

2022 Bernard Baruch Dinner

April 27, 2022

Hello everyone! I am President S. David Wu and I am honored to welcome you all to the Bernard Baruch Dinner, which is now 32 years strong. This is my first time hosting this spectacular event, and I could not be more pleased that we are finally able to come together—in person—to celebrate Baruch’s successes and our promising future.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of being Baruch’s president is the opportunity to talk with a variety of students, alumni, and friends of Baruch to learn about their unique Baruch story and commitment to the College. As we consider tonight’s theme—Invest in Us—I want to share my observation that excellence and engagement have been the hallmarks of the Baruch experience across generations. And your investment in us will pay dividends beyond the foreseeable future.

For over a half-century, Baruch has made an excellent education accessible—at little or no cost—to generations of students who might not have otherwise gone to college. Through internships and research opportunities, our students also engage with the issues of the day—from business ethics and climate change to policy reform and social equity—and contribute to meaningful solutions.

And so much of what we do is made possible—or made stronger—thanks to your support.

Since this is our first gathering in a while—and because we have many new Friends of Baruch among us this evening—I would like to spend a moment talking about **where Baruch College is today** and how we moved forward despite the challenges of the past two years.

- While the College community worked, studied, and socialized remotely, we were fortunate to be able to complete several major campus improvements, such as:
 - The Clivner=Field Plaza, which we dedicated last October
 - The Aaronson Student Center, which gives undergraduates a place of their own to study and collaborate
 - And the fully renovated and modernized entrance and lobby to the historic Field Building at 17 Lex
- Just last month, we also launched the Baruch One Stop Shop, which we call “the BOSS.” The BOSS is a fully integrated on-campus hub where our students can

access services from financial aid, to class registration, to personal support—all in one location.

- our students have also continued to excel, with strong job and graduate school placements, as well as winning renowned awards such as Fulbrights, Gilman International Scholarships, and the Jonas E. Salk Scholarship for medical school.
- The College and our undergraduate and graduate programs have continued to earn strong national and regional rankings, from *U.S. News & World Report*, *Washington Monthly*, *Princeton Review*, and more.
- And for *seven* consecutive years, CollegeNET has named us #1 in the nation for social mobility—that is, our ability to graduate students from low-income households into middle- and high-paying jobs. For some of our graduates, their starting salaries more than double the household income they grew up in.
- Our six-year graduation rate is also a point of pride. Last year, it reached 72.5% for undergraduates, breaking the previous record of 69.9%, which is virtually unprecedented for an urban public college.
- Because of our strong reputation and outcomes, Baruch also experienced a record enrollment increase—of nearly 7 percent—despite local and national trends to the contrary.

Success such as this doesn't occur in a vacuum, or happen overnight. It evolves from a longstanding tradition of excellence—and from engagement with friends like you who invest in our students... in our classrooms and career centers... and in our faculty and facilities. With your support, we are able to realize our mission of making excellence accessible to generations of deserving students.

In my view, engaging with the people and world around us, and using our own experiences and stories to enrich and build on the formal education we receive, is a key to success. These are also common threads among the students and alumni I have had the pleasure to meet.

As I mentioned earlier, I love collecting Baruch stories and have found them all awe-inspiring and heartwarming. Many have reminded me of my own past. As I reflect on my life, I recognize that it hasn't been extraordinary, but it has been enough for me to appreciate those whose circumstances are extraordinary.

Like most of our students, in college I took on odd jobs to supplement my expenses. Among my first was making deliveries in the busy streets and back alleys of Taipei on a motorcycle—like a prototype of Door Dash. This is when I developed a kinship with people who made the city work—street vendors, sanitation workers, manual laborers, and so on

Later, during my compulsory military service, one of my jobs was to strip paint and rust from deep in the inner hull of a World War II-era frigate. That small, dark space lit with a dim work light and combined with the sound echoing from my hammer and chisel still occasionally appears in my dreams.

These experiences never felt like hardships, but more like a series of journeys—until I had something of more value than anything I could ever imagine.

This is exactly what many Baruch alumni—some who are in their 80s and 90s—have conveyed to me. Through the ages, Baruch students have not had much handed to them. They have worked hard, learned incredible things from even mundane experiences—and written life stories that are truly remarkable. Collectively, these Baruch stories provide a window into our future—one that the possibilities are endless.

With this spirit and grit, we are now poised for a future that builds on our legacy of excellence and engagement across generations. The timing couldn't be more auspicious.

- To chart our course forward, this spring the College launched a major Strategic Planning effort—to construct an ambitious blueprint for our institutional future in this rapidly evolving world.
- As a start, we have set a target to create about 25% of instruction options online, to give working students greater flexibility in completing their degrees.
- We are also establishing a Digital Learning Hub at Baruch to lead the development, evaluation, and delivery of online and hybrid courses.
- Through service-learning and other community-based opportunities, we will also position Baruch as integral to New York City's recovery—from the pandemic and from social injustice.
- And by educating one of the most diverse student populations in the United States, Baruch is uniquely positioned to be a force multiplier for meaningful change in a society that values diversity, equity, and opportunity for all.

The list goes on, and we are able to set such goals and turn them into reality because the alumni, friends, and supporters of the Baruch College Fund have invested in our students and our College. These investments have and will continue to pay dividends for generations to come.

That is certainly the case for our two honorees this evening Buzzy Geduld and Lara Abrash.:

As you will hear later this evening, both Buzzy and Lara exemplify the grit, vision, compassion, and can-do spirit of Baruch College. I offer my congratulations to you both and thank you for all you do for the College and our students. I look forward to seeing you on campus, around New York City, and as I travel to connect with our vast global alumni network.

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