



COLLÈGE  
DE FRANCE  
—1530—

December 2014

## The Collège de France, a unique institution

*Administrateur*, President of the Faculty:  
Professor Serge Haroche, Quantum Physics  
Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics, 2012

*Vice-Administrateur*:  
Professor John Scheid, Religion, Institutions and Society in Ancient Rome

Founded in 1530 by Francis I, the Collège de France remains a unique institution.

Originally providing six chairs in Hebrew, Greek and mathematics, subjects which were not recognized by the University of Paris at that time, the institution has developed over five centuries based on its motto: *Docet omnia* (All things are taught).

It now has 52 chairs covering a very wide variety of disciplines ranging from mathematics to the study of great civilizations, including life sciences, social sciences and economics, physics, chemistry, history, philosophy and sustainable development, to name but a few. Lectures are free and open to all without tuition fees. Although many students attend lectures, the Collège de France is not a degree-awarding institution. The 6 former *lecteurs royaux* are now 52 professors of different nationalities chosen by their peers on the basis of the quality of their work and their contribution to their disciplines.

### **Freedom of research**

From the very outset, the basic premise that chairs are not permanent has underpinned the creative energy of this academic community. Therefore, when incumbents retire, new appointments are made on the basis of the very latest scientific developments. New members are elected by the Assembly of Professors. There is no specific academic rank stipulated for nominees; the only relevant factors are the significance and originality of their work. The option to modify chairs is a principal which avoids the rigidity of fixed academic disciplines. The Collège de France is therefore permanently adapting to developments in the sciences and remains a focal point for the scientific community.

In recent years, the Collège de France has created five annual chairs to abreast of developments in society: a Chair in Artistic Creation, first held by the French architect Christian de Portzamparc (2004); a Chair in Technological Innovation Liliane Bettencourt, the first chair to be financed entirely with private funds (2007); a Chair in Knowledge against Poverty (2008-2012)\*; a Chair in Sustainable Development – Environment, Energy and Society (2008)\* and finally a Chair Informatics and computational sciences (2009)\*. In 2014, a new type of teaching has been established. It allows Visiting Professors to dispense lecture series (10 lecture cycles) each year during three years.

Nearly five centuries after its foundation, the Collège de France therefore continues to pursue its unique mission of “**teaching knowledge in the making**” in every field of literature, the arts and sciences.

\*These three chairs have been created with the assistance from sponsors.

At the Collège de France, education and research go hand in hand. Many laboratories and libraries are spread out across the institution’s different sites in Paris (place Marcelin-Berthelot, rue d’Ulm – Institute for the Contemporary World, rue Cardinal Lemoine – Institute of Civilizations). Three phases of work (1992-2013) are enabling several buildings to be refurbished and new biology, chemistry and physics laboratories covering 16,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the very heart of Paris to be created with the institution’s own funds and with major funding from the French Ministry for Higher Education. The Collège de France has been the beneficiary of sponsorship funding allowing it to expand the scientific activity of its annual chairs, to support the development of its

libraries and laboratories and to foster the dissemination of knowledge via its International Digital Campus ([www.college-de-France.fr](http://www.college-de-France.fr)).

### **Research**

The research programs of Collège de France chairs and partnerships with institutions in France (including the CNRS, INSERM and the Institut Pasteur) and abroad also place the French institution in the ranks of world-class research organizations and French thought in the wider world. This is also a unique place, where Nobel Prize winners rub shoulders with winners of Fields Medals, the Abel Prize or the Balzan Prize.

### **Laboratories and institutes**

The Collège de France laboratories and six institutes (*the Biology, the Chemistry, the Physics Institutes, the Institute of the Contemporary World, the Institute of Civilization, and the Institute of Literary Studies*) play host to researchers and young guest teams working on medium-term programs. Internal, hosted or external teams are always affiliated to other research bodies with specialist infrastructures, so that they can work over the long-term, retaining a degree of flexibility which is the key to innovation.

### **Disseminating knowledge**

Lectures, symposia and seminars are attended by a growing number of people in the Collège de France lecture theatres (140,000 per year). Publications and broadcasts of our research and education activities on the France Culture radio station, increase audience reach. However, its key asset is its innovative and pioneering launch of an International Digital Campus in 2007.

Recordings of inaugural lectures, regular lectures and symposia are also available as podcasts in audio and/or video format on the institution's website and on iTunes U, Youtube or Dailymotion. These recordings are often supplemented by lecture notes and/or resources. The catalogue of electronic publications is also enhanced on a daily basis. This form of broadcasting throws the doors to the Collège de France and its knowledge base wide open.

Building on this success, the institution is making an even larger contribution to the dissemination of French science with a program to interpret lectures and to translate resources into English. Some lectures are also interpreted into Portuguese and Chinese. This large scale dissemination of knowledge is free and supported by the Bettencourt Schueller Foundation.

### **Libraries**

The Collège de France has valuable resources in the form of rare books and specialist libraries, including libraries specializing in the Near East and Far East (China, Japan, Korea, India, Tibet), as well as the very extensive library of social anthropology, Asiatic society, Byzantium and Egyptology. They house some of the largest and finest collections in Europe.

Fully refurbished premises covering 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> offer optimum reading and research conditions for French and overseas researchers. Furthermore, from 2013, the institution's archives are available online and it is now possible to access digitally scanned volumes remotely.

### **International reach**

Professors have the opportunity to deliver one third of their education activity in French universities outside Paris or universities abroad. A large percentage of this activity takes the form of partnership agreements, signed with universities in more than fifteen countries around the world or in collaboration with French Institutes.

Every year, the Assembly of Professors of the Collège de France invites over forty notable scientific figures from abroad to deliver a series of lectures.



The program to host “young researchers” from abroad extends a welcome to colleagues from all over the world.

Lastly, the International Digital Campus offers access to all research and education at the Collège de France.

**A desire exists to combine forces and unify and exploit synergies in order to create a world-class research campus.**

The Collège de France is developing a policy of greater openness beyond its own campus. Working alongside the ENS, the institution has supported a project for forging links between major establishments in the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève academic district of Paris in the firm belief that this collaboration offers a unique opportunity to improve synergies, support large-scale projects, develop the impact and appeal of these institutions abroad, and further to enhance the excellence of these associated institutions.

The Collège de France is the founding member of the Fondation de coopération scientifique Paris Sciences et Lettres, alongside the ENS, the Observatoire de Paris, ESPCI ParisTech and Chimie ParisTech, Dauphine and a dozen other establishments. This excellence cluster will add an extra dimension to the activities of the Collège de France.

**Facts and figures:**

The Collège de France currently boasts

- 2 Abel Prize winners
- 4 Fields medalists
- 7 Balzan Prize winners

10 Nobel Prize winners. The latest Nobel Prize Laureate is Professor Serge Haroche, holder of the Chair in Quantum Physics, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, in 2012.

**A few figures**

- 52 areas of research

*(Mathematics, Social sciences, Life Sciences, Physics, Chemistry, History, Archaeology, the Environment, Technological Innovation, Digital Sciences, Egyptology, etc.)*

- 6 Institutes (*Institute of Biology, Institute of the Contemporary World, Oriental Institute, Institute for Literary Studies, CIRB*)
- 315 researchers
- 326 engineers, technicians and administrative employees
- 186 advanced PhD and post-doctoral researchers
- 12 guest research teams
- A heritage of rare books and specialized libraries which are among the finest in Europe
- 140,000 people attend lectures every year

**Press contacts:**

Marie Chéron – 01 44 27 11 78  
[Marie.cheron@college-de-France.fr](mailto:Marie.cheron@college-de-France.fr)

Cécile Barnier – 01 44 27 12 72  
[Cecile.barnier@college-de-France.fr](mailto:Cecile.barnier@college-de-France.fr)