

Baruch and CUNY Welcome Dr. S. David Wu

Hosted by CUNY Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez and
Baruch President Mitchel B. Wallerstein

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I am delighted to be with you here today, and I am honored and humbled to be selected as the next president of Baruch College. I am also thrilled to have my family with me here; I will introduce them to you later.

First, I want to thank the Search Committee, especially Vice Chair Schwartz; members of the CUNY Board of Trustees; and Chancellor Matos Rodríguez for the trust they have placed in me to lead Baruch. I am delighted to see members of the Chancellery and fellow college presidents and deans in the audience. Thank you so much for being here. I look forward to working with all of you. Most of all, I am so very excited to meet the Baruch community in person! Many of you have written, tweeted, and sent me your likes over social media, which has made me feel part of the College family already.

As a start, I want to express my gratitude to President Mitchel Wallerstein. His exceptional leadership has helped Baruch to become not only the preeminent institution within CUNY but one of the best urban public universities in the world. Under Mitch's leadership:

- All three schools of Baruch are now named and endowed—the only college in CUNY that has this distinction. The only downside is that, Mitch, you didn't leave me any school to name. So we may have to start a new school of study soon.
- The College's endowment increased by almost 60 percent and passed the \$200 million mark.
- Mitch shepherded through some of the long-awaited additions and improvements to the Baruch campus, such as construction of Clivner=Field Plaza on 25th Street, the Field Building at 17 Lex renovation, and the new Allen G. and Mary E. Aaronson Student Center, across the street at the post office. During my last visit, Mitch walked me through the student center under construction. It truly is amazing.
- Most importantly, under his leadership, Baruch's academic standing and reputation have never been stronger. The graduation rate is by far the highest in

CUNY and highly competitive nationally. Baruch students are going on to great jobs in the private and public sectors and to prestigious graduate schools. In fact, the first Baruch alumna I met, at a dinner event totally unrelated to Baruch, is a cybersecurity expert at Goldman Sachs.

Sorry, fellow presidents, I don't mean to brag. I am bragging on behalf of Mitch.

Therefore, please join me in giving Mitch a round of applause to recognize his remarkable accomplishments.

Now, let me give you a sense what I would like to do as president of Baruch College. I still have a lot to learn, from all of you, but I will give you a sense of what I am thinking.

In my introductory video, I told you that I love the arts and I read all the time. To me, my job as an educator is not that different from an artist's or a storyteller's. Like artists, we educators never create in a vacuum, rather we create in a *cultural and intellectual continuum* shaped by our predecessors. Like storytellers, we change people's minds—and therefore change the future. We do this by showing the world what is possible.

I feel honored to conceive and guide the next segment of Baruch's history. Together, you have been creating this masterpiece called Baruch, and it is our responsibility to continue that creative process together.

We need to **tell** the Baruch story to more people so the world will understand that it is possible to be an agent of social mobility while still holding the highest academic standards. We also need to **serve** more people, both nationally and internationally, and be recognized as a leader in making urban public education an engine for prosperity and for a better, more sustainable world.

Sometimes, the furthest distance in the world can be from "how it is" to "how we want it to be." College is where we help our students understand "how it is," so they can help themselves, and the rest of the world, imagine "how they want it to be." It is a pleasure to get up in the morning, come to work, and know that you play a part in making hundreds and thousands of dreams come true. If we do it right, we may even help make the world a better place. I suspect that is why most of us in this room are in this field in the first place. I have to say, we all have a pretty **awesome** job.

One of the things that drew me to Baruch is its diversity on all levels. Over the years, I have come to appreciate how an eclectic mix of people can be the source of creativity and vitality for change. In all the leadership positions I've held, I have always sought

out a diversity of **opinions** and **perspectives**, which often come from people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It is something that I know will not only continue but expand on this campus.

I write a monthly blog at George Mason University where I typically pose a question that I know will generate different reactions and opinions across campus. You know, to rock the boat a little. This has allowed the campus community to delve into some complex issues together. As with all complex issues, there will be people who agree and disagree with a given position. Open debates and thoughtful dialogues often help to build the foundation for consensus and collaboration. I'd intentionally frame the blog topic in a more academic way—abstract and inquiry-driven, even philosophical—the kind of debate you can sit back and enjoy over a beer, wine, or coffee. My most recent topics included “Freedom of Speech on Campus and Academic Freedom” and “Why Does Diversity Form the Foundation of Learning?” I hope to continue this practice at Baruch and encourage feedback from everyone, as these types of conversations make the culture stronger.

As I said in my “Hello Baruch” video, we live in a complex and fast-changing world. It is no longer enough for our students and alumni to receive the best technical and professional skills; they must be able to think independently, creatively, and with **empathy**. That requires them to be exposed to people from different backgrounds and different ideologies. It also requires them to develop **intellectual curiosity**. Why? When you are intellectually curious, you are more likely to be interested in a point of view that is different from your own. We develop intellectual curiosity through intellectual diversity. I think the best way to achieve intellectual diversity is through comprehensive, and intentional, cross-disciplinary inquiry and collaboration—bringing together different paradigms from the disciplines and offering our students the **mental framework** and **deep understanding** that are critical for their long-term success and for being good citizens of a democracy.

Now, before I get carried away and start lecturing, let me invite my family on the stage. We are thrilled to be reunited here in New York City [Dr. Wu's son and daughter live in NYC], and we are proud to be part of the Baruch and the CUNY family. Thank you so very much for being here today and have a wonderful evening!

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