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Interview with Marvin Cohen, 2004

Columbia College Chicago

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Marvin Cohen

Okay. It is March 30, 2004, and this is an interview with Marvin Cohen, Director of Records at Columbia College Chicago.

All right, if you could start by telling us what the circumstances were that brought you to Columbia and what were some of your early responsibilities.

Well, at the time, I was a registrar at the Illinois Institute of Technology and I had also worked at Chicago State University for a few years before that. So, the circumstances were that the college was looking for a new director of records and registrar. The previous individual had been let go and there were some concerns that there were problems in the records office and the college was looking for an experienced person to kind of come in and make sure the office would run efficiently and perform all of its responsibilities.

And that was in the summer of 1988.

Right, that's correct.

Okay. And what were some of the problems as you understood them that needed to be addressed.

Well, the problems were that there didn't seem to be any organization in the office. It didn't seem like anybody was actually running the place. There'd be two and three staff members who had the same responsibilities, but were doing their jobs differently. And actually you discovered people working against each other. I mean I would go home at night and tell my wife stories and just am shaking my head saying there are no procedures. There's nobody in charge.

So, the office was kind of stumbling along, running itself, people doing whatever they thought they should be doing, not properly trained. And my responsibility and the reason I was brought in was to kind of make some sense out of it.

And were you given enough authority to kind of come in and reorganize. Can you describe some of that reorganization and what you thought the priorities were.

Well, I was given a blank check. I was told by Herman Conaway, who was the Dean of Students at the time that do whatever you have to do. He said the office needs some work and I was an assistant registrar at IIT for four years and then registrar, so I had eight years of experience in that type of operation and Herman Conaway basically just told me just clean it up. So I looked at all the various operations.

I talked to all the staff members. Actually the first thing I did was I told them give me all the forms, letters and documents we send out because one thing I can't stand is where you have a letter where nobody ever knows where the original is and they xerox copies of copies of copies of copies and you end up with something shrunk and sideways and misshapen and nobody can read it. So, basically I just looked each function of the office and tried to work out what I felt were better procedures.

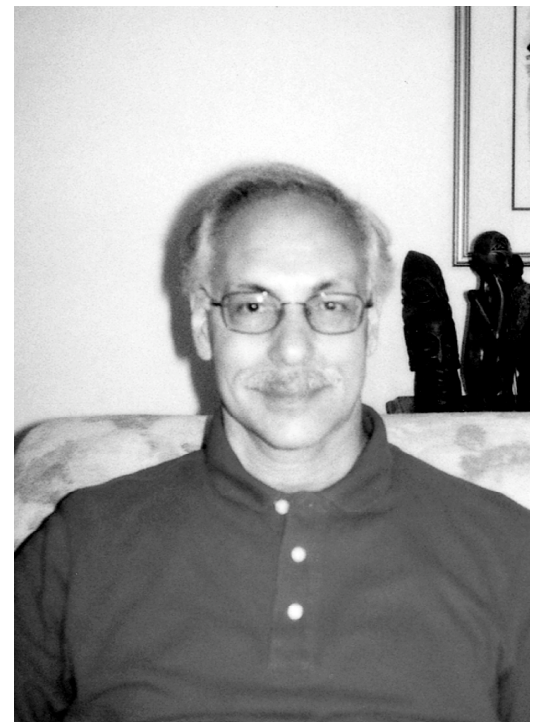
Plus what I thought was important was that somebody had to be in charge. The previous registrar, I never met the lady. I really don't know much about her, but from my understanding, she wasn't

around much for whatever reasons. The staff felt like nobody was protecting them. The college as a whole thought the office was a disaster and the people that worked in it were incompetent.

Well, that was only partially true. The office was a disaster, the people weren't incompetent, and they just needed some direction and leadership. And they felt beaten down and there was nobody protecting them, so one of the first things I did was try and boost their morale and their ego and make them feel like with a little bit of training, they could be very effective.

What were the main responsibilities of the office at that time when you came and if you remember, about how many students at Columbia.

I remember very clearly because I always mention this to people that when I came, we had 4,500 students and now, not because of



me, but now we have close to 10,000 and we've doubled in size. And we haven't increased the number of staff in the office at all. So, we're handling the needs of twice the number of students with basically the same staff.

How have those needs changed.

Well, the basic needs are still there. You know, students have to be registered and that's changed tremendously over the years. Students still have to get their grades. They need transcripts. Transcripts are a very big part of what we do. They need verifications for insurance and good student discounts and whatever. So that the needs are basically the same, I think the students have changed quite a bit I feel.

Could you expand on that.

We have opened admissions, which I am a supporter of. We're not quite as open as we used to be, which I think is a good thing, it seemed like in the past, we admitted everybody. You walk in the door, you're admitted and now we're a little more selective and I think in the past, I don't know exactly the word I'm looking for, not a rougher bunch of students, but a less sophisticated group of students who would be demanding as students are today; which is fine, they're our customers, but demanding in a more abrasive type of way.

I think our student body now has become a little more refined than sophisticated.

And what do you think that is due to.

I think it's due to a couple of things. One is that our admission standard is still open admissions. Students who are marginal now have to go through the bridge

program to see if they can actually make it here, which is good because it's not doing the students a service to admit them to a college, charge them a lot of tuition, when they're going to fail. And we know from day one they're going to fail. They're just not prepared. So, the bridge program gets them prepared and weeds out the ones who just aren't going to make it.

And I think we're drawing students from a different pool of high schools than we used to. I can't speak to any specifics because I'm not on the admissions end of it. But it seems like, I don't want to say we're drawing a better class of students, but, I think we're getting more sophisticated students.

Can you talk about the way the students have changed and the relationship of the student to the office. What other things have changed for your office. In compliance with federal requirements or state.

Well, the federal privacy laws have been the same forever. I think how things have changed, our relationship with the students has changed because especially now with Oasis, so much is done on line that students can do a lot of things for themselves and in the future, will be able to do more things for themselves and its become easier in a lot of ways even though the conversion has been something of a nightmare as all conversions are. Students now can look up their transcripts on line, they look up their grades on line, we no longer mail out grade reports. They get lost in the mail and the students call and it's this huge hassle.

Students can register on line, so we no longer have the three weeks of 12 hour registration days that we used to have. So, our interactions with the students have changed tremendously. Particularly in the last couple of years, with Oasis coming on board and the conversion and there are some additional things we want to do with Oasis in the future, where students will be able to do more on line and there would be even less reason to come into the office.

Would you say that Oasis has been the biggest change then with your office since you've been here.

Yes, a registrar's office at any college, I've worked in registrars' offices in three colleges, and a registrar's office is a place that pretty much nobody knows or cares about.

Until.

Until registration is a disaster. Admissions is a high-profile office. Everybody looks at numbers. Either you've made the numbers or you haven't. Financial aid is a high-profile office because either students complain they can't get their aid or are happy with it or there's a money issue. Money always generates a lot of emotions. A records office or a Registrar's office is a stepchild at any college and you have your highly visible registration a couple times of year, although it does seem like it goes on year round here and other than that, nobody much knows or cares what goes on in a Registrar's office.

Those people, they do something, but other than registration, we don't know what they do. So, we are an important office because we have to run registration, we have to get transcripts out, we have to issue grades, but pretty much nobody pays much attention to us.

What was your role in Oasis and I guess I mean by defining it what your offices needs were. How did that all come about in revamping registration, student complaints, what was the story behind the origins of what shape it would take and what needs would be addressed.

Well, I think that Oasis even though it's relatively recent, we've been moving toward an on line registration system for a number of years and were very late in getting one. I think in the past, this college didn't have the technological background it needed. Now, fifteen years ago when I came, registration was held in two buildings on six or seven different floors. There were twelve or thirteen steps students had to go through to go through the entire process. It took sometimes hours; it was a manual paper process. It was pretty much a nightmare.

It went on for three weeks. Ten and twelve hour days, three Saturdays. I felt like I wasn't home for three weeks and it was a very difficult, involved, complex problem. Students would line up in long lines, sometimes going down stairways. In September, it would be 100 degrees on some of those days. The stairway would be like a locker room. It was pretty bad. And I always tried to find ways of improving and smoothing it out, speeding it up. It got to be a fairly decent process. Not a good process, because registration under any circumstance is not a good process. I don't care how you do it. Registration is like a trip to the dentist for a root canal.

I don't care how you do it. It's a hassle and people will be made at you because they won't get their classes or something else will go wrong. So, I've always said that you have to look at registration for what it is. It's not some party, good time; let's have fun type of situation. It's a dreary, difficult, unpleasant process; which hopefully is much less unpleasant than it used to be. So, we had our manual stand in line in person registration. We totally missed the phone registration generation. That came and went and was gone and we just totally missed the whole thing. And I think possibly with our new administration, possibly with the fact that we had to get into the 20th century here, the decision was made that the money would put up for real grown up adult, real registration system.

So, a committee was formed of all the key people who would be working with the system and we interviewed seven vendors, from seven different systems. We made a couple of visits to different schools, look at what they did, we narrowed it down to three vendors, had them come out and give second presentations and then basically we voted on the system we thought would best meet our needs.

And then we started the implementation, which has been going on now I guess about a year and a half and it's been very difficult, but every conversion is. I've heard of stories at other schools where people took early retirement to avoid going through a conversion. It's not an easy thing to do. But I think we've made a great deal of progress and I think the system is working fairly well for the point we're at. We did it very quickly and we did it without enough staff. We

are very thin here at this school and I think it's a little remarkable that we were able to pull this off with the very small number of staff that we have.

I mean it's still relatively new, but does that make it possible for you with the same number of people to serve 10,000 students instead of 5. I mean, is that the hope.

That's not only the hope, at least for my office that's the realization. It has saved us a great deal of man hours of work. I could speak to how we used to do grades. That's been an involving process. Years ago, we would manually data enter grades for the entire school. Then I went to a scantron system, which was much more efficient, but still took hours and hours to work with and now the faculty enter their grades themselves on line.

And what difference has that made. Not only with your work, but like percentage of grades turned in on time.

We did on line grades over the summer, last summers the test that we didn't count, there's so few summer classes. For the fall, there are about 2,500 individual courses. Normally, by the one week deadline, I would have somewhere around 70% of the grades in from the faculty which means 30% were late. At the deadline this time, I had 84% received. It was a huge improvement and what helps is that students as soon as the grades come in, there's a procedure I run ten times a day, the faculty enter their grades and if the procedure I run over and over again constantly during the day to post the grades to the students' records, students can see their grades immediately.

So, if a student from home, from anywhere looks on Oasis, says, oh wow, I have three of my grades, but the fourth one isn't here yet, I'm going to call my teacher. So, that's kind of, you know, the teachers who might procrastinate a little bit. They're going to get these calls from students a lot quicker than in the days where I would have to send out grade report forms and then I'd get so many back in the mail because addresses are bad or the post office just isn't capable of delivering the mail or whatever. So, that's been a big improvement.

Now you talked about registration, was grade submission another big headache for your office.

I wouldn't say it was a big headache. It was a headache when we used the scantron forms, faculty would mail them back, the U.S. Postal Service in my opinion, has a great deal of difficulties. I am very down on them because of the way I don't get my mail at home, and there will be very responsible faculty who I've worked with who would say it would be three weeks later, and I'd say you haven't turned your grades in, and they'd say, but I mailed them. And I would know they're responsible people. So, there was that big problem. And then scanning them of course was always difficult. It took a lot of time.

What are some of the other major challenges your office faces or the biggest complaints that students call up and have.

Well, I don't get too many complaints about verifications. I get a lot of complaints about transcripts. We send out transcripts in 3-5 working days. If a student needs it in 24 hours, we will

produce it for a \$10.00 fee. The normal fee is \$3.00. I get a lot of complaints from students who say I ordered by transcript three weeks ago and the receiving school never got it. And according to our records, it went out. And the student says why didn't you send it out. And I always say to the student, well why do you assume we didn't send it out.

I say we're dealing with the U.S. Postal Service and another institution. No, you didn't do it. So, that's always a problem. We always just send another one free of charge. We had a student one time, there was some kind of meeting the president had on a Saturday and Deborah McGrath, who I report to, was there and she said the president told a story about how at 7:30 that morning on a Saturday, a student called him at home and said I need my transcript today. And the president, Dr. Carter said, well, how did you get this number. And the student said, well, I looked you up on the internet and went through a bunch of different places, and I found your home number. And so I thought I call you up and see if you can get me my transcript today.

It's a true story. And Dr. Carter said well how long have you known you needed it. And the student said about a year ago I knew I would need for this sorority I'm trying to join. But I need it today now. So he of course told him well why don't you check with the records office on Monday. But she went to such lengths to find him. I think transcripts are a big issue. We issue a great number of them.

There are always complaints about registration. There will always be unhappy people. And that's just the nature of what it is. And as far as

the biggest challenge facing us, I don't know that I can speak to any one big huge crisis. We have issues with immunization. All schools in Illinois under Illinois law to ensure that students who are taking more than six hours and then certain other criteria, are immunized for measles, mumps, rubella and tetanus of theory. And it's a very complicated situation and like any good law it has a lot of gray areas and areas open to interpretation. The law is different for international students. Right now, we're trying to get the immunization program working right now and it doesn't. What we do is we fine students \$50.00 every semester that they are not in compliance.

Some schools just do not let them register the next semester. We had a pretty good computer program with the old system where actually today the programmers are still working on the program for this system. We didn't find anybody last fall because we couldn't get the program to work right. I guess that's our biggest headache right now.

And that falls under your responsibility because every student comes through your office with registration.

No. Because nobody wants to deal with it. And, in the old Columbia days, we were much smaller. Offices would have multiple responsibilities and a bigger school they don't have. And my office also does ID cards which is not a headache at all. It's not a problem. Some schools have separate ID card offices or they have the security department handle ID's.

Immunization was done when the law was first passed by Herman

Conaway and he was Dean of Students when the school was much smaller. His secretary took care of it. And then it went to admissions for awhile. Admissions basically didn't want it and feel it was their job in the first place and so it came to my office which is okay, I mean we can do it.

And is this a paper work. I mean, they have to produce the paper work saying that they have.

Right. They need documentation from either doctor or their high school and it's difficult to work with it, because we get all these scribbled notes from doctors that nobody could read and it's a big deal. It's a big problem.

What other departments do you coordinate with or work with.

Every department at this college.

And can you talk about how that works and what the biggest challenges there are and what has changed over the years in your relationship to every department head at the college.

Well, I don't know if anything's changed. Well things have changed, but they haven't. I have to talk to the department chairs. I deal with student financial services on a daily basis with appeals from students who think they dropped a class and didn't and they're being billed and whatever. I work with academic advising. I work with every department at the college and everybody calls me for everything. Three fourths of the time it's not something my office does, but they don't know who else to call.

I think one of the problems at this school is people get bounced around too much. Sometimes I feel I get these calls because somebody else didn't want to be bothered and

said well, call the records office. So even though we're a small office, there are only eight of us, and we're not a glamorous one like some of the ones that have fancy wallpaper and nice bathrooms, which we don't have, we're in a way the center of the universe. And I don't mean to say that in an egotistical way. But, I get calls from everybody for everything and I feel that maybe the biggest responsibility I have is to respond to all of this, to direct people to the right places and to solve problems.

And again, I don't want to sound egotistical, but I've had students say to me after I've dealt with their issues and fixed it, say to me well you're the only person here who is able to solve anything for me. You know, I don't know if it's just taking the time to figure out what's wrong. Sometimes I will say to a person, well, this is a really a student financial services issue, I know you've called them twenty times, and nobody has responded; I will deal with it. Don't talk to anybody else about this but me because I understand the problem, I know who the right person is to go to. I say don't call anybody else, just deal with me on this. I've been here so long; I feel I have good relationships with everybody that I can take care of this stuff. Rather than send the student yet one more place because I think that's a problem here. We bounce students. The students will say to me, I went to this office, they sent me somewhere else, then I got sent somewhere else, then I got sent somewhere else. Can anybody solve this problem.

If you could implement tomorrow with your magic wand, changes,

how would you change student services to get rid of that or to become more efficient or more student friendly or whatever it might be.

Well, I think we're in the process of changing it. Now that in the past I guess two years or whatever, the student affairs division got formed, we all work in the same area for the same person, so gradually a lot of that is changing. Actually, I find out that it's not the student services that are a big problem; it's the academic departments where people don't know the policies. They don't where to send students. Student Financial Services with a new director is addressing some of their customer service issues and changing them. Because that was a big problem in that office and now it seems like they're becoming much more responsive to students.

Because I would imagine that relationship would particularly around registration and other times would be particularly important that you're on the same page or have an open line of communication that information can flow fairly quickly between.

Right. And I think it's important that I and my assistant and various other members of my staff know who the go to people are in each office. And we all have people we know in a particular area who we bypass everybody else when we go to them because we have either a personal relationship or we know that they'll actually do something as opposed to another individual who may not. And I know that it's really funny. I'll call a certain department chair person and a student worker will answer the phone, they'll be very polite and they'll say, well who's calling to

screen the call which is fine. And I always want to say to the kid, which I don't, I always want to say, he'll talk to me. You know, of course I don't, because people take call my calls. Again, and I don't want to sound egotistical, but they'll take my calls.

You're the center of the universe. We all think we're the center of the universe.

But records are.

In a lot of ways, we are.

I don't think that's hard to understand. Do you feel with some of these issues that are being addressed, could you expand on what the route of them was. We've talked about the tremendous growth, and that you kind of skipped that one era of phone registration. Why was Columbia slow or what was part of that process that made it finally possible or made it to take such a long time.

Oh, I think we had the same leadership for a long time which was fine, but I think that we needed new people with fresh ideas. And I think when we had our last NCA accreditation; they said we were too thin at the top. And actually, we were and in some cases still are too thin everywhere. But, as you know, we've gotten a number of new positions, top level administrative positions. I think that in some ways, we were stuck in the past and I think our top administration in the past wasn't really technologically as astute as individuals we have now.

I think because of a couple of reasons. Because of the turnover in our top administration; because of the fact that they recognized we were falling behind. We would get students who registered here their first semester and say well, gee, I was out at my junior college and I just registered on line. Here, I'm standing in this three-hour line. What is this.

So, we just fell behind because I guess nobody felt it was important to commit the resources to do what we're doing now. And maybe it was the new administration who said if we're going to be and we always hear from the president, the best student centered art school, well if we're going to be that, it doesn't happen just in the class room. It has to happen in how we respond to student's needs. And oasis responds at this point pretty well and will be much better in the future responding to student's needs. A student should be able to at three in the morning, if he wants to see his transcript, look at it. If he wants to register at three in the morning, fine. Go ahead and do it. Change the schedule. I mean in the past, students would say but I'm going out of town, I have an ill grandmother, whatever, can I change my registration time. And then it would always be this hassle I'd have to go through trying to play judge and is your excuse for registering soon more valid than somebody else's and all that kind of thing. Now it's, you know, you have your computerized time slots. That's when you register and that's it. And if you have to go out of town, fine. I had a student call me from England and say I'm going to need to register. I say, fine. Go ahead. You're in England. Go on line and register. We're responding

much better to the needs of our students and I think our administration recognized that we had to do that. We were falling behind.

Could you talk about maybe a few of the key people since you started here at Columbia that have impressed you or played a particular role in your career here, most memorable. Nothing necessarily specific, but for whatever reason you will remember them and why.

Well, I think always remember Herman Conaway who passed away a number of years ago. He's the person who hired me. He's the person who basically gave me kind of the go ahead to fix this office. This office has a problem, fix it. And he pretty much let me do what I felt was right which fortunately turned out to be right because there were a few mistakes. Some stupid, some not so stupid. We all have our bumps in the road.

I'll always remember Herman. As a matter of fact, my wife and I just mentioned him this morning because I was talking about something. He had us over to his house one time and we had him over for dinner once, so I'll always remember Herman.

And Bert Gall, Bert was interesting individual. He had his quirks, but I like Bert and I think he did a lot of good for the college in the time he was here. But other than that, I mean I've been around a long time. I've worked at three colleges. I've seen presidents come and go, you know, every few years, there's a new president. So, I think Dr. Carter has gotten off to a good start.

So, other than that I don't know that there's anybody who has had a great influence on me or anybody in particular who stands out in my mind.

A lot of times when we look at the college, and I've interviewed a lot of faculty, some of the issues of staff and administration aren't always explored. And I was wondering if you could speak to some of that because we don't have a lot of input from that where I don't know that there's a proposal that the staff wants to unionize. What are the issues that face a staff at a college that maybe get overlooked or you know said records isn't high profile. The other office said that our staff issues also not the high profile issues.

Well, I think staff kind of feels at times that they're second class citizens. Of course, each area feels without them the college would fall apart. The teachers feel they're the most important people and forget about the staff. Students come to the school for the faculty. The staff feels like well, that's fine that the teachers are teaching, but without us, to do all the nuts and bolts and all this bureaucratic work, I mean somebody's got to issue grades, somebody's got to collect money. So, the staff feel like well, you know, we're more important. And the maintenance staff who are contract people, probably feel like well, without us to clean the place, the school couldn't open. So, I mean everybody feels like without them, the college couldn't function.

I think many times the staff feel like second class citizens. We do jobs that aren't necessarily glamorous and in some cases, just plain

old boring. Keeping up a filing room, mailing out transcripts, I mean, there's nothing exciting about that. Those are critical functions. Nothing exciting about it. Staff work all year round whereas they could possibly resent faculty who aren't here a lot of the time.

So, I think it's basically just that the staff wants to feel like they're important and they're recognized. I think the convocation we had last week where Dr. Carter and the other vice presidents got up and spoke was very good. Because the staff needs to be informed. Staff works here too. Somebody should let us know what's going on and keep us informed and not just people at my level, even down to the lowest position here.

So, would you say that that is moving in a positive direction with the most recent administration that they seem to be reaching out to the staff as well.

Right. They seem to be reaching out to the staff. Now, the cynic in me can say, well are they doing that because of all of this union stuff going around, but, for whatever reason, I think it's good that the administration is recognizing the staff as important people that are necessary to keep this place functioning.

If we could look back a little bit, now obviously oasis, you already said was so important in changes. Do you think even college wide, what have been the biggest challenges to Columbia in the past since you came in '88.

I would think the biggest challenges have been our growth. Now we've grown phenomenally. We are constantly buying buildings, which is good. I'm the proponent of

buying everything we can get our hands on in this area. We haven't necessarily in some areas increased staff exponentially. And I think the biggest challenge we've had in this institution is managing our growth and managing it in a way that makes some sense. It's great to buy buildings, but are we scheduling our classes in there properly. Do we have enough teachers even to teach these classes. How are we going to function with more and more buildings and more and more students and are we increasing our services for those students. And do we have enough staff and enough faculty. I mean it's great that we're the largest film school in the world, but do we have enough teachers for all of these students. I mean I've seen times at registration where wasn't a single space in a single film class left and we're still at two days of registration with new students coming in.

And parents were, that's back when Burt was here, there were a couple of parents who went into Burt's office to complain to him that my kid came here because he wants film classes. He's a transfer student and the only thing left open is a history course and whatever. So, I think our biggest challenge is managing our growth and doing it in a way that not only do we not burn out the staff and overload the faculty; but that we don't also have students just saying this place is a mess. I can't get my classes. I'm leaving and walk out the door. And I've seen that happen. I've seen students just give up and say I'm going to go somewhere else.

And that's the worst PR. Because they tell everybody. For the future, where do you see Columbia going and what do you foresee as the biggest challenges. And maybe if you could, I forgot to go back to this, you mentioned open admissions and your commitment to that and that changed. Maybe you could address that or expand on that a little.

Well, we're still an open admissions school, but the admissions office and I'm not 100% familiar with what they do, but I know that they look at the applications, they look at all the relevant documentation and if they feel students maybe are marginal in terms of those students being successful here, they require these students to take a couple of bridge classes for a few weeks and then the determination is made as to whether or not the students can succeed here. Which I think is a good because in the past, we'd admitted everybody whether we thought they could make or not. And to run up a huge bill for a student who obviously just is not college material, it doesn't make any sense.

So, I believe we should still be open admissions, but we should also help the students who are trying to get in to succeed and make sure that they do have a chance to succeed before we register them, fill up seats in classes, charge them thousands of dollars and then they have no chance of making it here.

If your version, if you will, of the mission of the college and how you think we're doing.

Well, I think we're doing very well. I have a bunch of relatives who came here. I have a niece who graduated from here. I have a sister-in-law who graduated from

here and my stepdaughter graduated from here. So, there's this whole family connection. I think we're doing very well in terms of meeting our mission statement. I think that it poses challenges for us because we do have to manage our growth. We do have to manage who comes in. But I think we're meeting our mission of accepting students who maybe can't get into other school or have had difficulties elsewhere and we're a place that they can succeed in. I know my stepdaughter had all kinds of issues before she came here in three or four different schools and it worked out for her here.

Could you describe what Columbia offered her that she wasn't getting elsewhere.

We have a different atmosphere here. It's a freer atmosphere. It's more open. You can be whatever you want to be at Columbia. If you want to be a student and we've had these, who were John Smith last week and want to be Joanna Smith this week, you can do that. We've had students who have had sex change operations. We're very totally open to any sexual orientation. Whereas other places, it just wouldn't be that way. And I think the atmosphere around here is one of more of a sense of freedom, more of a sense of you can be whatever you want to be. And I think our faculty, because so many of them are working professionals, bring something to the school that other schools don't have because they're out in the world and maybe they're a little more in some cases, more down to earth or realistic as to what the real world really is instead of being at a school in the middle of corn field. I mean Julie went to Iowa State; it's in the middle of a corn field, small town, totally different atmosphere.

And do you worry at all about that freedom for students of expression or again, that they aren't forced to conform to certain expectations or standards. Has that changed since you've been here.

Oh, I think they're conforming to our standards and expectations more now than they used to. I think because of and I've used the word sophistication before because I don't know of a better word. Our student body has changed and they have expectations of getting good service, which they should get, they're our customers. But they also seem to be more ready to follow our rules and our procedures than students in the past used to be. It just seems like they come in here with more structure. Maybe that's the word I'm looking for. Maybe it's because in the past, we were so unstructured and so we did whatever we felt like and now that we've gotten bigger, we have to have more rules. We have to have more procedures and the students come in and since that's how they perceive us, then they tend to follow our rules more.

Do you think with the growth, can that coexist. That place where students that don't fit in well in other places that come and find a different atmosphere and the need for the increased structure because of the growth, can those things coexist.

Oh, I think so. I very much think so. I think that now we have the support systems in place. We didn't have the freshman center a number of years ago. We didn't have the counseling center. We didn't have people who can respond to crises or difficult situation or student concerns like we do now. We have more support systems in place to help the students with whatever their students. We have the health

center. Before this was kind of like free wheeling, do whatever you want, rules are made to be broken.

There was one graduate dean one year who said well, we're here not to enforce the rules, but to make exceptions to them. So, it's a different place now.

That could be a nightmare for an office like yours. Any office. You have touched on all the points that it was that I needed to raise with you, but is there anything else that you think would be important to share with the oral history project that we haven't talked about.

Nothing I can think of at the moment. I do want to reemphasize my feelings about the atmosphere here. I worked at IIT which was an engineering school for eight years and then I came here and I was at Chicago State for just a couple of years, a very brief period of time. But here, it was just so much different, maybe it's just engineers tend to be a different type of people. We know that (*inaudible*) where all that stuff is. But I really enjoyed and still do the atmosphere here, the fact that there's just so much energy. There's so much going on at this school. I mean it's impossible to see and know and do everything, all the exhibits and everything, it's just a huge amount of creativity and talent here. I know I've taken classes here, mostly computer classes and my wife's taken a lot of art classes and we really enjoyed the college not only as students, as a matter of fact, I taught a freshman seminar class one semester and my wife taught a course in the management department, so it's almost like the college

has just kind of become a huge part of our lives where we've worked here. But I've seen the school from being a student, a faculty member, and an administrator. So, I kind of feel like I've seen it from all of the angles. So, I understand some faculty problems, I understand the student issues after being in 10 or 12 classes here and it's really been interesting and its just whole atmosphere I think is really great here.

What did you teach in the freshman seminar.

It was a little of everything which I only did it one semester and I was a little uncomfortable because I didn't feel like I can get a handle on the whole thing. There was some creative thinking. We were supposed to be mentors to the students, take them on trips. That was about five years ago, so I don't remember everything.

You didn't get the teaching bug.

No. Actually I had taught seventh grade for eight years in the Chicago public school system. So that pretty much satisfied my teaching desires.

Well, the point you're making on the atmosphere and people really being drawn to work here, and I don't know if you can speak to this, but the other thing that's coming up most recently is that there's a fear factor of I think with people. Are they going to be able to stay here. And I don't know again, if you want to speak to that, but it is interesting because many of the points you make, a lot of other people and its not just faculty, and its not staff, I mean that's a common theme about liking the energy, the creativity and that you don't

get paid as much maybe as elsewhere. You don't have the facilities, but the people that are here. But, most recently, there's also that fear.

There is and that's unfortunate. I was on vacation last week and when I walked back into my office Monday morning and I said to my staff, how's everybody doing, what's going on, anything happen. The first thing a couple of them said to me was well, nobody got fired that we know of. So I thought that it's unfortunate that there is that feeling in existence now that what's going on here. Is there house cleaning go on. Are people going to be let go. Are our jobs safe and I know that the president is aware of that. He addressed it at the convocation. And I think that's unfortunate and that's something that years ago, nobody felt that way.

Do you feel that what the president said helped (*inaudible*) some fears.

I think it helped. But I also think people are still a little concerned and there's always conspiracy people who say well, I've had people say to me well you know you're getting older, you've been here a long time. You know they may want to get rid of the older people because they're making too much or have increased health costs or whatever. I don't know. I certainly hope that none of that is true and that whatever changes have been made are pretty much the extent of it and other than that I feel that I try and do a good job and my plan right now is to stay until I retire and hopefully that will happen.

Well, I want to thank you very much for your perspective. Like I said, that we don't have enough information on documenting kind of this aspect of the history of the college, so unless there's a last comment you want to make, we can end the interview.

No, I have no other comments and I enjoyed giving you my thoughts and if there's anything else you would like to know, feel free to contact me.

Okay, great. Thanks.