

HISTORY

Hunter College has its origins in the movement for normal school training which swept the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century. While the legislature of New York State had for many years previously been faithfully granting subsidies to academies within the state for the education of "teachers of common schools", the first state normal school in New York was founded in 1844. Other normal schools soon afterward appeared. As early as 1851, there was an authorization to the Board of Education of the City of New York to organize "normal schools for the education of teachers."

When this opportunity was not improved, a more comprehensive grant of power was offered to the educational fathers of New York City in 1854:

"To continue the existing Free Academy, and organize a similar institution for females, and if any similar institution is organized by the board of education, all the provisions of this act, relative to the Free Academy, shall apply to each and every one of the said institutions, as fully, completely, and distinctly as they could or would if it was the only institution of the kind . . ."

These provisions are noteworthy in that they laid the basis for our present group of public institutions of higher learning of New York City, by indicating the Free Academy of that time (later to become the City College), as the model for other institutions of its kind.

The only high school in New York City at the time was the Evening High School for boys. Public instruction beyond the grammar grades was limited to "supplementary classes" in the various grammar schools, which conducted students through one or two years of additional studies. From these classes, or from the grammar grades directly, prospective teachers went into the schools to serve as apprentices under the school principals.

Under the Act of 1854, a Daily Normal School was established in New York City. While apparently a success in academic education, the Daily Normal School was a failure as a normal school. It existed but three years, after which normal instruction of the preparatory type was abandoned. A Saturday Normal School, for the improvement of teachers already engaged under the Board of Education, was thereafter the only institution which afforded normal training. The instruction in the Saturday Normal School was merely of high school grade. Following these earlier unsuccessful attempts in New York City to establish normal training, the Normal and High School for females was organized by the Board of Education in the fall of 1869, for improvement of the training of teachers, and as an economy move.

The formal opening of the Normal and High School for females took place on February 14, 1870, with the transfer of students from fifty-four "supplementary classes" of the public schools. By providing for the instruction of the "supplementary classes" in one school, the Board of Education planned to economize. The third floor of a building at No. 691 Broadway (the southeast corner of Broadway and Fourth Street), an urban and entirely unsuitable location, was leased for the school. Here, there was a constant rumble of stage-coaches and wagons passing on the Belgian pavement of Broadway. The ceremony of the opening of the school was attended by a number of prominent visitors, members of the Board of Education, the faculty, consisting of President Hunter, Vice-President Dundon, and three professors, and the staff, made up of the Lady Superintendent, the Librarian and Secretary, and twenty other instructors and tutors. The faculty and staff were drawn, with one exception, from the public school system.

The total number of students admitted to the Normal and High School in the first semester was 1105. Of these students, practically all came in by competitive examination. The questions on the examinations for admission were prepared by the president. Three hundred of the students were found capable of doing high school work. No sooner was the Normal and High School opened than it was found to be overcrowded. Thereupon, one-half of the floor below the school was leased, and hastily furnished and equipped.

In its first president, Thomas Hunter, the Normal and High School secured an educator of courage, wisdom, and vision: one who believed earnestly in the importance of higher education for women. The purpose of the Normal and High School President Hunter conceived to be "to furnish a higher and better education and training for the teachers of the Common Schools." The course of study was planned to consist of six grades, which should require three years for completion. The three classes were the Introductory, the Sophomore, and the Senior, each subdivided into Higher and Lower grades. The curriculum carried out the theory of President Hunter, that "Normal study and normal practice, to be effective, must be based on the broad foundation of a liberal education." Latin, modern languages, science, mathematics, and other studies were required. Pedagogy was introduced in the first semester of the third year, and practice teaching in the last semester. President Hunter had no faith in optional courses; hence there were none.

In the fall of 1870, a model primary school was opened at No. 17 St. Mark's Place, about half a mile from the school. "Kindergarten" methods, an innovation at that time, were introduced in the Model Primary School.

Two months after its establishment, the Normal and High School was renamed the "Normal College of the City of New York" by the New York State Legislature, and at the same time the Board of Education was granted

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a site "north of Fortieth Street" for a new building for the College. The present site, on Park Avenue between Sixty-eighth and Sixty-ninth Streets, was chosen for the College, and work commenced in the summer of 1871. The building was completed for occupancy in the fall of 1873, just before the Board of Education, which had established the College, was legislated out of existence.

The new building, a Gothic structure of brick, surmounted by two towers, was four stories high. It contained an Assembly Hall to seat two thousand, thirty classrooms, a very modern facility for the time: a "calisthenium," and a suite of rooms for the President and the Commissioners of Education. The building stood in the midst of vacant and unfenced lots; a deep chasm bounded it on the West. It was dedicated on October 28, 1873, with speeches by the mayor and by members of the Board of Education, and with recitations by the students. The Model School was about a year later moved to the Lexington Avenue Building on the same site.

The student body of the Normal College was drawn from every class in the city: the laboring class, the mechanical, the mercantile, the manufacturing class, and the professional were all represented there. Not long after the opening of the Normal College, President Hunter petitioned the Board of Education to raise the age for admission to the College to fourteen years. This was done in 1872. Thereafter, the average age of graduates completing their course was seventeen. This was also the age at which they started teaching. Admission requirements were early defined to require one year's attendance in a public school of New York City and residence with legal guardians in the city. After the depression of 1873 left New York City with a surplus of teachers, the Normal College, in 1879, found the opportunity to extend its course to four years, thereby raising the age at graduation to eighteen years.

Another decade brought about the incorporation of the Normal College of the City of New York as a college, under the statutes of New York State, on June 9, 1888. The College was authorized to "grant the usual degrees and diplomas in the arts," and the Normal College received a Board of Trustees, made up of the members of the Board of Education, and the President of the College, ex officio. For the first time, a course of study was introduced for students who did not wish to become teachers. It was designated as the "Classical" or "Academic" course; it included possible study of Greek, in addition to Latin; it required five years, instead of four, for completion. It was the course which led to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. The "Classical" course included instruction in the history of education and in educational theory and methods.

In the year 1888 industrial and manual training was introduced in the schools of New York State, and the "Act relative to the Normal College" provided for the introduction of normal classes in manual training for the preparation of teachers of manual training for the public schools. Normal classes in kindergarten methods, in cooking, sewing, and in modeling, as well as in the Slويد system of manual training were added in 1890, for students who had already graduated from the normal course. The demand for women teachers in Slويد proved disappointing, and the normal courses in other kinds of manual training only moderately successful. President Hunter was opposed to the teaching of "trades." His idea regarding manual training was that it should be one factor in education, but not the whole of it: "As an educational means, like arithmetic, it is excellent; as an educational end, it is unsound."

With the addition of high schools to the New York City public school system in 1897, higher standards and better preparation were required of teachers. The academic department of the Normal College, which had grown increasingly important, because of its more extended instruction and the advantage of the college degree to its graduates, now absorbed the Normal Department completely. The course of study was gradually extended to a compulsory seven years' course, predicated on the basis of completion of eight years of elementary school. The Bachelor of Arts degree of the Normal College obtained recognition from the Regents of the University of the State of New York, and was thereafter conferred on graduates of the normal, as well as of the academic course.

In 1901, the High School course was set apart from that of the College, and the following year, the course of study was made a compulsory seven years' course. After seeing this development completed, President Hunter retired, in 1906. He had defended the Normal College during its early years, when there was serious opposition to higher education at public expense, especially for women. President Hunter had been not only organizer and first president of the Normal College, but teacher and examiner as well, and even architect of the 68th Street building.

For an interval of almost two years, fundamental issues concerned with the organization of Hunter College were canvassed, after which George Samler Davis, then Associate Superintendent of Schools in New York City, was appointed president. Mr. Davis had been educated in the New York public schools and in City College, of which he was a Bachelor of Science in the class of 1880.

Consistent effort brought about the extension of the College work to require four years instead of three for graduation. During the first year of President Davis' administration, the curriculum of the College was liberalized.

A system of limited elective studies was set up. The course of study was now prescribed only within narrow limits, and the prescribed work was confined to the early semesters; for the most part, the course of study was divided between an elective group of related subjects (a major, and a related minor subject), and certain optionals. The elective group system followed the model then being introduced at Harvard.

Although, through development, the Normal College had arrived at a collegiate basis, the suspicion that it was a technical or a professional school ever recurred from its name. To insure its prestige, therefore, and to honor its first president, a bill was introduced in the Legislature, which, on April 4, 1914, changed the name of the Normal College to "Hunter College of the City of New York." The primary aim of the College was declared to be unchanged by President Davis: "The change of name was simply to prevent misunderstanding, and to enable us to fulfill our original purpose to better effect, by attracting to the College students desiring to enter upon the work of teaching with the broader and deeper academic preparation which a college gives."

Within a decade after the erection of the building at 68th Street and Park Avenue, the College had become overcrowded. As early as 1884, a restriction had been put on the number of admissions to the College. During the ten years from 1870 to 1880, the enrollment had increased to 2191; during the next decade, it rose to 2746; in 1900, the roll stood at 3871; in 1910, because of the separation of the High School from the College, the enrollment stood at 1244 for the College alone, but for all departments, it totalled the high figure of 3239.

* Because of great overcrowding, annexes in various parts of the City had come into use. To provide more adequate housing for the College, in 1910 the old Training School was torn down to make way for a new structure facing on Lexington Avenue. The new addition, which was completed in 1913, was an adaptation of sixteenth century Gothic architecture, six stories high; the material a light-colored limestone. It is still used. Other units of a group of buildings planned at the time for the site, did not materialize.

Constant increase in the size of the College made the work of administering it more onerous. In 1915, a Board of Trustees, distinct from the Board of Education, was established by an amendment to the Greater New York Charter. The new Board consisted of eleven members: nine of the eleven were appointed by the Mayor, the other two being the President of the Board of Education, and the President of the College, ex officio.

Beginning in 1916, a Summer Session of Hunter College was organized to enable students to fulfill their requirements more readily. The successful outcome of this experiment led to the addition, in 1917, of Evening and

Extension Sessions, for the benefit of women who could not attend the regular College classes and to the offering of other degrees. The degree of Bachelor of Science in Education was offered in the Evening Session, and the graduate degrees of Master of Arts and Master of Science in Education in the Evening, Extension, and Summer Sessions. Expansion in these new directions, together with gradual growth, increased the enrollment of the College by 1920 to 3673. Then followed the post-war period of increase in the size of the student body (unprecedented for American institutions of higher learning in general), which, for Hunter College, multiplied the enrollment many times over, so that by 1930, including the figures for the large Brooklyn branch, which had been started in 1926, the students numbered approximately 23,089.

The great demand in New York City for public higher education seemed to require further expansion of the city colleges. To facilitate this development, in 1926, a Board of Higher Education, appointive by the Mayor, was established to "govern and administer that part of the public school system within the city which is of collegiate grade and which leads to academic, technical, and professional degrees." The Act of 1926 also provided for a new city college in Brooklyn, where the need appeared to be most pressing. Three years later, the Board of Higher Education assumed sole control of the several units of higher education in New York City, which became collectively the "College of the City of New York."

The promotion of Dr. James M. Kieran, Chairman and Professor in the Department of Education, to the presidency of Hunter College took place on March 16, 1929. The vast student-body of Hunter College was scattered in various parts of the city, for lack of adequate buildings. An annex on East Thirty-second Street, one on East Eighty-fifth Street, one on East Twenty-ninth Street, and one in Brooklyn, were in use. The Brooklyn branch shortly became the women's division of the new and independent city college in the spring of 1930. Construction of a group of buildings (the style adapted from Tudor English architecture, in granite) for Hunter was started on the Jerome Park Reservoir site in the Bronx, in May 1929. Here Gillet Hall, a classroom and administration building, was opened in September 1931, and the Student Building, a center for social and extra-curricular activities shortly afterward. Davis Hall, another classroom building, was opened in February 1932, and the gymnasium, in the spring of 1933. At the Bronx Buildings, Hunter College lower classmen enjoy the advantages of campus life.

On September 1, 1933, Dr. Eugene A. Colligan, previously Associate Superintendent of Schools, became president of Hunter College. One of the first undertakings of President Colligan was a reorganization of the curriculum, begun in the winter of 1933, designed to give more freedom to students in the choice of studies. Alternatives were provided in the prescribed base for

the degree, the number of available specializations was increased, and a wider optional area was offered to students. The expansion of academic work at the expense of normal training, which started coincidentally with the grant of the College charter, has continued more markedly in recent years.

A change in the administration of Hunter College, as well as in that of the other City Colleges, took place on October 1, 1938. On that date, a set of By-Laws for the City Colleges, drawn up by a Committee of the Board of Higher Education, of which the Honorable John T. Flynn was Chairman, went into effect. The new By-Laws provided democratic organization for the faculties of the colleges, and also for the different departments of instruction. Under these By-Laws department chairmen are elected for a term of three years. The next election will cover the years 1941-44.

The only disaster in the history of the College, a fire on February 14, 1936, had practically destroyed the original and historic building of the Normal College at Sixty-eighth Street and Park Avenue. The main part of Hunter was then transferred to quarters leased in an office building at Two Park Avenue, leaving the college scattered among four different centers, some of which were as widely removed from each other as the Bronx and downtown Manhattan.

In this exigency, financial assistance from the Federal Government made possible a project for a new sixteen story, modernistic building on the Sixty-eighth Street site. The corner-stone of the new skyscraper was laid on December 6, 1939. The building was ready for classes in September, 1940. In the new building, 4500 students are accommodated, while 2500 are assigned to the Bronx Buildings.

Four days, October 8 to 12, 1940, were devoted to dedicatory and inaugural ceremonies. The dedication of the new building took place on October 8. Mayor LaGuardia, other prominent members of the city government and of the Board of Higher Education participated in the ceremony.

The inauguration of Dr. George N. Shuster as President of Hunter College followed on October 10, 1940. Dr. Shuster, who was Academic Dean and Acting President of the College in 1939-40, became President on September 1, 1940, following the retirement of Dr. Colligan. Dr. Shuster is a Bachelor of Arts from Notre Dame University, (1915), Master of Arts from the same University, (1920), and Doctor of Philosophy from Columbia University, (1940). Dr. Shuster had a distinguished career as author, editor, and Professor of English before his appointment as executive head of Hunter College.

In the epilogue to the dedication of the new building, Hunter College was honored by a visit from the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, on October 28, 1940. President Roosevelt spoke informally to an

Assembly of the College, stressing his interest in Hunter and in the new building, which arose from the fact that he had been a neighbor on East Sixty-fifth Street, for a number of years.

The ceremonies of Dedication Week conferred recognition on the place of Hunter College in the American educational world. They may be regarded as indicating the aspiration of Hunter College, with more democratic organization in the college administration, with new and modern equipment, and under the direction of a promising executive, to an era of even greater usefulness in educational service, than it has given in the past seventy years, to the people of New York City.

SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, PRIZES, AND FUNDS

Department of Art

The Nancy Ashton Memorial Fund. The income from a fund now amounting to \$3,072.50 is awarded annually, at the discretion of the Department, to encourage among the students of the College the study of art in its relation to interior decoration, or for a scholarship to enable a qualified student to study the art of interior decoration outside the College, or for both of these objects. In 1921, Mrs. Frederica Bennèche established the Fund with a gift of \$3,000, in memory of her daughter, Nancy Ashton, and in 1925 increased the gift to \$4,000.

Department of Biological Sciences

The Kane Prize. The income from \$1,000 is awarded annually to the member of the graduating class who has the best record in biological science, including both required and elective courses. Mr. J. Grenville Kane established the Prize in 1872 with a gift of \$1,000 for the award annually of a gold medal. The Prize will be awarded in cash until the income is sufficient to cover the cost of the gold medal.

The Else Seringhaus Scholarship Fund. The sum of \$50 from the income of a fund of \$1,000 is awarded annually to a science student for use in payment of fees for scientific work during the summer months at Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory or elsewhere. The remainder of the income accrues to the principal. The award is made by the President of the