

THE FORD SEMINAR IN COLLEGE TEACHING



PROFESSOR HARRY L. LEVY

With the end of this semester there will come to a close the three-year college teaching internship experiment known as the Hunter College Ford Seminar in College Teaching. This venture has been supported by grants totalling \$61,000 from the Fund for the Advancement of Education over the three-year period. To aid in the improvement of college teaching through work with a selected group of young instructors at Hunter College has been its primary purpose.

The first year's seminar, in 1954-55, was under the direction of Professors Ruth G. Weintraub and John S. Diekhoff, who initiated the project. Working with them were the Dean of Faculty and seven other senior professors of the College. The junior members of the Seminar, the young instructors for whom the program was conducted, numbered twelve, from seven different departments. Each of the junior members received a two-fifths reduction in his teaching load to enable him to participate fully in the work of the Seminar; the senior members, with the exception of the Co-Directors and the Dean of Faculty, received a one-fifth reduction. This pattern, though followed in the main, has been varied in details from year to year. In 1955-56, Professor Beatrice G. Konheim was Director; associated with her as senior members were Professors James Gordon Clapp and William Kimmel; there were eight junior members from seven different departments. In the year now coming to a close, Professors Kimmel and Marjorie B. Smiley were associated as senior members with the writer, who served as Director. We have had as junior colleagues ten instructors from six different departments. In all, then, thirty beginning instructors have participated in the Ford Seminar in College Training at Hunter College.

Each academic year the Seminar began with a series of orientation sessions, designed to give the entering instructors some familiarity with the College as a whole. This year we

invited not only the junior members of the Seminar itself, but all persons who were beginning to teach at Hunter College in September 1956. Approximately twenty-five persons attended. They participated in three discussion sessions: on the morning and afternoon of Thursday, September 13, and on the afternoon of the following day. Leading the discussions were Dean Rees, Professor Weintraub, and Professor Konheim, on "The Organization and Administration of the College", Dean Rees and the writer, on "The Curricula of the College", and Mr. Hubert O'Gorman on "The Hunter College Student". On Friday morning the group attended the Convocation for entering Freshmen.

The principal activity of the Seminar proper has been a series of weekly discussion meetings. Here topics related to the problems of the college teacher have been discussed on the basis of outlines and readings prepared for the group by committees of its own members. Some of these topics are: Teaching Effectiveness (psychological principles underlying teaching and learning, the application of these principles, the nature of the student body, evaluation of students, evaluation of teachers); College Curricula and Course Organization (curricula at representative colleges, integration in terms of the course and of the individual, the structure of individual courses, course planning). Outside speakers and discussants were occasionally invited to participate.

In connection with its study of curricula at representative colleges, the members of the Seminar spent an entire day at Princeton University on May 8. Here we heard a lucid explanation of the Princeton preceptorial plan, and we had a chance to see it in operation as we sat in on small preceptorial conferences conducted by members of the Departments of English, History, and Modern Languages and Literatures. We also attended in a body a brilliant lecture on "The Impact of Evolution" in the series "Man in the Western Tradition" which forms part of the Humanities course. The work of the Princeton Council of the Humanities, which conducts the course just mentioned, had been discussed with our group by its chairman, Professor J. Whitney Oates.

The tutorial reading program, initiated by the 1955-56 Seminar, and enthusiastically received by its student participants of that year, was repeated this spring. The Dean of Faculty, as before, invited a selected list of honor students to join with members of the Faculty in a program of independent study, without grades or course credit. They were given a list of the instructors who would participate, and of the topics proposed. This year thirty-two students elected to work with ten instructors, on topics as varied as Evolution, the Brontes, Democracy in American Political Thought, the Writing of Latin Verse, Existentialism, and Hamlet. Students generally met once a week with their faculty mentors, and were guided by them in individualized, ad-

vanced study. The advantages of this program to the students are obvious; but the main purpose from the standpoint of the Seminar has been to provide young instructors with the experience of guiding superior students in individual study.

Another activity of the Seminar was a program of faculty intervisitation among its members. Each senior member was associated in this program with three or four of the junior members. They visited each other's classrooms to observe the teaching which went on there, and, later, to discuss their observations. In some cases the senior and the junior member took over each other's classes for a period or two. It is hoped that this program has achieved some of the goals of classroom observation without the tensions and strains of the ordinary supervisory visit.

Though the Ford Seminar as such will have ended its activities by the time this goes to press, the College intends to maintain, on a less elaborate scale, a regular program of induction for new members of the teaching staff. At the very least, this will include an orientation session at the beginning of the academic year for those newly appointed to Hunter. An advisory board under Dean Rees' direction is now working on the details of the new program.

HARRY L. LEVY

Director, Ford Seminar, 1956-57

FACULTY FACTS

Dr. Mina Rees, Dean of Faculty, appeared as guest speaker on NBC's Educational Television program on Saturday, April 27, discussing "The Calculus". Dean Rees was introduced by President Shuster, and assisted by Trude Robinson, a senior who expects to teach the kindergarten class in Babylon, Long Island, next September.

The *New Yorker* for March 30 contained as one of its famous series of *Profiles*, headed *A Giant in Her Field*, an account by Morton M. Hunter of the scholarly work of Professor Helaine Newstead of the Hunter College English Department, who is a specialist in the medieval Arthurian romances.

Ernest C. Hunt, who will be remembered as former Secretary of Hunter College (a post which he held for 49 years), celebrated with Mrs. Hunt on Saturday, May 18, their seventieth wedding anniversary.

ALICE HUNT

Hunter College Elementary School

IN MEMORIAM

Professor Marie Bell Coles, '81, a retired member of the Hunter College staff, passed away last June in her ninety-third year. Professor Coles had attended every Hunter College Kindergarten Alumnae Reunion since her retirement in 1926. In all, she had served the interests of Early Childhood Education over a period of seventy-eight years. She was a graduate of the old Normal College, a teacher in the Model School, and later a Professor in the Education Department of Hunter College. Then after her retirement she maintained an active membership in the Hunter College Kindergarten Alumnae, which is composed of those who have been graduated from Hunter College (and Normal College) as Kindergartners.

Professor Coles spoke at every Fall Reunion of the Kindergarten Alumnae. Many graduates attended in order to greet her. She was a very good speaker, her talks well-organized yet informal. She had a sense of humor; and she spoke with a consciousness of the changes that time brings. Several times she mentioned that she was graduated in 1881. She also told of her feelings when she was honored by appointment as the Training Teacher for Kindergartners at the time that the first Kindergarten Training class was established in Normal College in 1889 under the direction of President Thomas Hunter. She spoke of other well-known educators of the 1870's and 1880's.

Professor Coles maintained a warm, personal interest in her former students. As time went on she extended this to later graduates. She always asked the Alumnae members to call at her home in Mt. Vernon, N. Y.

After Professor Coles' retirement from the College she continued a long-time active association with the Missionary Training Institute in Nyack, N. Y.

Eleven years ago, the Hunter College Kindergarten Alumnae established the "Marie Bell Coles Award". This is given to an Early Childhood Education student at graduation.

Professor Coles was a sister-in-law of Professor Helen Graham Coles, who was also a member of the Education Department, and who retired at a later date. The two daughters of Professor Helen G. Coles (nieces of Professor Marie B. Coles) are also Hunter graduates.

The Kindergarten Alumnae Association realizes that it has lost an unusual, contributing personality. It was an enriching experience to have had Professor Coles as a member of the Association for such a long period.

MURIEL FARRELL

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