

## FAQ

### A. HCHSAA Mission and Programs:

#### a. What is the AA's Mission and History?

The HCHSAA was formed in 1972 at a time when the Hunter College High School ("HCHS") was at risk of closing due to the New York City and State fiscal crises. For over 50 years, the HCHSAA has served as a powerful advocate and source of support for the school. Our mission is primarily to promote the charitable, scientific, literary and educational activities of HCHS. In pursuit of this goal, HCHSAA engages the alumnae/i community through a variety of programs and events, guided by our four foundational pillars: Connect, Engage, Educate, and Serve.

HCHSAA currently provides programs, both in-person and virtual, geared toward increasing member engagement across diverse geographies and eras. These events and programs are designed to reflect the HCHSAA's dedication to fostering a strong and supportive alumnae/i community and to ensuring ongoing support for the high school's educational and extracurricular initiatives.

#### b. How does the AA serve Hunter College High School?

##### i. *Financial Support*

With the generous support of Hunter alumnae/i, the HCHSAA provides ongoing financial support to HCHS. **We make grants in response to requests from the School and students, most of which are submitted in the second half of the academic year. In FY 2023, the AA granted every single request for funding from the School and disbursed just over \$61,000.** Our funding supports both immediate needs and longer term projects. Many of these efforts focus on increasing diversity and access. Examples of projects funded in FY 2023 include:

- Expanding the Transportation Grant Program established in FY 2022 to provide transportation aid to underserved families of admitted HCHS seventh graders who faced barriers getting to and from the school.
- Advertising to expand awareness of the opportunity to take the Hunter admissions test among potential students in underrepresented areas.
- Test preparation program for incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders hailing from low-income neighborhoods and racially isolated schools.
- Funding the fee for a consulting firm focused on recruiting diverse faculty and school administrators.
- Together with the PTA, subsidizing senior prom costs for students facing financial obstacles to participation.
- Field trips to the 9/11 Museum and Ellis Island.

- On-campus photographer to capture images of culture clubs, faculty members, student life, and campus grounds as part of updating the School's website (which had not been updated in a decade).
- Educational software for the Arts Department.
- Graduation expenses, such as costs of the convocation speaker and awards to graduating students.

**In FY 2024 to date, HCHSAA has disbursed over \$70,000 in response to funding requests from the HCHS and has approved requests for approximately \$80,000 in additional funding anticipated to be funded by the end of FY 2024.** These total disbursements include:

- Continued support for the Transportation Grant Program.
- Faculty stipend for curriculum development with Strother School of Attention.
- Subsidies for the 2024 senior prom expenses for students facing financial obstacles to participation.
- Working with the JED Foundation on a 3-year program for suicide prevention.
- College trip expenses for fee waiver students in Class of 2025.
- Washington Seminar trip and faculty support.

#### *ii. Educational Programming*

HCHSAA funds and organizes an array of alumnae/i programs, both in-person and virtual. Students are invited and encouraged to attend and participate in such events. Many of these programs are educational in nature and are designed to foster a strong and supportive alumnae/i community which, in turn, generates philanthropic support for the AA and ultimately the School. In FY 2023, HCHSAA made efforts geared toward increasing member engagement across diverse geographies and eras. Examples from FY 2023 include:

- In honor of Black History Month, the HCHSAA's Diversity Committee sponsored a virtual panel discussion on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) hosted by Judith Daniel '79, with panelists, Janice HERBERT-Carter '73, M.D., Ernestine WILLIAMS Duncan '79, Ph.D., and Ronald Aikens '86, J.D.
- In recognition of Women's History Month, the AA hosted a virtual discussion with Felicia Kornbluh '84 in conversation with Allison Pugh '84, focusing on the fight for reproductive justice and the journey from reproductive rights to reproductive justice.
- The AA hosted its 2nd annual in-person reunion since the pandemic in June 2023, attracting over 250 alumnae/i. The event included a sold-out fireside chat with alum Chris Hayes '97 and moderated by HCHS Social Studies faculty and alum Irving Kagan '82.

- The AA partnered with distinguished cardiologist Annabelle SANTOS Volgman '76 in Chicago to produce a successful and informative Chicago area alumnae/i reception. The AA also hosted a series of other mini alumnae/i reception gatherings in New York, Atlanta, Berlin, London, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Orange County.
- The Diversity Committee honored Hispanic Heritage Month with a virtual discussion of the book “Kid Quixotes: A Group of Students, Their Teacher, and the One-Room School Where Everything is Possible,” a revisionist take on the classic novel Don Quixote. Presenters included “Kid Quixotes” author Stephen Haff and Diana Conchado '79, Associate Professor of Romance Languages at Hunter College, who translated “Kid Quixotes” into Spanish.
- The AA held a reception and tour of “Mirror Image: A Transformation of Chinese Identity” at the Asia Society Museum, curated by Barbara Pollack '74, showcasing dramatic shifts in Chinese economic, political, and cultural landscapes through various art forms including paintings, sculptures, performances, installations, digital art, and photography.

## B. HCHSAA Finances:

- a. The FY 2022 Audit and Details on the Change in Auditing Firms

Lutz & Carr completed the FY 2022 audit in April 2024 and issued an “unqualified” (clean) opinion, meaning that the final statements are transparent and compliant with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). However, the process was extremely time-consuming and caused significant cost overruns for the auditor in addition to an extraordinary delay in completing the audit. According to Lutz & Carr, inefficiencies and inadequate financial staffing within the organization over the previous years (prior to the hiring of a new Executive Director in May 2022) led to an extended audit process wherein HCHSAA staff and the auditors needed to track down documentation sufficient to confirm many transactions (We have since brought on additional staff to assist with finances – see Staffing below.)

As a result, Lutz & Carr informed us that the HCHSAA engagement no longer made economic sense for the firm and they would not be able to assist us with the FY 2023 audit. According to the auditor, disengaging from clients who are not a good fit is a common practice amongst CPA firms. **The auditor stated that the decision to disengage did not relate to any financial improprieties or misappropriation of assets.** Had they detected anything of this nature, they would have been required to communicate that.

The full AA Board was informed of Lutz & Carr’s decision in early 2024. Membership was informed of the decision and the firm’s reasons for such disengagement in a letter from the Executive Director Statement posted on the HCHSAA website in February 2024 before the disengagement became effective in April 2024.

- b. What is the status of the AA’s FY 2023 Audit and Form 990?

Our FY 2023 audit is still underway. The FY 2023 audit began immediately at the conclusion of the 2022 audit in April 2024, which unfortunately means that it got off to a very late start. Although the board and staff are working diligently with our new auditor (GMA Associates LLC), we are not yet in a position to share audited financial statements at this time. This means that the FY 2023 books are not closed yet. The Board understands that this delay isn’t ideal, and we sincerely apologize to our members for the inability to produce audited statements for your review at this time. Needless to say, we are prioritizing completion of the 2023 audit and do not expect that it will take as long as FY 2022.

The 2023 Form 990 was due on May 15, 2024 (including all available extensions). There is no option to file for an additional extension. As audited financials were not available on the due date, on the advice of our auditors we filed a placeholder Form 990 to meet that deadline so that we would not be subject to late filing penalties. We have confirmed its receipt by the IRS. Once the FY 2023 audit is complete, an amended Form 990 will be filed. A similar process was followed for FY 2022 with an amended filing that reflected audited financials.

- c. What financial information can the AA provide for FY 2023 and FY 2024 at this time?

We can offer preliminary data with the important caveat that these figures may change as the audit progresses. The AA's **unaudited** balance sheet and P&L for FY 2023 is available here: <https://hchsaa.org/about/our-governing-documents/>.

This information is a raw data compilation of all HCHSAA's financial transactions for the fiscal year as recorded in our ledger software (QuickBooks and Raiser's Edge) and our bank statements. At the moment, it is organized into Revenue and Expenditures which are then assigned sub-categories as set up within our accounting software. During the audit process and the preparation of the Form 990, the data undergoes "testing," and the auditors will allocate the raw financial information among the functional categories appropriate to a non-profit organization. These categories will provide a more accurate picture of the year's activities as well as a breakdown of expenses attributable to "Program Service," "Management and General" and "Fundraising."

At the June 1, 2024 meeting, we presented information from the unaudited 2023 P&L, together with preliminary internal data from Q1 and Q2 of FY 2024 in the "AA's *Trend Over Time*" slide. This information compares changes in HCHSAA Revenues, Expenses and Net Assets since FY 2019. "AA's *Trend Over Time*" can be found [here](#). The financial report presented on June 1 (including "AA's *Trend Over Time*" and the rest of the PowerPoint presentation) was posted on the HCHSAA website on June 6, 2024.

In advance of the reconvened membership meeting, we anticipate distributing updated information through the end of Q3 of FY 2024 (March 31, 2024).

### C. HCHSAA Staffing

- a. What is the status of the Executive Director?

The Executive Director is on an unpaid leave of absence. We do not anticipate that she will be returning to the organization, and the Board is still deciding the details of her separation. Because these matters are not resolved and concern an ongoing personnel matter, we are not at liberty to disclose further details at this time.

- b. What about the other staff?

Although the HCHSAA board dedicates a substantial amount of volunteer time to the organization, we rely on professional staff to operate. While the Board evaluates the appropriate next steps in connection with the Executive Director, the AA is fortunate to have three full-time staff members to handle communications, event planning, gift administration, financial data entry and general administration. We have also increased the amount of time provided by our longstanding, part-time bookkeeper.

This level of staffing is similar to what existed in 2020 prior to the departure of the former Executive Director and the Events, Grants, and Development Manager and before other staff were placed on part-time status (before they left the organization). In the post-COVID environment, it is much more challenging to find qualified personnel. Our staff compensation reflects salary requirements in the labor market in this challenging hiring environment. HCHSAA engaged in a thorough review of comparable positions and salaries paid at other similar alumnae/i associations prior to retaining the current staff.

#### **D. General FAQs**

- a. Where is the HCHSAA Member Directory?

Earlier this year we addressed the fact that our existing membership directory did not provide a meaningful format for our members to find their classmates, connect with new contacts, or track their giving. The decision was then made to disable the directory temporarily and to begin a search for a new membership site vendor who could help us create a more useful tool. Our staff searched for and vetted several vendors over the last few months before selecting Membership Works. We believe that balancing the need to have an accurate directory with the wishes of members regarding how they share their contact information is critical, and we worked with this vendor to create an updated directory that launched on June 12, 2024. Please feel free to visit the directory [here](#).

- b. What are the “official” HCHSAA social media pages and how do I contact HCHSAA?

We can be reached on our official channels. We are not in control of any other channel other than those specifically identified below (click the links to be directed to the appropriate page). We are aware of several active “unofficial” social media groups using some or all of HCHSAA’s name and calling themselves “official” alumnae/i groups. **However, those channels are not official, are not authorized to represent HCHSAA and should not be relied upon for official information.** Over the past several months, HCHSAA staff has tried (without success) to correct and provide context for inaccurate information posted on these unofficial channels and other attempts to communicate with members of those groups have been deleted or blocked by the moderators. Therefore, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to respond to inquiries posted on channels other than the ones listed below:

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

[X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)

[Instagram](#)

[YouTube](#)