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### Interview with Rose Economou, 2001

Columbia College Chicago

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## ROSE ECONOMOU

*Okay, it is June 21st, 2001. This is an interview with Rose Economou. She is a faculty member of the Journalism Department and Coordinator of Broadcast Journalism. In addition she teaches in the Film Department and in the Freshmen Seminar, Senior Seminar which are now part of the Liberal Education Department.*

**So if you could tell us when did you come to Columbia and what were the circumstances that brought you here?**

Well, actually I came exactly ten years ago, a little over ten years ago that is, but ten years ago in terms of academic years. I came in September of 1990, and it was an easy decision to come to Columbia. And matter of fact, I'll tell you how easy it was that I knew I wanted to come back. I was born in Chicago. I wanted to come back to Chicago. My mother was ill. I had spent my entire career, 20 something odd years literally on the road for CBS news, I was working for ABC stations. I did independent projects for PBS, worked on a PBS show, did a Front Line for PBS.

And I became, after my broadcast journalism, I wanted to do long format television documentary and I became an independent documentary producer. In other words, I raised money and did my own work and some of it, you know, I've been rewarded very well. I have seven Emmys, five International Film Festival Awards and so I was doing pretty well. I was able to raise money, but in 1990 in New York there was a recession, a terrible recession. It was very difficult, I could get like \$300 thousand-

dollars, but couldn't find the matching funds and one day it's just interesting, on a fluke I just sent away my resume to both the Film Department and the Journalism Department and I got a call back from the Chair of the Journalism Department, who said that he was going to be in New York and he wanted to talk to me because there was an opening for an artist in residence.

And it was really interesting, he came to New York, we talked, I liked what he said about Columbia.

**Who was this?**

This was Nat Lehrman.

**Okay.**

And I will have to say, I really had to think about it because I didn't want to leave New York. I was pretty successful in New York. I enjoyed my independent film making colleagues. I was very much engaged in the life of the city, but I will have to say the day he called me to find out if in fact I would accept, the night before at 3 in the morning someone was screaming for their life right underneath my bedroom window and I hadn't slept the rest of the night. And he called early in the morning and I just said, "yes, get me out of this place." So you know, in kind of a negative way, I definitely—

**You got pushed.**

I got pushed to Chicago, but I was glad that I came here. And I would have to say that the first two weeks I was at Columbia it was frightening, it was absolutely frightening because I had always been in my career on the fast track as they say. And when I got here and my job

was simply, they just simply told me we have a broadcast journalism program. Students take technical courses in the Television Department, journalism courses in the Journalism Department, take a couple of courses, by the way also in the Radio Department and right now the students feel lost. They don't feel like they're in any department and exactly what I found.

I mean literally I remember the very first student I met, actually she lived in my neighborhood on the south side and a lovely African American woman by the name of Diana Nelson and she just said, she just walked into my office, her eyes wide open and she just said, "I'm so glad you're here. I have been lost for the last three years of my career here at Columbia."

And that came—and you know I heard that over and over again and matter of fact it was a very—I think that the designers of the program really thought about



everything, but the program had been up and running for a while and no major changes had happened. And so I was very ambitious and wanted to make sure that the writing courses were in the Journalism Department because we are first journalists, whether you do it for television or radio or print and it was a struggle.

I will have to say that the first four years were some of the most miserable years of my life, only because they were years in which I had to learn a great deal about working in what was the largest organization that I had ever worked in. I mean I worked for a network, CBS Network News but that's relatively small in the big picture. You know everyone. It's kind of like a big family, but I didn't feel like I was in a family here. Matter of fact, what I found were rivaling departments, enormous egos including my own. I mean it wasn't just the chairs that had big egos, I had big egos too. I had been successful in what I did and I thought that they hired me for my expertise and frankly they didn't want to hear about it.

And I think that for the first couple of years that I was here, I was just literally harassed. I mean it was, and I'll tell you I have—and the second week after I was here I said "I don't know if I want to stay here," and something about my stubbornness kicked in. Well, I'll be god—you know, I'll be darned if these folks are going to tell me what broadcast journalism is. You know I've won not only every award Dupont, Columbia, AP, every award that you could think of and won a Newman, I was honored by the Newman Program to go to Harvard for a year, which is very

competitive and a lot of journalists don't. And I was the first person, broadcaster from the Midwest to receive one.

And you know, I thought these folks have—you know I know broadcast journalism, they don't. And so I thought—and every day I would have this, in the afternoons I would have, besides the formal classes that I taught, I had something called open workshops in the afternoon where students who had ideas for stories could drop into my office. We started, I introduced them to long format documentaries as a way of telling some of the stories that couldn't be told in a news format.

I tried to encourage them to reach out and try for some of the competitive internships in Chicago. I knew a lot of people of course, in this market, because I had worked for WBBM. I had worked with Bill Kurtis, on the focus unit. I was his field producer and we had done, we worked together for four years and done a great many award winning documentaries and of course news segments. So I brought Bill into the school, I brought Warner Saunders, I brought all the people that I, Phil Walters when he was alive, a wonderful writer.

I was able to introduce them to a lot of people in the market and then after I was in journalism for a while and developing my own courses, then I was able to introduce them to people that I knew nationally. Walter Meers from the Associated Press, Jonathan Alter from Newsweek, of course Ted Koppel who has been so wonderful to our students when I've taken students to Washington and he's also done, when I taught political reporting courses, he's done sessions

with the students. And so I was able to kind of bring people that I knew into the college and my theory has always been that the more people we engage in the professions and hook them up with our students, the more people we invite to Columbia and they become invested in the college, the easier it will be for our students to gain entry to high level positions in the professions and especially in broadcast journalism and documentary filmmaking and I think I'm right.

During the four years that I headed the program before we made some changes it was wonderful. My students have gone on, I have two students at Dateline NBC, I have students that have gone to Time Magazine. I have students that have gone to Wall Street Journal and just all the great publications. I'm currently working with some students to go to the Washington Post. Of course our students have always found entry into the Tribune and the Sun Times, but get them out of the region and become national players.

And so I knew I brought with me when I came some resources and I've been trying to share the people that I know. I mean coming up in the fall Barbara Kopple, a two time Oscar winning documentarian, will be coming to Columbia as my guest and—

**I need to know about that because she did Harlan County USA?**

Yeah, she did Harlan County USA, American Dreams. I saw her down a few weeks ago at the Devil Take Documentary Film Festival at Duke in Durham, North Carolina and she strives for excellence. And

my theory has always been and I'm sure it has been yours as a teacher, is that one thing we can do as teachers is model the way. Be role models, model behavior. And the folks that have high standards introduce our students with not only faculty with high standards, but also professionals in the industry and they too will ask more of themselves, expect more of themselves and want more. And I think it works. I think it works.

I think that our job is to light a fire. What's really, really wonderful about being at Columbia is that yes I had a beginning that was the first two, three, four years were painful, were so incredibly painful and to the point that I was even thinking about filing a lawsuit against the college. It was serious. Some serious stuff was happening. And I thought differently of it because I spent a lot of time with students. I'm a faculty advisor. I've been a faculty advisor for the Journalism Club, most recently the Latino Alliance and other student organizations, a service organization at one time.

And one thing I've learned about working with the students, is they are the college. It's not the administrators, it's really that close relationship that's forged between the student and the teacher and the student and the other students that they work with, that they play with and those are the lasting bonds. So if I were doing say a chart of the college, you know we've been so obsessed the last couple of years with restructuring, by the way, which I've been for. I think that I've been really excited about the restructuring and excited that we're going to have a School of Media Arts. It's long overdo and I think it will solve some of our short range

problems and are just the endless possibilities that can come from collaborations, between the departments and between the professionals and the artists. I'm really excited about it. This is such an exciting time at the college.

But just to go back and tell you that one message that came across to the student is Columbia changed their lives. A lot of the students that I worked with early on came from the poorest communities in Chicago. They came from working class families where books were not valued, where art was not valued, and they came to the college and the artist within was unlocked and the student was inspired in a way that brought—the eyes started to sparkle. You know you could always tell if a student is awake to the opportunities of the world, when you look into their eyes and these students were coming alive. Students so shy they couldn't even speak a sentence in class when they were freshmen graduated bubbling with possibility, bubbling with—

I mean I just remember one of my students, Nadine Claremont from South Africa. I encouraged her, she used to come out. I was doing a documentary in Englewood and she would come out as my field producer and just getting her to leave the college, she was so shy and so quiet. And once I got her engaged in the college, in our activities in the journalism club and our panel discussions and other opportunities she was just wonderful. And I got her a job working for the South African Broadcasting Corporation on Johannesburg, South Africa as an internship, a paid internship when she was still

in school. She went back for the summer to be with her family and then she was the—she worked in the NBC Network Bureau here in Chicago.

See, after you start slowly working with students and giving them little opportunities, you know first doing little video producing and then giving them more responsibility, by the time they graduate everybody sees that these are people that not only can think but they work, they have a good work ethic and people want to hire them, they write well, people want to hire them. And writing is so important in broadcast journalism and she was just snapped up by NBC. It was just amazing.

And I love seeing how they grow during their four years. I try to help nurture them any way that I can, like the rest of my colleagues. I will have to say that one thing that's really always been really fun, up until just this past year I always taught a Thursday morning broadcast writing course and my students would have all of these liberal education courses on Wednesday afternoon and evening. You know Louis's Peace Studies and Arvis' economics course and Urban Politics. And they would come to my class the next morning so excited about learning, that they could not sit still in their seats.

And for me as a teacher, I mean all I want to do is open them up to a higher, get them to a higher level of both literacy in broadcast journalism and writing, but also cultural literacy and getting them to the point where they have no fear about speaking what's in their heart, what's in their soul, being able to express their innermost feel-

ings. I mean, I think that's my goal because if they can communicate, if they can articulate their lives and their struggles, they become more empathetic communicators with the issues that are important in the community. You know they are more attached to the community so I always try to encourage, especially those students who have had—and by the way who have had a tough life. But they're not only the students that grow up in squalor, but they also are students who grow up in isolation in suburban communities, communities where people don't know their neighbors, communities where cultural activities are not encouraged, are not promoted. Anyway it's been an interesting time.

And what happened I will have to say, what happened in this struggle of mine to find a place in Columbia is that somewhere along the line, somewhere along the way I fell in love with the dream of Columbia—

**Which—?**

—which is the potential, that everyone has potential and that everyone has a role to play, in not only the college but service to the community and service to their profession. And I'm seeing now that I'm working with Freshmen Seminar and Senior Seminar, it's kind of like cradle to grave. I shouldn't say grave, cradle to bridge because what we're doing at senior seminar is bridging to what we call the real world and it's truly exciting. I feel that I'm at an exciting time at Columbia.

**I want to go back to a couple of things way back, but when you said kind of on a whim that you sent your resume off to Columbia to the film and the Journalism**

**Department, did you know of the college when you were in Chicago or had you heard about it professionally?**

No.

**What were your impressions?**

I have to tell you, even the four years that I was at WBBM I did not know of the college at all.

**Okay.**

However, I came back to Chicago in the 80s to do a documentary at Robert Taylor Homes for WTTW. It was called, "Crisis on Federal Street." And while I was using the facilities at WTTW, I saw a documentary that a professor had done here at the college about a community in South Chicago and I thought hmm, this is an interesting place. And then I just asked around about, you know, what did anybody know about Columbia among the technical people that I worked with and people seemed to have—they were just starting to hear about it and just starting to hear about—see, I had never met any student from Columbia, it was just seeing the professional work of the faculty member and that interested me. Because I knew the work of folks from Northwestern and DePaul and University of Illinois, where I graduated from, but not Columbia and so that kind of got me interested in it.

So I was looking at my options and what I had done, the same time I had written away to Columbia, I had just received a New York Times had awarded me a full fellowship to work on an MBA and new management at the University of Memphis. And so I had to choose, between coming to Chicago and going to do an MBA to work at one of the local stations in Memphis. I want to say for many

years I thought I made a mistake, just for the record and in terms of my career here at Columbia. Maybe I've made a mistake because maybe I should have, instead of coming here you know when the college was still struggling with broadcast journalism although I'd like to think that I have helped shape it a little although I think it needs much more work. And my hope is that a dean of media arts will help carry on some of the reorganization, some of the work that needs to be done because I think I would like to see a—I mean I think we periodically have energized the program but I think we could do much more and our students deserve much more.

**Okay, the other thing I wanted to go back to was in those first several years that you struggled to it sounds like fulfill what you thought you were hired to do, to bring your expertise to the department and you met so much resistance, was that in part or to a great extent due, did you feel that it was due to the fact that you were a woman? I mean what was going on? What was the resistance? Was it beyond just egos and territory?**

No, it was not beyond egos and territory. Yes, I think it had something to do with because I was a woman, but I think it had more to do with that I was a woman that spoke up period.

**Okay. The final thing I want to return to before we move on that you brought up when you talked about, and I thought you said particularly when you first came here and the students that you heard repeatedly was that Columbia changed their lives. Yes.**



**Do you worry at all as Columbia becomes more well known, more successful nationally or more known nationally, respected nationally that that's going to impact the students that come here?**

I think it already has.

**It already has. In what way?**

And I will have to tell you—

**Do you worry about that or not so?**

I worry about it a great deal.

**Okay.**

I worry about it a great deal because number one, when I first came here I lived in an African American neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. I used to come and go to school, waited at the bus stops, came home with on the "L" and on the buses that I took with our students. I mean dozens of our students. I only see one person now and that troubles me. That troubles me that we have been forced to raise our tuition and I think the raising of the tuition has discouraged students from working class and poor families, who by the way had never borrowed money. The prospect of going into debt is frightening to them and my concern is that we have inadvertently started closing our doors to the original people, the original students that we promised that we would help. And you know I have played a role on the Budget and Priorities Committee and I've always taken the position that we should be lowering tuition, not raising it.

However, my hope is that the more the college can raise outside money or what they call soft money I'm hoping that this, every year of dramatic increases can stop because

we're losing them. We're losing all of these fine people who have incredible stories. Who matter of fact, a lot of their stories haven't been told and they are the ones we need to come here, learn the skills, being able to not only tell their stories but serve the communities in which they come. We need them and we need to start forging stronger relationships with their communities, you know by establishing, by opening our doors to retraining you know using our facilities to on weekends retrain people in the community, to give folks that don't have the inclination for four years academic to at least open our doors to some of the skills that we can teach. And I think that there's a great deal that we could do.

By the way I think our office of—we have this Office of Community Outreach and I think that they're doing a fine job, but there's much more that can be done. And I think we can do it and I want us to do it at a department level. I mean I want—we do a lot of outreach to the feeder high schools in the city and we have a high school institute, but we can do more. We can do much more. And I think we have to do a great deal in the Hispanic community because a four year college education, if you're a female for instance, the Hispanic community is often not supported. Poor folk need their kids to work and help the family and not go to college.

But in fact, you know more and more Hispanic students are going and I think that the school has an excellent support system, an Office of Latino Cultural Affairs, a very active student organization that

does leadership training. We are training Latinos in leadership skills and I know we have done, I've done for the past ten years, every year I do a Latino Writer's Workshop, where I invite the outstanding writers, journalists and narrative writers to come in and talk about the issues, both personal and professional, that have to do with writing about and with the Latino community.

But we've missed out in our African American students and we're flat lining in terms of an increase in their coming to Columbia. And I think especially in our retention of African American males, I think there's so much that we have to do and I would love to see a program targeted to African American males started at the college.

By the way what's been great about the last four years is that there have been so many good programs. Our enrichment programs for entering high school students in reading, writing, math, that has really helped our commitment by our academic advisors and career advisors to do counseling along the way. Our departments that have encouraged, have established their own tutors within the departments for any kind of specialized skill or writing center, these are things that we could have everything that we do now to support the student to grow. We should keep on making everything—I mean we are supposed to be a student centered college and if we're—we say that, but we have to walk the talk and remind ourselves that, that's our job.

**Okay, I want to move on to a couple of other topics that we need to address. The issue that**

**you are, one of the things that you're focusing on, the internationalizing of journalism, the department curriculum, can you speak to that why you feel that's important and how you see instituting that here at Columbia or developing that?**

Well, I do feel very strongly and before I came to Columbia I had been a media consultant for the counsel on foreign relations in New York and I did a study about—my study was to report on international stories, the level of international subject matter on American Television and Radio. It was dismal, let me say. The report had two grants for the Ford Foundation for that study. It was eventually called “While America Sleeps” and there was the original study and then they had me do an action agenda and what could be done. And so the wonderful thing about the council on foreign relations, is that they can bring all kinds of resources together and did and just let the word go forth from their headquarters. They published the reports and circulated them not only through the broadcast, but to the experts and the experts started making themselves available to especially television and radio markets in the Midwest and isolated parts of the country, so they too could have the luxury of expertise on international affairs.

And I will have to say that one thing when I was doing that study was that I said, “well where does all of this start? This starts in our journalism schools. The interest in international affairs starts in journalism schools.” And so what I tried to do here at Columbia, is I have launched a new kind of direction. It's not considered a concentration yet, but it's certainly a new program within journalism and that is two-fold. It's called Writing

for the Spanish News Media. And we've invited some of the top writers for both radio and television and print, Spanish writers to come in and teach our students, especially our students who are bilingual. And then we're, by the way, encouraging those that need refresher courses in language to take.

Here at Columbia we also have in this department, liberal education we have writing for foreign speakers where everybody can improve their Spanish. And so it's well supported by the Latino Community. I've established partnerships with both Univision, Telemundo, La Raza and Exito! And we've had a number of the executives join our board of trustees, so that we really have their input in the decision making about the entire college.

So on one hand, its to really make an effort to serve the fastest growing media in America is Spanish media and so we are inviting our students to be a part of that growth and they are. They're working at the local stations, they're writing for the newspapers and we want that—I mean, I hope that that will grow.

**My guess is possibly and tell me if I'm right or wrong though that other Journalism Departments in let's say more traditional institutions of higher education might be dragging their feet in this way or ignoring it, yeah.**

Absolutely, we're the first school in the Midwest to offer this program and we'd be the first in the country except that in Florida there's a school that's offering some courses. So anyway, we feel very strongly

about this and this is one way that we will be very special, in our region anyway. The other thing is that in order to support that and to encourage our students to start telling international stories, to make—see, right now a lot of broadcasters, print and broadcast journalists don't know how to take an international story and connect it to their community to make it make sense to the community, so that the community feels that this is one of their stories and that's a certain kind of writing. It's a specialized kind of writing.

And what we're doing is we're trying to, number one, we're trying to establish a semester in Latin America program, where students no matter if they speak Spanish or not, if they don't speak Spanish, if there's intensive Spanish, a concentrated Spanish course involved but to go to Latin America. And my hope is that, and I've been talking to some of the counsel generals in Chicago, they would like to see this become exchange so that our students go and study course work, I mean study the arts, politics, history of Latin America. And actually, one of the publications that we're doing is a publication called Dispatches, where all of the writing that they do will be put on an online publication and transmitted of course through the internet.

**While they're there?**

While they're there, and the stories that they're writing, they'll also be doing internships with the local journalist organizations. And for those students who aren't journalists that come to the program, we will be trying to get them internships with non-profit organizations and international human rights organizations within these countries.

**So is this also part of your mission to increase the cultural literacy of your students?**

Absolutely, because I think that it's a part of breaking out of this regional, this kind of provincial attitude that Columbia had at the beginning. By the way I think we've always had—I mean I think our faculty has always had an international outlook, however, our programs haven't supported that. And I think now we're putting in a layer of curriculum, a layer to our curriculum that has to do with more international programming and here in liberal education we have foreign, you can study foreign policy, you can study of course every culture under the sun. But now it's time to put some of that, to let the student expand more, expand their opportunities internationally and I'm hoping that it starts with Latin America and that we have a program in Europe.

It's very important that we have a program in Asia and that we not only have these international programs, but I feel very strongly that we have programs. We invite our students to have collaborative partnerships with Native American students on reservations to go to Appalachia, to have development programs in Appalachia where they work side and side with their counterparts in Appalachia and to not only help document the stories of the region, but also teach some of the skills that we have to students of all ages, not just young people but the people of all ages who would like a little help.

So I think that when our students have projects in Appalachia and on reservations and in some of the other corners of America that they too will, those are learning experiences. Their internships, their inde-

pendent projects, their courses, there might be courses for instance the Rosebud Reservation to speak Lokota. We've had, during the summer we've gotten students from the reservations, that have come for journalism and they've so enriched the classroom having someone who can, you know having Native Americans who have never been off the reservation come to learn about journalism here is a great opportunity for them and for us and for our students and I hope that this continues.

I hope we do more outreach to the reservations and before I came to Columbia I worked and supported the American Tribal College Fund and tried to develop film and video projects on 27 reservations with tribal colleges, so I mean there's just so much more that we could be doing. I think it's important, what better way to learn about another culture than to live in it, to immerse yourself in it and I hope our students will be able to do that.

We have the kind of students by the way, who are open to these experiences, who have heart you know, who have these enormous hearts and who are developing a voice and their vision and I think the more opportunities we could give them, the better our students will be. The more successful they'll be in terms of the goals that they'd like to accomplish. I mean I don't think, what's so wonderful about our students is when they tell you what they see in their future they don't talk to you first about money, which is wonderful. I mean money is something that you could never have enough of, right? And so why even try? But I mean, they hope to be successful but they see their

success not only in their professions, but in their communities and in their families. And we're supporting that, we're encouraging that.

**Okay, a couple of other things I want to make sure we get to. What is your response or how have you responded and your department and the trend towards fewer people reading print or picking up the newspaper? You've pointed to some of the things in your other answers but—?**

We've known about—I mean the school has just started talking about conversion. I've been working on conversion for the last 25 years of my life, my professional life.

**Can you explain what conversion means?**

Well, let me just tell you I think that there are a number of—we have always for the last ten years, have always told our students, have always encouraged our students, we've made it a part of the core curriculum that every student learns print broadcast online, they learn everything, that you are expected in this world to know everything. Because of these huge media companies that are developing that you do a story for print, you have to translate it to broadcast, both TV and radio, online. This is nothing new.

**So conversion it's almost like a translation from one medium to—?**

Yes, and so our students learn how to do everything in their core curriculum. And what's nice about that is that no matter if they're broadcast journalism major, their concentration is broadcast journalism and print, we find our students



not doing the opposite or doing one or the other media when they finally graduate. And they become more, they've always been more—anyway it's been easier, let me just back up and say, it's been easier for our students to get job because we've trained them in all the media. It's been much easier because we've emphasized writing and reporting and it's about writing. It's about being able to communicate a story, not only other people's stories but your own stories.

**So related to that, how do you and your department address open admissions in journalism as you've said, you know the foundation of which is writing? Has that been a special issue? Has it gotten easier, harder? How have you met that challenge?**

Well, it's been much easier to meet the challenge since the school has adopted enrichment programs for interim students. We have always had a requirement that our students have to get at least a C in English, in their first and second English courses.

**Here at the college?**

Here at the college.

**So what they did before your—?**

That doesn't matter.

**Right, it's here, okay.**

But that here they've been able to—and then once we get the C student, we have this most amazing tutor, Bill Ferguson who had been four years with United Press International. He could teach anybody. I'm telling you this man is a genius and we've been so fortunate in the last five or six years, we've always had tutors, but he's not a tutor, he's really, he's more than a tutor. He's had the ability to

encourage and inspire and he brings out the best in our students, he really does. And each one of us works with our students. I mean we have to.

I don't think I work with my students—I don't need to work with my students as much as I used to and the enrichment programs have really helped in that. But what we get from being an open—we get so much from being an open admissions college. We get stories and I will just give you an example. I had this exercise where students write about—I can test their level of writing. I give them a story. I tell them, “tell me about a day in your life that you'll never forget.” So the kind of stories that I've gotten over the years are, I'll never forget the day my parents were shot. They had a mom and pop store. I'll never forget the day I was gang raped. I'll never forget the day I saw my mother for only five minutes of my life and the next time I saw her she was in a coffin.

I mean our students come to the college with incredible histories and what we're able to do I think successfully is get them to turn that history around to grow from that place, to be able to empathize with other people that are—I mean our students come with so much life that we as a journalism program are enriched by it, we as a film, documentary film program are enriched by it. I mean these are folks that come with incredible street smarts, incredible street smarts and the world needs these folks and people come a long way, people. They're calling me all the time, “we need someone, we need someone who, we need one of your students, our organization needs

one of your students,” and they're right, they need us. They need our students. And that's why continually raising the tuition, I'm so afraid that some of these students won't come to us. I don't know where they'll go. I'm really worried about that.

**That comes up again and again, that if Columbia with open admissions or as an affordable college wasn't here, where would these people go. The other theme that's reoccurring and it seems like we're turning out this is a college of story telling in one form or another, even in advertising that it's like the emphasis on being able to tell your story or someone else's story.**

Absolutely, yeah but I mean I see that that is our role. I mean I do. It's true that a lot of these professions like broadcast journalism really began as oral history, as oral communication. You know yes, they were sitting around a camp fire you know telling stories and by the way, we still tell stories the same way. We tell stories for the ear in broadcast journalism, which is the same way they've always told stories. So you know I think we are—and I hope and I think that if we decide to go forward with the documentary lab, its going to be about story telling, both scholarly as well as artistic expression.

**What is the documentary lab? Is that something that's in the works or—?**

I think that's something that has been kind of simmering under you know, it was an initiative of Caroline Lotta in 1998 and we've had college wide discussions about it. I've developed a five year plan. We are to the point of trying to find some agreement about what makes us special because we want

to have a documentary lab that's very different than say, Duke's documentary study center or MIT's media lab and there's a place called the Salt—there's a place in the Northwest that has something, an independent documentary institute.

So we want to be very special and I think we will be because we'll engage all of our programs, all of our departments and I just see it as, it has great potential, the idea has potential. I think now, it's just a matter of once our academic leadership is in place we will be able to go forward with that as well as with some of the international programs, some of the other programs that the departments are developing now.

**You mentioned that you know you've gone through several eras yourself at Columbia in that you felt that right now is a really exciting time to be here and that you're glad to be here now. And you also mentioned that you're in favor of restructuring and what's going to happen (inaudible)?**  
Absolutely.

**Do you have any worries about the future of Columbia or things that haven't been addressed beyond you know, when we talked about the students, but maybe you can speak to that?**

Yes. I think we still have some problems that need to be addressed and I think one of our problems is that we have to—I think that maybe we have—it is important that we get forward thinking people in what we call, the outside world, middle management among our chairs, among our deans. We need people with vision. We need leaders. I think we've been treading

water for the last three or four years, waiting for the restructuring, that what we've lost out is we've developed maybe some of the people who haven't been able to show their leadership potential, all they've been doing is managing day to day is watching, making sure that you know the basics were done.

**Right.**

But I think we have to move from mere managers to leaders and to people, who bring imagination and intellect and continually challenge us to raise our standards and to show us you know to keep on moving the bar up. We'll need those people.

**Do you think that—**

By the way, I think some of the people are already here, it's just that they haven't been tapped for those positions.

**What about do we have to look outside a little more or—?**

Sure. I mean I think you have to look outside. I mean, I think you're doing yourself a disservice if you don't. There has to be an international competition for all the jobs that we have available, but I mean international competition.

**Not national, international.**

Oh no, international competition. Oh absolutely. I mean I hope if we ever restart it, I have an incredible list of people that once we start moving for a chair of the Journalism Department, that I'd like to advertise the job internationally absolutely.

**Okay, well I think that's a good place to wind up.**

I'm sorry—

