

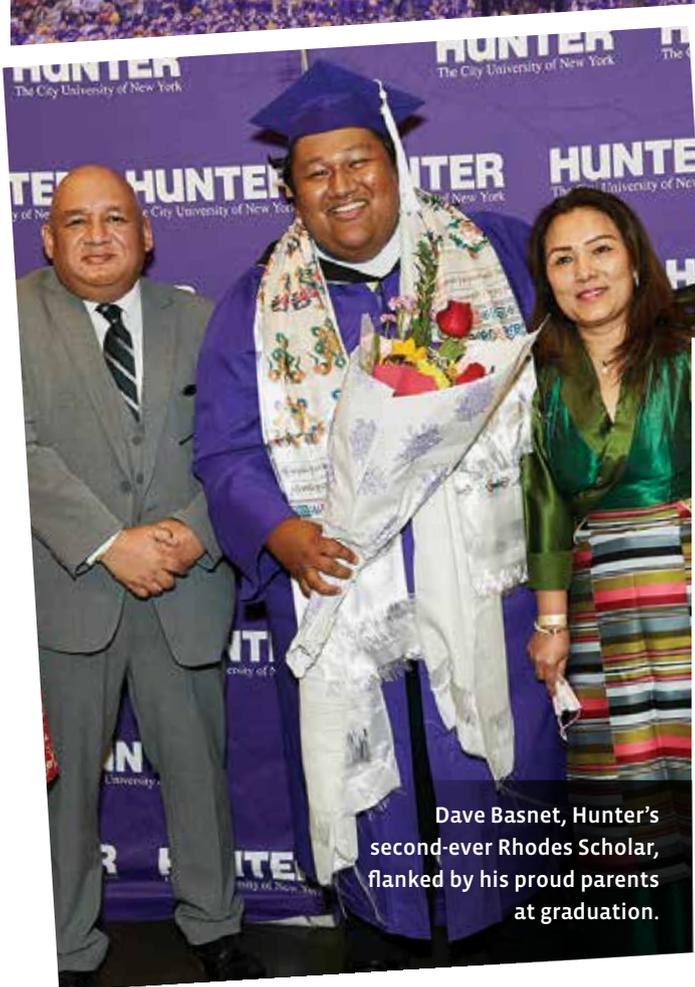
FALL  
2022

A HUNTER

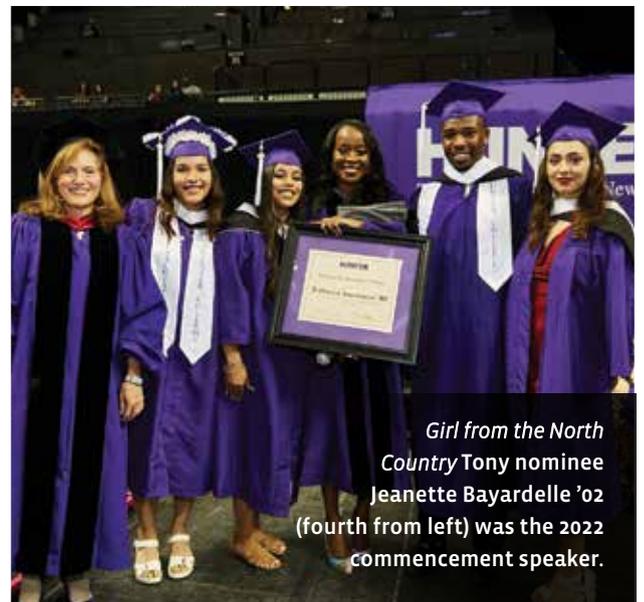


# We're Back!

The **Class of '22**'s  
Joyous In-Person  
Commencement



Dave Basnet, Hunter's second-ever Rhodes Scholar, flanked by his proud parents at graduation.



Girl from the North Country Tony nominee Jeanette Bayardelle '02 (fourth from left) was the 2022 commencement speaker.

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Photo: John Abbott



## THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

### The Covid Test: Here's How Hunter Aced It

We made it! Hunter came through the pandemic with flying colors, meeting challenge after challenge for more than two years, culminating in our first full-scale in-person commencement ceremony this June at Brooklyn's vast Barclays Center. COVID is not entirely over, but we are moving forward as we develop our Strategic Plan for the future, and we couldn't be prouder!

How did the College do it? From the start of the lockdown in the spring of 2020 onward, we kept classes going, whether remote or in-person. Our highest priority—driving every decision we made—was keeping students, faculty and staff healthy and safe. We never lowered our rigorous academic standards. And through it all, students and faculty kept up their great tradition of winning awards and honors, including six Fulbrights and the second Rhodes Scholarship in the College's history, which was won by Dave Basnet, a DACA student from Nepal.

When COVID-19 first became a threat, the College acted quickly to make the transition to online learning and teaching. We not only purchased the hardware and bandwidth that students needed to function in new virtual classrooms, we also provided the training the faculty needed to pivot successfully to the complex demands of online teaching.

Not every class went to remote learning, however. In some areas, such as the 47 research laboratories where vital science experiments were underway, students and professors were allowed to return to campus to continue their work under strict safety procedures. Still other subjects where in-person participation is essential—including dance, music and art—studios and classrooms were also open, again under carefully controlled conditions.



▲ Graduates fill Barclays Center.



▲ Science lab work perseveres.



▲ Art studios reopen, artists return.

Meeting the academic needs of the students was crucial, of course, but far more than that was required—and far more was done. We recognized as soon as the lockdown began that many working Hunter students were going to lose their jobs, or at least see their incomes sharply reduced. Thanks to the generosity of the Hunter community, \$1.1 million in scholarship aid was raised by the fall of 2020. An Emergency Assistance Fund created by a dedicated Hunter College Foundation Board continued to raise private funds to help students throughout the tough times.

The on-campus Food Pantry for students was not only kept open for the duration, it also was put on wheels. We used the College's Geographic Information System to identify neighborhoods in all five boroughs with high concentrations of Hunter students. Two vans were then dispatched to make 10 stops a week in these communities, delivering food, technology (think loaner laptops) and less-obvious-but-still-essential supplies such as feminine hygiene products. For the first Thanksgiving of the lockdown, the vans even delivered 60 turkeys!

By the fall of 2021, Hunter had begun, carefully but steadily, to reopen. The new semester began with 30 percent of classes in person, 39 percent hybrid (a balance of online and on-campus) and 31 percent entirely online. Again, the health and safety of students, faculty and staff were the top priorities. And it worked. At semester's end, Hunter graduated—remotely but proudly—1,900 undergraduate and graduate students, a testament to devoted faculty and staff efforts to provide students with a world-class education during an incredibly challenging time.

By February of this year, I was able to begin my *Open Line* newsletter to the Hunter community with these words: "It is so gratifying to see our campus returning to its usual hum of activity." Approximately 70 percent of the spring term classes were in-person that month, and more classes made the transition in the weeks that followed. By the end of the semester, the Student Union—which was already operating and a big hit before the pandemic began—along with our libraries, athletic facilities and other student spaces were all open and flourishing.

It was incredibly exciting for all of us to see our campus filled with students again and a good reminder that we are, at our core, an on-site institution. And words cannot fully express how thrilling it was to hold our June 10 in-person graduation ceremony. In person. Whoever imagined those two simple words would mean so much to so many?

The future path of COVID-19 and its potentially dangerous variants remains to be seen. But whatever the history books say about the era, this much will be certain: The Hunter community went all-out to ensure that the campus stayed safe and functioning. Teaching and learning went on. Hunter found a way through a perilous time to fulfill—without interruption—its mission of educating students and supporting faculty. And Hunter's motto—*Mihi Cura Futuri*, The Care of the Future Is Mine—still inspires and guides the College.

*Jennifer J. Laab*

**PS:** Please stay in touch with everything happening at Hunter by visiting our website: [www.hunter.cuny.edu](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu). You also can follow us on our Twitter feeds, including @Hunter\_College and @HunterPresident, on Instagram: @HunterCollege and @HunterPresident and at Hunter's Facebook page. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at [president@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:president@hunter.cuny.edu).



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▲ Our laptop loan program keeps students connected.



▲ We stockpiled essentials for the food-distribution program.



▲ A Hunter van nourishes the community.

# Celebrating the Best in a Class That Made it Through the Toughest of Times



◀ (Far left) Jeanette Bayardelle belted a song that had students waving. (Left) Fulbright winner Luisais Taveras.

The second Covid year consisted of hybrid studies — some of them remote but, increasingly as the school year progressed, back in classrooms. President Raab described that experience: “When at last classes started up again and you returned to campus, you persevered even when the risk of traveling with such a highly contagious virus all around had to add to the mental stress you were already under. And coming back to school was like landing in a parallel universe — almost like the one you left, but not quite.”

The Class of '22 was special in other ways, too, and the commencement ceremony celebrated many of the highlights. An astonishing 12 students qualified as valedictorians with perfect 4.0 GPAs — a tie, as President Raab, noted, “not even Hunter’s renowned Accounting Department could find a way to break.”

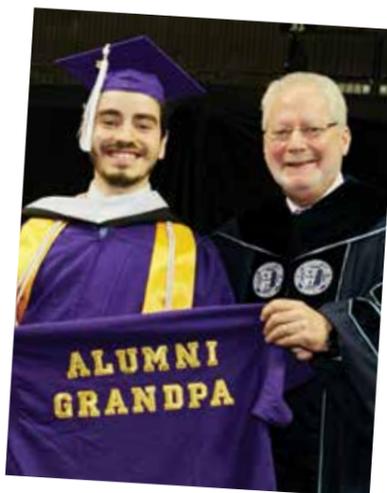
Students from five continents and more than 150 countries were in attendance, with the parents of some graduates traveling from countries around the world to attend, including Greece, Nigeria, Uganda, Pakistan and this year’s

▶ CUNY Trustee Fernando Ferrer receives a memento from his graduating grandson Jalen Gill '22. ▶

distance record-holder, Myanmar.

As it has been for decades, Hunter graduated a number of Fulbright scholars this year — among them Luisais Taveras, who entered Hunter through the SEEK Program, joined the Thomas Hunter Honors Program and became an Eva Kastan Grove Fellow. Born in the Dominican Republic, Taveras overcame a long series of hardships to make it to Hunter, and is now off to Mexico as a teacher and cultural ambassador.

The commencement speaker was someone special, too: Jeannette Bayardelle '02, who is currently starring on Broadway in *Girl from the North Country*, the musical based on Bob Dylan songs, in a terrific performance that earned her a Tony nomination. After exclaiming that she was “so proud to be a Hunter graduate,” she told the students the discipline she learned while earning a degree — not in Theater, but Medical Lab Science — has been a key to her success. Drawing on her roller-coaster early years in show



business, she urged the students, “Don’t let people put you in a box, don’t put yourself in a box. Don’t be afraid to try something new, and do be a lifelong learner.” She finished with a rousing rendition of a song she wrote, “I Believe,” that had the audience singing along, performing the Wave and shaking their purple and gold pompoms.

In her parting message to the

“unique, unstoppable” Class of '22 President Raab said: “As we celebrate you and say goodbye, I ask all of you to remember what Hunter has given to you and to commit yourself in some way to our motto . . . *Mihi Cura Futuri*, the Care of the Future is Mine. Today, I ask you to take those words into your hearts as you leave.”

## Heading for Top Grad Schools With PhDs on Their Minds

For some Hunter students, faculty members are not just mentors but role models who inspire young men and women to follow in their footsteps and become professors.

The Class of 2022, those survivors of two pandemic years of mixed learning experiences, produced a bumper crop of potential profs. Among them was Hannah Lynch, who got a second chance for a degree at Hunter. After leaving her first college, she began working at Shakespeare & Co., a bookstore near Hunter where she designed and sold Hunter gear. That led her to enroll in classics courses. She quickly became an honors scholar, graduated at age 28 with a 4.0 GPA and is now headed to Harvard in the fall, where she will try to earn a PhD in classics.

Xin Yu Zhu Jiang came to Hunter from Ecuador knowing no English, but her passion for science helped her overcome that barrier. A talented



▶ Hannah Lynch, bound for a Harvard PhD program.

lab researcher, she graduated with a 3.9 GPA and is off to Cornell to earn her PhD in biology.

Joselyn Garcia, an art major with a 3.86 GPA and departmental honors, double-majored in classics and won that department’s top honors. She will pursue her PhD in art history at Bryn Mawr.

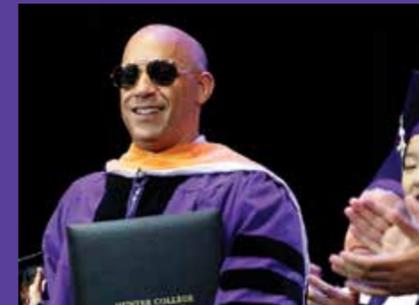
## An Eye for Diversity in Awarding Honors

Like most American universities, Hunter gives honorary degrees to notable figures. What distinguishes Hunter, however, is the diversity of its choices. Yes, there are major public figures (e.g., Bella Abzug, Bishop Desmond Tutu), distinguished authors (Walter Isaacson) and leading philanthropists (Leon Cooperman).

But Hunter also honors achievers other universities might not consider such as Arthur Elgort '64, a fashion photographer who revolutionized his profession with the free and easy way he captured models on film. Or Twyla Tharp, whose innovative but unconventional choreography has upended ballet. Or Nobel Prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney and Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter, MA '88.

Two recent honorees further illustrate the breadth of Hunter’s choices: Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, who was made an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in 2018, and action movie star Vin Diesel, who sported sunglasses as he accepted the same degree at the spring commencement that year.

Justice Kagan’s ceremony was something of a homecoming, since she is a graduate of Hunter Elementary School and Hunter High School (where her brother Irv now teaches her decisions in the constitutional law class). A brilliant student who attended Princeton and Harvard Law School, Kagan is remembered for wearing a judge’s robe in her Hunter High yearbook photo that proved to be prescient. She went on to break several glass ceilings — first woman an Solicitor General, first woman dean of Harvard Law and fourth female Supreme Court justice.



▶ Movie star Vin Diesel got an honorary degree.



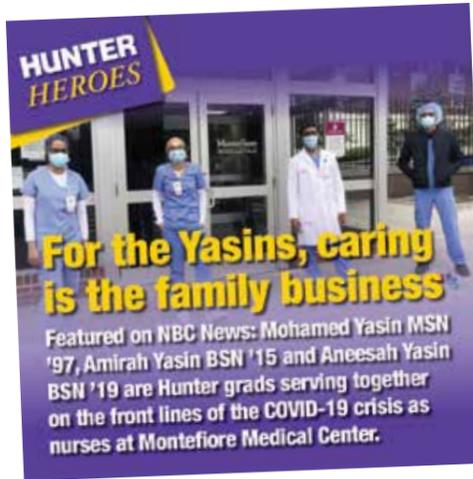
▶ So did Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan.

Diesel’s ceremony was a kind of homecoming too, since he was a Hunter undergrad for three years while he worked as a nightclub bouncer. He dropped out to undertake a long, difficult struggle that led to “sleeping on a lot of couches” before achieving Hollywood stardom. His success goes well beyond appearing on screen — he is also a screen writer, producer, philanthropist for causes as diverse as racial justice and regenerative medicine. As President Raab said, “You proved a smart, determined kid from the streets of New York can make it to the top.”

Who else would honor a Supreme Court justice and action icon in the same year? Hunter, of course.

# Hunter Heroes: Getting Us Past Covid

While the coronavirus pandemic has caused widespread hardship, it has also created an environment in which real heroes have risen to the moment, and many in the Hunter community — students, alumni, faculty and staff — are among those shining most brightly. While they are serving in different ways, each is demonstrating that the Hunter motto — *Mihi Cura Futuri* (The Care of the Future is Mine) — is more than just empty words; our amazing community is embodying it! Here is a small sample of our many heroes:



**HUNTER HEROES**

**For the Yasins, caring is the family business**

Featured on NBC News: Mohamed Yasin MSN '97, Amirah Yasin BSN '15 and Aneesah Yasin BSN '19 are Hunter grads serving together on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis as nurses at Montefiore Medical Center.



**HUNTER HEROES**

**Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez '75**

The commissioner of the NYC Department for the Aging is orchestrating home deliveries of food and crucial resources for New York City's most vulnerable.



**HUNTER HEROES**

**Arabia Mollette '04**

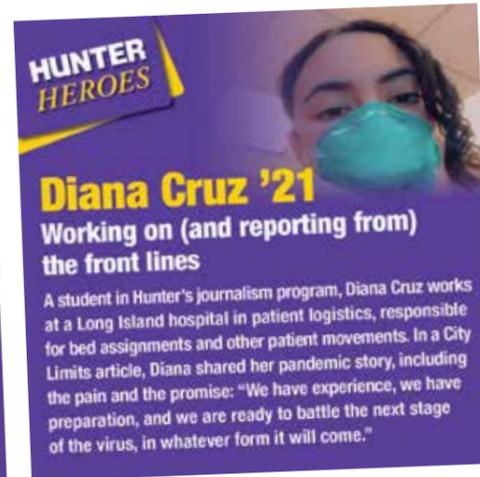
A Brooklyn ER doctor working on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis.



**HUNTER HEROES**

**Matthew Caron Spends Weekends Saving Lives**

A part-time EMT since 1984, Silberman School of Social Work grants manager Matthew Caron has been doing weekend double-shifts as a paramedic at Maimonides Medical Center.



**HUNTER HEROES**

**Diana Cruz '21**

Working on (and reporting from) the front lines

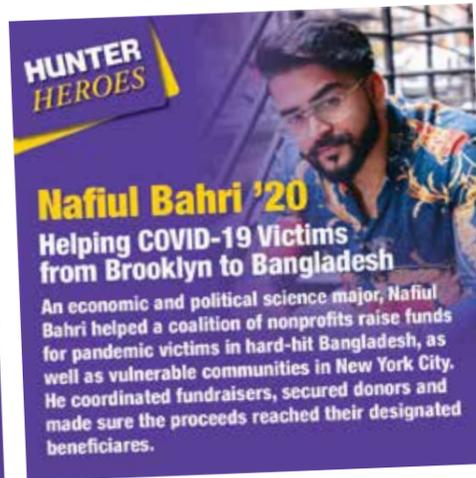
A student in Hunter's journalism program, Diana Cruz works at a Long Island hospital in patient logistics, responsible for bed assignments and other patient movements. In a City Limits article, Diana shared her pandemic story, including the pain and the promise: "We have experience, we have preparation, and we are ready to battle the next stage of the virus, in whatever form it will come."



**HUNTER HEROES**

**Regina Miranda & Ana Ortin**

Psychology professor Regina Miranda and research associate Ana Ortin are developing early insights on COVID-19's impact on mental health in communities across the nation.



**HUNTER HEROES**

**Nafiul Bahri '20**

Helping COVID-19 Victims from Brooklyn to Bangladesh

An economic and political science major, Nafiul Bahri helped a coalition of nonprofits raise funds for pandemic victims in hard-hit Bangladesh, as well as vulnerable communities in New York City. He coordinated fundraisers, secured donors and made sure the proceeds reached their designated beneficiaries.



**HUNTER HEROES**

**Tiffany Vuong Takes in Displaced Senior's Dog**

Hunter College alumna and former Mothers Day Scholar Tiffany Vuong '16 was named "New Yorker of the Week" by NY1. Tiffany volunteers at Animal Haven and is fostering "Sky" until she can be reunited with her owner following the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Our Second Rhodes Scholar: From Kathmandu to Oxford via Hunter

D evashish "Dave" Basnet was 6 when his family had to flee a violent uprising in Nepal. They arrived in New York without money, the ability to speak English, or even an understanding of what a Big Mac was. After the family ate some as one of their first meals, they learned they were made of beef — something that, for religious reasons they are not supposed to eat. Dave's dad found work as a taxi driver and his mom became a babysitter. Dave thrived in school, but when it came time to apply for college, he hit a wall. He discovered that because of his DACA status, he was ineligible for federal student aid. That meant he couldn't afford to attend any of the elite private schools that wanted him. He was thrilled to learn Hunter grants scholarships regardless of immigration status, so he enrolled as a political science major.

When a public policy class professor mentioned "immigration studies," Dave's world changed — this meant there was an entire

academic field dedicated to his life experience. Immediately, he knew what he had to study. That summer Dave interned at the U.S.-Mexican border. At one point he found himself sitting across the table from a 17-year-old who had just crossed with his family and was translating for his parents. It was like seeing his own reflection — he, too, had been the family translator. That's when Dave decided to dedicate his life to this work.

He spent the next three summers interning in the field of migration in the U.S. and abroad. He started an outreach project for the children of Nepal, was elected Student Government president, and decided, against the odds, to apply for a Rhodes Scholarship.

That is how Dave Basnet became the second student in Hunter history to win this prestigious award — the only New York winner this year from a public university. Now this Sherpa from Nepal is on his way to study immigration at Oxford University.



▲ Hunter's second Rhodes Scholar.

## Dave Meets Obama, DACA Is the Issue

D evashish "Dave" Basnet '22 is on a roll. Having just become the second Hunter student in three years to win a Rhodes Scholarship, he was one of five Dreamers who sat down in June with Barack Obama to discuss the status of undocumented immigrants.

The occasion was the 10th anniversary of then-President Obama's signing the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order, which provides temporary protection from deportation for people like Dave who were brought to America as children. Dave arrived at age 6 after his family fled deadly violence in their native Nepal.

Obama encouraged the Dreamers to tell their stories and be advocates in their communities, a role Dave has vigorously played in keeping with Hunter's history of supporting its DACA students. There were several in the Class of '22, and their stories, as told by President Raab, touched the commencement audience.

Stories like that of Montserrat Lopez, who came

to the U.S. at the age of 5 to join parents who were already here. Her grandmother put her in the care of a "coyote" to cross the border. Fortunately, she made it safely and adjusted to American life. Now Monti plans to become an employment lawyer to bring justice to the workplace.

Itzel Juarez Garcia's parents brought her to the U.S. from Mexico as a toddler, but her father was deported while Itzel was in high school.

Itzel began working to help support the family. A Dreamer Scholarship helped with her Hunter tuition, but she still had to work very early or very late shifts to fit in classes. She graduated with an accounting degree and a job with Deloitte, a major international financial firm.

President Obama said of Dave and his four counterparts, "Having seen the remarkable things these DACA kids have done with their lives . . . I hope it inspires us to redouble our efforts to permanently resolve their status."



▲ Hearing from President Obama.



▲ Posing with the former President and Jessica Astudillo '15.

# Hunter Project Takes the Lead In Preparing Theater Students



requires substantial funding. The Hunter Theater Project has been blessed with several donors, most significantly Dame Susie Sainsbury, a widely admired supporter of the arts in general, British theater in particular, and now theater at Hunter.

Since its creation, the Hunter Theater Project has mounted a series of hit shows. The first in 2018 was *Uncle Vanya*, which *New York Times* drama critic Ben Brantley called an experience that “happens seldom to even the most devoted theatergoers.”

Next was *Link Link Circus* in which Isabella Rossellini, MA '19 used short comic films, animation and some of her own pets to explore the latest scientific discoveries about animal intelligence and emotions. That was followed by

◀ **Jay O. Sanders (foreground) in a scene from *What Happened?: The Michaels Abroad*.**

The Hunter Theatre Department is playing a starring role in career training for its students. The innovative new effort is called the Hunter Theater Project, and it engages students in professional productions alongside some of the top acting, directing and technical professionals of the New York stage. The fresh approach offers the students what is now a keystone of Hunter's educational philosophy: experiential learning.

The Project was introduced four years ago by Department Chair Gregory Mosher, Hunter's Patty and Jay Baker Professor of Theatre. Here's how he describes it: “The basic idea is to connect top-flight artists with the interdisciplinary teaching mission of the College. For instance, Erica Schmidt's all-female production of *Mac Beth* raised all kinds of gender questions and had as much value for the Women and Gender Studies Department as it did



▲ Baker Professor of Theatre Gregory Mosher.

for students of English or theatre. And of course, a Black female in the title role was deeply resonant in our community.

Professor Mosher — who was previously the leader of three theatrical companies including Lincoln Center Theater and Circle in the Square — continued: “Hunter students were able to attend rehearsals as well as performances and listened as the director gave notes to the cast — an incredible learning experience. They've been in production meetings and listened as directors, designers and tech teams tried to solve problems that inevitably arise once performances begin. In other words, they've had an opportunity to connect.

Equally important, students are involved in professional productions as technicians, production assistants and ushers — roles, Professor Mosher points out, that allows them to study a show every night. Each of these positions provides moments to ask questions, share hopes and make professional connections. One student ended up with a well-paying job in a Broadway office after just one week as a Theater Project production assistant.

Of course, mounting professional productions



▲ All-female production of *Mac Beth*. — Photo by Richard Termine for *The New York Times*

*Mac Beth* (a variant spelling to reflect the changes from Shakespeare's original) in which seven contemporary schoolgirls set out to stage a show, only to find themselves entangled with witches, ghosts, kings and cascades of onstage rainfall.

Next up was the final installment of *Rhinebeck Panorama*, a series of dramas by acclaimed playwright Richard Nelson about the lives of three upstate New York families. The 12th and final play in the series — *What Happened?: The Michaels Abroad* — had its world premiere at Hunter's Frederick Loewe Theatre in August 2021. President Raab called it another example of Hunter's ongoing commitment to the arts.” And *The Times* said, “Centuries from now, when people want to know what a certain class of person lived like in America, they'll go to Richard [Nelson]'s plays.

In the words of Professor Mosher, The Hunter Theater Project, like all living things, is a work in progress. It will grow as we continue to learn the best way to connect the work onstage to the work in our classrooms, labs and studios. Our goal is to engage what the late Peter Brook called ‘a willing audience,’ one that's seeking an aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual adventure. This sounds like the Hunter community to me.



▲ Isabella Rossellini in *Link Link Circus*.

## FACULTY BOOKSHELF

### Victoria Johnson Begins New Project With an Odyssey to South America

She won't throw away her next shot — at another triumph in biography. Hunter professor Victoria Johnson — a 2019 finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize in History and the National Book Award in Nonfiction — is not resting on the well-deserved laurels she earned for her acclaimed biography of the medical doctor who accompanied Alexander Hamilton to his fatal duel with Aaron Burr.

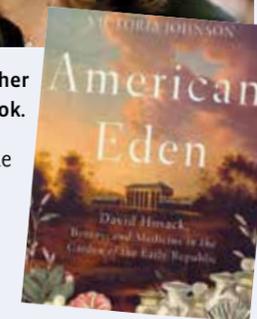
Her *American Eden: David Hosack, Botany, and Medicine in the Garden of the Early Republic* told the extraordinary tale of Hamilton's personal physician — who also happened to be a good friend of Burr's. When he wasn't practicing medicine, the multi-talented Hosack also co-founded both the New-York Historical Society and the city's first natural history museum, and designed the country's first public botanical garden — on a 20-acre plot where Rockefeller Center now stands. Dr. Hosack, Johnson revealed, was also a pioneer champion of public health whose work earned plaudits from Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

As part of the global research she is conducting for her new project — a biography of celebrated Hudson River School landscape painter Frederic Edwin Church — Victoria recently completed a voyage to Ecuador and Colombia, retracing the journeys Church took in the mid-19th century in search of scenic vistas to capture on canvas. She gazed at the same majestic landscapes — many all but unchanged over the 150 years — that Church portrayed in such works as *Heart of the Andes*, which captivated New York when it went on exhibit here in 1859.

One of the most famous artists of his day, Church became a co-founder of the Metropolitan Museum as well as a commissioner of Central Park, hand-picked by park designer Frederic Law Olmsted.



▲ Prof. Johnson and her award-winning book.



The working title of the Church biography for Scribner is *Glorious Country*, taken from Church's description of the breathtaking Hudson Valley setting of his hilltop villa, Olana, now a museum and National Historic Landmark.

“Frederic Church was a man of extraordinary talent, global cultural curiosity, and physical bravery,” Johnson says. “I can't wait to share his thrilling life story with a broad audience of readers. I'm so grateful for the support of Hunter and the Guggenheim Foundation as I work on this project.”

It is probably no accident that these two Renaissance men — Hosack and Church — attracted the interest of a Renaissance woman like Victoria, who serves on faculty as Professor of Urban Policy and Planning. A classically trained singer who studied music and art history while majoring in philosophy at Yale, Johnson continued her studies at Columbia (where Dr. Hosack once taught medicine), receiving a PhD in sociology.

Since joining Hunter in 2015, she helped launch the new Certificate in Arts Management program, which allows Hunter students interested in the arts — whether they are artists or not — to learn how to launch careers in arts organizations. She also created the Introduction to Arts Administration course that offers meetings with local arts leaders and opportunities to engage with arts organizations across the city, and teaches a popular course on leadership in the American nonprofit sector.

“I am so grateful to be at Hunter,” she says. “It has a long tradition of excellence in the arts, and is on an incredibly exciting trajectory in arts education and programming.”



# MARKING HUNTER'S 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



▲ (From left) Legendary baker Sylvia Weinstock '51, President Raab, Rosanna Scotto of *Good Day New York* and "Thomas Hunter" get ready to cut Weinstock's sesquicentennial cake.

The joyous celebration of Hunter's 150th anniversary was well underway in 2020 when March of that year produced a historic event of a very different kind: The arrival of Covid-19 and the start of a nationwide lockdown. Yet despite the unprecedented difficulties, members of the Hunter community were still able to commemorate Hunter's extraordinary history. A Founder's Day Birthday Party in February featured the College's time-traveling founder Thomas Hunter — or at least someone dressed and bearded to resemble him. Students and alumni gathered in the West Lobby to enjoy games, prizes and the Hunter Birthday Selfie Station. City Council member Ben Kallos delivered a proclamation recognizing Hunter's indelible impact on New York.

Anniversary Alumni Awards were presented by President Raab to three alums: Former City Parks

Commissioner Mitchell Silver, MUP '93, NYC Commissioner for the Department of the Aging and CUNY Trustee Lorraine A. Cortés-Vázquez '71, and the celebrity baker and "Queen of Cake" Sylvia Weinstock '51 (now deceased), who brought a pastry masterpiece she created in the shape of the 68th Street campus.

The celebration continued when the Hunter women's basketball team faced off against Lehman College, the significance being that Lehman is located on Hunter's former Bronx campus. And at the Lang Theater, the "Hunter Idol" competition wrapped up the day with memorable student performances.

In the virtual world, a new online platform, Hunter Connect, was launched to allow students to network with more than 100,000 alumni who have signed up to act as counselors, advisors and mentors. (To learn how to get involved, see p. 21).



▲ (From top) The Hawk works the crowd. Mitchell Silver, MUP '93 with President Raab. A Thomas Hunter descendant brought an original copy of his 1872 textbook, *Elements of Plane Geometry*.

## NEW BOOK EXPLORES HUNTER'S FIRST 150 YEARS

**H**unter 150: *Celebrating the Past, Caring for the Future* celebrates the first 150 years of Hunter's remarkable history. Comprising essays by Hunter faculty, alumni, administrators, scholars and artists, the book is a stirring account of how far Hunter College has come, and the promise its future holds.

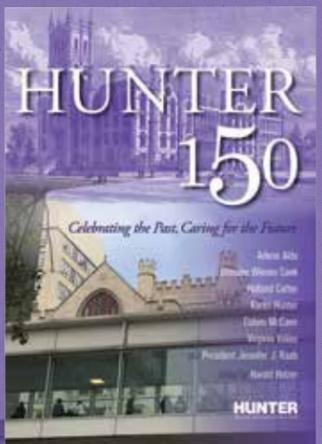
To bring this history to life, rare illustrations, yearbook photos and newspaper clippings supplement contributions from leading members of the Hunter community including media professor Karen Hunter, distinguished psychology professor Virginia Valian, historian Blanche Wiesen Cook '62, author Arlene Alda '54, art critic Holland Cotter MA '90, Roosevelt House director Harold Holzer (who also edited the book) and President Raab.

The topics range from the legacy of African American women at Hunter, including Pauli Murray '33 and Audre Lorde '59; the life and

vision of Hunter founder Thomas Hunter; the role of the Bronx Campus in WWII; the extraordinary class of 1942, including the great Bella Abzug; and prize-winning Hunter women in the sciences such as Mildred Dresselhaus, Rosalyn Yalow and Gertrude Elion. Yalow and Elion were awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine, making Hunter the only college in the world to have two women graduates who have won that honor.

This book is a fascinating exploration of the people and the achievements that have won Hunter the title of crown jewel of the CUNY system and that have made its alumni a force for social change and individual accomplishment," said President Raab. "It is a unique celebration of our wonderful diversity, artistic excellence, academic rigor, political activism and scientific innovation.

To request a copy of this essential keepsake, please email [150book@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:150book@hunter.cuny.edu).



▲ In the beginning: 19th-century students gather on original campus.

## A 150<sup>th</sup> Gift Drive Beats the Pandemic



▲ Lee and Toby Cooperman '64 with students at the Cooperman Library Dedication.

In honor of Hunter's 150th anniversary, Leon and Toby Cooperman '64, arguably the College's best-known alumni couple — and definitely among its most generous donors — offered a \$1.5 million challenge grant. The drive to raise the matching funds was planned as part of the events celebrating the anniversary. The pandemic made in-person gatherings impossible, but, as usual, Hunter alumni rose to the challenge.

Friends and supporters of the College also opened their hearts and checkbooks. When it was all over, the match had been made and Hunter realized the full \$3 million donation.

Hoorays were in order for the Coopermans, and not for the first time. They were also the chief supporters of the modernization of the library that now bears their names. Their gifts have created hundreds of scholarships, and Cooperman Fellowships help support students who, like Leon, plan on business careers.

It all began in 1960 when Leon — the son of Polish immigrants — met Toby in a freshman French class on the Bronx campus. Toby was so much help that Leon later joked that without her he'd still be trying to pass. In their senior year he was class vice president — but she was president. They married the year they graduated, 1964, and Leon began a business career that would make him one of the nation's most successful hedge-fund managers and a leading philanthropist.

Even in Covid times  
we still celebrate!

# HAPPENINGS at HUNTER



▲ Feminist icon and Hunter honorary degree recipient Gloria Steinem (left) and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (right) salute Human Rights Program Director Jessica Neuwirth as she earns (and wears) France's *Legion d'Honneur*.



▲ Visiting CENTRO, the source of research material for the recent film *West Side Story*, are (from left) screenwriter Tony Kushner; CENTRO acting director Dr. Yarimar Bonilla; Oscar winner Rita Moreno; and CUNY chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez.



▲ (From left) Kevin Law, MS'84, chair of the Empire State Development Board, President Raab, Eric Gertler, executive chairman and CEO of *U.S. News & World Report* and Tonio Burgos, CEO of Tonio Burgos and Associates, at the Summer Cocktail Party.



▲ Celebrating at the Holiday party (from left): Matthew Lee, Global CTO of BFS Cognizant; Angie Tang, Asia Value Advisors; Hunter professor Vivian Louie, director of the Asian American Studies Center; sociology professor Margaret Chin; and Basil Smikle, director of the Roosevelt House Public Policy Program.



▲ Alumna and Trustee Patty Baker '82 (center) and husband, Jay (right), join Baker Fellow Yasmine Sawadogo '22 to break through the "brick wall" leading to Baker Sky Bridge that will connect the Baker Theatre building with the main campus.



▲ Hunter's first Eleanor Roosevelt Award goes to Hillary Rodham Clinton.



▲ Carol Goldberg '56 (right), Arthur Goldberg (center) and art critic Jerry Saltz at the film screening of *The Art of Making It* at The Kaye Playhouse.



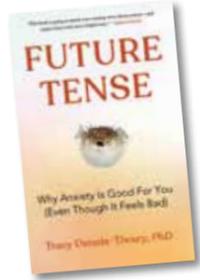
▲ President Raab welcomes Governor Kathy Hochul at Silberman School of Social Work during recent East 116th Street Festival.



▲ NYC Council Member Eric Dinowitz, MEd '09 (left) and NY State Senator Andrew Gounardes '06 celebrate their alumni awards with a selfie.

## Warm Reception for a New Look at Anxiety

The timing couldn't be better. At a moment when a continuing pandemic, mass shootings and political turmoil are making millions of people anxious, Hunter Professor Tracy Dennis-Tiwary's new book sets us straight about the real nature of anxiety. The title indicates the riveting case she makes: *Future Tense: Why Anxiety Is Good for You (Even Though It Feels Bad)*.



Every time we sense a threat, she writes, a warning signal goes off, triggering fear and stress. Anxiety is related to those two feelings, but it's also something different. It can actually be turned to our advantage because anxiety is anchored in our ability to project ourselves into the future and take actions to make it better.

This ability, which she calls "the future tense" (pun intended), helps us plan and envision possibilities, hopes and dreams. True, thinking about what may be about to come can cause worries. But Professor Dennis-Tiwary—who is a Hunter professor of psychology and neuroscience and director of the College's Emotion Regulation Lab—advises her readers to interpret these feelings as a sign that our future dreams and present realities may be out of sync.

By acknowledging our anxiety and seeing it as a tool, we can use it to energize ourselves—to motivate change, growth and success. Anxiety, Dennis-Tiwary says, can become a superpower that improves our lives: "We need to develop a new mind set about this misunderstood emotion."

*Future Tense* has received a strong, positive reception. *The Wall Street Journal* published a long essay by Dennis-Tiwary laying out her



▲ Professor Tracy Dennis-Tiwary

analysis and citing real-world applications. She has been widely interviewed in the media, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, CBS, ABC, CNN and NPR. And she has spoken in front of sold-out audiences.

## Peter Carey Honored for His Contributions to American Society

Peter Carey has added a new title to his long list of honors. The distinguished lecturer and executive director of Hunter's Creative Writing MFA Program was named a "2021 Great Immigrant" by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Every July Fourth, the Carnegie Corporation recognizes a group of immigrants who have made notable contributions to American society. He is the second Hunter faculty member to be so honored, following Distinguished Professor Nari Ward '89, who received the honor in 2019.

One of the world's leading novelists, Carey is among only five writers who have won the Booker Prize twice, (first for *Oscar and Lucinda*, then for *True History of the Kelly Gang*). He has received numerous honors, including election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

His home country of Australia issued a postage stamp in his honor. And many critics view him as a contender for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

He is a dual Australian-American citizen and longtime resident of New York and says he straddles both cultures: "No matter how familiar America—or at least New York—becomes to me, there is a huge part of it that appears to be alien and mad. Both these things increase side by side, a huge fondness and a kind of terror."

Teaching at Hunter has exerted a strong influence. As he told one interviewer, "There were so many first- and second-generation immigration stories in that room and I could engage with these issues in ways that probably surprised my students. As an Australian, I have tended to be obsessed by issues of colonialism, imperialism, the center and the periphery, and these were



▲ Peter Carey

often the concerns of my students."

He initially wanted to be a scientist, then worked at an ad agency, but everything changed when he started reading books.

"Literature arrived in this weird and very exciting way all at once, and it was like every book that I read at that time changed my life, as it does, I think, when you begin to read."

## A Hunter Team Leads In the Fight for Equity In Cancer Care

It's shocking but true: Black men with prostate cancer are 2.3 times more likely than white men to die from the disease. That fact alone would be alarming, yet it's just one example from a long list of cancer health disparities that affect minorities. To begin tackling this problem, the National Institutes of Health has awarded Hunter College and Temple University's Fox Chase Cancer Center a joint five-year, \$13.5 million grant to conduct research to help reduce such disparities. The grant comes through the National Cancer Institute.

The Hunter-Temple partnership is the first of its kind to serve the New York City-Philadelphia region, where minorities represent a large part of the population. The focus is on working with African American, Asian-Pacific and Hispanic communities in this New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania corridor.

The collaboration has three components: First, conducting multidisciplinary cancer research. Second, educating affected communities. Third, training minority junior faculty, postdoctoral researchers and undergraduate and graduate students to help diversify the research and medical fields.

"For too long, certain communities have faced barriers that prevent them from getting the best available cancer prevention, detection and treatment, and they suffer disproportionately as a result," said Dr. Olorunseun Ogunwobi, principal investigator at Hunter as well as associate professor of biology and director of the Hunter Center for Cancer Health Disparities Research. "We are grateful that NCI/NIH has recognized Hunter and Temple's dedication to improving health equity, and we are cooperating to leverage our strong community relationships."

More than 70 investigators from various academic fields at both institutions are participating in the multifaceted partnership, some of whom are first-generation college students or students who come from immigrant families.

"You need researchers who have lived in these under-served communities, who understand the population and who may not have had a high socioeconomic background," said Dr. Grace Ma, principal investigator at Temple's Fox Chase Cancer Center.

Michelle Naidoo, who has just become a postdoc-



▲ Dr. Olorunseun Ogunwobi (left) and his colleague Dr. Michelle Naidoo in the lab.

toral fellow at Weill Cornell Medicine and received her doctoral training in molecular, cellular and developmental biology in Dr. Ogunwobi's laboratory, is an expert on prostate cancer risks among African American men. "There is increasing evidence that racial disparities in cancer can be caused by biological events among minority populations," she said.

A significant portion of the NCI/NIH grant is designated for community outreach, including cancer screenings and symposia, with the goal of improving prevention, early detection and intervention as well as increasing access to treatment.

## A Top Art World Honor for Gifted Professor

Professor Lisa Corinne Davis, MFA '83, who is co-director of the college's MFA Program in Studio Art, has won one of the most sought-after honors in the art world—a Guggenheim Fellowship.

She is one of three Hunter-trained artists to receive 2022 Guggenheims. Joining her are Ellie Ga, MFA '04, a filmmaker and Keliy Anderson-Staley, MFA '06, a photographer (see Alumni Awards, page 21). They were selected from among 2,500 applicants for one of the nation's most prestigious awards for scholarly and artistic achievement.

Professor Davis is an abstract painter whose works have been exhibited throughout the United States and Europe. She is best known for her abstract paintings and works on paper that resemble multilayered maps. She describes these works as "inventive geography" that explore racial, social and psychological identity.

Among the major institutions where her paintings have been shown are the Museum

of Modern Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Her Guggenheim will support two upcoming solo shows, the first at the Jenkins Johnson Gallery in San Francisco this fall and then the Miles McEnery Gallery next spring.

Professor Davis joined the Hunter faculty in 2002. She had previously taught at the Yale School of Art and has lectured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and numerous universities. Among her many honors, she was a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artist Fellowship, three artist fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant.

"I am proud to say that Hunter College now has six Guggenheim awardees on our Studio Arts faculty," President Raab said. "That number alone in just one department is proof of Hunter's commitment to the arts and humanities."



▲ Professor Lisa Corinne Davis, MFA '83

# The President's Task Force On Racial Equity



▲ Speaking of Justice speakers from "Race, Racism, and Reform" and "Policing: Reform, Defund, or Abolish?"

In a swift and meaningful response to the tragic 2020 murder of George Floyd — and renewed focus on the Black Lives Matter movement — Hunter stepped forward with an expanded commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, initiating a college-wide program of reflection and reform that continues to this day.

The Presidential Task Force to Advance Racial Equity was created by President Raab in September of that year to develop strategies to overcome persistent barriers and ensure equitable community experiences at Hunter.

Committing the entire school to a re-examination of its policies and practices, President Raab pledged to "ensure that they reflect our values of diversity, inclusion and racial equality." The task force included more than 100 faculty, students and staff who developed recommendations to the administration on issues such as admissions and recruitment, student outreach and pipeline, anti-racism training, curricular enhancements,

research and scholarship, public programming and diversity at the campus schools.

The resulting outpouring of ideas, made all the more remarkable because they were discussed and developed during the COVID lockdown, set Hunter on a course toward fully overcoming inequality.

"For generations," President Raab noted, "the motto of Hunter College has been *'Mihi Cura Futuri — The Care of the Future is Mine.'* Together and individually, as deeply as we lament the inequities that have been laid bare by disease, dislocation and discrimination, we dedicate ourselves anew to caring for the future as a Hunter community.

The work of task-force committees is ongoing, and President Raab has established two standing committees — one at main campus and one at the high school — that is already making significant contributions to enhancing the curriculum. Throughout 2020, students, faculty and the public also enjoyed access to an initial round

of virtual Zoom presentations entitled "Speaking of Justice: Race, Racism, and Reform," developed and hosted by members of the programming committee.

These included a session on Hunter alumna and legal legend Pauli Murray '33; one on the issue of public monuments featuring Brent Leggs, director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund; and another on "Code Switching: Style, Experience or Survival" featuring journalist Harriette Cole. The programming committee was co-chaired by Karen Hunter, distinguished lecturer in the Film and Media Department, and Miesha Smith, vice president for Student Affairs.

And of course, this initial round of activity culminated in the widely reported effort to rename Hunter's crossroads in honor of groundbreaking African American alumna Audre Lorde — as reported in full on the opposite page.

<https://hunter.cuny.edu/hunter-on-demand/speaking-of-justice-archive/>

# Campus Crossroads Renamed 'Audre Lorde Way'

If the campus crossroads at Lexington Avenue and 68th Street has a brand-new look, it's because it has been officially renamed "Audre Lorde Way"—in tribute to one of Hunter's most extraordinary graduates.

On May 10, President Raab, Council Member Keith Powers (who sponsored the required bill) and hundreds of students, faculty, friends, admirers and neighbors gathered in the West Building lobby — and again outside for a ceremony on the northwest street corner — to unveil the new street sign dedicated to the great poet-activist Audre Lorde (1934–1992), HCHS '51, HC '59, and Thomas Hunter Distinguished Professor and faculty member from 1982 to 1986.

Widely known as "Sister Outsider," Lorde was a towering human rights and civil rights champion, giving eloquent voice to the struggles of the dispossessed and unrepresented: people of color, women and the LGBTQ community. A librarian, poet, essayist, teacher, mother, lesbian, survivor — that's how she wanted to be known — she remained uncompromising and eager to risk danger to advance unpopular causes. As the New York State Poet Laureate (1991–1992) famously declared, "I am deliberate and afraid of nothing." Prolific as well as passionate, Lorde wrote 12 poetry collections and five volumes of prose, winning several prizes for her work, including the 1989 American Book Award. She published her first poem while still a student at the high school.

"I write for those women who do not speak," Lorde once declared, "for those who do not have a voice because they were so terrified."

The May 10 ceremony was em-

ceed by Spectrum News NY-1 anchor-woman and author Cheryl Wills, and featured stirring remarks by award-winning author Jacqueline Woodson. John Jay College Professor Blanche Wiesen Cooke '62 and playwright Clare Coss, both lifelong friends of Lorde, read a message from the late poet's family. And Hunter professors Jacqueline Nassy Brown (Anthropology) and Melissa Goodman (English), both of whom studied with Lorde at Hunter, recited her well-known poems "Coal" and "Now."

In a particularly riveting moment in the program, the audience was treated to the resonant sound of Lorde's own voice, reading from her iconic work "For Each of You" in a recording taped at the Library of Congress. A cohort of students from the 2022 Roosevelt House Eva Kasten Grove Scholars' program then read aloud from Lorde's iconic prose essay, "There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions."

As President Raab put it, Lorde's "brave avowals of independence and resistance continue to resonate with a new generation of students and readers." The Amsterdam News reported that the president's words "captured the essence" of the College's tribute to the alumna who "heroically battled racism, sexism and homophobia with her breathtakingly original writing and her unrelenting advocacy."

As the poet's daughter, Dr. Elizabeth Lode-Rollins, said of her mother in a message to assembled guests: "I know how extremely proud she would be, and gratified, to have 68th Street and Lexington Avenue named in her honor — how proud, indeed, our entire family is. As a distinguished alumna, she wielded the tools she learned at



▲ President Raab, NY-1's Cheryl Wills, Council Member Keith Powers and Prof. Jacqueline Nassy Brown unveil the new street sign.



▲ Audre Lorde in her days as a Hunter College professor.

Hunter tirelessly, until her early death. My mother dated the beginnings of her scholarship to those early days at Hunter High, and

she prized highly the education she got at both Hunter High and Hunter College."

Sister Outsider has come home.

# The New Student Union Flourishes

The Student Union was a hit before the pandemic lockdown, and it's an even bigger success now that Hunter is back in full swing. The idea from the beginning was to give students a place of their own to relax and have fun after classes, a request that President Raab welcomed as meaning "students wanted to commit more of their time to campus life, leading to a stronger Hunter community."

And so when classes returned, the \$4 million project on the second

floor of Thomas Hunter Hall — built with \$500,000 from the Undergraduate Student Government and \$3.5 million from the Hunter College Foundation, the City Council and CUNY — was once again an immensely popular home-away-from-home for students.

But it's much more than a place for them to hang out, watch a large-screen TV and play ping-pong, foosball and board games. Student clubs, the Office of Student Activities, the Undergraduate Student Government and the College



◀ ▲ Students relax, rest and read at the new Student Union.

Association have spaces there, and so do student publications such as the *Olivetree Review* and *Hunted Hero Comics*. Placing club rooms within the Student Union has been especially beneficial because it gives students a chance they might otherwise miss to meet others who share their interests. And just to make sure schoolwork doesn't get overlooked, there's a computer lab

with 18 work stations and desktops to provide students with free computer time and printing capacity.

As Eija Ayravainan, vice president for student services, observed, "We know that opportunities for social interaction outside the classroom improve student success. This new space not only makes sure they have fun, but increases their academic achievements."



## Q&A with Bill Solecki

As cities like New York are increasingly affected by climate change, and in light of the Supreme Court ruling limiting the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to restrict carbon emissions, there has never been greater need for the expertise of William Solecki, who joined Hunter's Department of Geography and Environmental Science in 2003. A renowned authority on urban environmental change, Solecki is the author of a UN climate report, a journal founder, an institute founder, a scholar in the public service and more.

**Q:** You recently appeared before the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis to testify on global warming. That coincided with the release of a four-year study commissioned by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a report on which you served as a lead author. What did you tell the committee?

**A:** The core of my testimony, based on the study, was that the cumulative scientific evidence on climate change shows it is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet and that any further delay will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure our future. I further advised the committee that climate change has already impacted human health and well-being and that it is adversely affecting economic activities across the U.S., including increasingly severe and frequent climate events. But I emphasized that we still have an opportunity to implement climate solutions if we begin acting now.

**Q:** Is the science of climate change settled?

**A:** The issues of greenhouse effect and the capacity for humans to play a role in changing the global environment are well understood. Where the questions still lie are the rate and magnitude of change.

**Q:** Are students interested in sustainability studies?

**A:** Yes, students are increasingly interested. They have read about — and experienced — a number of challenges including climate change, environmental racism and global biodiversity loss. They are eager to gain knowledge and experience as well as the tools and techniques to develop durable, equitable solutions. They want to get this both through the classroom and outside the classroom in campus and off-campus opportunities.

**Q:** Are you an optimist when it comes to climate change?

**A:** I am an optimist, but a cautious one. There are a lot of reasons to be pessimistic regarding how we are addressing climate change. We are on track to make potentially irreversible changes to the world's environment but we haven't locked that in yet, so there's room for optimism.

**Q:** What role do heatwaves play in climate change in New York?

**A:** Year in, and year out, New York sees extreme heat as one of the most significant perils to the city. And future climate change could cause longer heatwaves than we have today. There's also a danger of maladaptation. For example, turning up our air conditioning makes

our rooms cooler, but we're burning fossil fuels to do so.

**Q:** What can one New Yorker do to prevent climate change?

**A:** Actions can take a variety of forms. Some of them are small, like reducing your electricity use. But there are other ways, too. You can engage with the political process and become a voice for change. You can talk to your political leaders or even join a climate march.

**Q:** You got a grant to study brownstones on the Upper West Side. Why?

**A:** While we think about Manhattan as completely paved over, save for Central Park and other parks, there is a lot of privately owned vegetation space in backyards of brownstones that we don't see. But the trend is that this vegetation is shrinking. Brownstone residents tend to expand their buildings, and a loss of ecological space follows. A map from that project was published in *Newsweek*.

**Q:** You're interested in climate change and injustice. What's the issue?

**A:** One significant question concerning any decision we make about climate change is who will be the winners and the losers. Not only who is going to be most impacted, but who is most vulnerable to those

impacts. If you have a storm hitting a coastline where the people are relatively wealthy, that's going to be different from one where the residents are poor.

**Q:** What are you currently working on?

**A:** I'm interested in how homeowners and property owners in coastal zones perceive the risk of sea-level rise and whether or not they're making decisions to change their investment patterns. Are they elevating their structures, fortifying them or deciding to relocate and eliminate the threat?

**Q:** You are part of a Hunter alumni family. Tell us about it.

**A:** My mother, Rose, graduated from Hunter in the Class of 1945. She became an archaeologist. My son Daniel is a Hunter alumnus, Class of '14, who majored in philosophy and went on to law school. It was fun that he was on campus, although I ran into him rarely. But nevertheless, as a parent, any day showing up to work and having a chance to see your child is always good.

**Q:** What do you most like about teaching at Hunter?

**A:** The students. They come from diverse backgrounds. They're always engaging and challenging. And they're bright.



# ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

## Three Who've Won Top Honors in Their Fields



▲ Adolfo Carrión Jr., MUP '90

Hunter graduates continue to do their alma mater proud with awards, prizes and prestigious government appointments. Here are three outstanding examples. New York City's new commissioner of housing preservation and development is Adolfo Carrión Jr., MUP '90. His appointment was announced by Mayor Eric Adams, who called Carrión "the LeBron James of affordable housing." The point was well taken. Former Bronx Borough President (and Council Member) Carrión was previously the CEO of Metro Futures, a real estate development firm he founded in 2012 to focus on affordable housing and economic development in the New York metropolitan area.



▲ David Guzman '00

His interest in housing policy has deep roots. As he has described it, "My parents came from Puerto Rico in the 1950s and moved into a tenement basement apartment in Williamsburg, then into the Housing Authority's Jacob Riis Houses . . . and then, with the help of an FHA mortgage, to our first home

“The LeBron James of affordable housing”

— Mayor Adams on Adolfo Carrión Jr. (MUP '90)



▲ Firelei Báez, MFA '11

in the North Bronx. This was all possible because our city and country invested in us. Now we must do the same for this generation." The Sloan Foundation Award is regarded as the Nobel Prize of New York public service. Among the six winners announced this year was David Guzman '00, who is the chief operating officer for Elmhurst Hospital, where he manages a \$600 million budget for one of the city's busiest hospitals. As the Foundation said in announcing the award, "With over 300 employees falling under his purview, he works closely with almost every department to find ways to increase efficiency and revenue for the hospital to allow its patients to receive high-quality care."

David, who has more than 20 years of experience in health care administration, is no stranger to awards. Just last year *Crain's* named him one of the city's Notable Hispanic Leaders and Executives. After getting his BA in economics at Hunter he earned a master's in public administration from CUNY. His dedication to the city's public hospital system is deeply personal, since, he was "born at one of its facilities."

The art world has its own high-profile awards including the Rome Prize presented by the American Academy in Rome. Among the 2021-22 winners was Firelei Báez MFA '11, who received the prestigious Phillip Guston Prize. Works created by Báez, who was born in the Dominican Republic, are included in the permanent collections of some of the paramount contemporary art museums and galleries in the U.S. and around the world.

Her works often feature strong female protagonists and incorporate the visual languages of mythology and ritual. One critic wrote, "These empowered figures' eyes most often engage directly with the viewer, asserting individuality and agency within their states of flux."



▲ (From left) Hunter College Foundation board member Kelle Jacob '08 accepts the class gift from graduates Allegra Acevedo, Kristy Lau and Ruth King.

## The Seniors Leave a Legacy

Each graduating class conducts a Senior Legacy Gift Campaign. The contributions support scholarships, academic excellence and student life. Equally important, the campaign raises the seniors' awareness of their obligation to help future students. The Class of 2022 was up to the challenge. When Student Government President Dave Basnet gave the newly minted alums a text number to send contributions, an outpouring ensued. The graduates were clearly listening when Basnet pointed out that "the number of individual donors is a determining factor in our college ranking, so every gift increases the value of our degree." And there's still time and opportunity to give. <https://www.hunter.cuny.edu/seniorlegacygift>

## Hunter's STEM 'Genius' Pirouetted from Ballet to Science

A great many Hunter alumni have won MacArthur "genius" grants, but none has taken as unusual a path to the award as Vanessa Ruta '00. That path has taken her from ballerina to Hunter undergraduate to pioneering researcher in neuroscience.

Vanessa spent four years after high school pursuing a career in ballet, but she chafed at the unpredictability of the dance world and the iron rule that requires strict obedience to directors and choreographers. An intro to chemistry class at Hunter changed her life.

"Studying chemistry was quite a revelation to me," she said. "The logic of the physical principles that govern chemical reactions seemed in extreme contrast to my life in the highly subjective ballet world."

She enrolled at Hunter full-time and became a star student, graduating summa cum laude. Ruta found the creativity of chemistry a surprisingly natural segue from dancing, and she credits her early exposure to the arts as formative in her scientific process.

She went on to get her doctorate in biology from Rockefeller University. As a postdoctoral fellow with Richard Axel at Columbia University, she found her ultimate passion — neuroscience, the intricacies of the brain, and how it is changed by experience. With a focus on fruit flies, Ruta's work there — which she continued after her postdoctoral appointment at Rockefeller University — explored the neural circuitry of how past experiences orient current behaviors, even ones that seem hard-wired, like mating.

At Rockefeller University, her lab's discoveries have uncovered principles that are startlingly pertinent to human brains and behaviors — the ways in which we too are affected by our environments and experiences. A MacArthur Fellowship, awarded annually to extraordinary thinkers and creators across many disciplines, recognized the unique brilliance of Ruta's work and provided her with \$625,000 of no-strings-attached funding over five years.

After receiving the award, Ruta said she was determined to use it to carry forward the principles she first developed at Hunter — including a commitment to diversity and gender equity. She recognizes that she is a model of what a scientist can look like for young women and people of color.

"I'm living proof that you don't have to fit the stereotypical model to be a scientist," she said. "Like me, they can start off as a ballet dancer."



Photo: John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

▲ In the lab



▲ On the stage

## HUNTER CONNECT

Hunter College's official community platform

## Connecting the Community

Founded in 1870, Hunter College is celebrating its 150th anniversary — 150 years of excellence, and 150 years of incredible alumni.

To foster collaboration and community, we've created **Hunter Connect**, an online platform where you can find and reconnect with other alumni, learn about Hunter happenings and events, and get involved with current college activities. Alumni can join groups, find job postings, start discussions, and access resources. And in the fall, we are opening the platform to students, allowing alumni to give back to their alma mater by paying it forward to current Hunter students through advice, guidance and connections.

And even sooner, we'll be launching an exciting new program: an alum-to-alum mentoring program.

We encourage you to join Hunter Connect and sign up to be a mentor. The gift of your time, insight and experience could prove invaluable to a student or fellow alumnus.

Sign up at [hunterconnect.hunter.cuny.edu](https://hunterconnect.hunter.cuny.edu) or contact [hunterconnect@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:hunterconnect@hunter.cuny.edu) to learn more.

# In Memoriam



## Hester Diamond, HCHS'46, HC'49

Hunter College Hall of Fame member Hester Diamond, a one-time social worker whose support of the arts through scholarship, philanthropy and collecting created a legacy for generations to come, died on Jan. 23, 2020 at the age of 91.

During an interview as part of the Hunter College Oral History Project, Hester said she developed her love for art as a student at Hunter College High School, from which she graduated in 1946. During World War II, when classes let out at 1 pm, she would spend almost every afternoon at the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Non-Objective Art (now the Guggenheim).

As a tribute to Hester, who was inducted into the Hunter Hall of Fame in 2007, Joachim Pissarro, Bershad Professor of Art History and director of the Hunter College Galleries, joined with her son David Diamond to discuss her fearless, independent spirit, featuring clips filmed for the Oral History Project. Those clips, David Diamond

said, were treasured by his family (which includes his brother, Michael Diamond — Mike D. of the rap group the Beastie Boys) because “it’s great fun, and it really captures her.”



## Patricia E. Bath MD, '64

Dr. Patricia E. Bath, an eye surgery pioneer and the first Black female doctor to receive a medical patent, died on May 30, 2019 at age 76.

The Class of '64 graduate invented the Laserphaco Probe, a laser device used to remove cataracts from eyes, in 1986. It was patented in 1988, and Bath subsequently earned four other patents for different methods to remove cataracts, including one using ultrasound. Thirty years after its invention, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office said the Laserphaco Probe “helped restore or improve vision to millions of patients worldwide.”

Bath also created UCLA’s keratoprosthesis corneal treatment program — making her one of the first ophthalmologists to use artificial devices to replace diseased corneas.

When she was inducted into the Hunter Hall of Fame in 2017, Dr. Bath said her time at the school provided the foundation for all she accomplished. At Hunter, she majored in chemistry with minors in math and physics, and

was a student leader in the civil rights movement.

After graduation, she became the first Black American to complete an ophthalmology residency at NYU, and the first woman ophthalmologist to join the faculty of the UCLA School of Medicine’s Jules Stein Eye Institute.

Throughout her life, Dr. Bath was a strong advocate for accessible, quality health care in under-served communities. She co-founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness and reached across continents to uphold its motto, “Eyesight is a basic human right.”



## Blanche Cirker '39

Blanche Cirker, and Hunter College Hall of Fame member and the co-founder of Dover Publishing, which turned long forgotten out-of-print works by famous authors into a multimillion dollar business, died on May 21, 2022, at the age of 103.

After earning a degree in pre-social work in 1939, Blanche worked as a family social worker at the Jewish Child Care Association and a medical social worker at the Joint Disease Hospital in New York City before she and her husband, Hayward, saw an opportunity producing high-quality books using works sitting in the public domain.

Dover Publishing, named for the Queens apartment complex the couple lived in, went on to print more than 7,000 books by authors including Albert Einstein and Henry David Thoreau, with nearly 60 Nobel Prize winners in its catalog. By the 1980s, what started as a mail-order business in the couple’s living room had grown to a \$15 million-a-year publishing house that employed more than 200 workers in offices on Long Island and in Manhattan.

Blanche was an editor of several of Dover’s publications and the author of eight Dover books, beginning with

*Monograms and Alphanumeric Devices* in 1970, and ending with *Victorian House Designs* in 1996.

A supporter of Hunter’s Creative Writing Program whose many appearances at readings helped inspire students, she was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2006.



Photo: Pepe Gomez

## Rosalind Jacobs, HCHS '42, HC '46

Rosalind Gersten Jacobs, who broke a glass ceiling at Macy’s in the 1960s when she became one of the company’s — and the retail business’s — first female senior executives, died in December of 2019 at the age of 96.

A Hunter College High School graduate who earned a BA from Hunter College in 1946, Jacobs was a vice-president and fashion director for Macy’s, where she worked for 24 years at a time when those roles were usually reserved for men.

And it was her time at Hunter that put her in the position to take on the big boys: She always considered her stint as editor of the weekly Hunter Bulletin newspaper — known as “The Bully” — as her first job — and one that taught her how to lead staff in pressure situations.

She was also a respected Surealest art collector who had friendships with some of the movement’s most well-known craftspeople including Man Ra, whom she met while on a buying trip for Macy’s in 1954. Together with her husband, former vice-chairman of Federated Department Stores and chairman of Saks Fifth Avenue Melvin Jacobs,

she put together a museum-worth collection of the art. Melvin died in 1993.

Roz was the consummate New Yorker, serving on boards or otherwise involved in organizations supporting the arts and arts education, including Learning Through Art at the Guggenheim, Merce Cunningham Dance, and MoMA, among others. She was a member of the board of governors of the Miami Art Museum in Florida and the Philips Collection in Washington D.C.

“My mother was a driven and ambitious young woman, and Hunter gave her the tools and confidence to go forth into the world and achieve her goals,” said her daughter, Peggy Jacobs Bader. “She was rare amongst women of her era but not rare amongst ‘Hunter Girls,’ as she called them.”



## Paul Kagan '58

Pay-television pioneer Paul Kagan, who beginning in 1969 parlayed his expertise in the then-budding cable television industry to launch a venerated media consulting business, died on Aug. 23, 2020 at the age of 82.

The 2004 Hunter College Hall of Fame inductee — born and raised in the Bronx — founded Paul Kagan Associates in 1969, whose newsletter on the cable industry was the first to publish public company valuations. During the next 50 years, he produced additional newsletters and databooks on cable, radio, television, movies, internet and broadband media and sports while holding hundreds of seminars around the globe that earned him the nickname “the cable guru.”

In 2013, in honor of his family’s connection to Hunter — his sister, Bea, and brother, Sheldon, are both Hunter College graduates — Kagan and his wife, Florrie, helped improve Hunter’s library space when their donation funded the Florrie and Paul Kagan Study Center, where students gather individually to study or in

groups to collaborate and socialize.

“It’s an honor to help raise awareness of Hunter’s exceptional library facilities,” he said at the time.



## Elaine Geduld Rosenberg, HCHS '39, HC '42

Elaine Geduld Rosenberg, a mainstay at on-and-off campus events at Hunter whose relationship with the college dates back to her days in the 1930s as a student at Hunter College High School, died on March 3, 2019 at age 97.

Rosenberg majored in journalism at Hunter and joined Phi Sigma Sigma, the country’s first nonsectarian sorority, before earning her MS from Hofstra University and becoming a teacher at Teaneck High School in New Jersey.

But she and her family’s ties to Hunter run deep — so deep, in fact, that she even met her future son-in-law at a Hunter event.

Rosenberg was enjoying her 25-year college reunion when then-Junior Class President Lew Frankfort '67 gave an impressive speech. Frankfort, who later impressed entrepreneurial circles as the legendary CEO of Coach Handbags, ended up meeting Rosenberg’s daughter Bobbie — and the two married in 1975.

The three became a force for giving at Hunter, helping create the annual Mother’s Day Campaign and

establishing the Elaine Geduld Rosenberg '42 Mother’s Day Scholarship. Their powerful example of devotion to Rosenberg’s and Frankfort’s alma mater played a huge role in encouraging others to support Hunter.

# HUNTER

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## MEET FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER **MICHAEL DEAN**

**D**r. Michael Dean '73 has always, in his own words, “loved giving back” — which explains why this Phi Beta Kappa, magna cum laude biology graduate is a longtime donor, proud Hunter booster and admired member of the Foundation Board of Trustees.

Asked what inspires his loyalty to his alma mater, he said, “My four years as a pre-med student at Hunter in the early '70s were my favorite academic experience. I have always been grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm of its faculty.” He would go on to receive his MD from SUNY Downstate Medical College in 1977, spend some time in private practice, then become medical officer for several large health care organizations, including John Hancock and Prudential. Next, he helped establish ChubbHealth, an HMO based in New York City, serving as its chief medical officer. He then formed Benchmark, an independent physician's association, serving as its president until he retired in 2004. Since his retirement, Dr. Dean has served on the boards of various charitable organizations.

His consistent history of contributing to Hunter caught the Administration's eye, and he was encouraged to become a trustee. After a series of conversations with the Search Committee and President Raab, he agreed and joined the Board in 2018, an experience he calls “an honor.”

Asked to discuss his work as a trustee, he said, “I served on an ad hoc search committee for the Dean of Library Services, an enlightening experience. The field has certainly evolved since my college days. The analytical approach of the Macaulay Scholarship Committee on which I serve is impressive. Most recently, I joined the Library Committee, helping to meet the research needs of today's students.”

He added: “I have had the honor and pleasure of evaluating high-school seniors for admittance to the Macaulay Scholarship program. Reading their application essays is genuinely inspirational. Although the candidates come from very modest backgrounds, they have accomplished much in their academic careers. Interviewing these motivated and articulate young folks

has been one of my most enjoyable committee responsibilities.”

It's not surprising that Dr. Dean relates to students from “very modest backgrounds.” He says of himself, “My dad was an airline mechanic, and my mother was a stay-at-home mom, typical of the Baby Boomer generation. I was the oldest of three children, and there was no way my family could afford college tuition. Not knowing what it would cost for medical school, I decided to attend Hunter, which was tuition-free during the '70s. I favor free college or at least substantially subsidized tuition at public universities. Investing in the higher education of young adults is a no-brainer.”

Dr. Dean's “giving back” goes well beyond Hunter. He and his wife, Dr. Maykin Ho, whom he met in medical school, have served on several boards, including at the Covenant House NY.

Still, he says, the Hunter experience is unique. “This past year, I had some medical issues,” he said. “I will never forget the chicken soup President Raab sent during my recovery.”