



**CUNY Chancellor Discusses
CUNY's Initiatives and Plans**

Sep 29 CUNY
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As college and university campuses across the country are adjusting to a pandemic-stricken world, many chose to open but closed soon after as cases of the coronavirus surged in several states. The City University system has maintained a mostly online semester for its 25 campuses. The problem for CUNY is not the number of coronavirus cases, but rather a fiscal concern which may conclude with an alarming budget cut. On September 10, CUNY's Chancellor, Felix Matos Rodriguez, sat with Errol Louis, the host of Spectrum News NY 1's 'Inside City Hall' to discuss the measures CUNY has taken to combat the spread of the virus while still trying to promote a positive educational environment and to discuss a potentially massive budget cut that will affect everyone in their school system.

According to Chancellor Rodriguez, the CUNY community lost approximately 39 members between faculty, students, and staff. An online memorial (<https://www.cuny.edu/memorial/>) was set up to celebrate the lives of the deceased CUNY members. "We actually have an online memorial that we started...to celebrate them until we have time to do it face-to-face when that's safe [to do]," Rodriguez told Louis. Among the deceased is the first Asian-American Vice-Chancellor in CUNY's history, Allen Yew. "He was a friend and a colleague so it's been very hard", he said.



Along with forming an online memorial to remember those we lost, Chancellor Rodriguez discussed some of the measures CUNY has implemented to maintain the safety of students for this fall semester. "Our mostly virtual approach seems to [be] working so in that sense, some of the planning and the investment we paid in [the] professional development of faculty and others to get ready for the fall so far, knock on wood, seems to be working", he explained. Currently, only one percent of CUNY classes are in-person. These classes are "mostly clinical courses that [are] very difficult to replicate via the online experience and some art and music courses". However, most resources for students have been able to transition online like

the student support services, financial aid, and appointments for the food pantries. CUNY sent out a survey to all students where they were asked about their access to technology and connectivity. Between last spring and this fall, CUNY distributed over 20,000 computers and laptops to students and purchased approximately 4,000 hotspots for those who mentioned struggles with connectivity. Professors have also gone through professional development training to ensure their sensitivity as they interact with students during this online semester.

Chancellor Rodriguez also discussed the potential budget cuts for CUNY. He assured Louis, “we’ve had no layoffs of any full-time personnel and even as you’re reading in New York State and other parts of the country, [where] layoffs of full-time [staff and] furloughs [have taken place], [even though] we’ve had a very difficult time last semester [and] the beginning of this [school] year, we haven’t done that. We have to do some adjustments with some of the part-time faculty and we’re trying...to retain them.” Last year, CUNY saved about \$20 million by instating a hiring freeze. At the moment, many public school systems like CUNY are hoping the federal government will provide support to states and cities who were affected tremendously by the coronavirus. “I think everybody is sort of waiting to see what the final outcome will be in DC so we’ve been waiting to do that and trying to protect as many of our faculty and staff as we can as we go along” Rodriguez explained.



There is some good news, however. In May of 2020, CUNY graduated close to a record number of students, around 50,000. With these graduates ready for careers, CUNY has partnered with the New York Jobs CEO Council, a “new CEO-led, results-oriented coalition [who] will collaborate with educational institutions, community organizations and nonprofits to hire skilled workers, meet employer needs and connect New Yorkers — with a focus on low-income and Black, Latinx and Asian communities— with the skills that they need for today’s and

tomorrow’s workplace” according to the CUNY website (<https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2020/08/11/27-ceos-launch-the-new-york-jobs-ceo-council/>).

CEOs from companies like JP Morgan Chase, Bloomberg L.P., The New York Times, Goldman Sachs, Montefiore Medicine, and a number of others, have come together for this Council. The goal of the Council is to hire 100,000 New Yorkers through this initiative by 2030 and hire 25,000 CUNY students for jobs and internships by 2030. Chancellor Rodriguez said, “This would allow...recent graduates who are facing a very tough market and the ones who are coming after [and] would also allow us to have a direct line with industries to improve career engagement and to improve some of the programs that we have so they are more in tune to the demand that industry has” and believes, “working with the business community...would help showcase the great talent that we have at CUNY and would also help us improve [and] expand...and develop programs that will lead to [creating a] pipeline to meet the demands that the city would have in the immediate future. [I am] so very excited about that initiative, particularly the work...done with the community colleges”. This initiative will build a bridge between higher education and the business community in New York City in a way it has never before.

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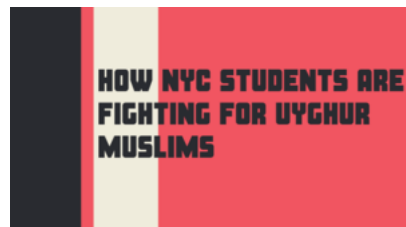
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