Wynton Marsalis
Jazz Legend Delivers Commencement Address
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THE PRESIDENT’S PERSPECTIVE

The arts have always played a large and exciting role in the life of our College, and, as this issue of Al Hunter describes, they are flourishing today through our outstanding undergraduate and MFA programs, exhibitions and performances, and visits to our campus by many of the nation’s foremost artists.

The speaker at our 200th commencement, at Radio City Music Hall, was the great Wynton Marsalis, whose renown in the music world is so universal that cities in France and Spain have actually erected statues of him. We presented him with both the President’s Medal and a work by one of the stars of our MFA in Studio Art, Sharon Madanes (MFA 14), which celebrates the instrument that he made so famous, the trumpet (photo at right). It was a delightful example of two art forms coming together on a Hunter stage.

Some of the other well-known guests who have appeared recently on our campus have been for Homecomings — they’re not only outstanding artists, but also Hunter alumni! Among them was the late Bill Kaufman ’34, author of the bestselling Up the Down Staircase, in one of his last public appearances. Another was Dascha Polanco VB, star of Netflix’s Orange is the New Black (photo at left). And yet another was the multitalented Arlene Alda ’54, whose new book, Just Kids from the Bronx, has received glowing reviews.

Arts Across the Curriculum is one of the most successful of the innovative programs we’ve introduced into the undergraduate and graduate experience (page 17). It brings the study of the arts into what seem to be completely unrelated classes like astronomy and chemistry and religion. The goal is to awaken students to connections they never realized before and make them aware of the dazzling possibilities that await them in the arts capital of the nation.

Our MFA in Creative Writing Program continues to win praise and national recognition for the quality of its programs, its prize-winning faculty and its prize-winning graduates. Just last November, Phil Klay (MFA ’11), won the prestigious National Book Award for Fiction for Redeployment, his collection of stories about Iraq (pages 4-6).

Speaking of award winners, Hunter undergraduates and alumni continue to capture many of the nation’s most coveted prizes. As you’ll see on pages 8-9, they are winning Fulbrights, Goldwater Scholarships, National Science Foundation grants and, for the first time in the College’s history, one of the only 18 Luce Scholarships awarded nationally.

One measure of a school’s greatness is where its graduates go in life and what they achieve. By that standard, it’s clear Hunter has emerged as one of the nation’s foremost public colleges.

I hope you enjoy reading these wonderful stories about all the changes and achievements at your alma mater. Please keep in touch with all that is happening by visiting our website (www.hunter.cuny.edu).

And I hope you’ll come back to campus soon for one of our many great programs or events, all of which can be found on our online calendar (www.hunter.cuny.edu/calendar). Thank you for all that you do to make Hunter College the extraordinary institution that it is.

Eleanor Clift: Cool at the White House, Tearful at Hunter

Eleanor Clift is a Washington journalist who has parried with presidents in the White House Press Room and tangled with pundits on TV’s The McLaughlin Group. Clift has also written authoritatively about the Iran-Contra scandal, a polarized Congress, the presidential election process, and the still-unequal role of women in our democracy—all difficult, daunting subjects. But last spring, when she took the stage at Hunter’s 200th Commencement, Clift was overwhelmed by emotion.

“Hunter wanted to confer an honorary doctorate on me, and I needed to find the words to properly convey how honored I felt,” she wrote later in The Daily Beast, where her columns appear regularly. “Looking out at the sea of students in caps and gowns, I saw the 21st-century version of myself, sons and daughters of immigrants and newcomers to America from every corner of the world.”

She continued, “When I stepped to the podium to speak, I thought I had my emotions under control. But telling my family’s story brought tears to my eyes, and it took me several seconds before I could continue.”

In Clift’s moving and funny speech to the Class of 2014, she reflected on her own years as a Hunter student. Although she noted that she had left before earning an undergraduate degree, she said she always took great pride in her association with Hunter.

Now, as her column soon after Commencement was aptly expressed, Clift has “A College Degree Worth the Wait.”
The number of applicants to decade into the premier training which has developed over the last MFA in Creative Writing Program, people whose gifts you can develop. “But you can select of the Booker Prize. “The rigorous two-year program — poetry, fiction, or memoir — winning authors included two of her favorites, Jonathan Safran Foer and Nicole Krauss. Vanessa Manko (MFA ’08) was paired with ac-claimed novel, “written in the finest Southern Gothic tradition [by] a 29-year-old Chinese-American from Queens who has never set foot in Mississippi.” Cheng acknowledged that he came to Hunter with no thought of writing a sprawling historical novel filled with the life and language of an unfamiliar region and era. But at Hunter, he said “that was the atmosphere created here.” Cheng explained, “Among the students themselves, there was a shared understanding of what was at stake — the idea that each of us wanted to do something that hadn’t been done before.” For two years, you were surrounded by amazing people, and you wanted to bring the best of yourself into that classroom.”

Maria Venegas (MFA ’09) began writing Bulletin/proof West. Her harrowing memory while studying at Hunter. novel, “written in the finest Southern Gothic tradition [by] a 29-year-old Chinese-American from Queens who has never set foot in Mississippi.” Cheng acknowledged that he came to Hunter with no thought of writing a sprawling historical novel filled with the life and language of an unfamiliar region and era. But at Hunter, he said “that was the atmosphere created here.” Cheng explained, “Among the students themselves, there was a shared understanding of what was at stake — the idea that each of us wanted to do something that hadn’t been done before.” For two years, you were surrounded by amazing people, and you wanted to bring the best of yourself into that classroom.”

The Hertogs: Lifting the Creative Writing Program to New Heights

The extraordinary generosity of Susan Hertog ’65 and her husband, Roger, has had a transformative impact on Hunter’s MFA in Creative Writing Program, now considered the most competitive master’s degree program in New York City. Their $1 million gift has allowed Hunter to recruit and retain world-class faculty and develop unique programs like the Distinguished Writers Series (see page 6). Their gift also made possible the Hertog Fellowship, a suppor-tive form of financial aid for Hunter’s MFA applicants. The fellowship provides select students with a stipend and the once-in-a-lifetime chance to work as research assistants to some of the most renowned authors in the world.

The Hertog Fellowship stems from Mrs. Hertog’s connection that careful research is the foundation of good writing, whether fiction or non-fiction. And, as a graduate of Columbia’s MFA in Creative Writing Program and the author of two critically acclaimed biographies, Anne Morrow Lindbergh: Her Life and The Enchantress, Hertog has turned her attention to architecture and architecture to 19th-century philosophy. “The Hertog Fellowship taught me about writing in ways that no amount of coursework could,” Manko said. “She took the lessons to heart when writing The Invention of Exile, her novel based on the life of her immigrant great-grandfather’s immigrant great-grandfather’s life and times she’d never known. From those Hertog Fellowships to the acclaimed faculty to the literary icons of the Distinguished Writers Series, the Hertogs’ commitment has been nothing short of transformative.”

Salman Rushdie with Susan Hertog ’65: In addition to the Hertogs’ Distinguished Writers Series, Rushdie served as a mentor to Hunter Fellow Vanessa Manko (MFA ’08). The Hertogs’ commitment has been nothing short of transformative. Rushdie with Susan Hertog ’65: In addition to the Hertogs’ Distinguished Writers Series, Rushdie served as a mentor to Hunter Fellow Vanessa Manko (MFA ’08). The Hertogs’ commitment has been nothing short of transformative.

Support Hunter’s MFA in Creative Writing Program Please visit: https://community.hunter.cuny.edu/creativewriting

Take the Hertog Challenge: Susan and Roger Hertog have renewed their commitment to Hunter’s MFA in Creative Writing with a $500,000 Challenge Grant. Please help us meet the challenge. Every dollar you contribute will be matched by the Hertog’s generous grant, helping support the next generation of great writers.
Phil Klay (MFA '11) Wins National Book Award for Stories Honed at Hunter

Phil Klay was named a National Book Award Finalist in 2014 for Redeployment, his collection of stories which brings the world’s most influential and well-regarded poets, memoirists and fiction writers to the College. Founded by a generous gift from Susan ’65 and Roger C. Grabe Dean of Hunter’s School of Nursing. Finkelpearl says he will always be a strong proponent of unhindered access to world-class education by keeping student costs as low as possible. As commissioners, they exemplify the power of a Hunter education. Finkelpearl says he will always be an inspiration to students and testimony to the soft of unhindered access to world-class education by keeping student costs as low as possible. As commissioners, they exemplify the power of a Hunter education. Finkelpearl says he will always be an inspiration to students and testimony to the soft of unhindered access to world-class education by keeping student costs as low as possible. 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Top Academic

Hunter Students

Win the Nation’s
Top Academic Prizes

From Luce to Fulbright to Goldwater and More, Hunter Students Win the Nation’s Top Academic Prizes

AN AWARD-WINNING RECORD

The true mark of a great college is the kind of citizens it sends into the world — where they go and what they do — then Hunter is excelling, and in the process is solidifying its status as one of the leading public colleges in the nation. Hunter students in growing numbers each year are winning many of the country’s most prestigious scholarships — among them Luce, Fulbright, Goldwater, and National Science Foundation awards. It is a direct reflection of the College’s commitment to student success — a commitment that was recently strengthened with the establishment of the Office of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships, the mission of which is to raise awareness about selective opportunities and then guide students through the rigorous application process.

This past year, Audrey Stienon ’14, Hunter’s first Luce Scholar, with nourishing brain food for her work at a leading Indonesian think tank. While the Luce is the high-water mark for scholarships in Asian affairs, the nation’s most prestigious prize for graduate students is the Barry Goldwater Scholarship, and here, Hunter continues to produce winners. Kristina Navrazhina ’14 won a Goldwater Scholarship in 2013 and is now an MD-PhD student in the Medical Scientists Training Program run jointly by Hunter and CUNY, to win a Luce Scholarship. Nicola Kriefall ’15 — who graduated with a major in psychology, is at Binghamton University, finding new ways to study genetic markers linked to learning disorders. And DelliCarpini ’13, Yasmin Zakiniaeiz ’13 and Aliona Tsypes ’13, TOPPYs, who majored in psychology at Hunter last year, have received grants from the National Science Foundation. These NSF grants are just as impressive. Dalila Ordonez ’13, who graduated with a major in psychology, is doing neuroscientific research on the Xavante indigenous community in Brazil, helping the Xavante indigenous community to document and pass down customs to the younger generation. Then there is Maggie Slavin (MSEd ’15), who will spend her Fulbright year in Jordan as an English Teaching Assistant while volunteering in the areas of youth development and refugee empowerment. In the past three years 12 Hunter students have received National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowships. They include Aaron Doler ‘12, who developed a proposal to study the electrical charges of fat cells — research he hopes will increase the effectiveness of HIV and cancer drugs. And it was no surprise that Baralsh Huhe ‘14 — with a triple major in biology-bioinformatics, chemistry and statistics, and a double minor in psychology and economics — won the NSF Fellowship last year. With his NSF grant, Bulbulai is studying a disease-carrying insect that is ravaging citrus crops. Three other NSF Fellows from Hunter last year were Rebecca DelliCarpini ‘13, Yasmin Zakiniaeiz ‘13 and Amelia Toppys ‘13. Toppys, who majored in psychology at Birmingham University, is studying new ways to study the factors that cause suicide, and possibly save lives.

Zakiniaeiz is studying the neural networks underlying the healthy and diseased brain at Yale University. And DelliCarpini is studying conservation science at the University of Texas at El Paso, her primary field site will be at the Ranomafana National Park in Madagascar. This year’s class of NSF winners is no less impressive. Dallia Ordonez ’13, who graduated with a major in psychology and a minor in biochemistry, is studying neuroscientists at Harvard. Benjamin Ruisis ‘13, who graduated from the Thomas Hunter Honors Program with majors in psychology and German and a minor in media studies, is currently studying social psychology at Cornell. And Alexander Teadey ’15 is majoring in physics at Hunter with a minor in math. Last summer, Teadey studied giant molecular clouds in the Milky Way at New Mexico’s National Radio Astronomy Observatory. In his graduate work at Columbia, he will use that data to complete a major analysis of tons of millions of stars.

Kristina Navrazhina ’14, a Goldwater winner, is now studying cancer biology in a leading MD-PhD program.

Baralsh Huhe, a Fulbright recipient, is in Japan conducting neuroscientific research.

Eddie Grinman ’14, a Fulbright recipient, is in Japan conducting neuroscientific research.

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Nicolia Kriefall ’15, a Goldwater Scholar, in Professor Chris Brown’s Hunter Laboratory of Comparative Sensory Performance.

Aaron Doler ’12 won an NSF Fellowship for his proposal outlining innovative research that could ultimately improve the effectiveness of drugs for cancer and HIV.

This extraordinary students — whether in Indonesia or Japan, Jordan or Texas — are practicing Hunter’s motto across the country and around the world. They may be studying outer space or the human brain or electric fish. They may be preserving an ancient culture or millions of dollars in crops. And whether their goal is to cure cancer or cure poverty, the care of the future is firmly in their hands.
Tracy Dennis: Making Headlines with an Anti-Anxiety App

Steve Greenbaum: World-Class Researcher and Mentor
Appointed Jefferson Fellow

Gary Mallon: Advancing Child Welfare, at Home and Around the World

Tamar Buckley: Telling the Truth about Workplace Diversity
Jack Rosenthal (r), interim director of Roosevelt House, and Katie Couric with the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund’s Rick Luftglass and Tisch Distinguished Fellow Thomas Farley (l), at a screening of the documentary Fed Up.

Klara ’54 and Larry Silverstein (r) welcomed CUNY Chancellor James Milliken and his wife, Nana Smith, to Hunter.

The legendary rock star Sting took the stage at Hunter’s Kaye Playhouse for an interview broadcast by Inside the Actors Studio.

Professor and Pulitzer Prize winner Karen Hunter interviewing New York Times columnist Charles Blow about Fire Shut Up in My Bones, his memoir of growing up in segregated Louisiana.

Professor and Pulitzer Prize winner Karen Hunter interviewing New York Times columnist Charles Blow about Fire Shut Up in My Bones, his memoir of growing up in segregated Louisiana.

Judith Zabar ’54 (l) and Zabar Visiting Artist Laura Owens. The Zabar Visiting Artist Program, endowed by Judith and her husband, Stanley, brings leading artists on campus to present a public lecture and work with students in master classes and private tutorials.

At Hunter’s 209th Commencement, U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri addressed a graduating class that included her daughter Lily Exposito ’14.

Leon Cooperman ’64, center, and President Jennifer Raab with Sandra and Edward (PICES ’40) Meyer at Roosevelt House.


Judy Zankel ’67 and Norman Benzaquen at the welcome reception for CUNY Chancellor James Milliken at Roosevelt House.
Over 1,300 alumni returned to campus for Hunter’s first all-class Homecoming. Attendees, many with their families, reunited with former classmates and had their choice of dozens of events throughout the day, including concerts, games and lectures.

Dascha Polanco ’08, star of Netflix’s Orange is the New Black, with Beverly Rosenstein ’43 at Homecoming. Rosenstein joined the Women’s Army Corps soon after graduating, and while home on leave, sat for the portrait now on display at Roosevelt House. It was painted by Hunter’s Joseph Cummings Chase, the Art Department chair famous for his representations of the military’s high-ranking officers.

At a dessert reception hosted by the Thomas Hunter Society, Klara Silverstein ’54 interviewed President Jennifer Raab about the enormous progress the College has made as a result of the generosity of its alumni.

Arlene Alda ’54, award-winning photographer and the author of 19 books — including her latest, Just Kids from the Bronx — spent the day entertaining the youngest members of the Hunter community with readings of her most popular children’s stories.

Lee ’43 and Morty Kaufman, who became instant celebrities with their TV ad for Swiffer cleaning products, and their daughter, Myra Allen. Myra helped her parents land the improvisational gig that swept them from their Long Island home to nationwide fame.

Bel Kaufman ’34, devoted alumna and renowned author, came back for one final visit to her beloved alma mater. Kaufman was as charming as ever when she gave her final campus address surrounded by (l-r) Waleed Alahari ’14, Simratpal Kaur ’13, Audrey Steiman ’14, Amal El Bakhar ’11, and Ryan Baxter ’12. Kaufman passed away in July at the age of 103.

F
irst Lady Michelle Obama made a critical point recently when she told an audience of American and Chinese students at Peking University, "Studying abroad is about so much more than improving your own future. It’s also about shaping the future of your coun-
tries and of the world we all share.” She might have added this: if you want to assure that your future abroad involves mastering the language, the opportunity for “shaping the future” increases exponentially.
The fact that the First Lady said this in Beijing is especially significant, because of all the foreign languages young Americans need to master, Mandarin Chinese ranks in the top tier, indeed, it may be first. Consider the various ways of building bridges to strengthen Chinese-American business relations.

At a luncheon on February 12, international investment banker Emily Tong ’16 (fourth from right) spoke to Chinese Flagship students about the importance of learning their host country’s language. Tong said Hunter is one of just 11 colleges and universities designated as a Chinese Flagship Center, an initiative of the National Language Flagship Program, which is a cost-effective investment America can make in large part on how well we do in the new global economy. It’s also a practical way to contribute to the U.S.-China dialogue and cooperation — with the emergence of China as a top economic power, we need to continue improving our mutual understanding.

T
he arts are alive at Hunter as never before, and they’ve found a home in some unexpected places. That’s happening thanks to the generous financial support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Hunter has launched Arts Across the Curriculum, a program that is breaking down the barriers between the arts and other disciplines and encouraging students and faculty to think about learning in new and different ways.

One of the most impressive examples of this is J.B. Bargonetti's course Choreo- graphy Genomics. When Bargonetti, a professor of biological sciences, wanted to ingrate her early love of dance into her teaching, she developed a course that teaches scientific concepts through movement as well as traditional scientific texts. "I got excited about teaching through multiple lenses and using movement and sound to articulate cancer biology as it relates to genomics," Bargonetti said. "The creativity and openness of the students is more easily tapped in this interactive setting." Similarly, psychology professor Tricia Straiton created a course combining Japanese printmaking and neuroscience. The

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ARTS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: Making Art An Integral Part of the Hunter Experience

media artist Alejandro Durán, whose work is at the crossroads of science, art, and public policy. Durán welcomed students from the undergraduate honors programs and from Hunter College High School to the East Harlem Gallery where he led an in-depth tour of his exhibition Washed Up, a work on plastic pollution in the world’s oceans and on its effects on wildlife. Colorful bottles of trash from an otherwise pristine coastline makes for striking photography in an art gallery, but for these students it also inspired a deeper and more thoughtful conversation about the science and politics of environmental pollution.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has allowed us to do something extraordinary at Hunter to enrich our students’ lives through exposure to the arts in all kinds of dynamic and exciting ways,” Connoc said. "Not only through direct interaction with important emerging artists like Durán, but also through innovative new courses, interdisciplinary programs, lecture and performance series and partnerships with cultural institutions."

An American in Tianjin

Hunter Gross ’15 exploring the corners and cultures of old and new China.

"If you are unable to make a successful translation, I'm afraid there is no other way to do it," said Gross. "It's a frustrating part of the process, but it's also a really important part of the process because we have to really think about what's going on in another culture."

The Chinese Flagship Program, Gross won the prestigious Boren Scholarship for his capstone year, which he is spending in Tianjin, China. "The students in these programs are redefining their foreign passports and building connections,” Gross said. "That's why I fell so strongly about the opportunities that are available here and how much we can do in terms of sharing knowledge of Mandarin to valuable uses.

Hunter Gross ’15, honors Chinese

HUNTER’S CHINESE FLAGSHIP PROGRAM:

This article is adapted from President Raab’s Huffington Post blog of December 2014.

Preparing Students for a Global Future

A n American in Tianjin

The in-country component of our program is its keystone. Mastering the four tones of the Mandarin language can be extremely difficult, and in practicing in Chinese-speaking surroundings is crucial. Students who take the three-credit Mandarin language courses may need extra help to achieve proficiency, but often finds the best opportunities making sure to reflect this extraordinary moment has more than tripled.

"By absorbing the culture and understanding the way people view you, you gain knowledge you couldn’t otherwise," he said. "The Chinese Flagship Program put me on a focused path, yet didn’t restrict my education." Gross said. "It opened up so many doors and introduced me to a whole world of possibilities.

HUNTER’S CHINESE FLAGSHIP PROGRAM:

result was a popular, arts-infused curriculum that will become permanent additions to Hunter’s course catalog, and we are seeing the arts being brought into the student experience in imaginative, stimulating and truly inspiring ways.

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Hunter Gross ’15, honors Chinese
ALL IN EAST HARLEM: Hunter’s Community to Its Uptown Neighborhood

East Harlem elementary school children visit the holiday book drive at Hunter’s Silberman School of Social Work.

Soon after Hunter opened its state-of-the-art Silberman School of Social Work Building on East 119th Street in the neighborhood known as “El Barrio,” it made a historic dedication, exemplifies the Hunter motto, “Mihi Cura Futurum” — I will care for the future of my community. Commitment. Known as All In East Harlem, the commitment addresses: the community’s multidimensional challenges — especially in health, education and the economy — by deploying Hunter’s vast reserves of knowledge, experience, and creativity.

The program — under the leadership of Jacqueline Mendoza, dean of the Silberman School of Social Work, and Joseph Vitetti, chair of the Department of Urban Affairs & Planning — rests on two fundamental principles. First, the College is bringing every available resource to bear on these challenges, with the participation of a broad range of schools and departments. Second, Hunter is directly engaged with local residents, neighborhood organizations, and public agencies. Instead of a top-down structure, All In is a grassroots program in which the community is engaged with every aspect of neighborhood improvement. From institutions or enterprises to neighborhoods or sources.

Tapping into the community at the grass-root level means expanding to the needs of residents and local institutions, from community planning boards to public schools, and health providers to neighborhood barber shops. Out of this collaboration has come a series of partnerships — 60 so far — whose breadth is remarkable. Their missions range from helping senior citizens who are aging in place with social and health services, to helping women who are former prison inmates with issues like substance abuse and mental illnesses. All in partners with READ East Harlem, a venture with local elementary schools that offers 2nd-grade teachers advanced training in reading instruction. All In is also engaged with community-based agencies, religious groups and Well Cornell Medical College to provide palliative care for East Harlem’s chronically ill. More than 150 Hunter students have been placed in internships and field-work programs so far. And a broad range of Hunter’s affiliated social-service agencies are engaged in All In East Harlem, including Social Work, Urban Public Health, Education, Urban Planning, Art, and Nursing. To encourage community engagement, Hunter has hosted many public programs, including a free film series, discussions on health and social justice topics, and health screenings. The College has also created an impressive new art gallery in the Silberman Building, the first of its kind in East Harlem. It is an enormous pool of talent dedicated to the vital goal of working with the community to strengthen the health of New York City’s most troubled neighborhoods from the grass roots up.

All In East Harlem has given us “the chance to live out my mission every day,” Dean Mendoza said. “And with Hunter fully engaging with the community, this comprehensive initiative can serve as a model for others in the city and the nation.”

New Way to Train Teachers: Embed Them in Schools

Joan Hansen Grabe, BSN ’60

Jean Hansen Grabe, chair of the Hunter College Foundation, expanded the trustee network, and worked tirelessly by chairing the Independent Care System’s Cancer Advisory Board and at the educational organization A Better Chance. After Hurricane Sandy, she supported the Hunter students who needed money for essentials. She is founding chair of the Advisory Committee to the Hunter College of Nursing, and founded the Grabe Endowment and Grabe Nursing Scholarship.

Jennifer Caserta, BA ’93

Joel New York-born woman was looking for. After earning his PhD from University of Pennsylvania, Grogan conducted much of his post-doctoral research at the NIH T32 Wistar Research Center before working as a scientist at a West Coast technology firm. Throughout all of those endowed experiences, the most gratifying experiences were those that included a teaching component,” said Grogan, who is completing his residency as a 9th-grade geometry teacher at Brooklyn High School of Telecommunications Arts and Technology. “I was aware of the barn-out rates for new teachers and didn’t want to be part of that statistic,” he said. “I felt Hunter’s residency model would ensure my long-term success.”

The programs are highly selective, drawing wide arrays of applicants — from recent college graduates to professional looking to change careers. Participants receive financial support and tuition and each is immersed as a resident in a host school alongside an experienced mentor. Upon completion, participants earn a master’s in education and are eligible for the New York State initial teacher certification.

In 2016, graduates commit four years of teaching in high need NYC public schools. “This program has provided me with endless support from my mentor and fellow residents and has given me the opportunity to be a part of a community of creative thinkers with a passion for science and math,” said Stefani Santana Ismail (MSEd ’16), “MASTER resident and a 12th-grade marine biologist teacher at Preparatory Academy High School in the Bronx. UFT resident Mrinal Majumdar (MSEd ’16), a special education teacher at Hillcrest High School in Queens, earned a master’s in education and is eligible for the New York State initial teacher certification.

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Jennifer Caserta is a leader in broadcast media. In 2004, she was appointed assistant vice president for marketing on the Independent Film Channel, and in 2013 became president and general manager of IFC Networks. Under her leadership, IFC has achieved its highest ratings ever, with new original programming including the Emmy-nominated series Portlandia. She is also the National Captain of Telecommunications and Telecommunications’ America’s Young Leadership Award, and has been named one of the Most Powerful Women in Cable by the industry publication Cablefax.

Lila Ventiloz Prounis, BA ’48

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**1930s**

Belle Greene ’32 celebrated her 101st birthday with a belly dancing party in Setauket, NY this January.

Martha Rosenstock Gold ’36, who recently celebrated her 100th birthday, taught English and German at Lakewood (Nj) High School before her retirement in 1977. Now living at a continuing care facility in Columbia, MD, she is on the welcoming committee and assists with writing and editing the newsletter.

Beatrice Lumping ’39, at the age of 96, issued words of encouragement to a crowd of striking steelworkers in northwest Indiana this past February – “Stay strong and don’t give up what my generation fought for!”

**1940s**

After 12 years in local government, including eight years as mayor of Closter, NJ, Sophie Dittmann Haymann ’48 decided not to seek re-election. Among her accomplishments were boosting parks and sports facilities, preserving historical sites, and editing the newsletter.


**1950s**

Famed poet Sonia Sanchez ’55, a leader in the Black Arts Movement, recently co-authored S.O.S. Calling All Black People, which discusses the movement. A winner of a PEN Literary Award, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Award, and a National Education Association Award, among others, she is the author of more than a dozen volumes of poetry as well as children’s books, plays and other works.

Former Gallaudet university president Robert Davila (MA ’65) was a featured speaker in “Sharing Stories: Deaf Latino Experiences,” an instigate conversation in American Sign Language hosted by the Smithsonian Latino Center, part of a series of events celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

John LoFrumento ’66, CEO of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers for the last 27 years, retired in January. LoFrumento first joined the ASCAP executive team as controller in 1982.

Jeffrey Friedlander ’67, a member of the Hunter College Pre-Law Advisory Board and second in command at the New York City Law Department, has retired after almost 45 years of public service.

James Harrison ’68, a history instructor and the chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Portland Community College in Oregon, was prolific in Diversity issues in Higher Education: Harrison’s courses focus on the accomplishments of African Americans.


Internationally acclaimed artist Alice Aycock (MFA ’71) created Park Avenue Paper Chase, seven large sculptures in aluminum and fiberglass that stretched from 52nd to 66th Streets during 2014. Aycock’s works are in the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, and other major museums in the U.S. and Europe.

**1960s**

Longtime Bronx activist Netty Fox ’62 was interviewed for the upcoming documentary Decade of Fire, which recounts the 1970s, the borough’s most challenging years.

Gail Ash ’68, was elected the first female mayor of the city of Clermont, Florida. President Obama has appointed Katherine D. Seelman ’64 to the National Council on Disability. Seelman is associate dean for disability programs at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences.

Kathy Harrison ’68, a history instructor and the chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Portland Community College in Oregon, was prolific in Diversity issues in Higher Education: Harrison’s courses focus on the accomplishments of African Americans.

Phi Alpha Delta ’69, the national honor society for pre-law students, announced the election of John LoFrumento ’66, CEO of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers for the last 27 years, as the organization’s national president. LoFrumento joined the ASCAP executive team as controller in 1982.

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New York State Senator Tony Avilia (74-D Queens) joined his chamber’s powerful Independent Democratic Caucus, and prevailed in an onstage conversation in 2014. Painted drawings by Alice Aycock (MFA ’71) created Park Avenue Paper Chase, seven large sculptures in aluminum and fiberglass that stretched from 52nd to 66th Streets during 2014. Aycock’s works are in the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, and other major museums in the U.S. and Europe.

**1970s**

Judy Lipschitz Comitati ’72, vice president and chief information officer at Trinitas Regional Medical Center in Elizabeth, NJ, has been appointed chair of the Jersey Health Connect Board of Directors.

Olivia Buery (MSEd ’73) received the Women Celebrating Women Award at a Women’s History Month ceremony in Brooklyn.


**1980s**

Kristine Bihun ’82, a nutritionist and certified diabetes educator, is a lecturer with the NYS Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, which educates school nurses, teachers, staff and students.

Robert Sandler (MUP ’82), a real estate partner at the law firm Farrell Fritz, has been appointed treasurer of the Farmingdale College Foundation.

Drawings by David Bainin (MA ’94) were on display at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock. In 2014, Bainin is an adjunct professor at the university.

Kevin Law (MS ’84), president of the Long Island Association, was named by Governor Cuomo to the New York State Gaming Facility Location Board. Since 2013, Law has re-charged the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council.

“Works on paper” by Carole Seborovski (MFA ’87) were recently featured at The Nohra Haim Gallery. Seborovski is represented in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art and the National Art Gallery.

Iris Linares ’88 has been appointed associate director of marketing at the Miami Beach Commercial Real Estate.

**1990s**

Jorge Montepare (MA ’98), global editorial director of market reporting for Platts, a provider of energy, metals, petrochemicals and agriculture information, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Energy Risk Magazine in 2014.

Linda Lassell Bryant (MSW ’90) has been named Katherine and Howard Abell Visiting Assistant Professor and executive in residence at the New York University Silver School of Social Work. Linda Lassell Bryant (MSW ’90) has been named Katherine and Howard Abell Visiting Assistant Professor and executive in residence at the New York University Silver School of Social Work.

Suzanne Jay ’96 (MSW ’93) received the Mary Warner Award for Service to Dance from the Dance Council of North Texas for her 20 years of work with the continued on next page
national non-profit organization Career Transition For Dancers She had served as a counselor and director of client services for the organization while in New York and continues to conduct workshops across U.S. from her home base in Texas.

Cynthia Roynon (MA ’96), curator of the Mattatuck Museum, participated in the September panel discussion “The Federal Arts Project in Connecticut, Then and Now” at the Wolcott Library in Litchfield, CT.

“A TASK party,” a spontaneous networking event organized by Pauline Yu and Oliver Herwig (MA ’53), was centered in the September 7, 2014, New York Times Madison Square Park celebration marked the 200th anniversary of the naming of Madison Square.

The National Association of Hispanic Nurses presented its 2014 Nurse of the Year Award to Yolanda BN (BSN ’13) on Oct. 17, 2014, in Washington, D.C. The award is given annually to a nurse who has developed a creative and innovative program, intervention or strategy.

Karen Remy (MSW ’91), director of the Urban Health and Community Development Program at the Harvard School of Public Health, was named to the National Book Foundation’s “5 Under 35” list. Remy is the author of “The Memoirs of a Non-Enemy Combatant, Published by Viking/Penguin in 2022. Her work has appeared in The Nation, Vogue, and The Best Global Stories 2014. The story “Things Considered” is given annually to a nurse who has served communities. Baptiste is a member of Phi Zeta, the veterinary pathobiology at North Carolina State University, has a fellowship in Rome. 2014 Smith Prize for “Word from Kampala,” conceived in reaction to the Ugandan law making homos-"
theila Lubetsky Birnbaum’s (’60, MA ’62) journey to becoming one of the nation’s most successful attorneys began on Hunter’s former Bronx campus. Her path to the law was inspired by a female instructor in a Private Law course, a broad — and in Birnbaum’s opinion, fascinating — overview of criminal law, property law and torts.

“I was hooked,” she said. “It was clear to me that I wanted to go to law school.”

After graduating cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, the Bronx-born Birnbaum taught fourth grade in her native borough. While teaching, she traveled to Hunter’s Manhattan campus for night school where she earned a master’s in history. Further inspired by an International Law course and her participation in a Mock World Court exercise,

she decided her future must be in the law. Selected multiple times by The National Law Journal as “one of the 100 most outstanding members of the legal profession,” Birnbaum graduated from NYU Law School before arriving at Skadden Arps, one of New York City’s top white-shoe firms, where she practiced for 33 years. She has successfully argued three cases before the Supreme Court, and serves as “Special Master” of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund. She is currently a partner with the trial law firm of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan.

Like many Hunter students, Birnbaum was the first in her family to attend college. Her younger sister, Norma Lubetsky Friedman (’63, MA ’67), followed in her footsteps, also earning her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Hunter. In honor of her late sister, Birnbaum funded the Norma Lubetsky Friedman Scholarship for poetry students in Hunter’s MFA in Creative Writing Program.

“Hunter is where I spent some of my most influential years and picked up many of the skills I use every day,” said Birnbaum, who continues to pay it forward to the next generation of aspiring lawyers at Hunter. Through her participation in the Hunter Pre-Law Program’s Lunch with a Lawyer and Moot Court, she is able to impart her wisdom, insight, and advice directly to students.

“I am so pleased to be able to help Hunter students explore professional opportunities and consider their career paths,” she said. “I have had a chance to see these future attorneys in action and it’s clear that they will have successful futures.”

Birnbaum and fellow Hunter College Foundation Board member Christopher Seeger ’87 were instrumental in developing the Pre-Law Program’s first benefit, Concussion Litigation and Its Effects on the Future of Contact Sports. They not only helped orchestrate this seminal event, but also engaged in a lively debate as part of a distinguished legal panel. That evening, Birnbaum and Seeger were presented with the first Hunter College Distinguished Alumni Lawyer Awards.

When Birnbaum, a member of the Hunter Hall of Fame, was awarded an honorary doctorate of law at Hunter’s 199th commencement in 2009, she declared, “It’s time we rededicate ourselves to public education and public service.”

As a member of the Hunter College Foundation Board and the Pre-Law Advisory Board, she lives up to that declaration daily, not only by helping guide the overall direction of the program, but also by being an active participant.