well as providing more courses designed to meet specific needs in targeted sectors.

I could cite many examples of recent initiatives with businesses and other institutions, but here are a few:

The financial industry is one of New York's largest and most attractive sources of employment and we are working with its leaders, as well as national organizations such as the Business Higher Education Forum and the Business Roundtable, to develop curricula that will meet the needs of the industry and make our students increasingly competitive. Baruch College, for instance, has created three new majors in data analytics: in computer information systems, marketing and marketing analytics, and information risk management and cyber security, as well as minors in marketing analytics and CIS data analytics. That reflects the growing influence of big data on a number of businesses and the new competencies that are required for the high-paying jobs in those fields. The speed with which Baruch responded surprised many of our private sector partners

and provides a model for collaboration that will greatly benefit our students.

Urban areas have a myriad of health challenges, and CUNY will step up its already substantial contributions in those areas. We will build on 40 years of success of the Sophie Davis program and open a medical school in the fall, participating with St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx. This partnership addresses the principal rate limiting factor in medical education – clinical education opportunities. Our student body, while small, will include sharply higher numbers of underrepresented students than other medical schools and, as we have learned from past experience, a larger number of those doctors would be expected to return to underserved neighborhoods in the city.

In another exciting initiative, in March we announced the launch of the Women in Tech and Entrepreneurship, or WITNY, partnering with Cornell Tech and a group of corporate partners including Verizon, IBM, Accenture, Citi and Xerox. The goal is to meet the growing need for workers with computer science and technology expertise – and to do it by significantly increasing the numbers of capable women, who

now occupy an embarrassingly low percentage of tech jobs. We will expand introductory computer science courses, provide generous scholarships and internships, and mentoring and career advisement support.

The arts are a signature industry in New York, but too few of our students have had exposure to them, as well as too few opportunities to build careers in museums, theater, and the other performing arts. We have launched an ambitious CUNY Cultural Initiative this year, and partners have been signing up enthusiastically to give our students access to institutions that most have never visited, or even imagined visiting. The first major institutions to welcome CUNY students, at no charge, were the Whitney, the Cooper Hewitt, El Museo del Barrio, the Jewish Museum and others. We are working with our partners in New York’s cultural institutions to expand arts curricula and programs and to create internship and job opportunities. BAM, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum and others have agreed to work with us on this initiative. The expanding New York movie and television industry offers many opportunities and last fall we opened Brooklyn College’s Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema in Steiner Studios in

the Navy Yard. We will bring diversity to an industry that has been conspicuously lacking in it and open the door to high-paying jobs for our very talented students. It is the only such school in the country in a working studio, another example of what I mean by the great opportunities in leveraging the assets of our partners.

Scientific research has, of course, long been an area rich with collaborations, and we can do much more with outside partners to provide interesting research opportunities for our faculty and students. A recent example is the Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay, with CUNY in the lead and with other partners including Columbia University's Earth Institute, the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and the Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences at Rutgers University. Together, the consortium has assembled a cutting-edge center of knowledge on the physical, ecological, and social systems of the Bay, and it will study water quality, flooding, health of the salt marshes and the impact of climate change. CUNY is a partner in The Center for Urban Science and Progress, or CUSP, a big data project led by NYU and that includes Carnegie Mellon Univer-

sity and industrial partners such as IBM, Microsoft and Siemens. CUNY leads the New York City Regional Innovation Node, funded by the NSF, spurring the translation of fundamental research to the market place, encouraging collaboration between academia and industry, and training funded faculty, students and other researchers to understand innovation and entrepreneurship.

We will also create more and better ways for our faculty to collaborate through CUNY-wide resources such as the ASRC and through new partnerships like the CUNY Global Cities Network. These efforts foster the interdisciplinary work that is needed to solve the challenges that cities across the world face today, and expand the reach and impact of CUNY expertise.

The changing economics of public higher education require us to think differently about our revenues as well as our expenditures. Since the mid-1980s, the share of state funding for public higher education has steadily declined, in some places precipitously. According to data collected by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, over the past 25 years educational appropriations per full-time equivalent student have de-

clined 20 percent while net tuition per full-time equivalent student has risen 107 percent. In other words, higher tuition has replaced public funding, creating a greater burden for many students and limiting institutional investments in faculty and academic programs. And while New York provides a higher share of funding than most states, the appropriation per student has gone down steadily here as well. The reason is simple — funding hasn't kept up with growth. We have expanded to 275,000 degree-seeking students and the lion's share of increases in funding to support that enrollment has come from tuition. Since the recession, state appropriations in New York State have dropped 2.6 percent and tuition has increased 30 percent.

There will be increased pressures on costs, and we need to be excellent stewards of public funds. Part of the answer will be continued efforts to find efficiencies, including in academic program offerings. We need to make sure that our investments are meeting real demands and that we are taking full advantage of the programs we already have in place. We have an incredible array of programs offered by very talented faculty, and we can-

not afford to replicate them everywhere. We must ask how we can best serve our students and the public by taking full advantage of these offerings, regardless of college location.

I am encouraged by tie-ups such as Hunter College with Cornell for research space, Brooklyn College with a private film studio, and Medgar Evers with emerging private businesses through StartUp NY. I believe we need to create more linkages that offer these mutual benefits. We need more space, and there are few cities where it costs more. And the benefits to our faculty and students from collaboration extend far beyond shared space. Other ways to extend our reach within the city include partnering among CUNY colleges and with other institutions to combine programs in new locations or provide more housing for our students.

Great opportunity exists for us to build much stronger connections with people and organizations dedicated to philanthropy. While our colleges have had much more success fundraising in recent years, I believe we need to do several things to improve our results dramatically. This year we retained a leading firm in public university fundraising to do a deep dive into CUNY's

advancement operations, benchmark us against peers and provide recommendations. In short, they recommended three things: that we invest more in smart college fundraising infrastructure, use a shared services model to take costs out of college activities so those operations can spend their resources on the real work of fundraising, and build a new CUNY-wide fundraising operation. We now have teams of professionals from the colleges working on implementing the highest priority strategies. A word with regard to the last item, CUNY-wide fundraising — we have worked with college advancement professionals, presidents and college foundation boards to make it clear that we have no interest in hindering college-based fundraising. Quite the opposite. But we live in a new era of philanthropy where donors, often individuals — including those with no ties to CUNY — are making very significant catalytic investments to improve society in fundamental ways. It is this market that we hope to enter, offering the opportunity through major investments in CUNY, its colleges and their 500,000 total degree and continuing education students, to change New York City and the world.

There are great challenges to these strategies. They require us to do more in different ways, build on our

evidence-based successes and develop new approaches to stubborn challenges that have held us and our students back. They require us to be open to new thinking about how we use our limited resources and, more importantly, how we leverage our work through far better collaboration with each other and with many other partners who share our goals.

I am convinced that CUNY, which has reinvented itself many times over 170 years, has the commitment, the talent and the energy for the important work that lies ahead. Through better connections with our students, among our colleges, with important partners in the private and public sectors, and around the world, we can create a model for the 21st century urban university, one that capitalizes on its singular location, its unparalleled scale in one place, its incredible diversity and talent and the good will and good judgment of those who not only want us to succeed but depend on our success. The promise of what was founded as the Free Academy has never been more vital or more relevant, and I am confident you share my enthusiasm and passion for this next exciting chapter.

Thank You.

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