

# The New York Times

## CUNY Picks James Milliken as New Chancellor

By [AL BAKER](#) JAN. 15, 2014

The City University of New York, the country's third largest public university system, turned to Nebraska for its next leader on Wednesday, choosing [James B. Milliken](#), a onetime New York lawyer and longtime college administrator, as its chancellor.

Known to friends as J.B., Mr. Milliken, 56, the president of the University of Nebraska since 2004, will take over a system that has undergone a spate of recent expansion but is still challenged by large pockets of impoverished and academically lagging students, the overwhelming majority of whom come from the city's public schools. Mr. Milliken, who will begin his new job by June, will also be taking over a system that is more than five times the size of the one he is leaving, which serves around 50,000 students.

His predecessor at CUNY, [Matthew Goldstein](#), is credited with raising admissions standards, adding thousands of full-time faculty positions and reforming a system that a mayoral task force in 1999 called "[an institution adrift.](#)"



*James B. Milliken*

Yet Mr. Milliken will [confront tensions](#) caused by Dr. Goldstein's push for common "learning outcomes," a program set up to help students more easily transfer credits from one CUNY college to another and to decrease the number of core courses some colleges require. The program is opposed by most faculty members who see it as a way to centralize control of the curriculum and, they contend, cut down on instruction.

In a statement issued just before CUNY's trustees elected Mr. Milliken in a 14-to-0 vote, Barbara Bowen, the president of the union that represents CUNY's faculty and staff, implored the new

chancellor to "listen to the faculty and respect our knowledge" on

the issue. Ms. Bowen also took issue with the selection process, noting that the names of finalists were not made public.

Benno C. Schmidt Jr., the board of trustees chairman, said the selection committee considered more than 50 candidates and interviewed about a dozen.

In a statement, Mr. Milliken said he was "honored" to lead the country's "premier urban public university." He said he hoped to build on the system's achievements, but provided no policy proposals.

“CUNY today has a world class faculty, talented students, an outstanding reputation, rising enrollments, increased academic standards and the most diverse student body in the nation,” he said.

Mr. Milliken’s annual compensation will total \$670,000, not including the use of a car and residence, officials said. Dr. Goldstein earned \$579,295, though many other presidents at large universities made seven-figure packages in recent years.

Mr. Schmidt said Mr. Milliken had declined several offers from prominent universities that were “far better compensated.” People who know Mr. Milliken said he had recently expressed enthusiasm for addressing the thorny issues CUNY has often wrestled with, and for returning to a city where he attended law school; met his wife, Nana Smith; and worked for several years.

Matt Joeckel, a professor at the University of Nebraska who is a member of the faculty senate, said he was sad to see Mr. Milliken go. “I never felt anything but confidence in his leadership,” he said. “He certainly spoke plainly and cordially and respectfully to the faculty senate.”

Molly Broad, who was the president of the University of North Carolina system when she hired Mr. Milliken to work there in 1998, called him “politically astute,” citing how he led an effort in 2000 to raise money for the university, including working to see a \$3.1 billion bond referendum passed by voters.

Mr. Milliken grew up in Fremont, Neb., and graduated from the University of Nebraska.

He received a law degree in 1983 from New York University, where he was a research assistant to Norman Dorsen, then president of the American Civil Liberties Union. He worked for the city’s Legal Aid Society before becoming a litigator specializing in securities and commodities, officials said.

At Nebraska, where he joined the faculty in 1988, Mr. Milliken led the development of an institute that addresses the challenges of food security and water shortage, developing a reputation as an “internationalist,” Ms. Broad said. He has developed research and education programs in China, India and Brazil, and in 2009, he represented the United States at a United Nations conference in Paris.

He publicly opposed a Nebraska ballot initiative, passed by voters in 2008, that barred the state from using affirmative action in hiring, contracting and admissions decisions.

“Nebraska is in many senses materially different from the City University of New York, but on the other hand we are both about providing opportunity to people who don’t have opportunity,” said **Terrence Martell**, a professor of finance at Baruch College and the chairman of CUNY’s faculty senate, who was on the search committee. “He gets that.”

Last June, Gov. Dave Heineman of Nebraska [criticized Mr. Milliken](#) for serving on the board of Valmont Industries, a manufacturer of metal products including traffic equipment, saying he should focus on the university job. But Mr. Milliken, who said he used his vacation time for his

Valmont work, [remains on the board](#) of the company, based in Omaha. He earned \$129,466 in pay and stock awards from Valmont in 2012, according to a March 2013 public filing by the company.

Jay Hershenson, a spokesman for CUNY, said that as chancellor, Mr. Milliken could serve on corporate boards so long as there was no conflict of interest and the service was approved by the Joint Commission on Public Ethics. Dr. Goldstein also served on corporate boards while chancellor.

Ben Wolford contributed reporting, and Susan C. Beachy contributed research.