



## CONSTRUCTION & PLANNING

by Cassidy Clevenger

# Blending Campus with Community at Manhattan College

Manhattan College is one of the premier private universities for engineering in the country. When compared to schools with similar student demographics, graduates from Manhattan College are 37% more likely to graduate, and 60% of their low-income students have reached top income earnings by their early thirties.

Tim Ward, the dean of Manhattan College's Engineering Programs, explains this high success across their student body is due to the college's dedication to their students and the experiential learning that takes place across the state of New York.

As a way to further support an exceptional higher education for their STEM students, Manhattan College will be debuting their new Leo Hall and Higgins Center construction and renovations projects in Fall 2020.

### Inside the Higgins Engineering and Science Center

Named after two of their largest donors, Patricia Higgins, Ph.D., and Cornelius Higgins, Ph.D., the Higgins Engineering and Science Center is the newest addition to Manhattan College. The facility is three stories tall and 30,000 square-feet.

The sleek, modern building will include 14 state-of-the-art laboratories as well as collaborative learning spaces. When designing the building, the college decided to not include new classrooms, and instead decided to utilize the spaces only for laboratories.

With nearly one-third of the students at MC being engineering majors, and all their students having to take mandatory science classes, this building will positively impact nearly everyone enrolled on campus.

### A Vital Partnership

Manhattan College recently received their second grant from the Higher Education Capital Matching Grant Program (HECap), and with these funds, the college began phase four of their renovation plans for Leo Hall; as of 2018, the college received a \$3.5 million grant from HECap.

To quote Governor Andrew Cuomo, “New York is home to some of the best colleges and universities in the world, and by investing in cutting-edge education and research, they will continue to fuel our workforce.” Cuomo explains how this funding will benefit both individual students and New York as a whole.

HECap’s goal is to invest in local, non-profit, private institutions, thus giving the colleges the resources they need to be able to provide their students with a world-class education.

HECap is a state government funded grant that is designed to benefit current students, future

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students, as well as strengthen the community and ultimately increase revenue within the state by keeping their college students educated and employed locally.

Dean Ward explains that Manhattan College is responsible for roughly half of all the STEM graduates in New York, and the funding provided by HECap highlights the state’s commitments to science and engineering.

When the college was in the planning phase of the project and looking for contract workers, Ward noted how many of the options were Manhattan College graduates, because so many MC graduates continued their careers locally;

Ward playfully stated, “Manhattan engineers built New York.”

Furthermore, MC has added jobs to the surrounding Bronx area, which is also inspiring other businesses to move into the neighborhood.

### Working with Alumni

In addition to the HECap grant, the college is largely relying on individual donors to fund the project. In total, the target expense of Leo and Higgins will be around \$165 million, and the college has currently raised nearly \$121 million, as of this year.

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Also noteworthy is the fact that former MC graduates donate more than money—they also dedicate a lot of their time to improving the college, and many maintained college involvement long after graduation.

### Considerations and Challenges of Construction

New York is notoriously congested, and certainly undertaking a major project—such as updating Leo Hall and Higgins—does not help alleviate this burden.

As Ward said, “We are living in a construction zone.” As a result, parking has been one of the largest sacrifices to the renovations, and now commuters must compete for space on smaller lots nearby, or use the larger parking garage that is a few blocks away.

Additionally, one of the most important steps in any construction project is expectation management. Everyone involved in the design and action must have a realistic expectation of what can be achieved within their timelines and budget.

### Campus and Community

Thanks to the HECap grant and support via donors, Manhattan College has continued their multi-million dollar renovations on Leo Hall and the Higgins Engineering and Science Center.

Leo Hall and Higgins will serve as the primary student hub on the southern part of campus, and these projects will open doors of opportunities for students to build interpersonal academic relationships with their peers and professors, as

well as prepare them for interdisciplinary work environments in the future.

The new science center is especially monumental, because its construction marks the beginning of Manhattan College’s comprehensive, strategic plan of up-and-coming renovations and upgrades for all of their science and engineering facilities, both on the North and South side of campus.

The culture of MC is one of community. Students are encouraged to explore and study areas off campus, such as the 2nd Ave subway line or the Washington Bridge. Similarly, community boards and government organizations are welcomed to host events on MC’s campus.

In short, everything and everyone involved with MC appears to overlap, and there is a seamless integration between the college and New York state.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Cassidy Clevenger is a Samford University alum. She is currently in graduate school at Samford in the MSW program, while working as a staff writer.

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