



Dr. Norman Smith

Smith stresses broad liberal arts education

ADVANCE STAFF REPORT

Dr. Norman Smith glances out the window of his office at the panoramic view of New York Harbor and the Wagner College campus spread below.

Turning to a reporter he commented that the average term of a college president is five years. "I guess I'm over the hump," he said.

In his eighth year as president of Wagner, Smith can recite an impressive list of achievements: The college budget is once again in the black; its enrollment is up; and the campus dorms are full of resident students from nearly two-dozen states. The college also has raised its endowment, mostly through tracking down and convincing graduates of Wagner to contribute.

And Wagner is actively competing with some of the top small residential colleges in the country.

Smith's formula for success concentrates on promoting a

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Wagner College: Small-town flavor in heart of big city

■ Enrollment up for fourth straight year

By DIANE C. LORE
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Fall enrollment at Wagner College is up for the fourth consecutive year, and administrators see the growth as a positive indicator of how far the college has come over the last decade.

Enrollment for 1995-96 is 1,753 students, up from 1,675 last year, 1,585 for 1993-94, and 1,369 in 1992-93. Of the students currently enrolled, a total of 1,505 are undergraduates. The students represent 23 states and 28 countries, an indication of the geographically broader appeal of Wagner.

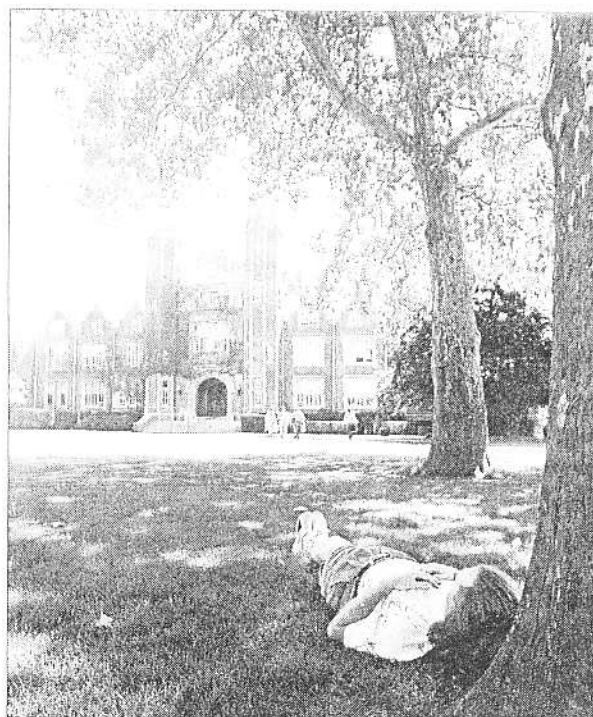
The increase in enrollment has also translated into increased revenues for Wagner. The college reported revenues of \$33.4 million, up \$10 million since 1992-93.

"We continue to successfully swim against the tide facing so many small, private residential colleges today," said Wagner College president Dr. Norman Smith, who is in his eighth year at the helm of Staten Island's oldest institution of higher education.

The college was founded in 1883 in Rochester as a seminary of the Lutheran Church. In 1918, Wagner College moved to its present campus on Grymes Hill, the original estate of steamship magnate Edward Cunard. The Cunard mansion, built in 1852, on soil originally transported from England as ballast on Cunard liners, is still used by the college for administrative purposes.

Since Wagner's arrival on Grymes Hill, the campus has added classroom buildings, a student union, library, gymnasium, dormitories and other facilities. Two years ago, the college purchased the 18-acre campus of the former Augustinian Academy, a nearby (though not contiguous) property off Campus Road. That acquisition brings the Wagner campus to 105 acres.

When Smith took over at Wagner, its complex of dormitories overlooking New York



ADVANCE PHOTOS ■ MIKE FALCO

A Wagner College student relaxes under a tree as the college's Main Hall serves as a stunning backdrop.

Harbor was largely empty. More than 70 percent of its students were commuters from Staten Island or Brooklyn, reflecting Wagner's traditional appeal as a "local" school. But today, the student ratio is reversed. Less than 30 percent of Wagner's students are Islanders.

The reversal is partly due to an ambitious recruitment and marketing strategy Smith has pursued at high schools up and down the East Coast, that touts Wagner as offering the best of both worlds — a "small town" residential college with a bucolic campus, that's located in the heart of New York City, the entertainment and financial "capital" of the country and the

world.

"The geographic diversity of Wagner is 'good for Staten Island,'" Smith maintains, because it presents the Island (and New York City in general) in a favorable light. "Everyone is down on New York, but when our students leave Wagner and return to their hometowns, they bring with them a whole new view of

HIGHER EDUCATION

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