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**AN OPEN LETTER TO CHAIRPERSON THOMPSON AND
CHANCELLOR MILLIKEN:**

MAKE CUNY A SANCTUARY UNIVERSITY

December 2, 2016

William C. Thompson, Jr.
Chairperson of the Board of Trustees
James B. Milliken
Chancellor
The City University of New York
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Chairperson Thompson and Chancellor Milliken:

The City University of New York was founded on a principle of radical inclusion, as a university for “the children of the people, the children of the whole people.” That principle has been both tested and expanded in the years since 1847, but rarely has it been as urgent as it is now.

President-elect Trump was elected following a campaign that mobilized racism, misogyny, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia and other forms of violent, systematic oppression. His cabinet choices signal an unchanged commitment to normalizing white nationalism. Some of the policies he has already announced may directly target significant numbers of CUNY faculty, staff and students. Many members of the CUNY community now live in bodily fear.

All members of the community are affected when any of us are unsafe. A university cannot operate in a climate of fear.

At immediate risk are undocumented youth, including several thousand CUNY students and their families. President-elect Trump has vowed to revoke President Obama’s executive actions, particularly those concerning immigration reform, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which grants reprieve from deportation and allows undocumented youth to work. Trump has also proposed to create a dedicated task force that will focus on detaining and deporting undocumented residents.

American Federation of Teachers Local 2334

New York State United Teachers • New York State AFL-CIO

American Association of University Professors • New York City Central Labor Council



CUNY is the largest public urban university in the country and New York City is the leading port of entry for immigrants into the United States. The revocation of DACA places the city's most vulnerable new immigrants in danger. It could rip apart students' families and destroy the lives they have worked to build for themselves against great odds. The "Dreamers," as the students protected by DACA are known, are among the most determined and courageous of CUNY's students.

The Professional Staff Congress/CUNY is proud to have been a leader in the coalition that won legislation in 2002 permitting undocumented youth who meet residency requirements to pay in-state tuition rates at CUNY. We commend the University on supporting that legislation and on its continued efforts in support of immigrant students.

The PSC appreciates the statements Chancellor Milliken has made in support of The NYS Dream Act; the statements by Chancellor Milliken affirming support for CUNY's immigrant students following the election of Trump; the statements of support and the forums about the election held by several college administrations; and the webinar on immigrants' rights conducted by CUNY attorneys. We are also aware that the CUNY administration offers an exceptional array of programs to support immigrant students, students with disabilities and others who are at risk.

The current moment, however, calls for more. Several CUNY college governance bodies have already passed resolutions calling for their college to become a "sanctuary campus," and many individual members of the CUNY community have signed petitions calling for such status.

On behalf of the leadership of the PSC, I call on you to make CUNY a "sanctuary university," as that term has been defined by the American Association of University Professors in its November 22, 2016 statement.

Specifically, we call on the University to take the following actions, consistent with New York City's position as a sanctuary city, as reaffirmed forcefully by Mayor de Blasio on November 21:

- **Protect the physical safety of faculty, staff and students at CUNY.** Immediately and unequivocally condemn any acts of violence, any threats and any expressions of bigotry if such acts appear on any CUNY campus.
- **Refuse to allow immigration officials onto any CUNY campus** or center when acting in their official capacity unless specifically ordered to do so by a warrant or court of law.
- **Refuse to provide information on the immigration status of undocumented students or any other sensitive information about CUNY faculty, staff or students** to federal officials unless required by subpoena or court order, or unless prior, explicit authorization has been given by the individual concerned.
- **Direct CUNY security personnel not to take any role in enforcing federal immigration laws** and not act on behalf of U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) or any other immigration enforcement agents.

- **Pledge to prevent unwarranted and unlawful surveillance** of any member of the CUNY community, in adherence with the 2011 ICE memo issued under President Obama, stating that immigration arrests, interviews, searches and surveillance should not occur at “sensitive locations such as schools and churches...unless (a) exigent circumstances exist, (b) other law enforcement actions have led officers to a sensitive location...or (c) prior approval is obtained.”
- **Issue a public statement** that urges state and federal governments to protect students, faculty, staff, and their families from deportation, and calls for a path to permanent residency and citizenship for students, faculty, staff and families.
- **Pledge that the University will make utmost efforts to provide financial aid if DACA is terminated** or substantially curtailed and students with DACA status lose the right to work. Make every effort to provide the financial and other support that would allow undocumented students who qualify for CUNY admission to attend CUNY, regardless of their immigration status.
- **Provide increased resources for immigrant students, faculty and staff** and to all members of the CUNY community who feel or are at risk. Provide safe spaces and a central, electronic resource for relevant resources.

As President-elect Trump’s policy plans are clarified and enacted, the PSC may call on you to deepen the meaning of “sanctuary” and, if necessary, to take stronger measures to protect students, staff and faculty.

There is no time to waste. The actions you take now will define what CUNY stands for at this time and for many years to come. CUNY took the lead in 1847 in defining an inclusive vision of university education, and has taken the lead several times since its founding. The current moment calls urgently for such leadership again. The time to make CUNY a sanctuary university is now.

Sincerely,



Barbara Bowen
President, PSC/CUNY