


Living Up to Her Legacy

Susan Fuhrman vowed to build on TC's track record of innovation.

She's leaving behind a pretty considerable one of her own

By **JOE LEVINE**

Illustration by **JAMES STEINBERG**



t's an indelible image from Susan Fuhrman's 12-year run at the helm of Teachers College: The president in glittering evening dress on the stage of Harlem's Apollo Theater in November 2013, smiling from ear to ear as she danced with cast members of a musical revue depicting TC's history.

She has never been known as a spotlight-grabber, but that moment — from a night that capped the College's year-long celebration of its 125th anniversary and raised the curtain on its historic Campaign — showed Fuhrman in her element. TC's 10th president arrived in Fall 2006 with a reputation as a convener. As an alumna from the time of Lawrence Cremin, Donna Shalala, Maxine Greene and

Edmund Gordon, she also vowed that TC would live up to the legacy of its many great innovative thinkers — a theme she formalized during the 125th anniversary year as “celebrating a tradition for tomorrow.” And on that night, with Tony Bennett, Mario Cuomo and Dr. Ruth heading the guest list and a cast of students that included the great-great granddaughter of Booker T. Washington, she was delivering as advertised.

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· SPOTLIGHTING INNOVATION ·

Fuhrman has worked to build a culture that supports creative thinking — including a seed fund and rapid prototyping grants for promising work.

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20 new members, including leaders in finance, philanthropy and higher and K-12 education; her own senior leadership team, whose key players have stayed for her entire run as president; and some 70 new tenure-track professors.

“These faculty hires will be paying dividends for decades to come, and, through their students, for far longer,” Rueckert says.

A CULTURE OF INNOVATION

Even before arriving at TC, Fuhrman said she wanted the College to “engage in much more holistic, concerted, comprehensive efforts” to address complex societal problems. To that end, she commissioned a series of external reviews of TC’s academic departments and launched an ongoing series of “Domain Dinners” themed to “Big Ideas” with potential for greater faculty collaboration. She has explicitly sought to establish a culture of innovation, proclaiming annual themes such as “the year of research.” TC has seen a 40 percent increase in outgoing proposals for external funded research, and sponsored program expenditures have increased by 40 percent to over \$50 million annually. Reflecting her passionate belief that teaching should be as much a science as an art,



the College has led in the explosion of new discoveries about how people learn, with work that has included:

- Research demonstrating that toddlers and preschoolers perform “everyday math,” and merit more intensive teaching.
- Studies correlating poverty with less robust brain development in young children.
- Findings that while younger students learn to read, older ones read to learn, using different skills to mine “content knowledge” in subjects such as history, science and social studies.
- New insights about the importance of children’s ability to emotionally “self-regulate” to learn, and how parents shape that ability.
- The launch of the Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project, which positions teachers as



Building Teams

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premier address for education policy debate.”

Also on Fuhrman’s watch, the College has launched such cross-disciplinary hubs as the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy; the Resilience Center for Veterans & Families; the Spirituality Mind Body Institute; and most recently, the Education for Persistence and Innovation Center (EPIC), which studies failure. TC also has introduced degree programs in nursing education, dia-

on-the-ground experts in mainstreaming children with learning disabilities.

- The creation of a new program in learning analytics — the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, to optimize learning and the environments in which it occurs. As President of the National Academy of Education, Fuhrman also convened discussions to create common standards in this emerging field and protect student privacy.

In 2011, TC also created a new Department of Education Policy & Social Analysis, bringing together top policy scholars in early childhood education, community college research, school choice, school finance and desegregation. That effort complemented the launch of the Phyllis L. Kossoff Lecture in Education & Policy, which has brought top speakers to campus, including then-U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; current New York State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia; several New York City public schools chancellors; and, during the past three presidential elections, the education advisors of major party candidates.

Fuhrman, herself a leading education policy scholar, says these efforts, coupled with the opening of TC’s Cowin Conference Center, have established the College as, “quite literally, the nation’s

LINKING PAST AND PRESENT

Above: TC’s “125th” Gala. **Below (clockwise from top):** Launching the Tisch Food Center with (from left) TC Trustees Jack Hyland, Cory Booker, Laurie Tisch and others; TC Day; with Donna Shalala.



betes education and care, spirituality and psychology, dance education and creative technologies, and developed continuing education programs in financial literacy, teaching for diverse classrooms and the use of education technology in K-12 classrooms. And the College's psychology professors have united to hold an annual symposium and launch a new Institute for Psychological Science and Practice.

"Our website no longer says we're simply a school

CONNECTING WITH YOUNG AND OLD

Above: With Board Chair Bill Rueckert, Professor Susan Recchia and TC's Rita Gold Center kids. Below (clockwise from left): With psychologist Edmund Gordon; launching TC's school; supporting all fields.



of education, but also one of health and psychology," the late TC Board Co-Chair Jack Hyland said last summer. "We're actively taking advantage of our size — the fact that we're four to five times bigger than the next biggest school of education — and our history of innovation, to pull from all fields when we need to."

BEYOND TC'S WALLS

The Fuhrman era at TC has also been marked by extensive collaboration. In 2007, the College established a new Office of School & Community Partnerships (OSCP), which brought TC's activities in New York City schools and neighborhoods under a single umbrella. With the city's Department of Education, OSCP led creation of the Teachers College Community School (TCCS), a pre-K-8 school in West Harlem since hailed as a national model of university-public school partnership. (Another indelible Fuhrman moment: the president gleefully helping two first-graders wield an over-sized pair of scissors at the Fall 2012 ribbon cutting ceremony for the school's permanent home.) TC faculty designed the school's enriched curriculum in math and technology, an early childhood education program that ensures seamless transition to formal schooling, a



social and emotional development curriculum, and a developmentally structured music program with movement, orchestra, choir and composition.

TCCS, in turn, anchors REACH, a network of northern Manhattan public schools that TC supports. TC students collectively devote thousands of hours to REACH schools as teaching assistants and volunteers.

Another hub, the Office of International Affairs, has worked with Columbia University's Global Centers to create partnerships in Jordan, where TC helped set up the Queen Rania Teacher Academy; Singapore, whose National Institute of Education teamed with the College on a Master of Arts program in Leadership & Education Change; China, where TC has created partnerships in the fine arts and music;

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and Brazil, where the Lemann Foundation is funding Brazilian Student Fellows and Visiting Scholars at TC and research led by professors Sharon Lynn Kagan, Mariana Souto-Manning, Doug Ready and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. A new partnership in teacher preparation with King's College London, forged by Vice Dean A. Lin Goodwin, is anchored by Souto-Manning, an authority on cultural relevance in curriculum, and King's College's Viv Ellis, an authority on transforming teacher education.

THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

Perhaps Fuhrman's ultimate strength has been her ability to ground change in TC's history and longstanding values. During its 125th anniversary year, the College ran bus shelter ads and street banners featuring its great minds from different eras, drawing connections to its present-day work. The year concluded with a gala event at Harlem's legendary Apollo Theater at which Fuhrman announced the public kick-off of **Where the Future Comes First**, the largest campaign ever conducted by a graduate school of education. And this past fall, in her State of the College address, she said TC's legacy and chal-



Strength in Breadth

“Our website no longer says we're simply a school of education, but also one of health and psychology,” the late TC Board Co-Chair **Jack Hyland** said last summer. “We're actively taking advantage of our size and our history of innovation.” Ultimately, TC's strength comes from being able to “pull from all fields when we need to.”

The Fuhrman era has featured extensive collaboration, with a new office uniting partnerships with New York City schools and neighborhoods under a single umbrella.

challenge is “to promote our social justice mission in such a way that education becomes the solution.”

“Susan deeply understands Grace Dodge’s original vision for the College and has remained true to it,” says Rueckert, Dodge’s great-nephew, who heads the Cleveland H. Dodge Foundation. “She truly believes that education is the key to a better life for people in less fortunate circumstances. My family and Foundation have never been more excited and engaged with TC than during the past decade.”

The most significant example of Fuhrman leveraging collaboration is the Campaign, which this past fall surpassed its original target and as of May 15th, 2018 had raised \$330 million. As a result, the College has increased its traditional strengths, such as teacher education, education policy, school leadership, and counseling and clinical psychology, while leading in newer fields such as education technology, digital learning, data mining, neuroscience, health care management, culturally relevant pedagogy and spirituality.

The Campaign has also raised nearly \$100 million in support for students, creating more



than 160 new scholarships as TC has doubled its spending on student aid; funded major upgrades to the physical plant, including the new Smith Learning Theater and a suite of smart classrooms; and significantly broadened TC’s donor base, re-energizing its 90,000 alumni worldwide.

“The Campaign is a huge accomplishment that owes directly to Susan’s presence,” says Rueckert. “We couldn’t have attracted so many generous, savvy donors without Susan leading the charge. Donors get motivated by the person at the helm.”

CONTINUING IMPACT

Clearly Fuhrman’s legacy is secure, amply reinforced by TC’s glowing re-accreditation by

HONOR HER LEGACY

Thanks a
MILLION

The Susan H. Fuhrman Endowed Scholarship supports students who embrace a multi-disciplinary approach in their work, reflecting President Fuhrman’s conviction that integrating multiple academic perspectives fosters the creativity, innovation, and collaboration needed to solve many of society’s most complex problems. ■ TC leadership created this scholarship to help fulfill one of President Fuhrman’s most important priorities of her twelve year tenure: building TC’s scholarship pool so it can compete for future leaders in education, health, and psychology and help lessen the burden of debt students acquire upon graduation. **To make a gift, please visit tc.edu/thanksamillion**



“No other initiative could be more in line with the history and mission of Teachers College,” she said. “To quote John Dewey, ‘Apart from the thought of participation in social life, the school has no end or aim.’ Our great hope is that the striving for social justice, the spirit of civic camaraderie, and the commitment to helping others that flows through TC will spread both outward to schools and communities everywhere, and forward for generations and generations.”

That is a legacy we can all be proud of.

STANDING ON CEREMONY

Above: Convocation. Below, with (clockwise from top) actress Goldie Hawn; U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, alumna Phyllis Kossoff; (from left) donor David O’Connor, TC faculty Dinelia Rosa and George Bonanno.

the Middle States Council in Higher Education in 2016. But her Apollo Theater moment also reflected another of her hallmarks: endings that beget new beginnings. This past fall, after announcing that she would be stepping down in June, Fuhrman laid out four new initiatives to position TC for “eminence and leadership well into this century.”

First is reaching the Campaign’s target for student scholarships and fellowships.

Second is positioning TC for preeminence in the digital education market. The College enrolls more than 20,000 people in its online courses, programs and institutes, and Fuhrman predicts the number will grow “as we offer more world-class programs geared especially to working professionals, starting with our alumni.”

Third is TCedTech, an effort to secure TC’s leadership in the booming education technology market. The College, which held a student innovation contest in December, is working to ensure that education technology draws on solid research to actually improve teaching and learning.

And finally, confirming a promise she made in the wake of the 2016 presidential election, Fuhrman announced “a world-class, 21st-century Civics Education Initiative that reinvents and rejuvenates civics in our schools as a catalyst for informed, responsible citizenship in our democracy.”

