

HEO GENERAL MEETING – October 9, 2025

Invited Guest: President Nancy Cantor

President Cantor thanked and recognized staff—especially HEOs—for their vital, often behind-the-scenes work that keeps Hunter College running. She emphasized Hunter’s mission as a hub for social mobility and community engagement in New York City and shared her personal connection through her mother, a Hunter alumna. She further reaffirmed the college’s unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion despite external pressures. She encouraged staff to share their stories to help promote Hunter’s impact and invited open communication with her and her communications team. President Cantor highlighted significant **growth and renewal** at Hunter — record enrollment, new staff hires, expanded student success initiatives, and campus improvements — while acknowledging serious **financial and policy challenges**. She emphasized resilience, community, and the importance of telling Hunter’s story to sustain support and momentum.

Here’s a summary of the key points from the meeting minutes:

1. **Introduction by President Cantor:**
 - She highlighted that despite being at Hunter for just over a year, she has already seen the significant contributions made by staff members, emphasizing the importance of recognizing not just HEOs but all staff members, with changes to the staff awards program.
2. **Importance of HEOs and Staff:**
 - President Cantor stressed how critical staff are to the institution's success, noting that the work of HEOs, though often behind the scenes, is essential for keeping everything running smoothly and helping students succeed.
3. **Hunter’s Commitment to Social Mobility:**
 - She reinforced Hunter’s role as an anchor institution in New York City, supporting social mobility, community engagement, and serving a global diaspora, especially from Harlem to Tribeca.
4. **Personal Connection to Hunter:**
 - President Cantor shared a personal story about her mother, a Hunter graduate in 1943, and how Hunter has been an important part of her life. She encouraged everyone to explore the Hunter archives in the library to learn more about its history.
5. **Focus on Students and Staff:**
 - Despite the challenges posed by federal and local issues, she mentioned that the dedication of students, faculty, and staff to Hunter’s values keeps her motivated. She emphasized Hunter’s commitment to DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and the importance of staying true to these values.
6. **Communicating Hunter’s Story:**
 - The President encouraged staff to help showcase Hunter’s story, particularly through communicating their own work. She stressed that everyone’s contributions should be highlighted, and encouraged open communication with her and her team (including Peter Englot, Chief Communication Officer).
7. **Staffing and Recognition**
 - Hunter made 142 full-time hires this year, with 69 being HEOs (50%).
 - President Cantor praised the staff awards ceremony, highlighting its importance in fostering community spirit.
8. **Enrollment Growth**
 - **Total enrollment:** 22,805 — a significant increase.
 - **Largest freshman class** in Hunter’s history and a **strong transfer class**.

- **Second-largest SEEK class** in 15 years.
 - **Silberman School of Social Work** has its **largest MSW class** in 67 years.
9. **New Academic and Support Initiatives**
- Launching **two new scholars programs**:
 - *Science, Wellness & Social Justice Scholars* (focused on public health).
 - *Next-Gen City Scholars* (for future educators, counselors, and advocates).
 - Starting **ASAP for senior colleges**, focusing on **transfer students** (about 150 participants).
 - Creating a **Transfer Student Success Center** to improve advising and retention.
 - Expanding the **Immigrant Student Success Center**, led by Raquel Torres, offering training through *First Gen Empower* (next session Oct. 22).
10. **Campus and Facility Updates**
- **Faculty dining room** renamed to *Faculty and Staff Café* with new food services.
 - **New benches** with charging outlets being installed across campus.
 - **Library now opens at 7:30 AM** to serve commuting students.
 - **New meditation and lactation rooms** added at 68th Street campus.
 - **Five new all-gender bathrooms** completed, with three more underway.
 - **Silberman renovations**: upgraded 5th floor, new café, new art gallery, and updated furniture and technology.
11. **Challenges and Advocacy**
- Facing **cuts to federal and grant funding**, including some **minority-serving programs**; however, **McNair was reinstated** for two more years.
 - **Potential 37% cut to federal work-study** would reduce funding from \$3M to \$1.9M, impacting 1,500 students.
 - Concerns about proposed **\$100,000 H1B visa fee**, which could harm institutions like Hunter.
12. **Fundraising Efforts**
- Despite challenges, Hunter's story is resonating with donors.
 - Recent **rapid fundraising drive** raised **nearly \$50,000 in 60 days**, with many new contributors.
13. **New Initiatives:**
- Two new scholars programs launched: one focused on science, wellness, and social justice, and another for students pursuing careers in education, counseling, and juvenile justice.
 - **ASAP** program for senior colleges and the **Transfer Student Success Center** are being implemented to better support transfer students.
 - **Immigrant Student Success Center** continues to grow, offering training for faculty and staff to support undocumented students.
14. **Campus Updates:**
- The faculty dining room was renamed the **Faculty and Staff Café**.
 - New benches with charging outlets are being installed, and the **library** now opens at 7:30 AM.
 - Two new meditation rooms, lactation rooms, and all-gender bathrooms have been added.
 - Silberman is undergoing renovations, including a new café and art gallery.
15. **Challenges:**
- Funding cuts have impacted grants and programs, with a 37% potential reduction in federal work-study funding.
 - Concerns over a proposed \$100,000 charge for H1B visas, which could negatively affect institutions like Hunter.
16. **Rallying Support:**
- The President emphasized the importance of not stopping efforts during challenging times. The focus is on **rallying alumni support**, reaching out to **local sources and foundations**, and continuing to **hire and support** staff.
 - The **Hawkeye Reunion** was highlighted as a success, showcasing the dedication of alumni to Hunter College.
17. **Communication:**

- There was a strong focus on the need for effective **communication**, particularly through **civil discourse** and **intellectual dialogue** series to create constructive conversations across the community.
- The President asked for feedback on **communication preferences** and how best to share updates and information, given that many people (including students) often don't engage with emails.
- Suggestions for centralizing communication included creating a spot on the homepage to list upcoming events or updates and leveraging **social media** for announcements.

18. **Strategic Plan & Town Halls:**

- The **Strategic Plan** was discussed, with an emphasis on ensuring it includes feedback from all stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and students.
- Surveys will be sent out, and **town halls** will be organized to gather input.
- **Middle States Accreditation** is a major focus, with efforts to make sure the accreditation process reflects the entire Hunter community's input.

19. **Institutional Developments:**

- The **Institutional Advancement Team** was praised for their work, and there were discussions about making campus spaces more accessible to alumni and the public. The challenge of balancing open access with campus security was also raised.

20. **Engagement & Events:**

- Upcoming events include:
 1. A **meet and greet** for the **HEO (Higher Education Officer) staff** on October 30th.
 2. Future **speakers** in the forum include Brian Buckwald on **Navigate**, the **Provost** on Middle States and strategic planning, and **Gustavo Ordonez** on **facilities issues**.
- The **Senate meetings** were mentioned as a good resource for anyone who wants to stay informed about important updates at Hunter.

21. **Other Updates:**

- **Spotlight on HEOs:** An initiative to highlight notable staff members, with a call for more nominations to continue the program.
- **Survey Feedback:** A request for people to complete short surveys related to the **Strategic Plan**, with an emphasis on the **faculty, staff, and community** subcommittee. The idea was also raised about having small working groups and surveys to gather feedback for the Middle States report to involve everyone in shaping the future of the college. There was concern about email overload and how to identify official communications. with maybe a central, clearly marked email subject line could help, like "**Middle States Survey Feedback Needed**" or "**Hunter College Staff Survey – Your Input Matters**", to make it more noticeable and less likely to get lost.
- **Speaker Series and Professional Development:** As for the speaker series and professional development for staff in other titles, it's encouraging to see how much the community has appreciated those opportunities. It might be worth revisiting the idea of a broader speaker series for the entire college. Having open forums where different departments and staff across various titles can connect with leadership could really help reinforce that sense of inclusivity and shared mission.