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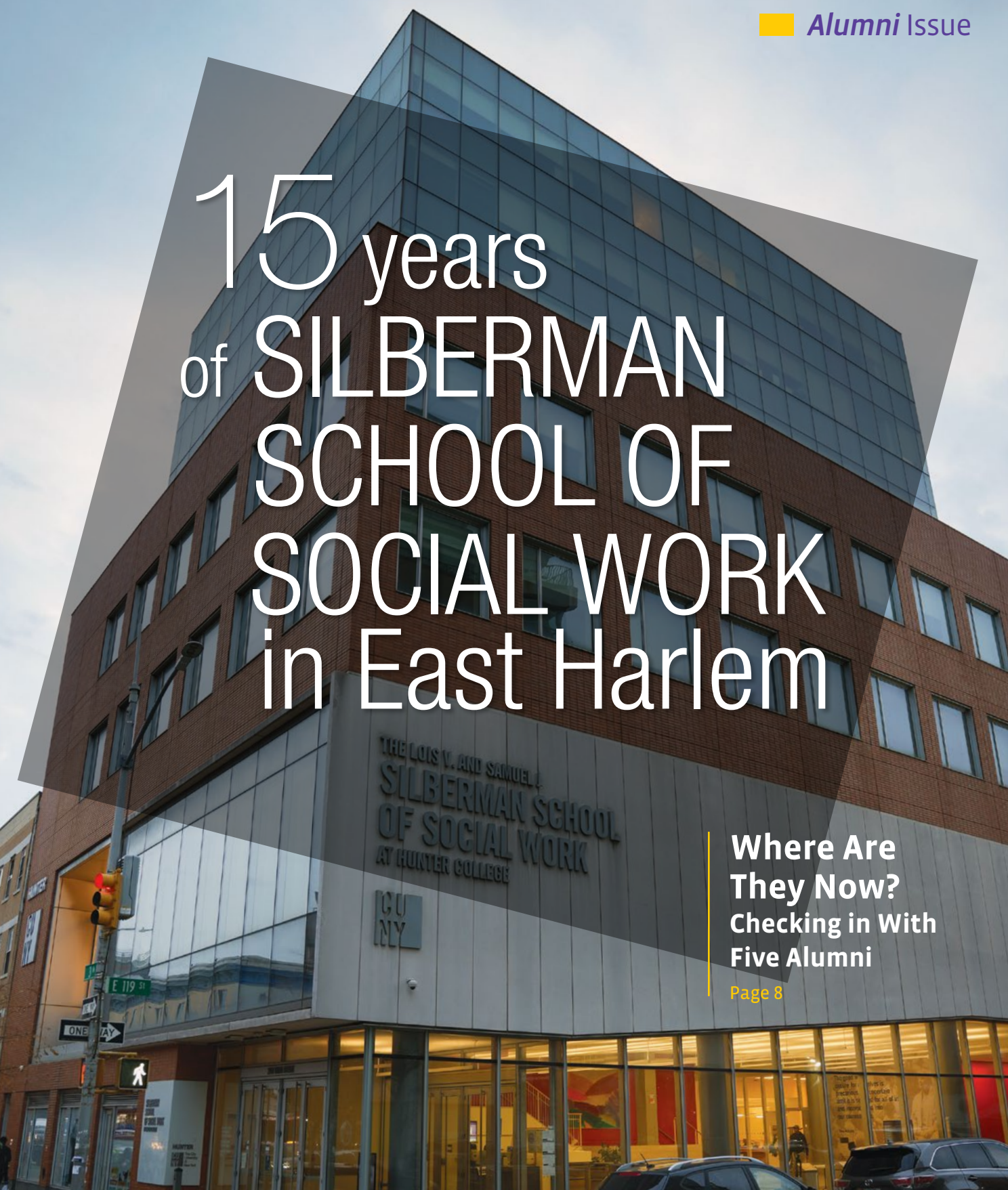
magazine

■ *Alumni Issue*

15 years of SILBERMAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK in East Harlem

**Where Are
They Now?
Checking in With
Five Alumni**

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NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What does it mean to be not just in, but of, a place? What does it mean to be woven into the fabric of your community? What does it mean to be dedicated to collaboration and collective action locally as a way of striving to realize the vision of a more just and more peaceful world? To my eye, the Hunter stories of people, programs, and place in this issue begin to point toward answers to profound questions like these.

One thing that leaps out immediately is that being and doing all of those things means being and doing them for the long haul. The commitment to just that is evident, for example, in the celebration of the Silberman School of Social Work's 15th anniversary at its home in East Harlem. The school's embeddedness there is sharply reflected in the expansive network of local partner organizations where faculty, staff, and students — as well as alumni — join community-based professionals and volunteers to learn what it takes to weave and strengthen vital social safety nets for residents of El Barrio and beyond.

Enduring commitment also underlies Brothers for Excellence, Hunter's manifestation of the CUNY-wide Black Male Initiative. Launched 20 years ago to realize a vision conceived by the New York City Council to increase academic and career success of Black and Latino men, the program is still going strong and open to all, with an impressive track record in cultivating leadership qualities and fostering a sense of belonging that is undeniable in the trajectories of young alumni in fields from banking, to law, to the entertainment industry, who are now giving back as guides and mentors to new generations.

Multi-generational impact is precisely what the late, great Hunter benefactors Leonard Lauder and Evelyn Lauder HCHS '54, HC '56, DHL '04 had in mind with their decades of capacious support for breast cancer research, our community care nurse practitioner program, and the arts. Ever the visionary, when Mr. Lauder established the Leonard A. Lauder Fellowships in the History of Art in 2023, he humbly ensured that they would be renamed for his longtime art advisor, Distinguished Professor Emily Braun, upon her retirement — which occurred this past summer following 34 years of seeing her mentees fill curatorial roles across the cultural landscape of New York, as well as cities around the world.

We could fill a library, let alone a magazine, with examples of work like this that have woven Hunter inextricably into the fabric of our city, just as the one in every eight city school teachers who are Hunter alums do every day, and just as this issue's Class Notes attest our alumni are doing as leaders in business, healthcare, the arts, media, public service, and community organizing. As you will also read in this issue, we now have two great leaders securely in place — Provost Manoj Pardasani and Special Advisor on Community Engagement and Public Partnerships Jenny Tuten — to help assure that we continue to grow Hunter purposefully into its enduring identity as an anchor institution that is both in and of New York City.

Cordially,
Nancy Cantor
President and Professor of Psychology

Alumni

BROTHERS FOR EXCELLENCE: 20 YEARS OF COLLECTIVE SUCCESS

It's been a generation of comradery and success. Alumni of Hunter's Brothers for Excellence program gathered on September 4 for a special reunion and networking event marking 20 years of CUNY's Black Male Initiative.

The initiative, of which Brothers for Excellence is a project, cultivates leadership and fosters a sense of belonging for students. Brothers for Excellence is open to all but focused on helping Black and Latino males become successful graduates through scholarships, mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and access to dormitories. It also encourages high-school students to apply for and attend Hunter.

The Black Male Initiative began in 2005 when the New York City Council approved funds to raise the enrollment, matriculation, retention, grades, and graduation rate of historically underrepresented students. Twenty years later, with funding also from New York state, the initiative is a \$3.4 million annual endeavor.

At Hunter, **Marcia Cantarella**, then assistant dean, helped establish Brothers for Excellence with Dean of Diversity and Compliance **John Rose**, who has led the program since 2008. By now, some 800 students have participated.

"We recognized early, 20 years ago, it was clear that young women of color were doing well, and young men of color were really struggling," Cantarella told the publication *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*.

She and Rose empowered students to helm the program through team leadership and peer mentoring — to have students be part of the solution.

"It's important that students feel they



Hunter alumnus Irwin Taylor Forbes '19 with Kenney Robinson, the director of Career, Professional and Partnership Development at Hunter's School of Education.

have autonomy and that the grown-ups aren't in charge; they are," Cantarella said. "Hunter's program gives the students a lot of latitude."

The celebratory evening, held at Hunter's Roosevelt House Institute for Public Policy, vividly illustrated the lasting impact of Brothers for Excellence. Dozens of people representing a cross-section of New York professions attended. At a panel discussion, Brothers for Excellence alumni discussed how the program helped them succeed.

"Brothers for Excellence taught me that when you see a problem, it's completely okay to take it upon yourself to find out ways to address it."

— **Stephon Odom**

Participants dined on down-home fare supplied by Just Soul Catering, a Black-owned business that helps to mainstream formerly incarcerated women. Jazz played by a trio of student performers, The Groove Hunters, provided a festive vibe.

"I noticed flashes of joy on your faces as you spotted someone you hadn't seen in a while and then hugged them up close," Rose told the gathering. "It's about celebrating a milestone. For two decades, this program stood for something more than academics — your success at Hunter, at graduate and professional schools, and in your lives beyond."

Collin Craig, a professor of English,

assistant dean, and a longtime mentor for Brothers for Excellence, reflected on those journeys.

"Those young men who once trickled into the Brothers for Excellence's office with anxious smiles are now doctors, lawyers, teachers, and finance leaders," he said. "I hope Brothers for Excellence was not only a safe space, but a place where you learned to voice your dreams, trust your gifts, and build kinship."

Stephon Odom '19, who works for a multinational bank, recalled how the program taught him to create his own opportunities.

Recognizing that Hunter wasn't always a target school for major business employers, Odom worked to organize a CUNY-wide event connecting students with career development programs, such as Inroads and SEO Career.

"Brothers for Excellence taught me that when you see a problem, it's completely okay to take it upon yourself to find out ways to address it," he said.

Jorge Cubias '20, a lawyer, described how the program fostered academic accountability and self-help. He said that casual meetups in the library evolved into a formal study group, GPA Defenders, in which students supported one another to maintain their grades.

"It was an experience not only just to get that comradery, but also to have people hold you accountable when you're studying," he said.

Quentin Jackson '17, an entertainment-industry cameraperson and producer, called the program illuminating.

"The Black Male Initiative is the pathway to a better version of yourself that you are not expecting," he said.

POLITICAL SCIENCE GRAD IS HUNTER'S FIRST BANYAN IMPACT FELLOW

A recent alumna is the first Hunter graduate to be chosen for a prestigious development fellowship in India.

Anvitha Tammiseti '25, a political-science major, won the American India Foundation's Banyan Impact Fellowship, the premier U.S.-India service program for young international-development leaders.

AIF Banyan Impact Fellows work for 10 months at nonprofits across India to exchange technical skills and support women, children, and youth through improvements to education, livelihoods, and public health.

Tammiseti will work for a year in Puducherry, India, at the Satya Special School, an organization that works with persons with disabilities.

Tammiseti, a Roosevelt and a Jewish Foundation for the Education of Women scholar, completed the Certificate in Public Policy at Roosevelt House. She did her capstone project on policies to alleviate medical debt. She interned at New York Legal Assistance Group in the legal health division, which supports low-income clients with legal and health issues.

She also interned with the Social Science Research Council at the Mercury Project, which combats health misinformation. That taught her about public-health research and global health issues.

Tammiseti, 22, grew up in Queens and speaks Telugu at home. She has visited India, but Puducherry is a new area for her, along with its language, Tamil.



Anvitha Tammiseti '25

"My public-policy certificate at Hunter helped me understand the role research plays in policy," Tammiseti said. "I hope to use these research skills as a lawyer. The fellowship is a step in learning and using these skills in the field. It is a chance to connect with others who are leaders interested in driving change."

ALUMNI SCHOLARS REPORT THEY'RE HAVING A BLAST ABROAD

"We never hear that anyone is homesick!" Ruth & Harold Newman Office of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships Director **Stephen Lassonde** said of the alumni scholars who send him news and photos from abroad.

Ariana Ahmed '23, a Schwarzman Scholar, is completing a public policy master's program at Tsinghua University in China. **Alp Doymaz MHC '25**, a Fulbright Scholar, is conducting genetic research in Germany. **Emily Springer '23** — a jazz journalist and aspiring cultural

critic — is a Marshall Scholar studying audio journalism in Britain at Goldsmiths, University of London.

"As you can see from the photos, they are learning a lot and having a blast," Lassonde said.



Left, Fulbright Scholar Alp Doymaz at Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. Top, Marshall Scholar Emily Springer at her university in London.



Schwarzman Scholar Ariana Ahmed, second from right, with friends from her cohort in Beijing.

Students

TWO HUNTER SENIORS START 'FOUNDERS' CLUB FOR TECH ENTREPRENEURS

Two Hunter computer science majors have founded a club for founders — students who want to start tech businesses or explore pathways to digital work other than a corporate job.

Samuel Michnik '26 and **Angst Gregory '26** have chartered the Founders @ Hunter club. Professor **Arabella Pollack** — the director of Hunter's Certificate in Business Studies program and a distinguished lecturer in the Department of Economics — has signed on as the faculty adviser.

Michnik saw the need for

the club after taking time away from school to try his technical skills at hackathons and networking events. Collaborating with tech entrepreneurs broadened his perspective about what he was learning.

"Through Founders @ Hunter, I want to bring that knowledge and energy back to campus," Michnik said. "My goal is to show students that there are many ways to succeed, and not all of them lead to a corporate position. Whether it's starting a company, launching a product, or just simply learning by building, I want to



Samuel Michnik

empower students to explore alternative paths through hands-on, community-driven experiences."

Gregory said that he founded the club because he loves connecting people.

"There's something electric about introducing two people and seeing them create something neither could have built alone," he said. "I want Founders to be a launchpad



Angst Gregory

where Hunter students don't just network, they collide. Where the computer science major can meet the marketing genius and the design obsessive, and suddenly we're not just students anymore. We're builders."

Pollack, the club's adviser, said, "I'm sure these cross-major collaborations will lead to the creation of some exciting businesses."

STUDENT CLUB GOES TO VEGAS CONVENTION

Student members of Hunter's Association of Latino Professionals for America chapter represented the college at the national group's recent convention in Las Vegas.

The five-day convention at Caesar's Palace was packed with workshops on personal branding, networking sessions, and opportunities to connect with top Latino financiers and businesspeople.

It worked: One student secured an internship, several others landed interviews for future jobs, and another is getting invitations for exclusive

recruiting events at Bloomberg — all because of connections made at the convention.

Students founded the Hunter ALPFA chapter two years ago to draw the Latino professional community into Hunter. Last year, only four students attended the convention, paying their own way.

This year, members, with support from the administration, secured scholarships for attendance by a larger group, covering flights, hotel stays, and expenses.

The trip held many unforgettable moments — and surprises. The first night, the



ALPFA club members make the Alpha sign in Las Vegas.

hotel hadn't prepared a room, so it gave one member its penthouse.

"That's where we spent

most of our time hanging out," another member said. "It was amazing."

MEET HUNTER'S NEW UNDERGRADUATE LEADERS



Sumaiya Ahmed



Ahmad Waraich

Hunter students elected 35 new officers to Undergraduate Student Government in voting last spring.

The One Hunter, One Future slate predominated, winning most offices.

Senior **Sumaiya Ahmed**, the founder and president of Muslims Giving Back at Hunter, won election to the presidency. She seeks to support underserved communities.

Senior **Ahmad Waraich**,

a former president of the Pakistani Students Organization, was elected vice president. With three years of experience as a club leader, he hopes to expand resources for clubs.

Selina Zheng, a junior and Macaulay Honors Scholar, was elected as cultural affairs — student activities commissioner. A past president of the Taiwanese Student Association, she wants to promote events celebrating cultural diversity.

HUNTER-MACAULAY SCHOLAR PICKED AS NEW YORK CITY'S FIRST YOUTH AMBASSADOR

A Hunter College senior who has spent years pushing for youth representation in government is now taking that work citywide as New York's first youth ambassador.

Alina Nodrat — a Macaulay Honors College student majoring in political science and minoring in African, Puerto Rican, and Latino studies and public health — would appear to be a natural for the post: She has volunteered for civic organizations since high school, when she was her class president.

"From the very beginning,

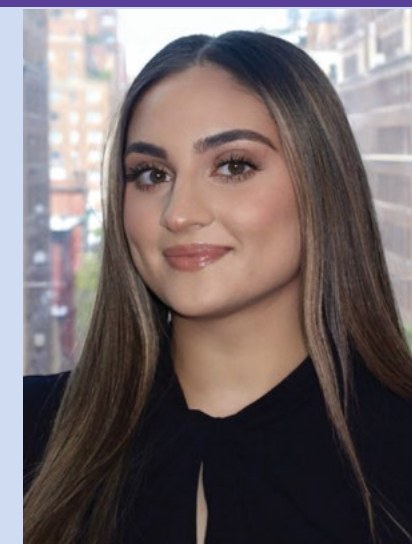
I believed that young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow; we are the change-makers of today," she wrote on LinkedIn in announcing her appointment. "In this role, I will be amplifying youth voices and ensuring that we all, as New Yorkers, have a seat at the table. I cannot wait to connect communities across the five boroughs with city government and make civic engagement accessible for all."

The Office of Civic Engagement was set up this year under the mayor's chief of staff to involve New York

communities in the city's decision-making.

As youth ambassador, Nodrat works with it to make sure young people's voices are represented in local government. She also helps develop programs and policies that support youth and involve more young people in civic life.

From an Afghan American immigrant family, Nodrat served as chair of the High School Democrats of America and on the New York State Senate 7th District Youth Advisory Board in Nassau County. She has supported



Alina Nodrat

the right to education for children worldwide by working with the global advocacy groups JINA Alliance and Afghans Empowered. "Centering young people has always been at the heart of my work," she said.



A BEACON IN EAST HARLEM: 15 YEARS OF THE SILBERMAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

In higher education, schools of social work are often an afterthought, occupying the least-impressive building on campus, observed Dean of the Lois V. and Samuel J. Silberman School of Social Work **Mary Cavanaugh**. Not so at Silberman.



Dean Mary Cavanaugh

For 15 years, its state-of-the-art home at 119th Street and Third Avenue has stood as a magnificent beacon in East Harlem. More than glass and steel, it represents a \$115 million declaration of the school's mission as an anchor institution, a true community partner.

Silberman's integration in the neighborhood shows in a network of 1,100 community partners in East Harlem alone. The relationships are the core of its pedagogy: Every master's student must spend three days a week embedded at community agencies.

Many small agencies cannot afford to employ the licensed social worker the state requires to supervise a student intern. So, Silberman uses its endowment to hire and pay for certified supervisors at the agencies — expanding their reach. Students gain invaluable experience while providing essential services.

"Our students are providing structural support for the small agencies," Cavanaugh said. "That's the beauty of the endowment. It is the way in which we use it, and it should be used. We have been enormously enriched by our location."

As the largest public social work school in the city — and one of the largest in the country, with 1,500 students — the school is a powerhouse of diversity and local talent.

According to Cavanaugh, students speak 37 languages. Almost all come from the five boroughs, and about 98% of them stay in the five boroughs.

"Our students are providing structural support for the small agencies"

— Dean Mary Cavanaugh

Students who grew up in the city train in its communities and graduate into employment at the same agencies.

"They come from New York City; they stay in New York City, and we couldn't be prouder," she said.

Silberman's two-year tuition is about \$30,000, compared to \$120,000 at nearby private schools, and graduates entering a field in which salaries might start at \$65,000 do not graduate with hundreds of thousands in debt.

Costs aside, applicants apply because of Silberman's strong social work

program and reputation as one of the country's top schools.

That national reputation is upheld by a faculty that bridges academic theory and real-world practice. Silberman's tenured faculty are a core strength, but Cavanaugh points to the school's adjunct professors as its lifeblood: Major officials from nonprofits and city agencies bring their high-level experience into the classroom.

"Someone from the mayor's office is teaching here," she said.

Established academics and active city leaders give students a direct line to the fields they are preparing to enter.

Since opening its doors in East Harlem, Silberman has seen explosive growth. Enrollment has risen by 39% since Cavanaugh became dean in 2015, even as many social work programs nationally are seeing a marked decline, Cavanaugh said. Silberman's enrollment grew by almost 10% this year alone, and it just hired seven new faculty members.

"We are bursting through the seams of that building," Cavanaugh said.

The school is building a part-time program and launching CUNY's first fully online social work degree. It also inaugurated a dual-degree program with Union Theological Seminary.

To celebrate Silberman's crystal anniversary in East Harlem, we looked at five graduates to see where they are now. Here are their stories:



Suri Duitch

SURI DUITCH '95: COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Suri Duitch MSW '95 became president of Kingsborough Community College after several jobs in public policy advocacy, education administration, and workforce development.

She worked for 12 years in CUNY's central Office of Academic Affairs, overseeing programs enrolling more than 50,000 students annually, and launched the CUNY Service Corps, a paid experiential learning program. She helped establish CUNY's School of Professional Studies for adult learners. She held top posts at Tulane University. But her degree in community organizing from Silberman also had much to do with her becoming president of the community college.

A native of Colorado Springs, Colo-

rado, Duitch came to New York in 1987 to study as an undergraduate at Columbia University. After college, she was working as a paralegal and contemplating a law degree but realized her interests lay in policy and advocacy.

"The community organizing program at Hunter was unique and compelling," Duitch said. "It had a strong conceptual framework for thinking about how to approach organizing work. There was room to do policy work. It also provided me with a lot of support around how to think about cross-issue organizing."

It also helped that, with her Ivy League undergraduate debt and the challenges of working overnights as a legal proofreader, Hunter had the right price point.

By "cross-issue organizing" Duitch means finding common ground among people across different perspectives and in diverse environments. She cited longtime community organizer **Myles Horton's** *The Long Haul*, a book in the Silberman curriculum, as highly influential in her work. The author, a southern labor and civil-rights organizer, wrote about how he brought the same skill sets and perspectives to working on both union issues and racial justice.

"The community organizing program at Hunter helped me figure out how to work effectively in racially and ethnically diverse environments, which has been a key focus of my career," Duitch said. "To be in diverse environments and really thrive was an amazing gift."

She also credits learning from a faculty member about the difference between strategy and tactics for insights that have guided her work. "I often remind myself of the difference," she said. "One skill I bring to work is being extremely tactical, while also strategically having the big picture in mind, where I want to take an institution or an initiative, and how to make every single decision point meaningful and something that helps move the institution toward larger goals. I absolutely became grounded in that through the community organizing program. It's been enormously helpful."



Joelle James

JOELLE L. JAMES '20: SERVANT LEADER

Many students obtain a social work degree to work at nonprofits, but **Joelle L. James** went in a different direction.

She was already an experienced nonprofit executive, having spent 20 years helping people find jobs, before she got her Silberman MSW.

She worked for a dozen years as the director of the STRIVE New York Network (aka East Harlem Employment Services) and for four years as senior director of employment services at The Fortune Society, which supports successful reentry from incarceration.

Her Silberman degree enabled her to go into private practice as a psychotherapist.

"It provided me with the freedom of time to concentrate on the things that mean the most to me," James said.

In her practice, she uses narrative, person-focused, family-systems, and cognitive behavioral therapy to assist her clients with meaningful relationships and events in their lives. She works with LGBTQ+ people, youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, and persons with substance-use disorder, among other populations.

Now a principal partner of 2 Hands 2 Help, a boutique psychotherapy practice, a consultant to nonprofits, and an adjunct instructor at Silberman, the Harlem resident has spent more than a

quarter-century supporting those in need. Seeing herself as a “servant leader,” James also has volunteered for social justice organizations in her neighborhood and abroad.

James serves on the boards of The East Harlem Neighborhood Based Alliance and Da Hill Block Association.

She also has traveled to Brazil as a fellow of Social Change Agent Institute, which describes itself as an interactive think-tank that prepares advocates and scholars to do decolonizing social justice work in the African diaspora.

“We investigated how we could work together to assist nonprofits in liberation and protest as a conscious voice against socially unjust practices and policies,” she said.

Finally, James came to Hunter’s 68th Street campus in March to speak on a panel on “Shaping the Future: The Impact of Social Work Graduates in Our Communities.” She finds a lot of meaning in her Silberman teaching and in sharing her work with her fellow alumni.

James likes to quote the late, great civil and children’s rights activist **Marian Wright Edelman**: “Service is the rent we pay for being. It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time.”



Jihoon Kim

JIHOON KIM ’08: HEALTHCARE EXPERT

Jihoon Kim ’08 parlayed his Silberman degree and government experience into a career as a top Albany health-care adviser.

Now the president and chief executive

officer of InUnity Alliance, an advocate for almost 200 community-based organizations serving New Yorkers at risk of or living with addiction and mental health conditions, he works with partners to provide strategy, training, education, and professional certification. Kim most recently served as deputy secretary for human services and mental hygiene under **Governor Kathy Hochul**. In that role, he managed 13 state agencies and offices and co-chaired New York’s Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council.

“My education at Silberman gave me a solid foundation by training me to think systemically about people, policy, and power”

— Jihoon Kim

Kim helped craft the state’s historic 2023 multi-year investment in mental health services, tackle the opioid overdose epidemic by distributing opioid settlement funds, expanded access to affordable childcare, and launched efforts to reduce child poverty by 50% over 10 years. He also established New York’s first Office of the Chief Disability Officer.

Kim said his Silberman degree made it all possible.

“My education at Silberman gave me a solid foundation by training me to think systemically about people, policy, and power to see how individual experiences connect to larger structures,” he said. “That perspective has shaped every step of my career, from political action to government leadership and now as head of a statewide advocacy association. Silberman also connected me to an amazing field placement that launched my career in government!”

He said he uses his Silberman training every day: “Whether I’m negotiating policy language, building coalitions, or leading an organization, I draw on the social work principles of empathy, systems thinking, and respect for lived

experience. Silberman empowered me to empower others.”

He also relies regularly on the connections that he made with other social workers at Silberman.

“I am a proud alumnus of Silberman and believe that it prepared me for a purpose-driven professional career that has also been personally rewarding,” Kim said. “The education is intellectually challenging, socially conscious, and intentionally connected to real-world practice. For anyone who wants to make a lasting impact as a social worker, Silberman is a place that will equip you with both the skills and the values to excel and find your purpose.”



Diana Santos

DIANA SANTOS ’14: CHANGEMAKER HELPING HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

“From the moment I arrived at Hunter College’s Silberman School of Social Work, I knew that it was a place where purpose met action,” said **Diana Santos ’14**. “The professors were more than educators — they were practitioners deeply engaged in the field, and the classroom felt like a training ground for real change.”

Santos, the chief program and strategic advocacy Officer of Women in Need, New York City’s largest provider of shelter and supportive housing for families, herself is involved in real change: She oversees programming and staff across 16 family shelters, a shelter for single

women, and several supportive housing sites. Her work includes leading policy, research, and clinical teams; advancing housing goals; and overseeing job development, childcare, and recreation programs.

Santos works to raise awareness about mental health and substance use but also believes that homelessness is a racial-justice issue stemming from structural barriers affecting communities of color. She believes that ending homelessness requires more than just a roof — it requires wraparound support that allows individuals and families to heal, stabilize, and thrive.

Santos began her career in social services in 2005 as a case manager at Treatment Alternative for Safer Communities, developing individualized treatment plans and conducting psychological and violence risk assessments. She went on to join VIP Community Services, directing a reentry program at Rikers Island for individuals leaving incarceration. Hunter was a logical next step.

“I chose Silberman because of its deep commitment to social justice and community impact,” she said. “I built lifelong friendships and an incredible professional network with some of today’s most influential social workers — people who inspire and collaborate with me years later. That sense of community taught me that social work is collective work, grounded in purpose, compassion, and accountability.”

“What I learned at Silberman guides me every day,” she said. “It gave me critical thinking, empathy, and leadership skills to navigate complex systems and deliver measurable, people-centered results. Silberman shaped not only my approach to the work but also the conviction to lead with integrity and purpose.”

Santos said she would strongly recommend Silberman to anyone who wants to make lasting change: “It’s a place that prepares you not just to understand systems — but to transform them.”



Kevin O’Connor (center, wearing a grey sportsjacket) created a scholarships program for second-year Silberman students.

KEVIN O’CONNOR ’90: INSPIRED BY LOVE AND JUSTICE

Kevin O’Connor MSW ’90, a dual recovery coordinator at Ellis Mental Health Clinic in upstate New York, established the Elizabeth Tyler (MSW ’93) Scholarship on February 21 in honor of his deceased wife, who was born on that day.

The scholarship is inspired by his own financial struggles as a student. The \$1,000 to \$5,000 grants for second-year Silberman students are for living costs such as rent and childcare.

“I sold my life-insurance policy when the subway fare went from 90 cents to \$1.10,” he said of his student years.

It also fits well with his lifelong interest in social justice.

Motivated by the late 1980s surges in homelessness, HIV/AIDS, and crack addiction, O’Connor found inspiration in Silberman’s dual philosophy — helping individuals while also changing the community through affordable housing, entitlements, and programming.

Living in a rented attic in The Bronx, he did field placements at Bronx Psychiatric Center and Bronx Lebanon Hospital’s Outpatient Mental Health Clinic.

He even met his late wife, Betsy, then an occupational therapist, while commuting on the Bx55 bus — she was riding to work at a day-treatment program — and, in turn, inspired her to

attend Silberman. Hunter helped form their relationship: For their first date, they went to see a big band at the 68th Street campus. His wedding ring is inscribed: “Love from the 55 bus.”

The soul of kindness, Tyler spent her last 21 years in outpatient mental-health work, working at Union Settlement Association’s James Weldon Johnson Counseling Center in East Harlem and at St. Anne Institute in Albany with traumatized young girls. She also rescued hundreds of cats by volunteering for a trap-neuter-release program. She died suddenly on June 16, 2024. They were married for 30 years.

O’Connor still fights for social justice. He recalled a story told by Silberman Dean **Hal Lewis**, who built the school’s national reputation. After a disappointing activist event, the dean shared the story of two frogs caught in a bowl of milk. The frogs try unsuccessfully to kick their way out. One wants to give up, but the other says, “just keep kicking.” They keep kicking until the milk turns to butter, giving them a ramp.

“The message was ‘keep kicking’ and don’t give up on social change.”

O’Connor met 19 students at the scholarship event; many were first-generation students or themselves had experienced social work on the receiving end, such as in the foster-care system.

He funded the scholarship with Betsy’s life insurance policy.

“Hunter gave us a lot,” he said.

AROUND CAMPUS



From left, entrepreneur and investor James Rhee, New York Urban League CEO Arva Rice, and SUNY Chancellor John King participated in a New York Urban League fireside chat at Hunter's Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute on September 3.



From left, President Nancy Cantor and Institutional Advancement staff members Francesca Bishop, Amy Whang, and Jamal Alexis at the Faculty, Student, and Staff Mixer on September 5.



John Catsimatidis signing his book *How Far Do You Want To Go?* for Hunter alumna Jacqueline Sferra Rada '77 at Roosevelt House on September 18.



From left, CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Governor Kathy Hochul, and Eleanor Roosevelt Distinguished Leader in Residence Carolyn Maloney at Roosevelt House on October 30.



Hunter alumnus Stephon Odom '19 and Career Center Office Coordinator Carla Sanchez were among the alumni, staff, and students at a student-alumni networking mixer on September 15.



Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani, left, announced his choice for first deputy mayor, Dean Fuleihan, at Roosevelt House November 10.



Recent alumni including Afsana Rahman '23, Mirage Peduruhewage '21, Zicong Peng '25, and David Sharer '25 gathered at the Hunter Scholars Alumni Mixer on October 15.



New York City Commissioner of Housing Preservation and Development and two-time Hunter College alumnus Ahmed Tigani '07, MUP '13, spoke to Roosevelt Scholars at Hunter on September 30.



The Honorable Edit Shkreli, Bronx 1st Municipal Court District Judge and Hunter College Class of 2010 alumna, spoke at the Pre-Law Mixer on September 17.



Hunter alumna Isabella Rossellini MA '19, center, and Professor Diana Reiss, right, were interviewed by Templeton Foundation podcaster Ben Arthur on animal cognition at Hunter College on September 17.



Hunter College celebrated outstanding staff members, including two alumnae, at the President's Staff Excellence Awards on September 15. From left, Alicia Brown, Nayib Ega, Sylvia Santiago, Irina Amanatidis, Sean Davis, John Valinotti, Nicole Pommerehncke '05, Farajana Kabir '19, Khant (Ko) Naing, and Eve Levy with their awards.

Alumni & Schools

LINDSEY FERRENTINO MFA '13 HIT BROADWAY WITH *THE QUEEN OF VERSAILLES*, A MUSICAL



Left, playwright Lindsey Ferrentino. Right, actors Kristin Chenoweth with F. Murray Abraham on the set of the Broadway musical *The Queen of Versailles*.

Award-winning playwright **Lindsey Ferrentino MFA '13** undertook her biggest challenge yet: writing *The Queen of Versailles*, a Broadway musical starring **Kristin Chenoweth** and **F. Murray Abraham**.

The extravaganza, about **Jackie** and **David Siegel**, Florida billionaires who, inspired by the French palace, set out to



build the largest home in America, opened November 8 at the St. James Theatre. The show, Ferrentino's Broadway debut, has music and lyrics by **Stephen Schwartz**. Sadly, it was set to close January 4.

An inaugural Hunter "40 Under 40" alumni honoree and the recipient of many prizes, including the ASCAP Cole Porter Playwriting Prize and the Paul Newman

Drama Award, Ferrentino is known for her socially conscious dramas. *Ugly Lies the Bone* portrays a female veteran overcoming horrendous burns, and *Amy and the Orphans* gave a leading role to an actor with Down Syndrome.

According to *The New York Times*, Ferrentino writes with "a muscular empathy," while *Variety* praised her for "a moral compass second to none among her generation of playwrights." *The Hollywood Reporter* dubbed her Netflix's "go-to writer" for her many screen projects.

But writing *The Queen of Versailles* felt different for the playwright, who said that she had done Off-Broadway for so long that she had given up on the dream of mounting a Broadway show.

As Ferrentino told *Broadway World*, "It takes so much work, and so many people have to say 'yes' to make the dream come true."

THREE HAWKS SELECTED FOR BASKETBALL HONORS COURT

Three Hunter College men's basketball players — two of them alumni — earned spots on the prestigious 2024–25 National Association of Basketball Coaches Honors Court for their academic success.

Hawks Captain **Casey Meyers '25** and teammate **Enzo Caceres-Roussel '25**, both media studies majors, were recognized alongside **Marcuz Casulla '26**, an accounting major.

Meyers was a standout for the Hawks during his four-year career and earned a spot on the CUNYAC Sportsmanship Team in his senior season. He scored 910 career points and knocked down 167

three-pointers, ranking in the top five in program history. He also totaled 271 assists, good for seventh all-time at Hunter, and 178 steals, the third-most in program history.

Caceres-Roussel was also named to the 2025 CUNYAC Vice Chancellor's Honor Roll after starting all 25 games this past season. With 153 total points, he had his best season during his senior year, with six double-digit scoring performances.

The NABC Honors Court recognizes junior, senior, and graduate men's



Enzo Caceres-Roussel in a game with Baruch.

basketball student-athletes who concluded the academic year with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or higher.

Courtesy Hunter Athletics



Participants in the AI conference with Edgar Troudt, fourth from right.

Hunter College's School of Education convened a landmark conference on November 7 that drew faculty, staff, and administrators to examine the use of artificial intelligence in education.

"Don't AI Alone" was organized by faculty members from across CUNY, with Dean of Academic Innovation and Outcomes **Robert Domanski**, Chief of Staff to the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences **Mari Watanabe-Rose**, and Distinguished Lecturer and Director of Programs in Computer Science Education **Edgar Troudt** taking the lead at Hunter.

For Troudt, integrating AI into education

is a personal and professional mission. A CUNY "lifer," he attended Queens College as an undergraduate and earned his PhD in computer science from the Graduate Center, writing on using AI models to better understand English-language learners. He got his position at Hunter after the retirement of **Mike Zamansky** — coincidentally, his high school computer science teacher.

The conference traces its origin to a May conference organized by the "Don't AI Alone" group, which drew 50 people on a rainy Friday, Troudt recalled.

Troudt pitched the idea of a CUNY-wide conference to Klara and Larry Silverstein Education Dean **Julie Gorlewski**, to showcase the energy

PONDERING THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION

and projects that exist at the university.

The November 7 event, held at Hunter's Roosevelt House Institute for Public Policy, featured 12 sessions and panels.

Troudt highlighted an insight from a senior state policy adviser: Educators spent too much time forbidding students' use of social media and failed to teach them how to use it responsibly. AI presents a similar choice.

"Do we want to tell people this is bad, and let them use it anyway, irresponsibly?" Troudt asked. "Or do we want to get ahead of the curve and say, 'Here are the guardrails; here are the things that are ethical and honest. Let's work together to find a way of using this positively to benefit your education.'"

ALUMNA DIETITIAN SCHOLAR MAKES IMPACT IN THE FIELD

Daaimah Dratsky MS '22 models Hunter College's motto, *mihi cura futuri* — the care of the future is mine — with a career spanning clinical research, higher education, and patient-centered care.

At Hunter, she earned her Master of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics as class valedictorian, showing a deep commitment to advancing evidence-based nutrition practice and health equity. Her student research was published as "Food Insecurity and Dietary Quality in African American Patients with Gastrointestinal Cancers," in the journal *Nutrients* in 2024.

Now a registered dietitian for a

clinical telehealth company, Dratsky provides individual medical nutrition therapy for adults managing diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and gastrointestinal disorders.

She also works as an adjunct lecturer at the School of Health Professions, leading the Introduction to Nutrition course and mentoring emerging dietitians. She earlier did research at Columbia University and Fox Chase Cancer Center, for studies on dietary quality, food insecurity, and minority health outcomes. Her work led to her recognition in 2023 as a "40 Under 40 Rising Stars in NYC Food Policy."

"At Hunter College, a Master's degree



Daaimah Dratsky MS '22

isn't just a credential; it's an investment in the intellectual heartbeat of New York City," Dratsky said. "It's where ambition meets opportunity, transforming your passion into purposeful expertise that resonates not only within these historic halls, but throughout the diverse communities you're destined to lead and uplift."

Faculty & Staff



Photo: Elena Seibert

Megha Majumdar

Hunter faculty member **Megha Majumdar**'s second novel, *A Guardian and a Thief*, was a finalist for the 2025 National Book Award in Fiction. It was also picked by Oprah's Book Club. It's the second time Majumdar has been nominated

DISTINGUISHED LECTURER'S BOOK LISTED AS FINALIST FOR NATIONAL BOOK AWARD IN FICTION

for the prize; her debut novel, *A Burning*, a *New York Times* bestseller and a 2020 Times Notable Book, was longlisted. A native of Kolkata, India, Majumdar is a distinguished lecturer in Hunter's English Department and teaches in its MFA Creative Writing Program. She also attended the Hunter MFA program. "It's impressive enough to have your first novel be nominated for the National Book Award, but she's now accomplished this twice in a row, which is amazing and very well deserved," said

MFA Creative Writing Director **Adam Haslett**. "We're incredibly proud and lucky to have Megha, who attended the MFA program at Hunter, be back at the college as a colleague and a teacher." *A Guardian and a Thief* (Knopf, 2025) is set in a dystopian future in Majumdar's native city, which the book depicts as a hellscape ravaged by flood and famine. The story centers on the travails of two families as they scrape and scramble to survive. "Megha Majumdar is wise beyond her years. She's able to bring in cultural conflicts

and interweave the way people live and relate to each other in such a way that leaves us spellbound," Oprah said in announcing Majumdar's selection for her club. Majumdar read from *A Guardian and a Thief* as part of the Distinguished Writers Series on November 6 at the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute.



HUNTER SOCIAL WORK PROFESSOR AND ALUMNA WINS IMPACT AWARD FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS

An associate professor at and alumna of Hunter's Lois V. and Samuel J. Silberman School of Social Work is being honored for her scholarship advocating for marginalized communities. The Council on Social Work Education has selected **Mayra López-Humphreys MSW '01 CUNY PhD '11** with its 2025 Community Impact Award, which recognizes community-engaged, justice-focused scholarship. The honor illustrates Hunter's commitment to being a training ground for diverse talent, and engine of social mobility in New York City and in East Harlem, the site of the Silberman campus.

López-Humphreys uses a liberation ethic to teach restorative approaches for working with justice-involved individuals and their families. She serves as the principal investigator on an evaluation of the Peace Brokers initiative at Exodus Transitional Community, a peer-mentoring project designed and led by formerly incarcerated leaders to address public safety without police involvement. López-Humphreys has also conducted research on the Exodus Transitional Hotel Project, an emergency housing program that served individuals returning from incarceration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Her evaluation identified improved mental-health engagement, stronger family reconnections, and better employment outcomes among participants. She also is the principal investigator for the Homeless Services Training Resource System, which is funded by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and housed at Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. In 2024, the system's annual budget expanded from \$500,000 to \$1 million, positioning it as the state's primary training initiative for staff working in homeless shelters.



Mayra López-Humphreys

Finally, she spearheads efforts to involve Silberman faculty and students with community groups in East Harlem. With the Humanities Action Lab, a national university-community coalition housed at Hunter, she has co-led "Building Bridges, Creating Futures: Community-Led Dialogue & Action." The ongoing effort brings together groups to advocate for community needs.

ACADEMY FOR DIVERSITY IN NURSING HAILS HUNTER PROFESSOR AS LEADER



Dr. Maya Clark-Cutaia

A demonstrated leader, committed to justice, diversity, and equity. Those were the qualities that the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing cited in inducting Dr. **Maya Clark-Cutaia**, the inaugural Evelyn Lauder Associate Dean for Nurse Practitioner Programs at the Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing, as a fellow. "Your selection recognizes your demonstrated leadership, commitment, and contributions to advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in nursing, health, and healthcare," academy president **Selena Gilles** wrote to Clark-Cutaia. "As a fellow, you join a distinguished community of leaders dedicated to combatting all forms of oppression and striving toward the goal of achieving health equity." The National Black Nurses Association, Inc., established the Academy of Diversity Leaders in Nursing Fellows to codify the work of nursing and other healthcare professionals who are advancing health equity, diversity, and inclusion. The honor underscores Hunter's position as an anchor institution and high-impact training ground for the state's best nurses and promoter of health equity for all populations. Hunter was ranked third out of 210 nursing schools in New York and in the top 10% nationally by nonprofit news site RN Careers. Hunter's master's programs also was ranked 43rd in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report's Best Graduate Schools*. Dr. Clark-Cutaia also is a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. As the inaugural associate dean of the Evelyn Lauder Community Care Nurse Practitioner Program, Clark-Cutaia furthers health equity in New York City by training nurse practitioners in collaboration with the NYC Health + Hospitals, the nation's largest municipal hospital system. The program offers advanced clinical training and graduate-level education focused on the critical aspects of care, from diagnosis to ordering and interpreting tests to prescribing medication. She is a practicing clinician, nurse scientist, and researcher focusing on chronic illness. With a clinical background as an acute-care nurse practitioner, U.S. Air Force flight nurse, and community health nurse, she is interested in the impact of racism, discrimination, and social determinants on health.



Jennifer Tuten

HUNTER PROFESSOR CHOSEN AS ANCHOR INSTITUTION FELLOW

Professor **Jennifer Tuten**, a past acting dean of the School of Education and now a special adviser on community engagement and public partnerships to Provost **Manoj Pardasani**, was named one of four 2026 fellows nationally by the Anchor Institutions Task Force of Marga Inc. The Anchor Institutions Task Force, comprising some 1,000 members internationally, was established in 2009 with the goal of using the resources of higher education, economic development, and medical institutions to improve communities' economic, social, and civic needs. According to the Marga website, task force members share a commitment to the following values:

- Equity and social justice
- Democracy and democratic practice
- Place and community
- Collaboration and partnership

Tuten has guided many high-impact community projects, notably READ East Harlem/Hunter College, a multimillion professional development initiative funded by the New York Community Trust's Brooke Astor Fund for Public Education. The collaborative project united faculty with K-3 teachers and school leaders across East Harlem's elementary schools. "I'm very honored to have been selected and I'm very much looking forward to the experience," Tuten said.

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS



Emily Braun

LAUDER FELLOWSHIPS IN ART HISTORY RENAMED FOR DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

The Leonard A. Lauder Fellowships in the History of Art have been renamed for Distinguished Professor of Art & Art History **Emily Braun**.

The fellowships now are named The Emily Braun Fellowships for the History of Art. The change, which Mr. Lauder envisioned when he funded the fellowships in 2023, took effect on July 1, 2025, in anticipation and in honor of Professor Braun's retirement in 2026 after 34 years at Hunter. The fellowships provide full academic tuition annually for selected graduate students enrolled in the art history master's program.

Professor Braun has mentored many who went on to have careers as university art historians, curators, critics, appraisers, art advisers, art librarians, independent scholars, provenance researchers, and gallery owners and directors. She has curated the world-renowned Leonard A. Lauder Collection of Cubist Art since 1987. Two of

her former Hunter students, **Luise Mahler** and **Dr. Ania Jozefacka**, now work on the Leonard Lauder Collection team, while a third, Hunter Professor **Lynda Klich**, curates Mr. Lauder's Postcard Collection, now at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

The name change comes at a sad time. Mr. Lauder — a top art collector and the great benefactor of our Art & Art History Department and the Hunter–Bellevue School of Nursing — died on June 14. (See obituary on P. 20.)

The chairman emeritus of The Estée Lauder Companies, Mr. Lauder grew up in the city and attended the Bronx High School of Science. His late wife, Evelyn Lauder HCHS '54, HC '58, DHL '10, who he met when she was a Hunter undergraduate, was one of Hunter's biggest boosters. Mr. Lauder believed strongly in public education and Hunter's mission.

Mr. Lauder also established the Leonard A. Lauder Exhibition and Catalogue

Fund. The fund provides support for Hunter College Art Galleries exhibitions and catalogues mounted as part of Hunter's Advanced Certificate in Curatorial Studies Program. Mr. Lauder lived in the Hunter neighborhood and would often walk along 68th Street and observe the activities at the Leubsdorf Galleries.

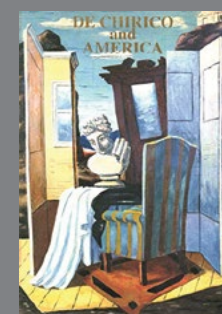
He visited the *De Chirico and America* exhibition, organized with Hunter MA students at the Leubsdorf Galleries, and the 2019 show *Robert Rauschenberg: Night Shades and Phantoms*, organized with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

"Leonard understood that our program could inspire New York City students to pursue museum careers and make a difference in the public's experience and knowledge of art and its history," Professor Braun said.

In Professor Braun, Mr. Lauder found someone who shared his passion for 20th century modernist art. Her scholarship on Italian modernism, Cubism, and post-World War II European art examines art in relationship to politics and popular culture, and the history of exhibitions and collecting.

Professor Braun advised him on his Cubist collection, as well as its gift in 2013 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She co-curated the exhibition that

celebrated the gift, *Cubism: The Leonard A. Lauder Collection*, which was recognized by the Association of Art Museum Curators for the best catalogue of the year. In 2022, she co-curated the *Cubism and the Trompe l'Oeil Tradition* exhibition for the museum, which



De Chirico and America, the catalogue for the exhibition [in the Leubsdorf Gallery] organized by Emily Braun and her MA students in 1996.

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ALTERONCE GUMBY BFA '14 SHOWS HUNTER STUDENTS THE BUSINESS SIDE OF ART

Connect with as many artists, gallerists, and curators as possible. Invite them all to your studio. Go to every art opening and talk by a working artist. Get out there, act like the artist you want to be, and believe in yourself. Others will believe in you, too.

Alteronce Gumby BFA '14, one of the art world's hottest artists, gave that wise advice to Hunter students at a recent tutorial on arts management. Hunter has begun awarding a Certificate in Arts Management and Leadership, a 15-credit program provid-

ing accounting, business law, and marketing essentials that may be taken in concurrence with any undergraduate major. Gumby recently joined the Hunter College Foundation Board.

"Most people I know, even those who have 'made it,' the hustle never really stops," Gumby told students at the late October lecture. "You're an artist and a small business owner."

An **Evelyn Kranes Kossak** Painting Fellow during his undergraduate years and later an inaugural Hunter "40



Alteronce Gumby at his studio.

Under 40" honoree, Gumby used his Kossak work to populate his first website. Now he is represented by Nicola Vassell, a New York gallery that focuses on cross-disciplinary artists. He currently has two solo museum shows (one at the Anderson Collection at Stanford University and another at Susquehanna Art Museum

in Pennsylvania) and a commercial gallery show at **Jeffrey Dietch** in Los Angeles.

Still, he had time to talk to students and offer alumni a private tour of his studio to show his latest art, stunning collages using broken glass, semi-precious stones, and natural pigments.

"I love building my community," he said.

established a new way of understanding this foundational movement of modernism.

Professor Braun has authored many award-winning books and catalogues, including *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism: Art and Politics under Fascism* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), and *Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting* (for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, which received the 2016 Dedalus Foundation Exhibition Catalogue Award).

She also has published essays on Thomas Hart Benton, Grant Wood, James Rosenquist and Sol LeWitt, and the Harlem Renaissance.

Professor Braun's many other exhibitions include *The Power of Conversation: Jewish Women and their Salons* (Jewish Museum, 2005; a National Jewish Book Award winner) and *Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy* (Jewish Museum, 1989; Henry Allen Moe Prize).

She has supervised some 60 Hunter MA theses, several of which won collegewide awards for best thesis. At the Graduate Center, she has overseen nine PhD theses and has four more in progress.

Her role as Mr. Lauder's curator enriched her teaching. He encouraged her to offer graduate courses around his

collection, and he welcomed students into his home to study artworks.

"Leonard Lauder valued Hunter; he valued our students, and he valued how our art history program bridged the museum and the academy," Professor Braun said. "For him, the study of art and material culture was a means of instilling civic pride, preserving our culture heritage, and making art available and interesting to all. I am deeply grateful to him for this honor."

Hunter Distinguished Professor of Art & Art History **Cynthia Hahn** said, "Mimi Braun models excellent and meticulous scholarship and set

the standard for both students and faculty for what is now recognized as one of the best art history departments in the country. We will miss her presence, her guidance, and her hard work. We can only hope that she visits often."

"Leonard Lauder valued Hunter; he valued our students, and he valued how our art history program bridged the museum and the academy."

— Emily Braun



LEONARD A. LAUDER'S LASTING LEGACY AT HUNTER COLLEGE

support to Dr. Bargonetti since 2005.

"Leonard and Evelyn Lauder brought a deep personal compassion to the fight against breast cancer," Dr. Bargonetti said. "They were agents of change and hope and left a lasting impact on medicine and science, improving the lives of millions. I am grateful for their support of our research at Hunter."

Mr. Lauder and his sons were also among the early donors to Hunter's Mother's Day Scholarship Fund Campaign.

In 2015, Mr. Lauder created the Evelyn H. Lauder Nursing Fund to support Evelyn H. Lauder Faculty Scholars and Evelyn H. Lauder Scholarships for nursing students.

In 2022, Mr. Lauder made the historic gift that established the Evelyn Lauder Community Care Nurse Practitioner Program, which strengthens Hunter's Adult-Gerontology and Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner programs and prepares New York's future healthcare leaders. The program supports fellows who work in community clinics in partnership with the New York Health + Hospitals Corporation. It was the largest gift to Hunter.

"Leonard Lauder believed passionately in the importance of Hunter College and its nursing school in furthering the health and wellbeing of underserved communities in the city," said Joan Hansen Grabe Dean of the Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing **Ann Marie P. Mauro**. "Thanks to Leonard, we have the privilege of honoring Evelyn Lauder, our ardent supporter who was devoted to Hunter."

Mr. Lauder was a lifelong art collector who gave peerless 20th-century works to several American museums.

He generously supported the arts at Hunter, where two curators of his personal collection are on the faculty. Distinguished Professor **Emily Braun** has curated the Leonard A. Lauder Collection of Cubist Art since 1987. **Lynda Klich**, associate professor and director of graduate studies in art history, has



Leonard A. Lauder with Evelyn H. Lauder Nursing student Joanna Law '16 in 2015.

curated the Leonard A. Lauder Postcard Collection since 1999.

In 2023, Mr. Lauder established the Leonard A. Lauder Exhibition and Catalogue Fund and a scholarship fund for graduate students in Art History. The fund provides support for exhibitions and catalogues published in connection with exhibitions held at the Hunter College Art Galleries. The fellowship, now renamed for Professor Braun (see story, P. 18) provides full academic tuition annually for selected students enrolled in the art history master's program.

Hunter College is profoundly grateful for our special relationship with this remarkable man.

JACQUELINE ROSEN FELDMAN '51



Jacqueline Rosen Feldman '51, a fashion industry professional and longtime supporter of Hunter College, died on August 27 in Manhattan. She was 95.

A New York City native who grew up in The Bronx, Feldman spent 40 years in fashion, working at Look Magazine, as a department store fashion director, and

as a stylist for designers and photographers including Richard Avedon and Jane Stark. She later designed for Stanley Looms, the fabrics business she founded and ran with her husband **Stanley**.

She graduated from Julia Richman High School and Hunter's Bronx campus.

Rosen and her husband contributed for many years

to Hunter's Annual Fund. Her daughter also donated in honor of her mother. Rosen attended countless lectures at Hunter's Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute.

Feldman is survived by her husband of 68 years; children **Lee Feldman (Suzanne Quill)** and **Philippa Feldman Portnoy (Larry)**; and six grandchildren.

Class Notes

1960s

Lewis Frankfort '67, the chairman and former CEO of Coach, shares stories and



strategies behind the company's stunning growth into a billion-dollar global brand in his new book, *Big Man: The Story Behind the Improbable Rise of Coach*.



Life (University of Iowa Press).

Pat Lipsky MFA '68 published *Brightening Glance: Art and*

Lynne Tillman '67, the author of 18 novels and many essays and stories, has two recent books: *Thrilled to Death: Selected Stories*, and *The Mystery of Perception*, a book-length conversation with her by critic **Taylor Lewandowski**. In 2026, she will publish *Paying Attention*, a collection of essays on art and culture. In 2022, she received The American Academy of Arts and Letters Katherine Anne Porter Award for Contributions to Literature.

1970s

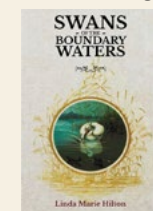
Anthony DeCurtis '74 was interviewed in the Billy Joel documentary *And So It Goes*.

Allen Roskoff '74 made *City & State's* 2025 *Manhattan Power 100* list.

1980s

Linda Armstrong '87 was honored by the Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library for her 40-year career as a theater critic.

Linda Marie Hilton '87 published two poetry books, *Swans of the Boundary Waters* and *Words of a Feather Hawked Together*.



1990s

Michelle Dunbar '95 was honored as principal of the year in Warren County, N.C., the second time she has received such an honor.

Georges Leconte '92, BA '93, CEO of NYC Health

+ Hospitals/Harlem, was recently recognized among *City & State's* top healthcare leaders in the 2025 *Manhattan Power 100* list.

Launette Woolforde MSN '97 was named as executive vice president and chief nursing officer of Northwell Health, placing her in charge of more than 22,000 nurses.

2020s

Eliana Bonaguro '09, MSN '16, a licensed mental health counselor in New York and Florida, authored two books: *Yesterday It Rained: A Visual Guide to Living with Anxiety* and *Quieting the Noise: A Visual Guide to Living with OCD*. She has been featured in *Newsweek*, *Healthline*, and other publications.

Class Notes continued

M. Florine Démosthène '02 is a 2025 Caribbean Cultural Institute Fellowship Artist exploring the region's art and diasporic connections.

Flora Kelly '08 was promoted to senior vice president of *ESPN Research*, recognizing her leadership and oversight of the company's forecasting and audience measurement across all platforms, as well as consumer insights.

Sherra Johnston '06 serves as the operational support model lead for the City of Seattle, helping to upgrade and modernize technology across city departments.

Rosamaria Mancini '00



wrote a memoir, *SOS Podcasts* (Cambria Books), in which she talks about

leaving Long Island to live in Italy, where she worked at the Vatican, and then Germany, where her husband was stationed, and her roles as wife, mother, and expat.

Gary Shteyngart '02, a best-selling novelist, has had his books published in more than 30 countries. His most recent book, *Vera, or Faith* follows a 10-year-old girl navigating family drama and in a dystopian America.

2010s

Na'ilah Amaru '18 was selected for the 2025 *Above & Beyond Women* list by *City & State*, highlighting her grassroots leadership and advocacy.

Naphtalie Azor '13 was recognized among the top 36 under 36 attorneys by the Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division.

Firelei Baez MFA '11 will have her art featured in JFK Airport's new Terminal 1, which will open in 2030.

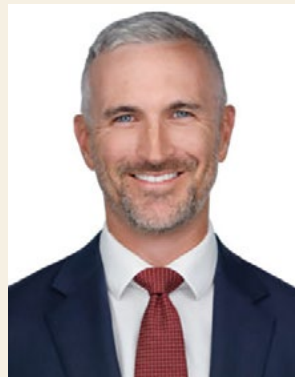
Todd Caissie PhD '13 was named Deputy Director of the Montclair Art Museum (NJ). He most recently served as director of the New Brunswick Internment Camp Museum in Canada.

Laura Chipley MFA '10 was selected for LMCC's 2025 Arts Center Residency at Governors Island and has been exploring the historical ecology of New York Harbor with 18 other artist collaborators.

Alexandra Rae Fabrizio '11 was included in Marquis's *Who's Who*. She has worked as the director of global merchandising for footwear, handbags, sunglasses, and accessories at **Stuart Weitzman** since 2021.

Derek Fordjour MFA '16 unveiled his latest exhibition, *Night song*, at David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles.

Kevin Havelda '12 has joined the firm Frost Brown Todd as a partner



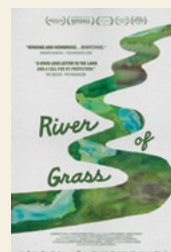
in the Litigation Department's Business Litigation Practice Group in Denver, CO. Havelda rejoins the firm after starting his legal career as an associate in the Lexington, KY, office.

Elana Leopold '12, a political strategist who worked for **Mayor de Blasio**, will serve as the executive director of **Mayor-Elect Mamdani's** transition team.

Lucas Mautner '17 has been selected as a 2026 Susan Kamil 2026 Emerging Writer Fellow by the Center for Fiction.

Benjamin Njoku '17 was honored by Marquis's *Who's Who* for Leadership in Nursing. He is assistant director of nursing for perioperative services at New York City Health + Hospitals/Lincoln.

Samara Smith '10 was selected for LMCC's 2025 Arts Center Residency at Governors Island and has been exploring the historical ecology of New York Harbor alongside a cohort of 18 other artists/ collaboratives.



Sasha Wortzel MFA '12 released *River of Grass*, a documentary about

the Everglades.

2020s

Subyeta Chowdhury '25 was named to the latest cohort of the Damon Runyon Scholars Program for Advancing Research and Knowledge, a one-year cancer research internship for post-baccalaureate scholars.

Emily Collins MFA '20, IMA alum and founding partner of Mighty Oak, a New York City-based woman- and queer-owned animation studio, won an Emmy for Outstanding Motion Design for the film *Octopus!*, a two-part documentary series about the giant Pacific octopus.

Kyle Gorman '20, a podcast host for *The South Asian Times*, interviewed ecologist **Eric Sanderson** about New York City's natural landscape.

Violet Moss '21, a lobbyist at Bolton-St. Johns, was in the 2025 *Manhattan Power 100* list for helping the firm secure \$10.5 million in lobbying compensation last year. She has worked with organizations including the Greater New York Hospital Association, Children's Aid, and Barnard College.

Save
the
Date!

Alumni Weekend 2026

APRIL 17-18

Reconnect with classmates, explore guided campus and archive tours, hear from distinguished faculty, discover what's new at Hunter, and celebrate milestone reunions!

We can't wait to see you there!

Visit hunter.cuny.edu/alumni/alumniweekend to learn more.

40 under Forty

Celebrate Hunter's Visionaries!

Hunter graduates exemplify our mission — leading groundbreaking research, transforming classrooms with innovative teaching, mentoring the next generation of changemakers, championing community efforts, and advancing healthcare.

Nominate an outstanding alum for our prestigious *40 Under Forty* list and help us honor their impact.

Nominations close March 31, 2026.

For more class notes or to submit your own, visit hunter.cuny.edu/alumni

hunter.cuny.edu/alumni



MEET HUNTER'S NEW PROVOST: **MANOJ PARDASANI**

He is committed to making sure every student realizes their potential! **Manoj Pardasani** was officially named Hunter College's provost and senior vice president of academic affairs and student success in June, culminating a national search.

Pardasani had served since August 2022 as Hunter's interim provost and vice president of academic affairs, but the reference to "student success" in his permanent position title signals a more holistic approach for the role.

"Hunter College is such a rich and diverse collection of change-makers, all of whom bring the knowledge of their myriad lived experiences to the college," Pardasani said. "It is a privilege to facilitate their education and serve as the vehicle for social mobility and opportunity."

In announcing the appointment, Hunter President **Nancy Cantor** praised Pardasani's leadership, public engagement, and empathy.

"Manoj brings deep wisdom and compassion to addressing the array of demands facing higher education today," she said.

At Hunter, Pardasani has cultivated a climate of collaboration and innovation across schools and has strengthened faculty recruitment, recognition, and development. During the past three years, more than 100 full-time faculty members and two new deans have been appointed to the college. He will oversee strategic planning and help prepare the way for the Science Park and Research Campus that CUNY is building at Hunter's Brookdale campus. He helped oversee the establishment of the School of Health Professions, the development of three online graduate degree programs and two new graduate programs: anesthetist nurse practitioner and genetic counseling.

Earlier, Pardasani served as Hunter's associate provost and as a faculty member of the Lois V. and Samuel J. Silberman School of Social Work. He also served as dean of the School of Social Work at Adelphi University, and he was associate dean of the Fordham Graduate School of Social Service. Having earned master's and PhD degrees from Yeshiva University in social work, he is a gerontological scholar who researches community-based programs and services for older adults in order to impact social policies.