

# **THE HISTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION at HUNTER COLLEGE**

**written for the 125th Anniversary  
of Hunter College**

**Spring, 1995**

**by Arlene Seguire**

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*Arlene Seguire*

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# THE HISTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT HUNTER COLLEGE

by Arlene Seguire

1995 commemorates the 125th anniversary of Hunter College. Although it was originally established by Dr. Thomas Hunter in 1870 as the Normal College for women, it later became known as Hunter College in 1914, in honor of its visionary founder. In the beginning of its history, the first women were trained to teach in the New York City public schools; ultimately, a liberal arts curriculum would evolve. (*Hunter College Faculty Factbook*, 1991).

From its very inception, 'physical training' (from the Greek *kalos*, meaning beautiful, and *sthen(os)*, connoting strength) was included as a fundamental component of President Thomas Hunter's system of education in order to promote the physical well-being of his young students. Consequently, his establishment of the *calisthenium* in the original Park Avenue building not only provided the forum for personal physical development, but also gave testimony to his recognition for the importance of educating for healthy lifestyles. Every morning beginning at 9:25 A. M., each student ... "obtained at least fifteen minutes of physical exercise under the 'tutor in calisthenics.'" The extent to which President Hunter was a proponent of physical education is exemplified in his statement: ... "the value of physical training cannot be over-estimated," ... as he wrote in his report to the Board of Education back in 1878:

... "It relieves the mental faculties; it gives a wholesome vent to the over-strained nerves; it causes a healthy circulation of the blood, and it enables the instructor to command a closer and better attention to the work of the recitation room." (Ruth Smallberg, and Ruth Limmer, 1988).

Contemporaneously, a reporter from the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* rendered the following account of the calisthenic exercises taught at the Normal College:

"The exercises in the calisthenium last fifteen minutes, and no students are excused from taking part in them, except on a physician's certificate of disability; About three hundred girls were assembled when we entered, and under the direction of the teacher, placed on a commanding dais, at the end of the room, they were performing simple and graceful evolutions to the tune of the piano. The tune was lively; and the lines weaving in and out, the waving of the arms, the measured step of the feet, and the swaying of the body made a pretty and inspiring sight, like a theatrical *ensemble*. Each girl held a strong elastic band, with wooden handles, which was stretched from side to side, in front from shoulder to hip, from back to front, and from over the head to chin in ways that develop muscle, expand the chest. At the end of the fifteen minutes these students, who had been languid felt a freer coursing of the blood, and a glowing activity that prepared them for the work of the day. Their steps were lighter and their brains clearer; indeed, the advantages of these brief calisthenics cannot be overestimated." (*Alumni Quarterly*, Winter, 1970, Hunter College Centennial/Reprint from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 1878).

It is evident that the perceptions of Thomas Hunter and the reporter from the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* were in complete agreement regarding the viability of physical training in the college curriculum. Indeed, they realized the medical values derived from participating in systematic exercises.

During this period of American history, a national movement for including physical education in the elementary and secondary schools was emerging. In 1892, Ohio was the first state to pass a law requiring physical education to be taught in the public schools. Ultimately, colleges and universities would win similar legislation contingent upon having gymnasias constructed, and departments established. (Wuest, and Bucher, 1991). Regarding the growth of physical education in the early years at Hunter College, gaining funds and administrative support for building additional gymnasias to accommodate the expanding number of students participating in calisthenics, posture, sports, and dance classes would be prove to be a major challenge after the retirement of Thomas Hunter in 1906. (*The Autobiography of Thomas Hunter*, 1931).

In another historical context, it is interesting to note that Thomas Hunter had the foresight to inculcate in his students the values of physical training even before the epochal meeting on November 17, 1885 to organize the 49-member Association for the Advancement of Physical Education at nearby Adelphi University. Today, in 1995, this organization has evolved into the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. Moreover, during its long evolution, it has integrated physical education with the other allied studies reflected in the title. Through continual strong leadership, AAHPERD has become the organization, which sets the professional standards for our allied disciplines. (*NYSAHPERD Journal*, Winter 1984/85).

#### **MABEL H. TAYLOR - FIRST DIRECTOR OF PHYSICAL TRAINING:**

To continue with the modest beginning of physical education at Hunter College, Thomas Hunter was fortunate that Mabel H. Taylor, who enrolled as a student in 1888, would later become dedicated to the teaching of physical training, and eventually would be the first to hold the title of the 'director of physical training.' From the very onset, she made a strong impression by having passed the college entrance examination with a 93%. Subsequent to her graduating, Mabel H. Taylor later returned to the college to teach physical training in 1897.

..."The Instructor of Physical Exercise has accomplished an excellent work in improving the bodily health of the students. By her system of teaching, she has squared the rounded shoulders, straightened the spinal columns, and compelled the girls to walk and march in a proper manner; she has brought into action every muscle of the body without overstrain which is so often the case with physical training. The Instructor, in her own person, is an object lesson for the students," wrote Thomas Hunter after observing Mabel H. Taylor teach.

By the time she retired 38 years later, in 1935, Professor Taylor had a staff of seven physical education instructors, whose offerings, in addition to the required physical education, included:

swimming, dancing, kinesiology ( the science of muscle movement), corrective gymnastics, and anthropometry (recording body measurements to assess physical fitness development) [Before her death, Professor Taylor established a fund, to be administered by the Department of Physical Education for the purpose of sending students to sports camps.] (Ruth Smallberg, and Ruth Limmer, 1988)

Yet, Mabel H. Taylor's early career as a physical trainer at Hunter College was replete with extraordinary, but not insurmountable challenges. She soon discovered that the one gymnasium was inadequate to accommodate the ever-increasing number of students who enrolled in the courses offered in her Program of Physical Training. She adroitly identifies this problem in her Report about the Program of Physical Training sent to President George Davis on December 30, 1908. The following quotations reveal her administrative savvy:

..."The regular courses given in the Program of Physical Training are of a pedagogical nature, planned to prepare students to teach the work required in the Public Schools of New York City. ...The opportunities for Physical Training in the College Building, for both the College students and the High School pupils, are extremely limited. This is especially evident when comparisons are made with the courses of study of other Colleges, and of the Training Schools and High Schools of the City."

Her intention was to show that comparable educational institutions had superior facilities, and also a competitive edge. She continued by suggesting to either have free exercises taught in the classrooms by the Class Presidents, or selected students; or, consolidate four unused classrooms into a second gymnasium. And, she continued to suggest to President Davis that the better plan would be to hire two new physical trainers; one to teach in the college, the other to teach in the Annexes.

Her comprehensive report also made the following recommendations: (1) a thorough physical examination of all students at least once a year followed-up, where necessary, with special corrective work; (2) the establishment of a minimum of two periods of regular work a week for all the High School pupils, and the same for all College students, or the substitution of the more recreative forms of exercise, such as: fencing, dancing, or tennis; (3) and expand the Physical Training section of the Library to include recent publications in dancing, imitative plays, singing games, and placing on file copies of *Mind and Body*; and, the *Physical Education Review* published by the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education. (Hunter College Archives, 1994).

Further historical research shows that in another handwritten report sent to President Davis on January 4, 1912, Mabel H. Taylor's persistence prevails, when she emphasized that the lack of enough gymnasia hamper the growth of her Physical Training Program. She makes particular reference to the lack of teaching space. To off-set this problem until the new gymnasium is completed, she suggested supplementing the limited amount of indoor exercises provided, with instruction in outdoor sports. Again, she offered practical solutions. Her frustration is reflected in her comment: "It is baffling and discouraging to realize that the best we can do is to secure the use of a gymnasium for just six periods in the week, when so many need the training."

*[Special note: for a pictorial timeline marking the historical highlights of the growth of the Physical Education Department at Hunter College refer to pages 5 - 6 in this document.]*

## **THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL TRAINING ESTABLISHED IN 1914 - 1915:**

Over the years, as Hunter College continued to develop, and expand the liberal arts-based courses, it was not easy to promote the growth of a Department of Physical Training (Education), where the profession of teaching, and particularly that of a special subject, such as Physical Education, were generally viewed with disfavor. In fact, for all the early pioneer work, and unstinting dedication evinced by Mabel H. Taylor, it was not until 1917- 18, that credit-bearing courses in what would become the Department of Physical Training would be offered. Her indomitable personality provided the original momentum, and set the stage for this to happen shortly after.

In 1915, the Department of Physical Training with a staff of three teachers was established. It is interesting to note that the three teachers on the staff also taught in other departments of the College, as well as in the Hunter Elementary, and Hunter High Schools. The curriculum consisted of one course in gymnastics, one in dance (both without credit), and two courses in methods of physical training for the elementary school teacher. The course offerings gradually expanded to include: posture, athletics, and games in addition to gymnastics and dance --- all without credit earned. (*History of the Department of Physical Education* written by Augusta W. Neidhardt, 1958).

## **DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL TRAINING FIRST OFFERS COURSES FOR CREDIT IN 1917 - 1918:**

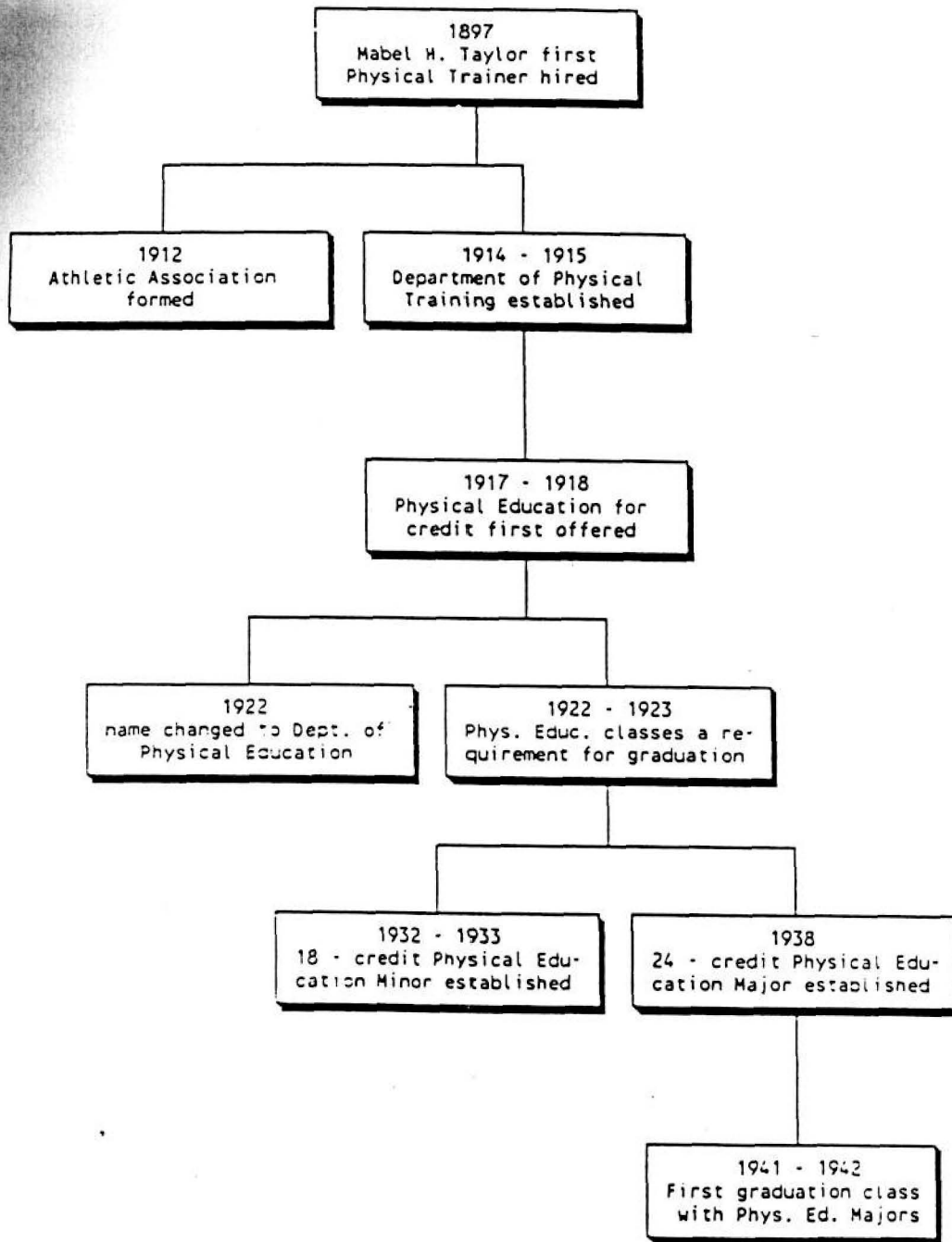
It was not until 1917 - 1918, that the Department succeeded in introducing courses with credit. At this time, one year of required physical training was introduced for all students in the college. These courses carried credit. World War I had become a reality, and the growing public concern for the importance of the physical fitness of our soldiers in defense of our country probably provided an added impetus for achieving college credit for courses in physical education. The Selective Service Act of 1917 pressed all men between the ages of 18 and 25 into service. Concurrently, health statistics gathered from the Selective Service physical examinations aroused keen interest in the nation's health. As World War I progressed, both men and women physical educators provided leadership for the armed services, and also for the people back on the home front. (Wuest and Bucher, 1991). In response to the war scenario, the Department of Physical Training at Hunter College introduced two courses called "tactics," both offered for college credit. In addition, other theory courses were given in: kinesiology, anthropometry, correctives, and methods of teaching physical education in the secondary schools. Interestingly enough, there were courses in both gymnastics and dance given from time to time. Although they were not credit-bearing, class enrollments continually increased, indicating that a genuine student interest in these physical activities existed.

When the war ended, the American public gained the opportunity to learn about the medical examiner's report about the men who had been summoned to military duty. The results were pub-



# HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

## 50th ANNIVERSARY PHYSICAL EDUCATION MAJOR 1938 - 1988

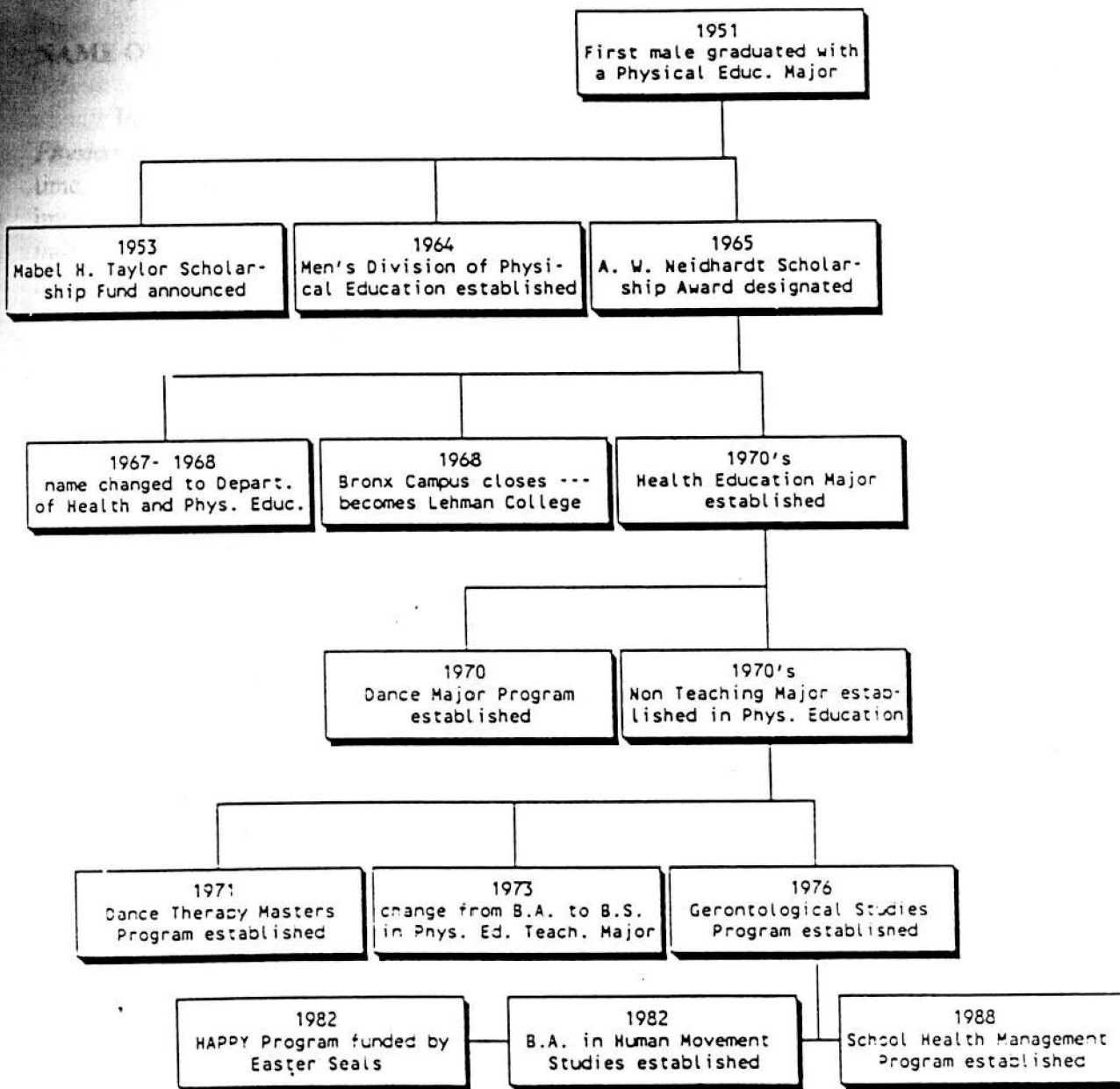


**SOURCE:** Commemorative Journal for the Fiftieth Anniversary  
of the Physical Education Major at Hunter College  
(1988), p.8.

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# HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION



SOURCE: *Commemorative Journal for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Physical Education Major at Hunter College* (1988), p. 9.

lically disturbing: one third of the men were deemed physically unfit for the armed service, and many more were found to be physically inept. Almost simultaneously, in 1918, a survey conducted by the National Council on Education revealed that children in the elementary and secondary schools of the nation were woefully below par physically. Soon after, the advent of the 'golden twenties' called for a new physical education. The move away from the formal gymnastic systems used in Europe towards the less formal activities, such as: games, sports, and free play were well received by the public. And so, once again, the faculty in physical training at Hunter College became responsive to the tenor of the times.

#### **NAME OF DEPARTMENT CHANGED TO PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN 1922:**

In 1922 - 1923, the Department of Physical Training became known as the *Department of Physical Education* in order to stay current with advances being made in the profession. At that time, the national leaders, who led the movement for the 'new physical education' stressed the importance of physical education in general education with an accent on teaching the *whole individual*. The profession was shifting focus to the biological, psychological, and sociological foundations of physical education. So too, the newly named Department of Physical Education at Hunter College was successful in persuading the General Faculty to adopt a three-term prescription in physical education for all students; and, secondly, an increase in credit allowance for theory courses from one-half to one credit per hour was achieved.

#### **18- CREDIT PHYSICAL EDUCATION MINOR ESTABLISHED IN 1932 - 1933:**

In her letter written as the Head of the Department of Physical Education sent to President James M. Kieran, on January 15, 1930, Mabel H. Taylor requests the "establishment of a minor in physical education." Subsequently, in her Report of the Department of Physical Education written January 28, 1932, she states:

..."The establishment of a Minor in Physical Education composed of the courses basic to Physical Education 48 is a source of gratification. The immediate reason for requesting this minor was the fact that Teachers College was requiring additional courses from our graduates who desired to work for the master's degree in physical education, on the ground that "Hunter had no professional course, no major or minor in the subject." The additional courses amounted to 6 - 10 points, an expense of 60 - 100 dollars."... (Hunter College Archives, 1994).

This eighteen-credit Special, or Second Minor, as it was called consisted of a combination of education, physical education, physiology, and hygiene courses. Although there was no swimming pool at that time, courses in swimming were introduced, and conducted in whatever municipal pool was available. At first, these swimming courses were optional, but then later became acceptable toward fulfilling the physical education prescription in 1936 - 1937.

Also, by this time, several courses in theory, and theory and practice had been added, so that

it became possible to elevate the Special Second Minor to the status of Special Minor. Some education courses were removed and replaced by physical education courses

*(History of Physical Education)*

1942) It was a remarkable achievement for Mabel H. Taylor and her colleagues, when they persuaded the Hunter College administration to give approval for the eighteen-credit minor in physical education in the very midst of the Depression Years (1930 - 1939). The 1929 stock market crash had ushered in the Great Depression, which, in turn, had had a negative impact on education in this country. Unemployment and poverty had ruled the day. Health and physical education had had a difficult time surviving in many communities. School budgets had been cutback, and many programs had either been eliminated, or severely trimmed. Between 1932 and 1934 approximately 40% of physical education programs in the schools had been dropped. As a result, many physical educators had become involved in recreation programs in community agencies for the unemployed citizens. The national association had become cognizant of this new speciality, and voted to change its title to: the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. (Wuest, and Bucher, 1991).

The establishment of the eighteen-credit minor in physical education at Hunter College enabled the students to pursue graduate work, and later qualify to teach in the New York City high schools. However, the Department of Physical Education felt that those former students would have been better prepared, and realized their professional ambition sooner, if it had been possible for them to have taken more undergraduate course work in physical education. Consequently, the Department created a twenty-four credit Major in Physical Education, which was adopted by the Faculty and Board of Higher Education in 1938.

#### **24-CREDIT PHYSICAL EDUCATION MAJOR ESTABLISHED IN 1938:**

When the twenty-four credit Major in Physical Education was first introduced in 1938, it consisted of the following courses:

##### from the Department of Physical Education:

Theory and Practice of Athletic Events and Games	1 year, 2 credits
Theory and Practice of Classic, Folk and National Dancing	1 year, 2 credits
Theory and Practice of Modern Dance	1 year, 2 credits
Kinesiology	1 year, 4 credits
Corrective Gymnastics and Anthropometry	1/2 year, 2 credits
History of Physical Education	1/2 year, 2 credits
Organization and Administration of Physical Education	1/2 year, 4 credits
Tests and Measurements in Physical Education	1/2 year, 2 credits

##### from the Department of Physiology, Health and Hygiene:

Safety Education, Accident Prevention and First Aid	1/2 year, 2 credits
Nutrition and Physical Development	1/2 year, 2 credits

It is important to note that the Physical Education Major at Hunter College fulfilled both the New York State, and the New York City provisional requirements for the teaching of physical education. (*History of Physical Education at Hunter College* written by F. H. M. Holsten, and Anne Mackey, 1942).

The innovation of the twenty-four credit Physical Education Major was equally amazing given the fact that its inception occurred in the early stages of World War II. The Depression, which had taken time to develop fully and affect the entire country, had lasted from 1929 to the beginning of World War II (1941.) The lack of money in many communities had resulted in dropping physical education from the school curriculum using the rationale that it was just a "frill." Many physical educators had become shocked by the very fact that the place of physical education in the school programs ended up under attack.

For the first time, physical educators had become cognizant of the need for strong public relations in order to educate the community regarding the values and place of physical education in the schools. However, as the World War II progressed, a turn of events proved a boon to the profession, and ended the arguments over whether physical education belonged in the educational program. It soon became public knowledge that of the first two million men given medical examinations for military service at the start of the war, 45% were rejected for mental or physical reasons. The good news for the profession of physical education was that this excessive number could not have been blamed on the school programs. Widespread publicity aroused public concern about the national fitness problem. The government assumed the position of seeing a great need to improve the nation's health and fitness.

Meanwhile, physical educators were afraid of being forced back into the old concept of physical training, since the war-need had been on fitness only -- to the exclusion of broader interests. As a consequence, many physical educators turned their attention to devising fitness tests to assess the results of armed forces training tests. Later, this translated into the educational setting. Eventually, though, one wartime gain for the profession of physical education was that many states replaced their laws for recommending physical education with those that required it. (Freeman, 1982).

#### **FIRST GRADUATION CLASS WITH PHYSICAL EDUCATION MAJORS - 1941 - 1942:**

Happily, though, physical education had 'come of age,' at Hunter College by reaching the status of a Major Program in 1942 --- when the first group of physical education majors graduated --- exactly fifty years from the time Mabel H. Taylor had been hired as a physical trainer in 1897. In order to eventually gain permanent certification as a Teacher of Physical Education and Hygiene in New York State, it was necessary for Hunter College's graduates to take additional courses at private universities. However, many found this financially burdensome soon after graduation. Later on, in 1948 the state made it possible for qualified students to pursue graduate study, and earn their Master's at Hunter College. Throughout the development of the degree program leading to the teaching of physical education, the Faculty have continuously provided student advisement for Physical Education Majors regarding college regulations for graduation, teacher certification re-

on Youth Fitness in 1956. (Freeman, 1982). In 1961, President John F. Kennedy revised the Council on Youth Fitness. President Kennedy and his fitness consultant, Bud Wilkinson consulted with AAHPER to develop a plan of action to improve American youth fitness. This resulted in the publication: "Youth Physical Fitness: Suggested Elements of a School-Centered Program." (AAHPER *Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Dance*, 32(6):22). This historical collaboration would later influence the direction of physical education curricula by focusing on fitness units of instruction in both the public schools and the college preparation courses.

#### **MEN'S DIVISION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION ESTABLISHED IN 1964:**

As the number of male physical education majors continually increased, The Department of Physical Education saw the need to create the Men's Division of Physical Education in 1964. Administratively, the transition was made from just having an overall Department Chairperson to having both a Chairperson, and Sub-Chairperson. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the physical education major at Hunter College, it was reported that during the two previous decades 502 women, and 110 men had received their bachelor's degrees; 99 women, and 31 men had earned their master's degrees in physical education. Most had become employed in New York City, Long Island, Westchester, and other parts of the country in high schools and colleges. Some had even become registered physical therapists in hospitals and rehabilitation centers. (*Program Booklet from Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Physical Education Major*, May 4, 1963).

#### **BRONX CAMPUS CLOSES AND BECOMES LEHMAN COLLEGE IN 1968:**

In 1968, the Hunter College campus in the Bronx ceased to exist, when that institution was transformed into Lehman College. (*Commemorative Journal for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Physical Education Major at Hunter College, 1988*). As a result, the entire Department of Physical Education would be housed at Hunter College in Manhattan located at Park Avenue and 68th Street in the North Building.

#### **NAME CHANGED TO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION - 1968:**

In 1968, the name of the department was also changed to the Department of Health and Physical Education. The significance of this move created the opportunity for the department to begin offering its own courses in health education; whereas, in the past our physical education majors had to enroll in the courses offered by the Physiology Department. In order to accommodate this curricular expansion, our department began hiring health education professors. Later on, in the 1970s, the Health Education Major would be established. (*Commemorative Journal for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Physical Education Major at Hunter College, 1988*).

#### **NON-TEACHING MAJOR IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION ESTABLISHED - 1970s:**

The 1970s witnessed a new trend under the rubric of physical education course offerings. *Lifetime sports*, such as tennis and bowling, instead of the traditional fitness and competitive-sports

oriented activities began to have a greater appeal for the public. The profession of physical education had also began to focus more on working with special populations, such as the handicapped and the older Americans. A lot of the impetus came from support through federal legislation. (Freeman, 1982).

The Department decided to design a curriculum for Physical Education majors, who wanted to pursue a career outside the school arena. In order to provide for their needs, a bachelor's degree program in physical education was created with several areas of concentration, or specialties, which included: coaching and administration, physical fitness leadership, adapted physical education, and gerontological studies. In addition to the core courses, and the activity leadership tract, which encompassed lifetime sports as selections, physical education majors were expected to study their specialty in-depth in lieu of taking the education sequence of courses.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHING DEGREE CHANGED FROM A B. A. TO A B. S. IN THE 1970s:**

Beginning around 1973, the faculty in the Department of Health and Physical Education began working on a proposal for a new academic program in "Physical Education Leading to B.S. Degree" for future physical educators. It was approved by the Hunter College Senate on March 19, 1975, and became effective February, 1976. The original physical education major curriculum (previously described on page 8 of this paper), which was first introduced in 1938, had been written in the context of a B. A. degree.

The rationale for making the change from a B. A. degree to a B. S. degree was predicated upon the fact that the B. A. did not reflect the emerging advances in the body of knowledge encompassing the growing field of physical education. For instance, the subject of physical education had begun to expand to include the sub-disciplines of: motor learning, exercise physiology, movement education, and sport sociology. This curriculum proposal purported to provide a physical education teaching preparation program, which emphasized a cognitive-motor, and experiential approach. It also embodied the elective tracts, whereby the physical education major could gain additional study in such areas as: scientific principles, social and cultural foundations, administration, coaching, etc. (Department of Health and Physical Education, *Curriculum Proposal for Physical Education (Teaching Program) Leading to the B. S. Degree*, 1975).

### **DEPARTMENT INTRODUCES PROGRAM COORDINATORS INTO ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE - 1970s - 1980s:**

The Department of Health and Physical Education began to revamp its curricula, and become more diversified. With the addition of the Health Education Major in the 1970s along with the Dance Therapy Masters Program being established almost simultaneously, and the eventual introduction of the Human Movement Studies B. A. Program in 1982, it decided to eliminate the Sub-Chairperson's position, and replace that with Coordinators of Physical Education, Health, Human Movement Studies, and Dance Therapy. This provided a more feasible administrative structure to better serve the various constituencies evolving under the umbrella of the Department.

#### **FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION MAJOR - 1988:**

On October 22, 1988, the Department of Health and Physical Education celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the physical education major. The day began with a tour of the new gymnasium and research lab facilities housed in the recently opened Hunter College West building. Former graduates, friends, and guests were entertained by physical education major students demonstrating activities appropriate to each facility (i. e. fencing in the gymnasium, kinesiology in the classroom, research in laboratory, etc.). The program culminated with a dinner with the sharing of nostalgic memories. All visitors received a copy of the *Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Journal* with a directory of former graduates of physical education included.

#### **DEPARTMENTAL STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER ESTABLISHED - 1992:**

Beginning around 1992, the department student resource center was created by Professor Dorothy Vislocky and major students. Located in room 1137 Hunter College West, it contains research materials for use by the undergraduate students majoring in physical education, health education, and human movement studies. Anatomical models designed for kinesiology students are also on view. Extensive preparation has been spent by her and the students in cataloguing textbooks, journals, curriculum materials, etc. Future plans include the addition of a videotape library as an animated resource for educational and research purposes. This resource facility has been a definite enhancement for student development in our department.

#### **STUDENT ADVISEMENT HANDBOOK FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION MAJORS 1994:**

In 1994, a comprehensive manual was developed for the Physical Education Major Students as part of the ongoing guidance process sponsored by the Department. This reference entitled: *Student Advisement Handbook for Physical Education Majors - 1994 - 1995*, consists of a portfolio of guidance materials (i.e. program plan card, formula for computing grade point averages, a schedule of physical education major courses, and education course offerings, as well as a checklist for tracking academic progress, etc.). It also includes policies regarding attendance, lateness, grading, medicals, uniforms, etc. Other information covers course descriptions, and criteria for teacher certification. This handbook written by Dr. Thomas R. Burke, and Dr. Arlene Seguire has proven to be a valuable guidance tool for our aspiring physical educators.

#### **DEPARTMENTAL PROPOSAL FOR RESTRUCTURING - SPRING, 1994:**

In the Spring of 1994, the Department of Health and Physical Education formulated a proposal for restructuring the department's organizational plan. A variety of factors which influenced this collective pursuit included: a diminishing faculty due to attrition, and insufficient budgetary funds. In addition, it was time to conduct a periodic updating of programmatic development in order to be congruent with the current directions taken by physical education and its allied disciplines.



At present, the Department is considering the possibility of changing its name to the Department of Health and Human Movement Studies. This strategy plan provides a new conceptual framework for creating a closer natural articulation among physical education, human movement studies, health education, and dance/movement therapy by focusing on the fact that movement is the common thread, which ties all these disciplines together. Furthermore, in keeping with the tenor of the times, the changing needs of American society, and, in particular, urban populations; our faculty is projecting a new curricular option related to wellness education with the accent on developing healthy lifestyles. This objective is in keeping with the spirit of the the *Healthy People: 2,000* the national initiative sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services begun in the early 1990s. It also is reflective of the recent criteria established by the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. NASPE (National Association of Sports and Physical Education) a division of AAHPERD, codified new benchmarks of performance, which describe the *physically educated person*, which was printed and circulated among physical educators in 1992 for inclusion in school curricula.

#### **ELIMINATION OF THE ONE-CREDIT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT DUE TO THE CUNY BUDGET CRISIS - 1995:**

Currently, in 1995, our Department along with colleagues in the rest of Hunter College is faced with the emergence of the most unprecedented budget crisis in the history of the City University of New York. The extent of its severity will most likely be felt for many years to come. At the moment, the parameters of this fiscal emergency seem undefinable; it will certainly test the ingenuity of our Department.

Prior to this budget emergency reaching such an epochal dimension, in Spring of 1993, our Department had been asked by the Hunter college administration to eliminate the one-credit physical activity distribution requirement --- needed by all college students to graduate. After much deliberation, our Faculty decided not to relinquish this requirement. Because it was a curriculum matter, we were invited to the Hunter College Senate meetings. After making an admirable and proactive presentation for retaining this requirement, the vote cast in the Senate was in favor of keeping our Department's collegewide requirement for the general student population.

However, in the Fall of 1994, as the inevitability of the budget crisis became more imminent, the Hunter College administration once again, asked our Department to drop this requirement in the face of mounting budgetary constraints. (It should be noted that the bulk of the one-credit activity courses had been taught by adjuncts, or part-time faculty, which necessitated letting a lot of them go.) As a result, after giving this matter prolonged consideration, our Department agreed to the administration's request, but with the intention of rechanneling our Faculty's energies and redefining our Department's mission in the college. As previously mentioned above, our Department has realigned its sights toward developing a wellness education program with the accent on health-related fitness. The only one-credit physical activity courses to be retained are those which are intrinsic to the Physical Education Major in both the Teaching and the Non-teaching Degree Programs. These include: swimming, folk /social/ modern dancing, yoga, aerobics, weight training, etc.

## **DEPARTMENTAL SELF-STUDY WRITTEN IN FALL 1994:**

Subsequent to finishing the proposal for restructuring the Department, our Faculty immediately became involved in writing a Departmental Self-Study. Our Department was one of several Departments in the college engaged in this endeavor. We continued on the momentum generated from writing the proposal for restructuring the department, and developed a much more in-depth self-evaluation. It was a rigorous task, which produced a comprehensive document, which adroitly interfaces the missions of the four constituent programs: the three undergraduate entities: physical education, health education, human movement studies; and the one graduate program in dance/movement therapy.

This collective experience provided the opportunity for our faculty to do a *life review* of our department's evolution; and thereby, gain new insights into the nature and potential we have for continually tapping into our creative genius and devising new strategies for enhancing both student and faculty development. It is of paramount importance, that, we as professionals in our respective disciplines, demonstrate positive adaptive lifestyles when confronted with the constraints of financial exigencies.

The actual writing of the Self-Study has provided the vehicle for collaborating with our own colleagues to the point of realizing the commonalities shared in our professional pursuits. The entire document embracing the self-study is a statement of reaffirmation regarding the historical roots of each of the academic programs. Moreover, it addresses concerns regarding the future roles to be played by each program. A commitment to establishing community outreaches is a primary goal shared across the department.

## **THE FUTURE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT HUNTER COLLEGE:**

The prospect for the physical education program is to create a wider spectrum of career options by offering new specializations in such areas as fitness leadership, sports medicine, and wellness education. Our Department already has an increasing number of physical education majors serving as interns in community facilities in this City. Essentially, their on-site responsibilities entail working in the areas of fitness training, nutrition, and wellness education. This, in turn, will enable our physical education majors to gain entrance onto community-based career paths. In addition, our Department in collaboration with the American College of Sports Medicine offers a certification workshop for physical fitness and health fitness leaders.

For those physical education majors still pursuing teaching careers, a wider sphere of involvement has been created by the Department with respect to building linkages with alternative schools. This includes using sport, physical activity, and health as avenues to academic and personal development. Learner outcomes include; building self-esteem, values education, wellness concepts, multicultural awareness, safety education, etc. Another project combines adapted physical education with dance/movement therapy to offer viable approaches in working with the physically challenged and emotionally disturbed children. These school-based experiences provide databases for research to be designed by physical education majors.

Although the one-credit physical activity distribution requirement will be discontinued, many faculty and students believe that the general student population should receive instruction in wellness. This philosophical tenet is predicated upon: *health through prevention*, which given the high cost of health care in this country today along with the growing need to prevent chronic diseases, provides the viable vehicle for serving the need for our undergraduate students to gain *quality of life* education in an urban environment.

In retrospect, almost one hundred years have elapsed, since 1897, when Mabel H. Taylor was first hired as a physical trainer at Hunter College. Since then, the historical development of the Department of Health and Physical Education has evolved due to the unstinting dedication and foresight of its faculty. This becomes even more evident when viewed against the historical tableaux of both world and national events (i.e. wars and economic depressions). It is, indeed, in character for physical educators to be dynamic in their approach to life. We will continue to remain vigilant in our Department, while pursuing strategies for building innovative community partnerships, and creating life-enhancing programs as we approach the 21st century together. It should be a fascinating odyssey.

Arlene Seguire  
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