November 18, 2004

To: The Graduate Center Community

From: Benno C. Schmidt, Jr., Chairman
The Graduate Center Presidential Search Committee
Chairman, CUNY Board of Trustees

Subject: Presidential Search Progress Report #1

As the CUNY Board of Trustees and The Graduate Center community begin the process of selecting a new president, I would like to advise you that the Presidential Search Committee has been formed, as follows:

Five Trustees have been named, including Valerie Lancaster Beal, Wellington Chen, Randy Mastro, Nilda Soto Ruiz, and myself. The President of a CUNY campus sits on every search committee, and I have named President Ricardo Fernández of Lehman College. The faculty of The Graduate Center have selected three of their colleagues: Professor and Executive Officer Theodore Brown, Professor and Executive Officer Steven Kruger, and Distinguished Professor John Mollenkopf. The two student members are Stephanie Domenici Cabonargi and Paul McBreen. Ms. Caroline Urvater, Graduate Center Foundation Board Member, will represent the alumni. I will chair the committee. Dr. Steven Gorelick, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, will serve as campus liaison to the committee. The first meeting of the Search Committee took place on November 10.

An advertisement for The Graduate Center’s presidency ran in The New York Times of November 14, and ads are scheduled to appear in The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Jewish Forward, Black Issues in Higher Education, Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, Chinese World Journal, and the Affirmative Action Register. At its first meeting, the committee discussed the opportunities and challenges facing a new president and approved the college profile/brochure that will be used to recruit candidates.

Because there are often numerous good candidates who do not respond to advertisements, Chancellor Goldstein and I have engaged the services of Professor Johnathan Cole, Provost and Dean of Faculties, Emeritus, of Columbia University, to assist us in this search.

On November 2, several dozen members of the campus community participated in a series of meetings with Professor Cole, Dr. Robert Ptachik, University Dean for The Executive Office, and some Trustees on the committee, including myself. These meetings were very useful in giving us a clearer picture of The Graduate Center’s needs and priorities and the qualities it considers most important in a new President. Among the many challenges mentioned, the next president must raise the visibility and public awareness of The Graduate Center; continue to implement the consortial model in a
manner that best utilizes the strengths of The Graduate Center and the CUNY colleges; must work to strengthen the financial support available to doctoral students; and must take a leadership role in fundraising.

We expect an outstanding group of candidates because of The Graduate Center’s national reputation, its diverse and motivated student body, its distinguished faculty, and prominent alumni. After narrowing this pool, the committee will invite seven to ten candidates to be interviewed next spring. From those interviews, the committee will select at least three finalists to visit the campus sometime between the end of February and the middle of March.

Each finalist will spend a day on campus meeting with members of different campus groups, as well as addressing an open forum to which all members of the campus community are invited. Feedback from each campus group that meets the candidates will be forwarded to Chancellor Goldstein, to assist him in deciding which finalist to recommend to the Board for appointment.

As we begin the search process, I invite all members of The Graduate Center community to submit the names of any individuals they feel should be encouraged to become a candidate. Those communications should be sent to me, c/o The Office of Executive Search and Evaluation, The City University of New York, 535 E. 80th Street, 3rd Floor, New York, N.Y. 10021. The fax number is 212-794-5532; email can be sent to robert.ptachik@mail.cuny.edu.

The search committee will issue periodic reports to The Graduate Center community to keep it informed of progress in the search, while respecting the need to keep the names of all candidates confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.