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A-Way-Back-When NY Times Puff Piece About a Controversial CUNY College President ...



Gregory W. Morris · Following

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Hunter College President Jennifer Raab via the WORD Archive Photo

President Raab learned months ago that she would be stepping down whether she liked it or not. The Why of this #WhoWhatWhereWhenWhy story has yet to be officially announced, if it will ever be, though veterans of the comings and goings at Hunter are on to the skinny.

{**Writer's Note, June 19 Update:** Christine Normoyle, when she was alive, knew a lot about Jennifer Raab before Raab was ever appointed Hunter President. **Quotation Marks for Affect:** “Never trust her, never turn your back on her,” she once told me. I’m saving for another article piece the events of one of my nose-to-nose meeting with President Raab in her office. But the meeting confirmed what Christine told me. Christine — one of the best of my best friends — was a returning Hunter College student at the time she was a big time fundraiser for several civil liberty, civil liberty type organizations and issues. Officially, at one time or another: Director of Development for the YWCA, Director of Development for the New York Civil Liberties Union and Public Relations Executive for the American Civil Liberties Unio.

She was a friend beyond friend and a mentor beyond mentors. Christine, who eventually earned her degree with a summa cum laude BA in philosophy, was tapped into several higher ed administrators throughout the NYC metro area.}

NY Times September 2, 2013 Opinion Piece (Being Revised to Provide Journalism Context & Insight for this June, 2023) Begins Here, With:

Jennifer J. Raab, the fast-moving, fast-talking president of Hunter College, recently landed a \$25 million donation, the largest in the college’s history. A science and health building that Hunter is constructing with Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center won approval last month from the Department of City Planning. And on Tuesday, Ms. Raab will cut the ribbon on Phase 1 of a \$45 million redesign of the college’s library — a bright, inviting, communal space that could transform the compact vertical campus.

This was supposed to be a moment of unqualified victory for Ms. Raab, who has led the college for 12 years. But the summer began on a different note, after a departing assistant dean wrote and distributed a letter denouncing “personal attacks and a culture of fear and mistrust.” {**Writer's Note, June 19 Update:** Fear, loathing and mistrust persists on the Hunter campus.}

“I have watched her publicly shame and humiliate people to serve her own purpose,” the assistant dean, Maria Doelger Anderson, said of Ms. Raab in the letter. Ms. Anderson’s

departure came amid those of three senior administrators: Hunter's legal counsel, its chief operating officer and its dean of arts and sciences.

Ms. Raab's tenure has seen many such changes. The school of arts and sciences, which accounts for 17,000 of the college's 23,000 students, has had six official or temporary deans during that period. The school of social work has had five. The fund-raising office has gone through 11 shifts of leadership. And at Hunter's prestigious high school, three principals left within five years.

Some of these administrators left on good terms. Other offices have been more stable. But critics of Ms. Raab, like Michael Fabricant, a professor at the school of social work and a member of the union representing the City University of New York's faculty and staff, attribute the many departures to what they describe as a highly temperamental style of management.

"Those issues really have to do with the kind of assumption and behavior that you can lead on the basis of fear, intimidation and humiliation," he said, and "on the basis of threat, withdrawal of resources, particularly those who have something at stake like department chairs."

*Barbara Bowen, head of the union, said the number of complaints about the atmosphere at Hunter far exceeded the number from any of the 17 other colleges in CUNY. {**Writer's Note, June 19 Update: An annual report by the Hunter Ombuds Office would much later state that reports of bullying and mobbing were increasing significantly and that the Hunter campus was bristling with hostility and uncollegiate discord — not just from the top down.**}*

The unrest at Hunter, one of CUNY's top colleges, comes at a critical time, with the system seeking a new chancellor and the mayor's office, which chooses 5 of the 17 board members, about to change hands. (The governor chooses a majority of the board.)

Under Ms. Raab's tenure, Hunter's fortunes have risen considerably. Its admissions are more competitive and its faculty is more prominent. And a series of shrewd real estate maneuvers — among them finding a shiny TriBeCa home for the master of fine arts program, moving the school of social work from the Upper East Side to the more relevant neighborhood of East Harlem, and turning a crumbling double town house built for

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt into a public policy institute and stunning showpiece — have reinvented Hunter’s physical presence. {June 19, 2023 Puff Piece Alert: 😄}

CUNY’s interim chancellor, William P. Kelly, praised Ms. Raab’s “sterling performance.”

“Hunter,” Chancellor Kelly said in an interview, “is doing extremely well.” {June 19, 2023 Puff Piece Alert: 😄}

Ms. Raab is especially proud of her record in fund-raising. Building on the connections she made in her previous job as head of the city’s landmarks commission, she has won significant donations from families with names like Lauder, Silverstein, Spitzer and Tisch. The record gift came from Leon Cooperman, the chairman of a hedge fund, and his wife, Toby, a couple who met while they were students at Hunter in the 1960s.

Brash and outspoken, with the clatter of bracelets accenting her impassioned gesticulations, Ms. Raab, 57, has the kind of forceful presence that New Yorkers intuitively understand and that much of the rest of the country might find terrifying. {June 19, 2023 Puff Piece Alert: 😄}

“I have a vision and I have always been very, very determined,” she rasped. “I’m very tenacious.”

With her lacquered nails and fancy accessories, and with her unguarded style of communication (“I mean, how amazing is that!” she is apt to exclaim), she is as far as can be from the stereotype of a bland academic administrator.



Jennifer J. Raab, Hunter College's president for 12 years. Credit... Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

Asked about the complaints, Ms. Raab — her manner veering suddenly from affable to incredulous — made no effort to hide her irritation. She dismissed the criticism as the carping of a few outliers. To prove it, she pointed to a productive relationship with the Hunter College Senate, which its chairwoman, Christa Davis Acampora, confirmed. (Only five years ago, however, a Senate committee issued a stinging report on academic freedom, condemning a course the president’s office had initiated. Built around the theme of how counterfeit merchandise hurts society, the course had been developed and sponsored not by professors but by an anticounterfeiting trade group with close ties to one of Hunter’s major donors.)

{June 19 Update Note: The Film & Media Studies Department was rocked by the gyrations of this way-back-then besmirching, academic freedom transgression episode because it was complicit with the so-called anticounterfeiting trade group running the public relations course that had this “theme of how counterfeit merchandise hurts society.” It was taught by a tenure track assistant professor, Black, who was under pressure to teach the class and had been told that teaching the class could improve his tenure chances which at the time weren’t good. The assistant prof had no experience or interest in public relations. Chair at the time, Jay Roman, had smoothed the way for the course to be taught in his department. The normal procedures for startup courses had been circumvented. Several prominent trade press publications that report on advertising and public relations published very critical news and opinion pieces about this Hunter affair. Mainstream NYC news media did not.}

Ms. Raab said, as did many of her champions, that those who criticized her were just uncomfortable with strong female leaders. {🤔!!!} “Where are the stories about men and their leadership style?” she asked. “It is always the same story. Where’s the impact and what’s the importance, at the end of the day, of this conversation?”

Asked to name a legitimate criticism of how she leads, she drew a blank. {🤔!!!}

When Ms. Raab sought the presidency of Hunter, she had never worked in higher education. A corporate litigator who held positions in the administrations of Mayors Edward I. Koch and Rudolph W. Giuliani, she had degrees from Cornell, Harvard and Princeton, but no Ph.D. She did, however, have a powerful emotional connection to

Hunter College High School, to which she commuted from Washington Heights as a teenager, and she had a powerful vision for Hunter's future. Most important, she had the support of Mr. Giuliani, who was mayor at the time.

Over the objections of many at CUNY (someone called in a bomb scare during her campus interview), and even over the objection of the chancellor, she got the job. {June 19Update: That's because Gov. George Pataki added his political clout to Hizzoner Giuliani. It was believed at the time that Raab could be the pit bull needed to deal with campus student unrest and protest. Hunter had become the de facto center for organized student activism at CUNY because the activists at Hunter had managed to exert serious influence over students fees which they used for their political agendas. It wasn't unusual for City College/CUNY Student activists to show up on the Hunter campus where they were allowed to set up an outreach PR table for their causes.}

To people used to the collegiality {😬!!!} of academia, her methods could be jarring.

In interviews and e-mails with more than 30 current or former Hunter employees, the same few complaints arose repeatedly. Several people described being shunned by Ms. Raab without explanation.

"When I finally knew something was really wrong I was in the elevator with the president and I said hello and she just ignored me," said a former staff member who declined, as some others did, to be identified for fear of professional repercussions. "I offered to help her carry something, and she just completely ignored me."

Others said they were punished for expressing views not identical to hers.

"Academics like to fight and argue," said Joan C. Tronto, a former chairwoman of the Hunter Senate, who now teaches at the University of Minnesota. "After an argument's over, you can still work with the people. But Jennifer Raab, after someone has disagreed with her, can never work with that person again."

After making a minor accommodation for students protesting one of Ms. Raab's initiatives, one faculty member said, her dean called her in for a formal reprimand on what she was told were the president's orders. "Later that year I applied for funding for conference travel and research, and I was told by someone in the provost's office that the

president had personally crossed my name off the list and that I shouldn't bother applying," she said.

*Ms. Anderson, who wrote the letter criticizing Ms. Raab, said she was trying to buy some time for her boss, the dean of arts and sciences, who she felt was being persecuted and who has since left. **{Another Hunter College Dean Bites the Dust, Allegations of a Witch Hunt}***

People who work well with Ms. Raab describe her as someone who, in addition to working tirelessly on Hunter's behalf, remembers birthdays, asks about family, creates honors for underappreciated staff members and then invites their children in to see their parents celebrated.

*"She's all about lifting people up and recognizing their service and celebrating their service," said John Rose, the dean of diversity at Hunter. **{Like other "People who work well with Ms. Raab," Rose is a subordinate who works under her.}***

*It can often seem that her critics and her supporters are speaking about different presidents entirely. Andrew J. Polsky, a scholar of presidencies in wartime, is one of the few willing to bridge the gap. **{Like the other "People who work well with Ms. Raab," Polsky is a subordinate who works under her. as one after another of his immediate superiors was forced out by Raab, Polsky rose through the ranks of deanship.}***

*"She has been able to accomplish some extraordinary things at Hunter College and elsewhere," Professor Polsky said, adding that "the overwhelming majority" of the faculty approved of her leadership. **{🤔!!!}** "Are there parts of this that rub people the wrong way? Yes, but I don't think these are things that are inherently right or wrong. They go with the person."*

Then invoking the punch line from "Annie Hall," about the man whose brother thinks he is a chicken, he added, "We need the eggs."

Ms. Raab's bosses do, too.

When Ms. Anderson's letter was released, Stuart B. Ewen, a professor who is an outspoken critic of Ms. Raab, tried to press the case against her with Matthew Goldstein, who was

then CUNY's chancellor. Dr. Goldstein said he was aware of the problem, "but her metrics are very good."

The search for CUNY's next chancellor is now under way. According to someone with direct knowledge of the process, Administrative Executive, President Jennifer Raab's name was forwarded for Writer's Note, June 12, 2023: The anonymity allotted this "someone with direct knowledge of the proces" is so lame that it begs !!! exclamation points.

NYT published several Raab puff pieces. At the time trade press media were ripping into her, one of the NY Times published puff pieces was about Raab and her daughter one morning, having tea and crumpets breakfast. It read as if was to be a counter measure to the blistering acrimony of the trade press publications. **What follows is additional material about outgoing President Jennifer Raab published a while back in the Chronicle of Higher Education Letter to the Editor section.**

{Edited for Style, Context and Clarification}

'I Will Not Allow My Academic Reputation to Be Further Slandered'

February 6, 2014

To the Editor:

"Hunter College's Chief Remains a Lightning Rod" (*The Chronicle*, July 11, 2013)

reported on the controversial management tactics of Hunter College's president, Jennifer Raab, that lead to the resignation of a number of key senior personnel and the unprecedented turnover of senior staff in the 12 years she has served as president.

Two related articles addressed my dismissal from Hunter College's physics faculty and the legal action I filed against the City University of New York in July 2013 ("Hunter College's President Split with Senior Officer Got Personal," August 15, 2013, and "N.Y. Court Dismisses Complaint of Meddling by Hunter College Chief," January 15). These articles were published without my commentary due to concerns about ongoing legal procedures.

First and foremost, I want to make it clear my legal action against CUNY concerns

an annual reappointment decision, not a tenure decision. The legal complaint and supporting documentation clearly show that Ms. Raab inappropriately directed the outcome of the appeal, both before and after her so-called “recusal.”

In her aggressive and sarcastic letter (“Facts in Hunter College Decision Are ‘Incontrovertible,’ President Says,” August 16, 2013), Ms. Raab claimed the facts in my case were “incontrovertible.” Actually “the facts” have never been discussed.

I am the author of 21 publications with almost 800 citations. Seven of these publications were the result of my six years of research at Hunter College. My citation record surpasses that of the recently tenured department chair who denied my reappointment, and my number of publications exceeds research faculty recently tenured in other science departments at Hunter.

While it is true that I had not obtained a major federally funded grant, I successfully acquired small pilot grants to fund preliminary studies for larger applications. When those were insufficient, I purchased research supplies out-of-pocket to continue our studies and the training of my students. As for departmental “standards,” I was shocked to learn at the time of my appeal that the entire physics faculty have obtained only two National Science Foundation grants of that magnitude in the past 10 years!

In addition to my scholarly accomplishments, I consistently received excellent teaching evaluations.

I developed the college’s biophysics program, which doubled the department’s enrollment of physics majors. My record of mentorship and service is exceptional, having served as a mentor in many of the outreach and diversity programs at Hunter College as well as local public high schools.

Of the 30 students who were personally mentored in my laboratory, 25 continued to PhD, teaching, or professional programs (MD, DVM, DDS, JD, MA/MS). I served on numerous committees across the college, and freely gave my time to lecture at outreach and recruiting events. In short — an exemplary record that would be rewarded at most colleges.

Despite these accomplishments, my department began to fill my personnel folder with negative evaluations, suggesting significant bias.

To make the situation even more absurd, no written “standard” for reappointment even exists. In fact, the standards for tenure were only recently written by an acting department chair, Leon Cohen, in March of 2012. How convenient! Not only was he the sole author, but he refused to amend the document despite numerous objections from other senior faculty, emphatically stating at the faculty meeting, “This is what the president wants!”

Finally, in your January 15 article, you reported that I had lost the legal action due to my failure to grieve. The decision was based on a procedural technicality, not the merits of the case. I have appealed the court’s decision. The court dismissed my petition when it granted CUNY’s motion to dismiss, claiming that I did not exhaust my administrative remedies by grieving the decision.

The grievance process is a much more complicated procedure than has been briefly described in the press.

Two parallel procedures exist for appealing a department’s decision to deny reappointment. One pathway falls under the collective-bargaining agreement, whereby a faculty member files a grievance through the union. The other process is the college-specific appeals procedure presented to a series of hierarchical committees.

A grievance can only be filed against the “reasons letter” accompanying the final decision of the president (the last stage of the appeal). Normally, the union grieves a president’s decision to the chancellor. In September of 2012, Ms. Raab met with me to explain that she had met with the chancellor, who approved her request to recuse herself from my case.

The union objected to the precedent of allowing the president’s “recusal.” Feeling abandoned by the union and aware of the deadline for completion of the college’s appeals process, I had no choice but to proceed through the college’s appeals process to defend my academic reputation.

I won the first stage of the appeal to the Division of Math and Sciences, overturning the department's decision.

Although I lost the next stage of the college appeal to the full committee of faculty chairs, this stage was subject to a significant procedural error. Although my chair was allowed to speak freely at the proceedings, my defense package was not made available to voting members prior to their vote! To remedy the error, the college's counsel decided to hold a revote weeks later, only making the package available to faculty who came, in person, to the dean's office to read the personnel file. While this may be allowed under their procedural guidelines, it is hardly a fair hearing.

I appealed the faculty's decision to the former chancellor, Matthew Goldstein. He made the decision to deny my reappointment without the courtesy of a single interview to review my record. I also requested an independent investigation of the appeals process because of my concerns regarding the president's interference.

That too, went unanswered. His office provided the reasons letter for my dismissal in February of 2013 — long past the deadline defined in the contract for the grievance procedure.

CUNY made a motion to dismiss the Article 78 based on my failure to grieve. By contract, even if the union abandons the process, I was allowed to grieve through an independent arbitrator. The arbitrator does not have the power to overturn a college's academic decision.

If awarded the grievance, my case would have been returned to the same faculty who already voted for my dismissal. Hence the independent grievance procedure was futile (as claimed in our response to the motion).

I was motivated to file the Article 78 to shed light on the unacceptable interference of Ms. Raab in the appeals process. This has caused irreparable damage to my career, and I will not allow my academic reputation to be further slandered.

Noel L. Goddard
CEO, Goddard Labs

Hunter College C Cuny n Higher Ed r Realpolitics l Truth academic-reputation-to-be-further-slandered/?cid=gen_sign_in



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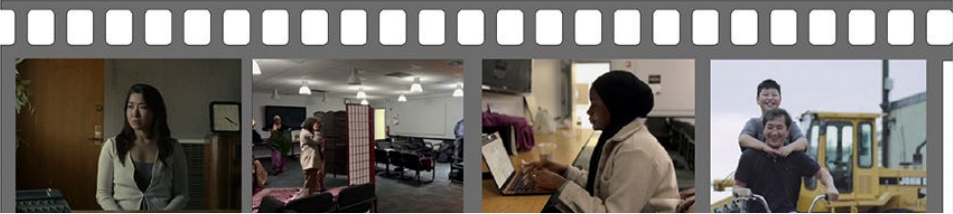
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