



## OPPORTUNITY AMERICA

### RELEASE

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## CUNY CHANCELLOR VOWS TO 'DOUBLE DOWN' ON UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT TO STUDENT CAREER SUCCESS

WASHINGTON – City University of New York (CUNY) chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez told an online audience this week that the university is committed to “improving on [its] track record of engaging students in the world of work and launching them into careers.”

The chancellor was reacting to a new report from Washington-DC-based research and consulting nonprofit Opportunity America, *Today's students, tomorrow's workforce: A roadmap for CUNY community colleges*. The report recommends that CUNY community colleges put job-focused education and career success more at the center of their mission and culture. The online event was hosted by Opportunity America and LaGuardia Community College and attracted some 240 New York educators, employers, funders and policymakers.

“If we were convinced of the need before the pandemic,” **Chancellor Matos Rodríguez** told the audience, “this release reminds us that it’s time to double down on our efforts. At the City University of New York, we are ready for that challenge. It’s part of our DNA. It’s part of our mission, and it’s part of the work that I’m focusing on as chancellor.”

The chancellor underscored several initiatives already under way at CUNY. The university is working with 28 leading New York City companies in the [New York Jobs CEO Council](#) to develop new skills-based credentials, provide paid internships and hire CUNY students. Another industry partnership, with Bloomberg LP, Goldman Sachs and Centerbridge Partners, [CUNY Futures in Finance](#), is focused on preparing CUNY students for jobs in the financial sector. In recent months, the [CUNY Recovery Corps](#) helped 4,100 students find summer employment.

“We see this as part of CUNY’s longstanding tradition as an engine of social mobility for New York City,” Chancellor Matos Rodríguez explained, “and we want to do more.”

Following the chancellor, a panel of New Yorkers positioned to partner with the university in building capacity for job-focused education echoed the call for change. Panelists included employer representative Stephen Fagen from American Express, labor leader Sandi Vito from the health care workers union 1199SEIU and philanthropic funder Farhad Asghar from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Two campus-level CUNY leaders, LaGuardia Community College president Kenneth Adams and Borough of Manhattan Community College president Anthony E. Munroe also participated in event, which was moderated by Spectrum News NY1 political anchor Errol Louis.

Opportunity America's proposals are based on interviews and focus groups with more than 200 New Yorkers: employers, educators, students, nonprofit training providers, union training funds and community-based organizations.

Among the report's top recommendations:

- Monitor the New York City labor market and adjust CUNY course offerings to respond in real time. Does each job-focused CUNY program align with an in-demand occupation? What is the gap between citywide labor market demand and the number of CUNY students who graduate with the skills to meet those needs?
- Create a central employer outreach hub that generates industry partners and job-focused programs for campuses across the university.
- Focus more intentionally on midcareer adult learners, accommodating their unique needs with tailored scheduling, advising and program design.
- Showcase the payoff to job-focused programs by collecting nondegree-seeking students' Social Security numbers and making aggregated data on all students' employment outcomes – job placements and wages – available to the public on an online platform.

Nearly 200,000 students pass through CUNY's seven community colleges each year, just over half of them in a nondegree-granting continuing education division. Among degree-seeking students, 85 percent identify as underrepresented minorities. Nearly 37 percent were born outside the US mainland and 40 percent speak a native language other than English. More than one-quarter are 25 or older and more than half work at least 20 hours a week.

**To read the report, please visit [opportunityamericaonline.org/CUNY](http://opportunityamericaonline.org/CUNY).**

*Opportunity America is a Washington think tank and policy shop promoting economic mobility – work, skills, careers, ownership and entrepreneurship for poor and working Americans.*

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