



Testimony of

Ms. Mahlet Tsegaye, Director of Executive Search and Enrollment Services

The City University of New York

Hiring a New Chancellor and College President at the City University of New York

New York City Council

Committee on Higher Education

February 8, 2018

Good morning Chair Barron and members of the City Council Committee on Higher Education. I am Mahlet Tsegaye, Director of Executive Search and Enrollment Services at The City University of New York's central office. A major part of my responsibility is to coordinate and assist the University in its executive level searches following guidelines set by the University's Board of Trustees.

I am here today to provide you with an overview of the processes and guidelines that are followed when hiring a new chancellor and a new college president.

Board of Trustees Guidelines

The Executive Search process is conducted in accordance with guidelines and bylaws established by the CUNY Board of Trustees. Over the years, the Board has revised some of these guidelines.

The Office of Executive Search falls within the Chancellery and is tasked with working closely with the Board Office, the Chair and members of search committees, search firms and CUNY colleges within the purviews of these established guidelines. In addition to myself, there is one additional full-time employee in the Office of Executive Search. The total current year budget for the office, including salary, fringe benefits, and other-than-personal services, is \$245,000.

The CUNY Board of Trustees has:

- a set of guidelines for the University to follow while conducting Chancellor searches, and
- a set of guidelines to be followed when conducting searches for Presidents of CUNY Colleges. The latter also includes the search for the Dean of the CUNY School of Law, the CUNY School of Professional Studies, the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, and the Macaulay Honors College.

For the most part, the language in the guidelines for searching for a new chancellor and that for a new president mirror each other with a few exceptions that I will highlight below.

The University partners with search firms when conducting Chancellor and Presidential searches. I will outline the process undertaken in the selection and hiring of search firms further down in my testimony.

Search committees

The Chancellor and Presidential searches are chaired by members of the Board of Trustees.

In the case of Chancellor Searches, the Board guidelines call for at least five members of the Board of Trustees to serve on the committee as appointed by the Chair of the Board. In addition, I quote "The Chair of the Board will serve as the Chairperson of the Search Committee and the Vice Chairperson of the Board shall serve as the Vice Chairperson of the Search Committee."

The guidelines also call for two faculty members including the Chairperson of the Faculty Senate, two students including the Chair of the University Student Senate, an alumnus of CUNY, and two CUNY presidents for a total of up to 16 committee members.

For presidential searches (which also includes the Deans of the various independent Schools within the system), the current guidelines call for up to five trustees, three tenured faculty from the college or schools elected as determined by the appropriate faculty governance body, up to two senior level administrators and/ or representatives of external constituents recommended by the Chancellor and appointed by the Chairperson of the Board (the total number of appointed Trustees, senior level administrators or external constituent representatives shall not exceed five), two students from the college, an alumnus/alumna from the college and a president of another CUNY college.

"In addition, the Search Committee for the Dean of the Law School, the Graduate School of Journalism, the Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy shall include a member of the School's Board of Visitors or Advisory Council and up to two other outstanding figures of the relevant professional community in New York City as appointed by the Chairperson of the Board. " (A presidential search committee thus consists of 11 to 14 members.)

Search Process:

Let me outline for you, in broad strokes, the life cycle of a search and the roles played by the committee, the search firms, the colleges and the Office of Executive Search. I trust, getting an overview of the steps, from launch to hire, will provide a better understanding of what is involved.

- The guidelines require that, quote, "When a vacancy for the position of president occurs, or is certain to occur, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall, after consultation with the Chancellor, establish a Search Committee to seek a new President." For obvious reasons, the guidelines for a Chancellor search, do not reference consultation with the Chancellor.
- As mentioned above, the college's faculty and student governance are tasked with selecting the faculty and student members of these committees following their own governance procedures.

- The Chairperson of the Board and the Chancellor consult with the college and select the alumni representatives. They also select one president, for presidential searches. (For Chancellor searches, the Chairperson selects two presidents, one from a baccalaureate granting institution and one from a community college). For presidential searches only, the guidelines also call for the selection of senior level administrators from other CUNY institutions and/or external constituents.
- Parallel to the formation of the committee, an RFP process is developed and search firms with experience in this particular area (e.g. some search firms focus on community college searches vs. senior colleges, some search firms have more experience working with Law Schools, etc.) are invited to submit proposals. Proposals and firms are reviewed in various categories including:
 - o A firm's track record and experience with a particular type of search;
 - o A firm's commitment to diversity. Search firms are asked to provide evidence of their dedication to diversity in terms of recruiting and building diverse interview pools and placements;
 - o The quality and breadth of services provided;
 - o Their proposed timeline and whether it meets the University's needs; and
 - o Cost, etc.
- Based on these and other criteria the Chancellor and the Board (for Chancellor searches) selects the search firm. Once a search firm is selected, the Office of Executive Search works with various units within CUNY, including the Legal Office and the Budget Office, to secure the necessary approvals. The search firm that has been selected for the upcoming Chancellor Search is Isaacson Miller, a leading national firm with deep experience in conducting higher education leadership searches. The contract between CUNY and Isaacson Miller has been registered by the Office of the State Comptroller, and comes after a Request for Proposal solicitation and evaluation process conducted by the University. All expenses for the Chancellor search will be paid with State Tax Levy funds. No City Tax Levy funding will be expended for the Chancellor search.
- For presidential searches, the college also appoints a search liaison to work closely with the Office of Executive Search for the duration of the search. This individual serves as a conduit for all communications from the search committee to the college; facilitates campus visits for the search committee and for finalists as needed; works with college constituents to ensure appropriate protocols are followed in the selection of faculty, students and other committee

representatives; and serves as a coordinator of college data and information necessary for the development of the advertisement and position profile.

- After the committee has been fully identified, and confirmed, typically a joint announcement from the Chair of the Board and the Chancellor (for presidential searches) is sent to the college community, announcing the launch of the search and the members of the committee.
- For presidential searches, the Office of Executive Search works with the campus to schedule a kickoff campus visit for Trustees on the committee, search consultants and staff. This group meets with the various key constituents including faculty, students, cabinet members and staff. The visit typically culminates with an open forum where any member of the college community is free to participate. Feedback from the campus visits provides insight into the culture, needs etc. of the college and informs the position profile documents and advertisement.
- At the very first committee meeting, the Chancellor, the University Chief Diversity Officer, and the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, when schedules allow, charge the committee. They outline their expectations of the committee, an ideal timeline, the needs and strengths of the institution from their vantage point, and the characteristics of the candidates they would like to see. Typically two major themes are identified and emphasized at these meetings and throughout – confidentiality and diversity.
 - o Confidentiality is key in this process because many of the ideal candidates are individuals who are currently holding high- level positions. If their candidacy becomes known, not only would it jeopardize their position and careers but could also compromise CUNY's ability to recruit robust and rich pools of diverse candidates for the search on hand and for the future. Committee members are selected by their constituent groups to be their voice on these committees and are asked to pledge confidentiality.
 - o Regarding diversity, let me quote language from the bylaws governing both the Chancellor and Presidential searches. "Diversity and inclusion are core values of The City University of New York and as such we encourage applications from individuals with disabilities, veterans,

women and those from traditionally underrepresented groups, including Italian Americans. We prohibit discrimination on the basis of any legally protected category, including sexual orientation and gender identity." As I mentioned earlier, when a presidential search committee is first convened to receive its charge from the Chancellor, the Chancellor is also joined by a representative from the Office of Recruitment and Diversity, who provides the committee with an overview of the ethnic and gender breakdowns of individuals holding similar positions at the University, and pointing out gaps the committee should try to bridge. The charge also includes how to diligently work against unconscious biases and guidance on appropriate interview questions, etc.

Furthermore, the committee and the search consultants are asked to ensure that the job vacancy is posted in a wide array of outlets to reach as wide an audience as possible. Throughout the search process, the committee continually solicits and welcomes suggestions of potential candidates and nominations as well as for additional outlets in which to post vacancy notices.

- Going back to the life cycle of a search, the next step is for the search committee develops a detailed search timetable including a schedule for future meetings.
- The Office of Executive Search works closely with the search Chair and the search firm, to develop and facilitate a draft ad, ad placement strategy, position profile, etc. and secures appropriate data from the college and CUNY units, for the development of these documents.
- Once the committee reviews and finalizes an ad, with input from the Chancellor (and the Board of Trustees when required), the Office of Executive Search works with the search firm to have it posted on various appropriate outlets (increasingly this is done electronically).
- The next step is to develop and finalize the position profile, which is a much meatier document, and provides an overview of the institution, highlighting unique strengths and challenges. It includes demographic and budget information and is meant to provide potential candidates with a 360-degree view of the current state of the College and serves as a major recruitment tool. In addition to being sent to potential candidates, presidential position profiles are also sent with accompanying solicitation letters from the Chancellor (or the

Chairman for Chancellor's searches) to higher education system and college heads nationwide, asking them to identify and nominate individuals they think would be a good fit for the position. Nominations are encouraged from the college and University community but also from other stakeholders and from the larger community.

- Applications and nominations are typically submitted electronically. A password protected secure website is created where applications, supporting documents and nominations are uploaded. Only committee members and appropriate staff are given access to this site.
- During the course of a search, the search committee holds several face-to-face meetings facilitated by the search consultants, who provide critical background information on applicants typically not apparent in the submitted documents. The consultants also provide information on some individuals who are reluctant to formally declare their candidacy, and work with the committee in strategizing ways to interest such candidates. Sometimes a phone call from a Trustee member or a faculty colleague might help things along. Through this back and forth, the committee, typically identifies 8 to 12 potential candidates for interviews.
- The committee, with the guidance of the search firm, develops and finalizes interview questions and themes.
- Interviews typically take place over one to three days and, in the interest of confidentiality, are held at an undisclosed location.
- Once all the interviews have been conducted, the committee selects typically three to four finalists.
- On occasion, and when appropriate, the committee is also tasked with doing some confidential first round referencing on candidates.
- For presidential searches, the Chair of the committee then communicates the decisions of the committee to the Chancellor.
- The next stage of the process for presidential searches, is for the identified finalists to meet with the Chancellor and the Chancellery and to visit the campus

where they meet with the various constituent groups. Campus groups are then asked to provide their feedback to the Chancellor. However, and I now quote from the bylaws, "After consultation with the search committee, if the Chancellor determines that campus visits would inhibit the generation of a suitable pool of excellent candidates, the Chancellor may, with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board, modify the college consultation process as follows: each finalist shall meet with a group of representatives of College constituencies, including but not limited to elected faculty and student governance leaders and alumni, selected by the Chancellor. Following such meetings, these representatives shall meet and provide the Chancellor with a report on their views of each candidate. The work and communication of those groups shall be conducted confidentially, with the understanding that the members of each group are not to reveal any information concerning the identity of candidates, the contents of its deliberations or any other aspect of its work to persons outside the groups."

- At this juncture, the search consultants and the Office of Executive Search finalize the background checks and referencing.
- For presidential searches, the Chancellor then assesses the feedback received from the various sources engages in negotiations with the candidates, and prepares a recommendation to the Board.
- After the Board has acted upon the Chancellor's recommendation, the Chancellor notifies the finalist and a formal letter of appointment is issued.
- For a Chancellor's searches, the committee is tasked with identifying approximately seven individuals to interview. Once the committee identifies a small group of semi-finalists, these semi-finalists are interviewed by the full board and a finalist is selected in executive session of the full board, followed by a public announcement.

I trust this provides you with a better understanding of CUNY's search process when hiring a new chancellor and college presidents.

Thank you.

END



FOR THE RECORD

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February 6, 2018

Dear New York City Council Committee on Higher Education:

We are pleased to have this opportunity to discuss our deep commitment to diversity in the leadership and faculty throughout The City University of New York, and to share our recent record of notable progress. Diversity is a core value at CUNY, as reflected in the University's strategic plan, "Connected CUNY," and we are proud of our achievements in building and supporting a highly diverse student body, faculty and staff. CUNY's board of trustees has also taken a strong interest in ensuring that we increase its diversity at all levels. We are working closely with the board and relevant committees as it steps up its role in maintaining oversight and ensuring accountability. We also recognize that we can expand on our achievements and we plan to do so. We look forward to discussing our robust programs for improving our record.

For 170 years, CUNY has pursued with consistent success its special mission—ensuring that all New Yorkers, especially those from low-income, underrepresented and immigrant groups, have open access to all the benefits of a high-quality, affordable education. Fulfilling that cause has made the University a remarkable engine of mobility for generations of New Yorkers and contributed to the prosperity and energy of the city. Our historic diversity has been, and remains, one of the most important factors in establishing that record. Diversity brings remarkable levels of creativity and drive to our campuses, and we are passionate about developing programs and working with the City Council to raise the bar even higher.

Here are some of our achievements:

Since I arrived at CUNY almost four years ago, I have hired 10 of our current campus leaders. Of these, eight have been women and people of color. The last two vice chancellors I have hired at the central office are a Latina and an African-American woman.

During the same period, the percentage of new full-time faculty hired from underrepresented groups rose from 30.4 percent in 2014 to 43.8 percent in 2017, largely by pursuing aggressive hiring priorities. The percentage of minority faculty is at 35.9 percent, which is a record for this University. Of particular note, the percentage of new hires that are Black/African American rose from 6.2 percent in 2014 to 15.1 percent in 2017. That is a start, but a good start, we believe. The number of women in our faculty has grown by 107 just over the past year, and women now represent 48.9 percent of the total full-time faculty, a record level at CUNY.

Last spring, I named an important new presidential working group on faculty diversity, chaired by presidents José Luis Cruz and Michelle Anderson. This high-level group ensures that CUNY college presidents and professional school deans are taking an active and aggressive role in developing the policies and practices that will advance our faculty diversity efforts. Importantly, they will ensure that all of

us are accountable in meeting our goals. I directed that the working group identify innovative, evidence-based recruitment and retention policies and practices, develop recommendations for short and long-term faculty diversity goals, and develop recommendations for short and long-term evaluation and accountability standards for measuring CUNY's success in meeting its commitment to faculty equity. I have been impressed by their commitment to and passion for this important work.

What is key is that the working group members have unanimously agreed that CUNY must continue to demonstrate its commitment to expanding faculty diversity through equitable policies and practices that nurture an inclusive climate for all and by organizing its work to achieve tangible, measurable results so that all stakeholders, including the City Council, can clearly see if we are meeting our objectives.

In September, together with University Provost Vita Rabinowitz, I directed all CUNY presidents and deans of the CUNY professional schools to "develop and submit a set of affirmative action plans, one for each department with an underutilization of underrepresented women or minorities that seeks to hire full-time, tenure-track faculty during the 2017-18 academic year," and gives them the option to "require a department to develop the department-specific affirmative action plan before authorizing any search for a faculty member in the area."

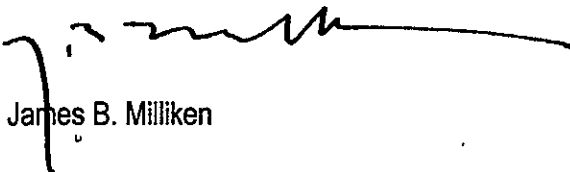
In December the working group asked the Subcommittee for Retention and Competitiveness to develop best practices for the use of University resources to help retain underrepresented faculty and best practices for mentoring underrepresented faculty. Also, CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs partnered with the Harvard Graduate School of Education on a grant from the Harvard Club of New York to send this summer a diverse set of 9 CUNY faculty and administrative leaders, most of whom are from underrepresented groups, to Harvard's renowned immersive leadership programs, free of charge, to expand our capabilities in this critical field. The working group will present its final report by June 1, 2018.

I have established the first Chancellor's Opportunity Fund, which supports recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty by identifying obstacles and investing in campus success. The Fund supports travel costs for interviews and conferences and also start-up costs and contributions to partner hires in year one. All CUNY campuses can apply for funding, and we have already made several awards.

In another program, beginning in 2016, the CUNY Mellon Faculty Diversity Career Enhancement Initiative seeks to develop sustained mentorship and professional development opportunities to increase retention and advancement rates among junior faculty from underrepresented groups. This initiative is tied to University-wide efforts to increase diversity, equity and inclusion in our faculty. Now in its second year, the grant currently supports 55 assistant professors across CUNY campuses.

As I said, this is just a start, but it is a strong start. Our senior leadership and faculty are both committed to our diversity objectives and clear on the need to develop and implement even more robust policies so that CUNY continues to fulfill its special mission with even greater energy in the 21st century.

Sincerely,



James B. Milliken

Esteemed colleagues and members of the public,

My name is Fern Chan, immediate past President of the Continuing Education Association of New York. I appreciate the opportunity to address you today about hiring a new Chancellor and College President at the City University of New York.

We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion and support of quality programs of public continuing education in New York State. The Association is comprised of continuing education departments across CUNY and SUNY schools and serves as an advocate for the post-secondary adult learner and to encourage the professional development of our members. We were established in 1972, and over the 46 years, we have seen the growth and importance of continuing education across the state and how it impacts the lives of adults and the community.

Within the CUNY schools, the continuing education departments across 18 campuses serve over 275,000 adults a year. The role of continuing education and the impact it has on our constituents cannot be understated. Beyond preparing adults to obtain high school equivalency diplomas, we also provide workforce development training in key sectors such as healthcare, education, hospitality, manufacturing and IT among others. Continuing education not only creates a pipeline into college, but most importantly responds to market needs with short-term training, building in industry-recognized credentials and certifications. We engage with employers to fill in skills gap for their incumbent workers as well as train for a new emerging needs and the evolving workforce.

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Continuing education departments are essential to the colleges. We are the entrepreneurial arm of the college, self-sufficient departments funded through grants, contracts, and tuition-based non-credit training programs. Not only do we provide a service to the community, we also give back to the administration to support the mission of our colleges.

It is our hope that the future Chancellor and any CUNY College President will recognize continuing education as an integral part of City University system and appreciate our role in their vision for the upward mobility of the disadvantaged in the city of New York. Making industry connections with employers, being aware of market demands, and forging partnerships benefits the academic side of the college. It also provides the adult learners who make up a significant portion of the workforce with continuing education primarily which transforms them from minimum-wage to middle-wage income earners, provides that bridge to college for those seeking to further their academic pursuits and enhances the skills of working professionals to boost their earning potential.

We are seeking new leaders of our university who understand the essential role of continuing education in the growth of the university and the economic development of New York City. Workforce training and continuing education are the engines of economic development for the university and the city and we look forward to working with the new leaders of the university.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1070 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 2/8/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FERN CHAN

Address: 491 RIVERDALE AVE

I represent: CONTINUING EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF NY

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 2/8/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mahlet Tsegaye

Address: Director - Executive Search and Enrollment Services

I represent: CUNY

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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Appearance Card

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Date: 2-8-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Caron Christian

Address: 230 West 41st Street, New York 10036

I represent: Univ. of St. John's

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 02/08/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Abernathy

Address: _____

I represent: University Student Sent

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms