

Stan Altman, President of Baruch College  
Speech at the Taste of Baruch  
held  
September 15, 2009  
at the  
United Nations Dining Room

I grew up believing that when people helped you said thank you. So tonight I want to thank you for all the help you have given Baruch College. It is not just about the financial contributions you've made that are absolutely critical to a public institution like ours, but it is the energy and spirit that you bring to the College and the larger Baruch family. When I became President of Baruch I was reminded of the legacy that was left by those who preceded me and that I am not just the president for the year 2009-2010 but that I'm the president in the 161<sup>st</sup> year of this college.

From the day I became the dean of the school of public affairs and addressed the incoming class of freshman, I've spoken of Baruch in terms of its link to the Free Academy. We still occupy the original site of the Free Academy at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue. The site upon which sits the Lawrence and Eris Field Building at 17 Lexington Avenue is a sacred site in New York's history and in the history of higher education in this country.

Baruch is not just any college. I often say to my colleagues that what makes Baruch unusual is that our mission is not just about educating students. We have a special commitment to all of the professions that our students make their careers in. We have a special commitment to maintaining our role in making New York a much better place for everyone who lives here. The College was created by our city fathers in 1847 because they recognized that for New York to be a vibrant and dynamic place for all the people who lived and worked here there was a need for educational opportunities for everyone. It wasn't enough to provide educational opportunities for those whose parents could afford to send their children to private colleges and universities because that left an awful lot of people out and denied New York City access to the creative energy they possessed. Recognition of this need led to the creation of the Free Academy to

provide higher education opportunities to those qualified and to create the fertile ground for preparing the next generation of society's leaders.

You are now in the zeniths of your career and have experiences that we need to share with our students to impart the wisdom and skills you have acquired during your life. Your continued involvement in the College and sharing of your energy and wisdom with our students is what makes Baruch such a very special place.

September 2009 is the 80<sup>th</sup> year since the opening of 17 Lexington Avenue as the largest building of commercial education in the United States. When it opened in 1929 it was exactly eighty years from the day that the Free Academy had opened in the gothic building that had been built on the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Lexington. So in my mind every eighty years there is a change in the physical façade of the building on 17 Lex, and that change marks the next period of growth in the history of the College. With the renovation of the Lawrence and Eris Field Building at 17 Lexington Avenue we are about to embark on the next eighty years of growth in the College's history. For those of us charged with the stewardship of Baruch College, there are three areas that we think are absolutely incredibly important to us. First and foremost, we are a college that is dedicated to New York City, which is obviously where our heart is and the City that gave birth to us, but we are also increasingly aware of our international role as a result of our students coming from all over the world. The Board of Trustees of the City University of New York gave Baruch a special mission that was to create well rounded professional schools by integrating arts and sciences into professional education. Our mission is to prepare our students to become the next generation of professionals for our institutions of commerce, government and non profit agencies and to become the future leaders of our society. Our society is no longer bounded by country borders. If we are honest with ourselves, we will accept the fact that we are a family that's world wide. The challenge for us is learning how to live like a family, not fight like a family. The mission of our College goes beyond the boundaries of New York and requires that we move both professionally and educationally out into the larger world we are a part of. Therefore, one of our major initiatives focuses on **Professional Development and International Programs**.

Second, we continue to have a major commitment to our students. We have incredible students and there are several here this evening that I hope you have a chance to meet and get to know as I have as their professor in my undergraduate courses. They're from all parts of the globe. They deal with circumstances that are amazing to me. In some cases I've actually said to them "I'm amazed that you're actually still in college given the challenges you have to grapple with in your life". But they have heart and they have the courage to want to do better for themselves. And part of that desire to do better for themselves is a result of the inspiration that people like yourselves bring to the College. We have a commitment to continue making Baruch an excellent place for our students and our faculty, to increasingly diversify our student body even though we are the most diverse college in the United States, to continue to work on diversifying our faculty, to make that diversity enrich the educational experience of our students, to inform our faculty's research and to continue the transfer of knowledge and wisdom to the professions we serve. Our diversity must be more than just a series of statistics, but must become opportunities for people to learn how to breakdown barriers of communication and exchange ideas and information about the cultural norms and the varied ways people see the world. We call our second major initiative **Academic Excellence, Leadership and Diversity**.

The goal of our third major initiative is to expand the boundaries that define the Baruch campus - the little box that bounds us between 22<sup>nd</sup> St. and 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Third Avenue and Lexington Avenue. We call the third initiative **Acquiring Real Estate**. I know for many of you in this room that brings a warm feeling in your heart. As I have said to some of you tonight one of the things we do very well at Baruch is that we know how to make deals. We need to go into the real estate market to begin to acquire property to build out our campus. Not only do we need residence halls for our students, because our students are no longer content with just living at home or finding somewhere to live on their own, they want a residential experience. But we also need a student center for them and we need a first class executive development center. Once we moved to the Vertical Campus and opened the Conference Center on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, I think, it took exactly three days to discover that we were out of space for our executive programs. I remember the feeling I had, when as the dean of the school who thought it was going to hold executive programs on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, I discovered there wasn't any room for them. So we've had to take over space in other buildings to do executive programs. We have a high demand for

the quality education that we offer in our academic programs and those directed at the professional development. In the next couple of years you're going to hear a lot about our making increasing investments in our students, increasing investments in trying to build out the campus so that their experience is more enriching than it currently is and to try to frame our place internationally.

Your commitment and your continuing support for what we do at Baruch is absolutely critical because what makes Baruch special is the fact that it's not just here for one generation. We're not a school where it's all about how much money we generate, we're a school about the people who go here. This is a school with a lot of heart and a lot of spirit and as I said at Eli Mason's memorial service on Sunday "the spirit that you impart in those buildings is an energy that remains when you leave." If you just walk through the halls, no matter what they look like you get the sense that you're in a place that's very special. For us at Baruch who have the responsibility to carry that on, we thank you for the gift that you give us and we continue to thank you for the enormous help that you provide to help us move forward. I hope that you won't mind if we continue to ask for your help because it's the only way we're going to continue to make Baruch as great as it is. So again, I want to thank you tonight for everything you've done and I look forward to thanking you again going forward together.

Thank you very much.