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Washington, DC 20008
Mobile: 412-889-0075
December 30, 2019

Chairman Phil Mendelson
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Service on Board of Trustees of the University of the District of Columbia

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

I am pleased to submit the following in response to your letter of December 16 requesting answers to various questions concerning my past and possible services to the District, specifically to the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). It will be my pleasure to appear before the Council to discuss the University and my service to it.

In response to your request for the Financial Disclosure Statement I filed with the Board of Ethics, I enclose the statement filed for 2018 on May 18, 2019. Nothing substantial has changed since that filing. Questions 1-8 are therefore not answered here.

9. I have served on the UDC Board since 2016 as a replacement for the Reverend Kendrick Curry.

10. Currently I serve on the following Boards in addition to UDC:

- Dollar Bank, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Tuition Plan Consortium (a college savings program for private institutions)
- PLEN Board of Advisors (Public Leadership Education Network- a national program for women college students who are being prepared and encouraged to seek public office)
- American University of Rome (AUR)

11. I have no outstanding liabilities owed to the District of Columbia

12. I have no direct or indirect conflicts of interest created by my family or otherwise that might impede my performance of my duties for UDC.

13. I contributed to Mayor Bowser's re-election campaign for Mayor.

14. No, I am not a registered lobbyist.

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15. I serve on the Academic Affairs and Executive Committees, as well as a special task force on Student Outcomes (focused on student performance and achievement), and as Secretary to the Board. During my service, I was also a member of the Operations Committee (often known as a Buildings and Grounds committee elsewhere).

16(a). My priorities for the University are guided by the strategic plan for the University, "The Equity Imperative". As a trustee, it is my duty to support the initiatives that we as a Board have approved, working with the president and administration, as well as leaders of the District. But of course, I have my own priorities within these goals. If you will permit me a short statement, and I will then list just four specific goals.

General statement of priority:

I am in strong support of what I read as the main goal of the strategic plan which is to demonstrate and advocate the value of PUBLIC higher education in the nation's capital. Given the laudable and correct wish to make the District a state, we should also wish to make UDC a suitable state university. We still have a way to go, given past cuts of various kinds and current need for academic program development funding. But we have certificates and associate degrees all the way through law and doctoral degrees in urban leadership and engineering. In the jargon, we are building "stackable credentials" starting where we are, assessing what we need and a plan to get there, as part of an academic master plan. Chief among the ways to make the university an exemplary public institution is to provide an array of excellent, affordable programs matching the work force needs of the district, from entry level work force training such as nurses' aides or associate degree RN's through doctoral degrees such as nursing. Broad educational development (beyond just basic workforce programs) at all levels should be aspired to, including continuing education for the many professionals in the District. One example of a program that fits the meaning of "broad educational development", but really is so much more, is the CAUSES program, which is UDC's exceptional program dealing with the environment and sustainability, especially in an urban setting and with the underpinning of the African diaspora. This program not only deals with one of the most urgent issues of our times, but also is the basis for a great deal of connection and visibility for the University beyond the District (not to speak of its being the very model of a land grant university setoff activities/programs).

Specific priorities for UDC:

1. **Funding to support UDC's academic program growth and improvement** on a path to excellence and more comprehensive service to the District.
2. **Repair of UDC's physical infrastructure** . There is a relatively new building, the Student Center, that masks that the others are at risk of breaking down and making educating

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our students impossible. Physical infrastructure should include providing equipment that is needed for classrooms which is in short supply or need of renewal.

3. **Further Demonstration that we are able to provide successful student outcomes** at an affordable price in such a way as to warrant the confidence placed in us as THE public institution of the District of Columbia. This requires support for hiring excellent faculty and their training to teach students who come from a wide variety of backgrounds—a challenge that will grow harder as we are able to attract a greater range of students due to our combination of affordability, excellence, and student centeredness in this great city in this great nation.
4. **Finally, we need to get the word out.** We do need marketing money, but we really also need good word of mouth for all the great things that are happening under the current regime. Perhaps that could be enhanced by partnerships that would both give our students real world experience but also provide a sense of ownership and pride in local citizens in the accomplishments of our students and their ability to contribute to the District.

16(b) My **vision for the next five years** is for the University to make the necessary progress on the Strategic plan outlined in the Equity Imperative. I would like to see UDC get recognition for the progress it has made rebuilding and in the face of the TAG incentive for DC residents to go elsewhere to study; encouragement and support for keeping high ambitions and goals, as people recognize the meaning of having a public university in their midst would be good. Specifically, achieving clarity that UDC is a comprehensive university which offers degrees through the doctorate, but also associates degrees, many with a workforce orientation, that “ladder” up to higher degrees would be very helpful. “Community college” is a highly ambiguous term today in educational circles, as it means, in common parlance, what we used to call “junior colleges.” However, places like Miami Dade, perhaps the best of its breed, call themselves “community colleges” and offer both associates degrees and baccalaureate degrees because the bachelor’s is a new minimum certification in many fields. I believe UDC should be as it is, this community’s university, while still also offering a full community college functionality. We should aspire for UDC to be the City College of DC (modeling on the one in New York City) for tomorrow, where every aspiring, capable hard-working young person could know that they could find an academic home they could afford.

17. The enrollment at the University will not be an issue if the University is funded to provide degrees in the number and quality they are needed. Health Sciences alone as disciplines will fill the classrooms as well as the workforce needs of the District. Instead we struggle (successfully, I might add) to grow our nursing program back. I believe “product” that is offered, more than recruitment by itself, is the key to growing enrollments. I also believe affordability and some hard thinking about how to help the population that UDC serves be able to attend, persist, and succeed is crucial to the future.

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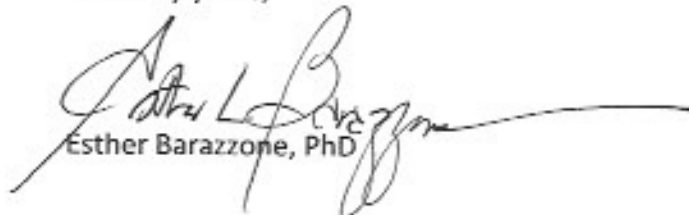
18. There are many things that could be done if there were more hands to do it. It is very hard to build/rebuild a fundraising program after years of institutional demoralization. It is practically impossible with only 1-2 staff which is what the UDC Foundation has. But there is a good Foundation Board that is stepping up to help ask more of all the alumni, as well as the Board. What is needed now is more hands, and a concerted reputation building and outreach effort so that the process of jumping on a winning bandwagon can get underway.

19. Building priorities must focus first and foremost on health and human safety. The elevators, the heaters, the coolers, are all "iffy." It is an affront to the students who attend not to fix these things, urgently. Beyond that, I would focus on academic and faculty needs for equipment and proper learning environments. Housing is important to UDC as well, to provide the opportunity for a sufficiently diverse student body to enroll.

Chairman Mendelson and Members of the Council, I appreciate the opportunity to answer these thought-provoking questions. I would like to make just one final point: I spent my career in private higher education before I moved here three years ago, and still remain involved in many ways with it. But I increasingly understand the importance of an affordable alternative, with equally high standards, that specifically does the work of educating citizens and workers. UDC as the least expensive alternative in this District can reach the point of filling that important role. I am very excited by what UDC could do even more powerfully for the District, in its community, economic, and human development in the future.

We all at the University of the District of Columbia are grateful for your support thus far and I hope you will join even more fully in a widened vision. I thank you for your consideration of my candidacy and I hope you will give me the opportunity for additional service to UDC and the District.

Sincerely yours,


Esther Barazzone, PhD