

**President Eugene A. Colligan
1932-1939
Finding Aid**



Archives and Special Collections



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GENERAL INFORMATION

Accession Number: 97-33

Size: 2.7132 cu. ft.

Provenance: Hunter College Office of the President

Restrictions: None.

Location: Range 4 Section 1 Shelves 5-6

Archivist: Prof. Julio L. Hernandez-Delgado

Assistants: Ms. Stephanie Drouillard
Ms. Gretchen Opie

Date: June, 1999

Revised: March, 2011

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eugene Aloysius Colligan, son of John J. Colligan and Eliza McMahon, was born in Brooklyn, New York on January 14, 1888. He received his early education in the public schools of Brooklyn, where he attended P.S. 148 and subsequently graduated from Eastern District High School. In 1908 he earned a B.S. from Teacher's College, Columbia University. He later did graduate work at Fordham University, receiving an A.M. in 1922 and a Ph.D. in 1927.

Colligan worked in the public schools of New York City as a teacher and an administrator for over twenty years. He began his career as an elementary school teacher at P.S. 148 in Brooklyn in 1908. In 1912 Colligan transferred to Eastern District High School where he taught history, civics and economics until 1924.

Colligan's first administrative post in New York City was as principal of Boys High School from 1924 to 1931. On January 28, 1931, he was named the Associate Superintendent of Schools of New York City where he supervised sixty-four junior high schools. Colligan officially remained in this post until August 31, 1933.

It should be noted that in addition to Colligan's aforementioned teaching and administrative assignments, he also served as a lecturer and/or instructor at Brooklyn Teachers' Association, 1913-1915; Fordham University Teachers College (Professor of Education), 1919-1928; Fordham University Graduate School, (part-time Professor of History), 1921-1931; Fordham University, Summer Sessions, 1921-1931; and finally at the Catholic Summer School of America where he was a Professor of Education and chair of the History Department, 1928-1932.

Colligan was inaugurated as the fourth president of Hunter College on May 16, 1933. The public response to the Board of Higher Education's decision was mixed. Many questioned his qualifications for college-level administration since his previous work had been with the public junior high and high schools. In spite of the objections, however, Colligan was inaugurated on September 1, 1933.

As Hunter's president, Colligan was involved in developing a number of departmental and curriculum changes. He was also involved with the continued construction of Hunter College in the Bronx, which had opened its first of four buildings in 1931. Perhaps the most memorable event of his presidency was the 1936 fire that closed the main Hunter College building. Colligan was faced with having to find immediate emergency quarters for the college and later with overseeing the planning and initial construction of a new sixteen-story building.

In June 1939 Colligan unexpectedly requested an extended leave of absence, citing ill health. The Board of Higher Education granted him a one year leave at full salary. In November 1939, he resigned his position amid controversy and widespread speculation that his resignation had not been voluntary.

It was later revealed that a majority on the Board of Higher Education had indeed forced Colligan to resign. According to some reports, Board leaders had met privately with Colligan on June 19, 1939, telling him that if he didn't resign, his salary would be dropped from the budget, and he would lose his pension rights. They instructed Colligan to request a leave of absence, and then write a post-dated letter of resignation, effective when the leave ended. Throughout his tenure at Hunter, Colligan had not been well regarded among Hunter's faculty and administrators. They, along with the Board of Higher Education, questioned his administrative abilities and methods, claiming that he ran the college like a high school. Colligan had also frequently been accused of supporting the growing Fascist movements in Italy and Germany—charges he adamantly denied. His resignation ended Colligan's thirty-one year career in public education.

Following his resignation, Colligan was a vice president of the Long Island City Savings Bank. He died in 1959 at the age of 71.

Gretchen Opie

Julio Luis Hernandez-Delgado

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The President Eugene A. Colligan Collection briefly highlights the tenure of Hunter College's fourth president during a period of economic and political instability in the United States of America. The collection consists of biographical information, inauguration materials, addresses, correspondence, committee minutes, financial records and general reports. Key folders in this collection document the February 14, 1936 fire that destroyed a significant portion of the college edifice, Hunter College's participation in the World's Fair of 1939, and President Colligan's abrupt and controversial resignation from Hunter College in November 1939.

The Colligan Collection is rather small because the bulk of his administrative records were not saved. President Colligan's hasty and contentious resignation from Hunter College may explain the scantiness of materials in this collection. However, surviving records do provide invaluable information on the operation of Hunter College between 1934 and 1939, and the contributions of one of its most controversial presidents.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Series I - Personal and Biographical

Series I consists of a questionnaire and personal data about the life of Dr. Eugene A. Colligan.

Series II - Inauguration

Series II consists of correspondence and documents related to Dr. Eugene A. Colligan's inauguration as the fourth president of Hunter College in 1933.

Series III - Administration

Series III consists of correspondence, annual reports, and financial documents. In addition, there are papers relating to the work of various college committees, as well as materials from the Board of Higher Education. There are three key folders in this series. The first highlights the work of the Hunter College Committee for the World's Fair of 1939. The second summarizes a four alarm fire that destroyed a significant portion of the college edifice on February 14, 1936. Researchers will find newspaper articles, correspondence, interviews, and a preliminary report on cause and effect of the devastating fire. The third key folder delves into the unclear and contradictory circumstances that led to President Colligan's abrupt resignation from his post in November 1939. Correspondence, resolutions, and newspaper articles provide an interesting backdrop to President Colligan's departure from Hunter College which caused considerable consternation amongst administrators, faculty and the general public. The arrangement is alphabetical then chronological within most folders.

Series IV - Reports

This series contains reports from the Committee on Cost, Evening and Extension Sessions, Summer Session, and a report on the youth activities at Hunter College. The reports are arranged alphabetically.

Series V - Scrapbook

Dr. Colligan received a scrapbook from members of the cast of *Master Skylark* which was presented at the graduation exercises at Straus Junior High School on February 1, 1932. Included are black & white photographs of the dramatization and of the school.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES I - PERSONAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
1	1	Biographical Information Eugene A. Colligan, Ph.D., LL.D., March 8, 1932 Questionnaire for inclusion in <i>New Revised Edition of the American Catholic Who's Who</i> , ca. 1934 Personal data of Eugene A. Colligan for inclusion in the <i>Biographical Directory of Leaders in Education</i> , (not sent) ca. 1934 Personal data of Eugene A. Colligan for inclusion in <i>The International Who's Who</i> , ca. August 1934 Personal data of Eugene A. Colligan for inclusion in <i>Who's Who in America</i> (not sent) ca. 1934 Dr. Eugene A. Colligan, Material prepared for use of the <i>Wistarion</i> by the President's Office, February 28, 1934 Short Biography of Eugene A. Colligan that was mimeographed in the Journalism Office (of Hunter College) February 1934 Biography of Dr. Eugene A. Colligan, March 1, 1937 Biographical sketch of Eugene A. Colligan prepared by the Journalism Office of Hunter College and sent to Mr. Frank P. Graves, Commissioner of Education on February 6, 1939
	2	Vitae, ca. 1933

SERIES II – INAUGURATION

1	3	Inauguration Committee, January-April 1934
	4	Invitations, 1934
	5	Order of Academic Procession, May 4, 1934
	6	Program, May 4, 1934
	7	The Inauguration of Eugene A. Colligan as the Fourth President of Hunter College of the City of New York, May 4, 1934

SERIES II – INAUGURATION

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		Correspondence-Felicitations
1	8	A-C
	9	D-F
	10	G-I
	11	J-L
	12	M-O
2	1	P-R
	2	S-W
	3-4	Western Union Telegrams, 1934
		Articles
	5	Hahn, E. Adelaide. "Hunter's New President." <i>The Alumnae News</i> (October 1933): 1-2.
		"Dr. Colligan Inducted at Hunter; LaGuardia Pledges Cooperation." <i>The New York Times</i> , May 5, 1934, p. 19.
	5	Woolf, S.J. "Hunter's President States His Creed." <i>The New York Times</i> , April 29, 1934, p. 8.

SERIES III – ADMINISTRATION

2	6	The Abolition of Fees for Limited Matriculated Students, 1939
		Addresses
	7	Colligan, Eugene A. "An Appreciation of our President." Address delivered at the Alumni Luncheon at Columbia University, New York, on June 4, 1935
		---. "Has Higher Education Any Real Plan or Definitive Goal?" Address delivered at the WNYC radio station at 5:00 p.m. on November 30, 1935
		---. "Catholic Leadership--a Challenge and a Hope." Address delivered at the Commencement of St. Thomas College, Scranton, Pennsylvania, on June 7, 1936
		--- "Hunter College Serves the City of New York." Address delivered over WNYC on February 14, 1938

SERIES III – ADMINISTRATION

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
2		Addresses
	7	Colligan, Eugene A. "History, Present Status and Hopes for the Future of Hunter College of the City of New York." Talk delivered over WMCA radio station on February 15, 1937
	8	Alien Students at Hunter College, 1938
	9	Annual Report of the President of Hunter College for the Year 1938-1939, October 13, 1939
		Board of Higher Education
	10	1932-1933, 1935
	11	1937
3	1	1938
	2	1939
	3	Budget, 1935
		Committees
	4	Committee of Five, 1937-1938
	5	Committee on Stoppage of Increments, 1938
		Curriculum Study Committee
		Correspondence, Memoranda, and Reports
	6-7	1934
	8	1935
	9	1936
	10	1937
4	1	1938
	2	Survey Committee, 1934
		Correspondence
		Incoming
	3	June 1932-November 1934
	4	December 1934-June 1939
		Outgoing
	5	March 1932-August 1939
	6	A Discussion of Public Higher Education, 1935

SERIES III – ADMINISTRATION

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
5	1	Dual Job Law, 1939
		Finance
	2	Appropriations-Personal Service, 1928-1937
	3	Budget Requests for Text and Reference Books, 1934-1937
	4	Payroll, 1935-1939
	5	Per Capita Costs of Instruction, 1922, 1931, 1935-1937
	6	Report on Unit Costs, 1937-1939
	7	Salary Rates, 1931-1934, 1938
	8	Summary of Report on Absence, 1935-1937
	9	Trust Fund Investments, 1933, 1937-1939
	10-11	Hunter College Committee for the World's Fair, June 1939
	12	Hunter College Fire, February 14, 1936
		Hunter College in the Bronx
		Correspondence
		Incoming
	13	January 1934-September 1937
		Outgoing
		December 1933-September 1937
	14-15	Materials on the Resignation of President Eugene A. Colligan, 1939
	16	Memoranda, 1935, 1937-1939
6	1	<i>Mibi Cura Futuri; a play</i> , 1937
	2-3	Miscellaneous Materials
	4	New York Teachers Union, 1938
	5	Report of Interview of the Custodial Staff of the Bronx Buildings by Detective Gun and Lieutenant Donelon of the 50 th Precinct, submitted by Professor Ann Anthony, May 5, 1938
	6	Salary Statistics of the Teaching Staffs of City Colleges for the Year 1934 Student Loan Fund, 1939
	7	Syllabi: Character and Citizenship Training, 1933 Chief and Subordinate Aims and Purposes of our School System, 1933
	8	Teaching Staff, 1933-1934

SERIES III – ADMINISTRATION

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
6	9-10	Tenure, 1936-1939

SERIES IV – REPORTS

6	11	Report of the Evening and Extension Sessions of Hunter College February-June 1934
7	1	September 1934-January 1935
	2	February-June 1935
	3	September 1935-January 1936
	4	February-June 1936
	5	September 1936-January 1937
8	1	February-June 1937
	2	September 1938-January 1939
	3	February-June 1938
	4	September 1938-June 1939
	5	Report of the Speech Department for the Summer Session of 1936, August 17, 1936
	6	Special Report for Mr. John T. Flynn on National Youth Administration Activities at Hunter College of the City of New York Bureau of Occupations for the period covering February 1937 to July 1938, ca. 1938
	7	Study of Cost and Personnel (not primarily instructional) in the Municipal Colleges of the City of New York: A Joint Survey by the Board of Higher Education and the Municipal Civil Service Commission, ca. 1938

SERIES V – SCRAPBOOK

9	Straus Junior High School, February 1, 1932
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