

Bloomberg donates \$25 million for fellowship at New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

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Last month, New York University (NYU) announced that Bloomberg Philanthropies had donated \$25 million to the university's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. The donation will be used to endow the Georgina and Charlotte Bloomberg Public Service Fellows Program.

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the philanthropic organization of former New York City mayor and multibillionaire founder of Bloomberg News Michael R. Bloomberg.

The announcement takes place under conditions where over 2,000 graduate student workers at the university are preparing to go on strike next week for a living wage, decent health care coverage and adequate childcare benefits. The donation by number 21 on the global list of billionaires is one more exposure of the NYU administration's fraudulent argument throughout 10 months of negotiations that it has "no money" to improve the living and working conditions of university workers. The university's board of trustees includes some of Wall Street's most powerful and wealthy figures.

It is, rather, a question of the administration's priorities, and the economic interests that determine those priorities. When it comes to serving the interests of the ruling class, NYU has an abundance of resources.

The new fellowship, named after Bloomberg's daughter and mother, both of whom received degrees from NYU, will offer up to 20 students per year full-tuition scholarships to complete either a Master of Public Administration or Master of Urban Planning degree at NYU Wagner. The so-called Bloomberg Public Service Fellows will be carefully selected by a panel of judges composed of representatives from the Bloomberg Foundation and NYU Wagner.

Under the close guidance of NYU Wagner faculty and the network of "mayors and government leaders" associated with Bloomberg Philanthropies, the recipients of the scholarships will be molded into grade A defenders of the ruling class against the working class. The first batch of Bloomberg Fellows has already been selected for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Not only will the students' tuition be fully covered by the Bloomberg Fellowship, the program will provide all

Bloomberg Fellows with funded summer internships, for the purpose, according to the official announcement, of enabling the students to "gain experience in the practice of public service in the public or nonprofit sector."

The program's stated goal is to produce future leaders who will be instrumental in "shaping the ability of the nonprofit and government sectors to address the most pressing challenges confronting our nation."

Ranked number nine out of 275 public affairs and administration master's programs across the country by *US News & World Report*, Wagner has specialized in funneling students into the service of the ruling class for over 60 years. The school offers extensive funding to students through the Pickering Foreign Affairs Program, the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation and numerous other programs and organizations with strong ties to the US state and military-intelligence apparatus.

Students who accept the ASPIRE scholarship, for instance, are required to do a related internship over the summer break, and after graduating, they must spend two years in government service. According to a 2015 article in the *Guardian*, roughly 29 percent of the students who receive the scholarship are slotted into the National Security Agency (NSA).

Wagner's degree programs are taught and organized by faculty who previously worked for the government on a local or national level, or both. Some of the most prominent faculty members are:

Mitchell L. Moss: Henry Hart Rice Professor of Urban Policy and Planning, and director of the Rudin Center for Transportation. He will be overseeing the Bloomberg Fellowship at NYU Wagner. In 2019, Moss was appointed by New York Mayor de Blasio to serve on the mayor's expert panel on the Brooklyn Queens Expressway Project. He had earlier served under Governor Andrew Cuomo and was an adviser to Bloomberg during his first campaign for mayor in 2001. Moss is currently a member of the Steering Committee of the Association for a Better New York, a non-profit with representation ranging from Amazon to BlackRock. He has also directed research projects for the National Science Foundation

and the US Department of Homeland Security and has been a consultant to leading corporations and government agencies.

Katherine O' Regan: Professor of Public Policy and Planning at NYU Wagner. She spent April 2014 through January 2017 in the Obama administration, serving as the assistant secretary for policy development and research at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Ken Zimmerman: Adjunct Assistant Professor of Urban Planning of NYU Wagner. Zimmerman served as the director of US programs for billionaire George Soros's Open Society Foundations. Before that, he served on Obama's presidential transition team for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Previously, he was a litigation partner at Lowenstein Sandler PC and chief counsel to former New Jersey Democratic Governor Jon S. Corzine.

Sarah Gerecke: Adjunct Associate Professor of Urban Planning at NYU Wagner. Gerecke served as deputy assistant secretary for the office of housing counseling at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 2011 to 2019. Prior to that she held appointed positions in the New York City government under Democratic Mayors Ed Koch (1978-1989) and David Dinkins (1990-1993).

Gordon J. Campbell: Professor of Practice and Director of the Executive MPA Program at NYU Wagner. Campbell served in senior positions in the New York City mayoral administrations of Ed Koch, David Dinkins and Rudy Giuliani (1994-2001).

Brendan McLaughlin: Adjunct Assistant Professor of Urban Planning at NYU Wagner. He serves as the deputy commissioner for policy and strategy at the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Previously, McLaughlin held various positions in connection with corporate strategy, investor relations and equity research in the financial services industry.

Scott Taitel: Clinical Professor of Public Service and Director of Social Impact, Innovation & Investment at NYU Wagner. Taitel created the Social Innovation & Investment Initiative at Wagner, through which he works closely with various policymakers, philanthropists, finance professionals, nonprofits and foundations to "address our most pressing social challenges." The initiative has received funding from the Ford Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Prior to NYU, he served as the chief operating officer for the Clinton Foundation's Enterprise Partnership and was a managing partner of an international venture capital firm.

Wagner alumni have gone on to play leading roles in various corporations, banks, local and federal government administrations and nonprofits, often heavily supported by corporations and banks. Bloomberg stated: "When I served as mayor, our team and the entire city benefited from the talent and drive of NYU Wagner graduates."

Bloomberg's administration was responsible for ruthless

attacks on workers in New York City, including an escalation of the New York Police Department's infamous "stop-and-frisk" policy. This went along with city-backed strikebreaking, mass arrests of peaceful protestors, job cuts, tax hikes, contract givebacks, etc. His 12 years as mayor (2002-2014) were far from beneficial for "the entire city," but quite lucrative for Wall Street.

NYU's establishment of the multimillion-dollar Bloomberg fellowship at the Wagner School further exposes the university's deep ties to the American state, the Democratic Party, the military-intelligence apparatus and Wall Street. Since the mid-twentieth century, NYU has functioned as a center for military research and training. In recent years, the university has expanded its work for the capitalist state, including the establishment of the Center of Social Media & Politics, which is playing a significant role in the surveillance of political activity on social media.

At the same time, the university has exhibited complete disregard for the wellbeing of students, staff and faculty, carrying out vicious attacks on workers and subordinating student mental health and food security to profit interests. It has repeatedly shown utter contempt for the most basic democratic rights.

The university's decision to hold in-person classes and work amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed over 32,000 people and infected 899,000 more in New York City alone, is no less dictated by the interests of the millionaire administrators and the multimillionaires and billionaires that dominate the NYU board of trustees.

These ties demonstrate that the struggle of students and workers at NYU is a political struggle against both corporate-controlled parties and the entire capitalist system. Graduate student workers at NYU must base their strategy on an orientation toward the broadest sections of the working class in New York City, across the US and internationally, which are now entering into a struggle for social rights. Appeals must be made to this powerful, revolutionary social force, not the university administration and the political representatives of the ruling class.



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