

Presentation of Martin Meyerson Award for Distinguished Leadership in Higher Education to Lawrence Bacow, ACSP Administrators Conference, 27 March '25, Denver Colorado.

Bruce Stiffel

Thank you for being here for the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first ACSP Administrators' Conference held in Atlanta in 1997, hosted by Georgia Tech Dean Thomas Galloway, the first chair of ACSP's Committee on the Academy and the Profession. The administrators' conference was started by Genie Birch when she was ACSP president. Birch felt that, as ACSP had grown its work as a learned society, that its function as an association of schools had lost momentum. She believed this conference series would help chairs and deans to develop professionally and would help ACSP to know how best to respond to the evolving needs of planning schools.

In 2005, the Committee on the Academy and the Profession began the Martin Meyerson Award for Distinguished Leadership in Higher Education to celebrate the many urban planning academics who were leaders in universities, believing that our small profession punched above its weight in higher education administration. That year, the first Meyerson awardee was Carl Patton, president of Georgia State University.

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From where we sit, it often seems university leadership was simpler in times past.

The *New Yorker* recently described a weeks-long student protest about campus food at Harvard in 1766. The students chanted, "Behold, our butter stinketh!"

Even the years of Martin Meyerson's leadership at Berkeley, Buffalo, and Penn in the 1960s and 70s seem relatively calm today as our leaders, as you, grapple with the aftermath of COVID, indirect cost formula changes, immigration upheaval, and the double-edged fallout of the Gaza war.

In these times it was so uplifting for Genie Birch, Tim Chapin and I to read the nominations for the Martin Meyerson Award. I wish I could tell you about all the nominees, but that isn't how these things work.

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Imagine persuading a major research university that planning students should enjoy a 75 percent reduction in tuition because their lifetime earnings would not support today's tuition rates. Larry Bacow did that!

Imagine putting campus-wide course materials on the web, open access for all. Larry Bacow did that!

Imagine increasing student financial aid by 94 percent during a presidential term. Larry Bacow did that!

Imagine crafting a ten-year partnership with campus-adjacent cities committing a non-profit university to payments in lieu of taxes, the cities to student financial aid, and growth in community service activities. Larry Bacow did that!

Imagine creating a new college with mission to educate *all* students to be agents of community change. Larry Bacow did that!

Imagine successfully litigating against the US Department of Homeland Security overturning the ruling during COVID that online students could not physically remain in the USA. Larry Bacow did that!

Imagine setting up a committee to examine the legacy of slavery on your campus resulting in a \$100 million fund to counteract historic injustices. Larry Bacow did that!

Imagine sunseting investments by your endowment to achieve net-zero green-house gas emissions across the investment portfolio. Larry Bacow did that!

Larry Bacow stands as a beacon, lighting up the possibilities for positive change in universities through visionary leadership.

Please join me in congratulating Larry Bacow, chancellor at MIT, president at Tufts, and president at Harvard; the 2025 ACSP Martin Meyerson Distinguished Higher Education Leader!