

Message from the President

March 26, 2020

Recalibration Period at Baruch

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, the Chancellor circulated a letter earlier this week to the entire University community announcing CUNY's "[Recalibration Period for Social Equity](#)." This program creates changes to the University calendar, suspending classes from this Friday, March 27, through Wednesday, April 1, and then resuming online instruction on Thursday, April 2. It also reduces spring recess to three days: Wednesday, April 8, through Friday, April 10.

I know that many of you are unhappy about these changes, and I understand the nature of your concerns. I have seen the extraordinary efforts that so many of you have made to reshape your classes for online delivery. Many of you have communicated to me, to the Provost, and to your Deans that you feel you have been able to recapture momentum from earlier in the semester, and that the last thing you want now is to have your class interrupted by another unanticipated break. I, too, want to preserve our academic momentum, provided that we can do so within both the letter and the spirit of the Chancellor's directive.

I want to underscore the reason why this Recalibration has been implemented and what I am empowered to do under the new policy. The main issue driving the Recalibration is the fact that thousands of CUNY students have reported serious problems in accessing computer equipment, broadband connections, or both. Indeed, many students are trying to connect to their online courses with nothing more than a smart phone. To address this problem, CUNY has acquired 50,000 computing devices that can assist students who are in this difficult situation to get fully online and back in class. These Chromebook devices will begin to be distributed starting this weekend. I applaud the Chancellor's attention to this basic equity issue.

Suspending classes speaks to the fundamental logic of the problem: if we continue to offer courses online before students have access to this equipment, it is estimated that roughly a fifth of CUNY's undergraduate student population will continue to struggle and will fall ever further behind; and some may well drop out. We know that there are many Baruch students among this cohort who are struggling, and we simply cannot let them fail.

We also want to honor and support all of the hard work that you all have undertaken during this crisis. So, in the interest of striking a balance between these objectives, here are the Recalibration implementation procedures for Baruch College, effective immediately:

- 1) Graduate programs whose students are enrolled *as a cohort*, and hence distinct from the general population, can continue on the schedule originally announced when we headed into the previous March 12-18 hiatus. That would include the following graduate degree programs: MA in Mental Health Counseling, MS in Industrial and Labor Relations, Executive MPA, Executive MBA, MS in Industrial & Labor Relations, Executive MBA in Health Care Administration, Executive MS in Information Systems, Executive MS in Finance, and Doctor of Professional Studies in Business. This is clearly permitted in the text of the Chancellor's letter.
- 2) Along with the College's other academic leaders, I explicitly recognize the advantage of asynchronous pedagogy, which can take place at times of the students' choosing, constrained only by instructors' due dates and testing demands. Group assignments and other activities can proceed as planned, provided that faculty make appropriate adjustments in due dates to avoid dates that occur within the Recalibration period—or that assume that students will be able to continue working during that time window in order to advance a graded exercise. It would be inappropriate, for example, to have a large assignment due on April 2, the first day that classes resume. This is a small extension of the kind of flexibility you have already been using as you've supported our students in the move to distance education formats.
- 3) Scheduled, synchronous courses on the regular course grid must move to the new calendar outlined in the Recalibration letter.

It is important that we act uniformly, as a campus, with a single set of procedures to avoid confusion. This is a matter of both transparency and fairness to our students. If we do not act as a whole campus, we will certainly have students who take some classes on the pre-Recalibration calendar while others will be operating on the new calendar. The latter students may not be able to collect their CUNY-issued equipment, and they would lose all but three days of a spring recess. E-permit students would be in the same position.

These guidelines recognize the critical importance of the work to be done during the Recalibration and supports the Chancellery's directive. They also provide flexibility for the large majority of our classes, which are delivered asynchronously, as well as those involving only students enrolled in cohort programs. It provides everyone in our community with a common set of procedures and a shared narrative about purposes.

Let me thank you once again for all of your good work, and for your patience with the cascade of new procedures. I wish I could say with certainty that this will be the last such change; but as Governor Cuomo has noted in his daily press briefings, the pandemic is

hitting us harder and faster than even the public health professionals anticipated. So there may yet be additional changes that we may have to accommodate.

I could not ask for a more dedicated and capable group of professionals with whom to solve these problems than the faculty and staff of Baruch College.

Sincerely,

Mitchel B. Wallerstein, PhD
President, Baruch College

The logo for Baruch College, featuring the word "Baruch" in a large, white, serif font above the word "COLLEGE" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, all set against a dark blue background.The logo for The City University of New York (CUNY), featuring the letters "CU" stacked above "NY" in a large, white, sans-serif font, with the words "THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font to the right, all set against a dark blue background.