

## A Message to the Baruch Community

PRESIDENT S. DAVID WU

July 1, 2020

**Hello, Baruch! I am thrilled to start our new journey, together.**

Dear Baruch Community,

I am honored and thrilled to join you as Baruch's eighth president, starting today. I have been looking forward to this moment with great anticipation since my appointment on February 3. At that time, none of us could have imagined how the next five months would unfold. As the nation grapples with Covid-19, the resulting economic damage, and the reckoning to end systemic racism, the entire Baruch community unified and overcame unimaginable challenges to continue core College operations and deliver distance learning while supporting our students to keep pace with their education. You have proudly demonstrated what I have come to know as the quintessential Baruch spirit: resilience, resourcefulness, creativity, and grit.

On an individual level, I know that many of you have experienced profound personal and professional pain and loss. My heart goes out to those who lost loved ones, especially as social distancing kept us from visiting one another during times of need. And while everyone's lives were upended by the restrictions, some lost jobs, either temporarily or permanently, or found themselves needing to support family members whose livelihoods were impacted. We will be wrestling with the economic fallout from Covid-19 for years to come, and many communities our students came from are disproportionately impacted. It is more critical now than ever that we support each other and overcome these challenges together as a community.

### **Our Collective Sense of Purpose**

As a nation, we have a long and arduous journey ahead as we confront our racist past and present, and look to build a more just and equitable future. Doing so is integral to Baruch's mission and to our legacy as an institution that offers a rare amalgam of top-

rated academic programs and upward mobility for diverse students from all echelons of society.

Because 2020 has had so much tumult, I feel as though my tenure at Baruch began months ago. Given the wreckage of Covid-19, it was imperative for me to start working with Baruch's thought leaders to discuss the many challenges that lie ahead. In May, I established the [Task Force for the Future](#) whose initial recommendations I will share with the College community next week. I also reached out to you regarding the nation's [racial injustice](#), the monumental [addition of Juneteenth](#) to our official calendar, and the College's exciting virtual [Commencement experience](#). Through all of this and the dialogue it has generated with many of you, I have come to recognize and admire the genuine passion, commitment, and inspiration that form the foundation of a great institution—one with an incredibly strong culture and a collective sense of purpose.

### **Let's Revitalize the American Dream**

While we remain unsure about when we can meet in person, I am honored and humbled to be leading Baruch at this time and settling in New York City. I still vividly recall the day I arrived in the U.S. some 40 years ago and wandered the streets of New York, marveling at the excitement and promise it holds. I had it in my mind that anyone who has a dream and the drive to succeed can make it here, because this is America. I think I was mostly right then. But can I still say that with the same confidence today? I am not so sure. Almost 90 percent of Americans born in the 1940s earned more than their parents did. But now less than 50 percent do. Compared to other industrialized nations, the U.S. is gradually falling behind in terms of upward mobility—or in realizing the American Dream.

Higher education has not been serving our democracy in the best way it could. Only one third of our population is able to attain a college degree; higher education is well out of reach for far too many. In our knowledge economy, this means that two-thirds of our population do not have access to the fastest growing, highest paying sectors in the economy. Educational attainment—or a lack thereof—has become the most significant factor in socioeconomic disparities.

As an immigrant myself, this is personal to me. This is never somebody else's problem; this is our problem. Colleges can, and have a responsibility to, close the widening gap of social disparity. In fact, public higher education is one of few real solutions that produce tangible outcomes. In this, Baruch is already a leader: 79 percent of Baruch students whose families were in the bottom fifth of the income distribution, moved to the top three-fifths after [attaining their degree](#).

Providing academic excellence and social mobility on this scale—as Baruch does—represents a distinctive niche. It is my goal to see Baruch emerge as a new model for higher education: institutions that deliver the most rigorous, high-caliber academic programs at an affordable price to an historically underrepresented population in higher education. Anyone who has the will to succeed should have the opportunity to elevate themselves in this way, because this is America, and this is why I am here.

I am grateful to President Wallerstein, whose steadfast leadership put Baruch on a path of historic growth in its facilities, degree offerings, global reach, and student support services. Owing to these advancements, the College has earned impressive recognition and accolades. Building on this momentum, I feel incredibly fortunate to be leading Baruch into a new era, and I truly believe Baruch’s distinctive model will emerge on the national stage as a shining example in the shifting landscape of higher education.

I look forward to seeing you very soon—virtually or in person—and in the meanwhile, please share your thoughts and aspirations for Baruch with me at [President@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:President@baruch.cuny.edu). I wish you and your loved ones a safe and healthy summer.

Sincerely,

S. David Wu  
President, Baruch College

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OF  
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