

HIGHER ED TODAY



A Year Into My Tenure, I'm Reminded of CUNY's Mission

The steps we take to guide The City University of New York through the COVID-19 crisis are born out of CUNY's historic mission to support our students, promote equity and make sure the most vulnerable are not excluded from the learning process.

We see who the coronavirus is attacking in disproportionate numbers — it's those who come from our most diverse neighborhoods, the very communities that form the backbone of this University.

The principled imperative to make sure that no one is left behind has set the framework for CUNY's decision-making from the moment I assumed the role of Chancellor.

As I approach my one-year anniversary on May 1, I couldn't be prouder of the

ment for health workers and helping to create face shields from campus 3D printers.

We continue to fill our ranks with pioneering leaders, individuals like S. David Wu, the incoming president of Baruch, who will be the first Asian-American college president at CUNY. He will be joined by Robin L. Garrell, newly appointed president of the Graduate Center; Frank H. Wu, tapped to lead Queens College and CUNY's second Asian-American college president; and Daisy Cocco De Filippis, who will be interim president of Hostos Community College and the first Dominican woman to serve as a CUNY college president. I am also proud to have built a cabinet of tested leaders representative of the City we serve.



In his first year in the role, Chancellor Matos Rodríguez (top row, third from left) has built a cabinet of tested leaders representative of the City.

work we have done over the last 12 months to honor the founding values of this University, a template of opportunity and inclusion that led us most recently to announce the Chancellor's Emergency Relief Fund on April 8 to provide an urgent lifeline to CUNY students facing financial strain amid COVID-19.

Launched with \$3.25 million including \$1 million each from the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation and the James and Judith K. Dimon Foundation, and \$500,000 from Robin Hood, the Fund has enabled us to begin issuing grants of \$500 each to thousands of CUNY students in the first CUNY-wide student assistance program of its kind. The first checks were delivered this week. (Individual contributions can be made at cuny.edu/emergencyfund.)

With support from Governor Cuomo, CUNY last month invested \$12 million to quickly purchase thousands of laptops and tablets, without which a sizable number of our students would have been unable to make the transition to distance learning and move forward with their courses.

We have broadened CUNY's record of public service from participating in relief work in Puerto Rico to collecting and distributing vital personal protective equip-

As I joined a video conference on April 13 to cheer the inaugural graduating class of the CUNY School of Medicine, I was reminded of the school's mission to address health care disparities in underserved areas.

These newly minted MDs are a perfect match for the moment as they graduate early and embark on their careers at a time of unprecedented demand, a shining embodiment of the University's mission to safeguard the most vulnerable while creating social mobility for our graduates.

I also have no doubt that the road to recovery of New York City's economy and public health goes through CUNY. I'm proud to see, for example, CUNY staff already working with government and health leaders, taking steps to train and prepare the thousands of social tracers we will need in the months to come.

It all underscores a truth about CUNY, which I knew to be true 12 months ago when I had the privilege to become chancellor, and continues to guide me today: The ground beneath us may shift, but our commitment to the equity, inclusion and excellence needed to sustain New York City's standing as a world-class city will never, ever waver.

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez is the chancellor of the City University of New York, the nation's largest urban public university, serving over 500,000 students of all ages in seven community colleges, 11 senior colleges and seven graduate or professional institutions. Visit cuny.edu.



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