The Chancellor

chancellor@cuny.edu

205 East 42nd Street, 18th floor
New York, NY 10017
646 664-9100 tel
646 664-3868 fax

To: College Presidents and Deans; Senior Staff

From: Felix V. Matos Rodriguez, Chancellor

Date: December 23, 2019

Re: CUNYfirst

Dear Colleagues,

I write to update you on the strategic direction CUNY is pursuing with respect to our critical business system – CUNYfirst.

As you know, the CUNYfirst system is an essential technology asset at CUNY that helps us achieve administrative efficiencies and academic priorities. I have asked Chief Operating Officer Hector Batista, Executive Vice Chancellor José Luis Cruz and Vice Chancellor Brian Cohen to establish a strategic vision and identify the key priorities for the ongoing and future investment in our computer systems.

Our strategic vision includes three key priorities:

1. Ensure CUNYfirst continues to operate and support the business needs of the University;
2. Acquire new solutions that support the strategic needs of our HR and Procurement operations;
3. Work to identify and procure new, innovative business systems that will support our future needs and uses.

These three priorities will operate along parallel timelines and will require significant investment of time and subject matter expertise throughout the University.

Priority Area 1: Ensure CUNYfirst continues to operate and support the business needs of the University (Upgrading CUNYfirst)

To ensure the system remains supported by Oracle as we work to achieve our other two stated priorities, we will upgrade CUNYfirst to the current version of PeopleSoft.

Oracle has so far publicly committed to supporting the latest version of PeopleSoft until 2032.

The upgrade of PeopleSoft will:

- Ensure CUNY has a stable and supportable student information platform;
- Improve system performance;
- Provide a mobile-friendly experience with CUNYfirst screens that will automatically re-size to any PC, smartphone or tablet;
- Provide enhanced search functionalities using search engine technology similar to Google;
- Enhance user experience with improved workflows, user tasks, alerts, reports, and queries all combined into a single "command center;" and
- Extend the life of hundreds of supplemental systems currently used across our colleges.

Finally, this upgrade will support CUNY's current and planned student success and inter-campus initiatives. Investments such as the new Schedule Builder system, the DegreeWorks upgrade with the transfer-what-if functionality, EAB, and the new academic systems on the horizon, such as Coursedog's modern schedule, curriculum and catalog planning software will benefit from having the latest CUNYfirst/PeopleSoft platform with which to integrate.

Work has already started on the first phase of the upgrade (splitting the HCM and Campus Solutions databases) and our plan is to complete all the remaining work over the next 24 months.

Priority Area 2: Acquire new systems that enable and support HR business strategies and procurement

To remain innovative in our operations, we must continue to find opportunities and systems that can achieve efficiencies in our business processes, reduce our operating costs, respond to business needs in a timely manner, and improve our customer service.

We have already spent significant time identifying opportunities in our Human Resources and Procurement areas that will benefit from investment and process re-engineering. With the arrival of our new Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, Doriane Gloria, CUNY will immediately begin to improve and invest in our HR systems.

A recently released RFP to procure a modern cloud-based solution will also enhance the procurement process and improve the way we conduct business with our vendor community. The new procure-to-pay system will allow us to move forward with strategically sourcing many of the commodities we purchase, streamline our current processes by providing on-line commodity catalogs, and change how we issue requisitions, receive invoices, and pay our vendors. We will digitally transform a very paper-intensive/manual process into a modern, digital, and efficient experience.

In the Human Resources area, we are beginning the process of documenting our procurement requirements to acquire enterprise solutions to support our payroll operations, collect and report on time and leave, support the employee on-boarding and off-boarding experience, and manage our employee benefits program with the City and State.

We plan to select solutions for both HR and Procurement that will leverage cloud-based technologies and will, for now, integrate with our current PeopleSoft solution. Whatever solutions we select, however, we want to ensure that it can also align with the University's next generation of systems vision.

Priority Area 3: Work to identify and procure new, innovative business systems that will support our future needs and uses

Our business systems must be able to respond to the changing landscape and needs of higher education, as well as be sustainable, flexible, and customer-friendly. While the two strategies I highlighted above will ensure the continued use of CUNYfirst and afford us additional and much needed functionality, we must also begin to identify our next-generation systems at CUNY. We must avoid a situation wherein our current business systems are unsupported, where we cannot be flexible, or where we incur unnecessary business risks.

Therefore, simultaneously with the above activities, we are also beginning to evaluate the marketplace for our next generation systems, research how other higher education systems are proceeding, and financially plan to acquire new solutions. As part of this effort, we will focus on the work to clean-up our data, invest in needed business process re-engineering, and identify/document our requirements and contractual needs to be used in the procurement process. Commencing these efforts early will put the University in the best position for procuring the next generation platform of systems in a timely manner.

I assure you that our work will be both comprehensive and inclusive. It will take into consideration the overall needs of the University, along with the needs of each college. We have already sought the feedback of many of the college CIOs and Vice Presidents for Administration and Finance on the strategy to upgrade PeopleSoft and the plan to acquire systems that are not currently in our technology portfolio. And we will continue to provide you with regular updates on progress made.

I hope that you find the strategy outlined above helpful and informative and are as excited as I am about this direction.

Thank you.