The Board of Trustees of The City University of New York (CUNY) met on February 13, 2019 at The Central Office (Headquarters), New York, New York, pursuant to a Notice sent by the Office of the Secretary of the Board on February 8, 2019.

Trustees Present: Chairperson William C. Thompson, Jr., Vice Chairperson Barry F. Schwartz, Michael Arvanites, Henry T. Berger, Una S. T-Clarke, Lorraine A. Cortés-Vázquez, Fernando Ferrer, Mayra Linares-Garcia, Kevin D. Kim, Robert F. Mujica, Jr., Jill O'Donnell-Tormey, Charles A. Shorter, Ken Sunshine, Sandra Wilkin, Haris Khan, ex officio, and Martin Burke, ex officio (non- voting)

Trustee Absent and Excused: Brian D. Obergfell

Others present: Interim Chancellor Vita C. Rabinowitz, SAC and Board Secretary Gayle M. Horwitz, Interim General Counsel and SVC Pamela Silverblatt, Interim Chief Operating Officer Marc V. Shaw, Senior Vice Chancellor Judy Bergtraum, SVC&CFO Matthew Sapienza, Vice Chancellor Brian Cohen, Interim Vice Chancellor Christopher Rosa; and President Michelle Anderson, Interim President Joy Connolly, President Rudolph Crew, President José L. Cruz, President Scott E. Evenbeck, President William J. Fritz, President David Gómez, President Russell K. Hotzler, President Thomas Isekenegbe, Interim President Timothy G. Lynch, President Karol V. Mason, President Gail O. Mellow, President Felix V. Matos Rodriguez, President Claudia V. Schrader, President Mitchel Wallerstein, Interim President Karrin E. Wilks, Dean Sarah Bartlett, Dean Mary Lu Bilek, Dean Ayman El-Mohandes, Dean Mary Pearl, and Dean Gregory Mantsios

CONVENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

Chairperson William C. Thompson, Jr. called the Public meeting to order at 4:36 p.m. and announced that the Public Meeting is being transmitted live on cable Channel 75 and webcast live at www.cuny.edu/livestream. He also announced that the Public Meeting will be available as a podcast within 24 hours and can be accessed through the CUNY website.
Action Item Introduced by Chairperson William C. Thompson, Jr.:
“As Trustees of the City University of New York, we have many responsibilities but none are more important than what brings us here today – to select a new Chancellor who will lead this extraordinary institution. Today, we have the opportunity to appoint a person with sterling credentials, unparalleled depth of perspective and a demonstrated commitment to CUNY. It fills me with great pride to have been part of this historic chapter in the narrative of this vital institution as we make history with one of our own.

Before I present the following resolution to appoint Dr. Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, I would like to thank the members of the Search Committee, who worked diligently to interview candidates. The Presidents’ representatives were Karol Mason of John Jay College and David Gomez of Hostos Community College. The faculty members were former Chair of the University Faculty Senate Kay Conway and Distinguished Professor Ruth Stark. Three students representatives participated - former Chair of the University Student Senate John Aderounmu, LaGuardia Community College Student Representative Huiling Cai and Zeenat Naseem, Student Representative from Kingsborough Community College.

Board Members who served on the committee were Vice Chairperson Barry Schwartz, and Trustees Fernando Ferrer, Una Clarke, Henry Berger, Jill O’Donnell Tormey, and Kevin Kim.

CUNY alumni were represented by John Banks, President of the Real Estate Board of New York and Baruch Graduate School alum.

I would like to thank the search consultants Isaacson Miller, for their excellent work and assistance with this search.

The Search Committee considered more than 50 candidates and recommended four to the full Board for consideration. President Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, President of Queens College, emerged as the unanimous choice for Chancellor.”

Moved by Chairperson Thompson, Jr. and seconded by Vice Chairperson Schwartz, the following resolution was presented and opened for discussion:

1. The City University of New York – Designation of Chancellor:

WHEREAS, The Search Committee for a new Chancellor of the City University of New York diligently conducted a comprehensive national search; and

WHEREAS, The Committee, comprised of Trustees, college presidents, faculty, students, and alumni considered more than 50 candidates; and
WHEREAS, The Board of Trustees interviewed four finalists and President Félix V. Matos Rodriguez, President of Queens College, emerged as the unanimous choice for Chancellor; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Matos Rodriguez is eminently qualified to lead the City University of New York as Chancellor having extensive experience as President of Queens College since 2014, President of Eugenio Maria de Hostos Community College from 2009 - 2014 and Director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College from 2000 - 2005; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Matos Rodriguez served as Secretary of the Department of Family Services of Puerto Rico where he managed a $2.3 billion budget and 11,000 employees across 104 offices as well as other high level positions; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Matos Rodriguez is a national leader and trailblazer in higher education with the unique experience of serving as president of both a baccalaureate and community college and as Board Chair of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That Félix V. Matos Rodriguez, an accomplished scholar, teacher, administrator and public servant, be appointed Chancellor of the City University of New York, effective May 1, 2019, at an annual salary of $670,000 from tax levy funds.

Chairperson Thompson, Jr. asked for a roll call vote with members casting their votes as follows:

Comment from Chairperson William C. Thompson, Jr.:
“I cast my vote in favor of Dr. Matos Rodriguez.”

Comment from Vice Chairperson Barry F. Schwartz:
“I vote yes.”

Comment from Trustee Arvanites:
“When I first met Felix I thought he might be Greek. After all I felt like he was my brother, and his last name starts with Matos! So I thought maybe we are connected. Queens College was my first campus tour, and I came to realize we are connected cause he cares about this institution greatly, he cares about the students, and for that I proudly cast my vote for the resolution and for my brother, Félix Matos Rodriguez as chancellor.”

Comment from Henry T. Berger:
“I vote aye on the resolution.”
Comment from Trustee Una S. T-Clarke:
“I vote aye on the resolution and to say his academic background is enough to have me vote yes, and I hope that the new research in all of our institutions, from our junior colleges to our senior colleges, that we will have more documents of our scholars being able to do the work that they need to do to show the strength of CUNY.”

Comment from Trustee Lorraine A. Cortés-Vázquez:
“First of all, this is a(n) historic day for CUNY, and I am extremely proud of the decision of this Board of Trustees. This decision sends a message throughout the University, throughout the city, throughout the state, and also throughout the public university system, that every child and every person, regardless of their origins and for whom we are responsible has a future, and they can count on us. I do believe in succession planning and growing from within, since that is the highest testament to the excellence of an institution. So with that sir, I proudly extend my vote in the affirmative for Felix Matos Rodriguez.”

Comment from Trustee Fernando Ferrer:
“I happily and proudly vote yes.”

Comment from Trustee Mayra Linares-Garcia:
“I proudly vote yes. Thank you for the work you have done. There is a lot of work in front of you, and you have not just the support of this Board—the confidence that you can do it—and your colleagues also had the confidence in you to do it. So thank you for what brought you here today and for what you are taking on, so I voice yes.”

Comment from Trustee Kevin D. Kim:
“I too vote yes. His record speaks for itself. We are very fortunate to have somebody who has had the community college and the four-year college experience, which is a unique characteristic of our CUNY system. We are really looking forward to working with you, and you have our full support.”

Comment from Trustee Robert F. Mujica, Jr.:
“It is my pleasure to vote aye on the resolution.”

Comment from Trustee Jill O'Donnell-Tormey:
“I do vote yes, and I have very high expectations.”

Comment from Trustee Charles Shorter:
“I vote yes, splendid choice. Fantastic for him as a leader and fantastic for the University and for its students.”

Comment from Trustee Ken Sunshine:
“I proudly vote yes. I saw him in action at Queens College, with the way he interacted with faculty, students, staff, and visitors. You could send something very special about him. I talked to a lot of people about him, and boy, they really like you.”
Comment from Trustee Sandra Wilkin:
“I am honored to vote yes. You are a mentor and a voice for the future of this phenomenal institution, that we could be so proud to be part of.”

Comment from University Student Senate Chair and Trustee Haris Khan:
“I vote in the affirmative. Dr. Matos Rodriguez established himself in this CUNY community system as a president that truly values shared governance and the importance of student voices and faculty voices in policymaking and decision-making. I know on behalf of the 500,000 students that I serve and represent, we are looking forward to him continuing that tradition and this mission of CUNY to make sure that all decisions are made collaboratively, in the interests of this University. In the statement that was released, he mentioned the people’s university. I hope this is a beginning of a new chapter that would really make this more accessible and affordable for all people.”

Comment from University Faculty Senate Chair and Trustee Martin Burke:
“As Lorraine was saying, this is an historic moment. While not voting, I can express the full support of some 6,700 full-time faculty, and on a good day, some 11,500 part-time faculty. You have a track record of working with us, and we look forward to working with you to move this University onto new heights.”

The resolution was unanimously approved. Trustee Brian Obergfell was absent and excused.

Statement of Chairperson William C. Thompson, Jr.:
“On behalf of my colleagues, it is my honor and distinct pleasure to introduce Dr. Félix (Felo) V. Matos Rodríguez, whom the Board has just appointed to serve as our eighth Chancellor. His appointment begins a momentous chapter in the history of this great institution, one in which every member of the CUNY community should celebrate.

Before I say a few words about Felo, I would like to thank Vice Chairperson Schwartz and the other dedicated individuals who served with me on the Search Committee and acknowledge their stalwart and ardent efforts. Please know that the many hours you put in were invaluable and essential in getting us to where we now stand. You helped the University take a very positive and well-considered step with this appointment.

Let me also ask each of you to join me in a heartfelt acknowledgment of gratitude to Interim Chancellor Vita Rabinowitz. The workload that Vita has assumed, and handled with such aplomb over the course of these past months, is nothing short of breathtaking. Her great efforts and tireless devotion enabled the University to not merely run smoothly, but to continue growing and meeting all the mandates of its mission. Her skilled stewardship gave us the time that was needed to conduct a rigorous, robust and comprehensive search for our next Chancellor. Vita, we are so fortunate to have you on the CUNY team, and we thank you sincerely for the tireless and invaluable work that you continue to do.
Now, let’s talk about Dr. Matos Rodriguez, CUNY’s first Latino and first person of color to lead the University. For a University of CUNY’s rich diversity—one that proudly embraces its mission of accessibility for all—it is with pride and resolve that we arrive at this moment.

Felo is a dedicated champion of accessibility, inclusion and excellence in higher education, and his roots in CUNY are deep. He came to CUNY nearly two decades ago as an historian and scholar, working as a professor of Black and Latino/Puerto Rican Studies, and as Director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, one of the nation’s noted research centers.

Felo’s experiences as President of both Queens College and Hostos Community College make him one of a very few educators in this country to have led both a community and baccalaureate college. He is keenly acquainted with the issues that are unique to community and senior colleges, and he knows better than anyone which challenges are common to both types of schools within our vast system. I do not think we could have ever expected to find an educator with this breadth and depth of expertise.

Felo left us for a few years and returned to Puerto Rico, where he served as a top adviser to the Governor and later led the Department of Family Services, an umbrella agency that helped to improve the coordination of services and maximize efficiency. His experience in managing that agency, with a budget in the billions and thousands of employees dispersed across the island, gave him another real-world perspective that made him stand out.

Dr. Matos Rodriguez has drawn national recognition as a trailblazer in higher education and currently serves as board chair of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and an Aspen Institute Ascend Fellow. He also currently serves on the boards of Phipps Houses, the United Way of New York City, the TIAA Hispanic Advisory Council and the Research Alliance for New York City Schools.

As the Chair of the Search Committee, I will tell you that this rigorous selection process gave us all a good deal to consider. We met a stellar field of accomplished leaders who stepped forward and expressed interest. There were a significant number of highly qualified candidates – individuals who brought much to the table in terms of their experiences, accomplishments and ideas. We interviewed Chancellor Designate Matos Rodriguez early on, and throughout the process we kept returning to him, time and time again, and I can say without hesitation or equivocation that CUNY is getting a leader of unmatched experience, vision and skill.

In word and deed, Dr. Matos Rodriguez has already done so much to advance CUNY’s mission-driven spirit. His sterling credentials, his unparalleled depth of perspective and his demonstrated commitment to CUNY made him the inarguable standout and the obvious choice. It fills me with great pride to have been a part of this pivotal decision, and to be able to announce that the nation’s greatest urban university is making history with one of its own. Please join me in welcoming Chancellor-designate Dr. Félix (Felo) V. Matos Rodriguez.”
Statement of Chancellor-Designate Dr. Félix (Felo) V. Matos Rodriguez:
“Good afternoon, Chairman Thompson and members of the board, Interim Chancellor Rabinowitz, members of Chancellery, fellow Presidents and the entire CUNY community.

It is my profound honor to accept the board’s appointment as the eighth Chancellor of the City University of New York. I am deeply grateful and tremendously excited to lead the nation’s foremost urban public university, particularly at a time when its mission to “maintain and expand academic excellence and to the provision of equal access and opportunity” has never been more vital. CUNY is a powerful vehicle for the upward mobility of all New Yorkers and is therefore an indispensable New York institution. ¡Muchas Gracias!

I came to Hunter as a faculty member in 2000 driven, like so many of CUNY’s faculty and staff, by CUNY’s mission of access, academic excellence and social mobility. I was also attracted by the hallmarks that make CUNY a unique educational institution: the intellectual vibrancy and proximity of colleagues and students from twenty-five (25) campuses; the privilege of working in the world’s most dynamic city; the potential to connect scholarship and public policy to directly impact the public good; and a profound commitment to diversity. I remain as energized and motivated today, as I was back in 2000, by the power of CUNY’s mission, impact and institutional uniqueness.

My commitment to CUNY’s mission and promise comes from a profoundly personal place. In every student I have been able to serve at Hunter, Hostos and Queens, I see my mother, Marta, and my father, Félix. I see individuals that come from humble backgrounds, full of talent, potential and aspirations, that get the opportunity to showcase that aptitude and move closer to their aspirations because a quality public educational institution opened the doors to them. For my dad and grandmother, that institution was the University of Puerto Rico, which made it possible for my parents to become professionals and then provide my brothers and I more educational and life opportunities than they had while growing-up. Many of the wonderful things I have experienced and benefited from professionally and personally came because of that door of opportunity opened to my parents. My commitment to CUNY comes because I want to be part of an institution that is at the center of that kind of social mobility here in New York City.

Although I’m still trying to comprehend its full implications, I am humbled to be CUNY’s first Chancellor of color and embrace the opportunities and promise that this unique role holds. One thing is clear on my mind: this historic milestone is largely the result of investments that CUNY has made in institutions, such as Hostos and Centro, that have made our university a more inclusive and representative space. I am committed to making sure that CUNY continues to invest and innovate in creating such spaces of inclusion and diversity for our students, faculty and staff who come from so many different heritages, cultural identities, economic backgrounds and experiences. Through this commitment we ensure that we remain in the forefront of excellence and inclusion for generations to come and that, in the words of Dr. Ruth Simmons – that African-American educational pioneer: “...the thing about being first is that you
want to make it possible for people to come after you. A first never wants to disappoint the people who believe in that ideal, in the capacity to endorse difference.”

CUNY is an extraordinary university at every level. Our success is propelled by a unique kinship of students, faculty, staff and leadership who together carry on CUNY’s legacy as the paradigm of a people’s university. That is both a high aspiration and an incredible obligation.

I want to thank you for placing your confidence in me. I will spend each and every day working to justify that confidence and expectations in the years ahead leading this institution I love, and I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees, and the entire university community, as we begin to move on into CUNY’s next chapter together.”

Moved by Chairperson Thompson, Jr. and seconded by Trustee Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, the public session was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.