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October 2, 2026

Dear Board Chairperson Thompson and Esteemed Governance Committee Members,

I write with alarm at the dramatic proposed changes to university Policy 2.12 on the Governance Committee's October 5, 2026, agenda. In the name of "enhancing the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the Board and its work," the proposed changes represent a sharp departure from past practice and current policy regarding the composition of presidential search committees at CUNY. I would like to request a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss the matter and urge withdrawal of the item from the Committee's agenda.

Few decisions affect an academic community as profoundly as the appointment of a new college president. For that reason, Policy 2.12 describes the composition of a presidential search committee in terms of a college's stakeholders. Two clear goals of the policy are proportionality of representation and proximity to the academic enterprise. The current Policy 2.12 permits up to five Trustees to be appointed to a presidential search committee, including former Trustees. The proposed changes include substituting up to five "individuals" for any or all of the positions currently reserved for Trustees. Such individuals need have no relationship to the college for which the presidential search is conducted, nor to the university. Indeed, they need have no track record of public higher education service whatsoever.

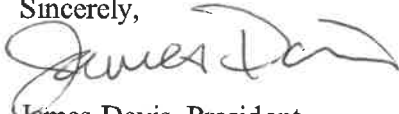
The proposed changes as written are dangerously incoherent:

- *Such appointees may but need not be current and acting members of the Board of Trustees, and may include non-Trustees, former members of the Board of Trustees, and affiliates of the University.* It is clear what a member of the Board is, and clear what a former member of the Board is, but it is unclear what is meant by non-Trustees, what is meant by affiliates of the University, and how they differ.
- *As used in this provision, the term "affiliate" shall mean an individual who is and [sic] independent, outside member of the University, and not otherwise employed or providing services to the University for a fee or compensation.* What is an independent, outside member of the University? The clarification that follows fails to clarify, as it provides examples without definition or restriction. Is the eligibility of an affiliate determined by whether their organization is "aligned with or supportive [of] the mission of the university"? If so, why does the proposed revision unwind this criterion by stipulating that affiliates "need not be limited to" organizations with "aligned" and "supportive" qualities?

Policy 2.12 already provides for the appointment of up to two "representatives of external constituencies." The proposed revision seems aimed either at expanding their number or devising a separate, new category not described by the Policy's current nomenclature.

Policy 2.12 also provides for the suspension of the Procedures guidelines for exceptional circumstances. If Policy 2.12 must be revised in anticipation of exceptional circumstances affecting the composition of a search committee, then a new provision for "special situations," similar to the Procedures guidelines, could be added. Otherwise, the proposed revision threatens to severely attenuate the relationship between search committee members as stakeholders in a college for which they are recommending a presidential appointment. This strikes me as ill-advised and susceptible to abuse, and I strongly recommend that it be reconsidered.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James Davis", with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Davis, President
Professional Staff Congress