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Interview with Diane Erpenbach, 2001

Columbia College Chicago

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D i a n e E r p e n b a c h

Today is March 29, 2001, and this is an interview with Diane Erbenpach, who is the coordinator of Fashion and Retail Management within the Management Department here at Columbia College.

So Diane, if you could tell us when you came to Columbia, and what were the circumstances that brought you here?

I came to Columbia in 1991, so I've been here 10 years. And at that time I was working with Mark Shale, which is an upscale clothing retailer in the area. They also had at the time I worked with them about 11 branch stores. And I was a corporate trainer for them, as well as a communications director. And before that time, I had taught at the International Academy of Merchandising and Design. And I was there for 10 years as well. And I was head of their Textiles Department, because textiles is kind of my area of expertise within the fashion industries. And before that, I worked at—while I was raising my kids, I was teaching continuing education at the College of DuPage. And before that I taught in Downers Grove North High School, in the Home Economics Department.

So that goes back to my whole history. So I've had a lot of educational background. In fact, my undergrad degree is in Secondary Ed. But I evolved into the industry, and through Mark Shale. And then while I was working here, when I first started working here at Columbia, I was working part-time as a retail representative, for—marketing retail representative for DuPont Apparel Fibers. So I was working with fibers at

Nordstroms, Sears, you know, major stores in the area, trying to promote the use of DuPont Fibers. So that's kind of my industry background as well as my educational background.

And who was your first link to Columbia, and how did you first hear about it, and what brought you here?

Well, I had taught at the Academy, as I had said, and while I was there, I developed a collegial relationship with Dennis Brozynski, who is now coordinator of the Fashion Design Department. And then he in the interim, while I was at Mark Shale, moved to Columbia. Columbia had approached him and asked him if he would start a Fashion Design Department, or program, I should say, it's not really a department. And he told me, he says, "you know, there's going to be a full-time opening in fashion retail management area." And he said, "would you be interested, you know?" He didn't know if I was ready to leave the industry or not. And at that point it was in the '90s, 1990, and there was a recession, and Mark Shale was cutting back. And, you know, I was still working for them, still had a job, but it just seemed that it was an appropriate time for me to move on. And I missed teaching, you know.

Being a corporate trainer is a form of teaching, but I missed the dynamics of the classroom, I was missing that whole collegial academic environment. And I felt that I had gained the experience that I really wanted from my own growth, from my own professional

growth. So I applied, and there was a national search, and I think there were 30 applicants, and I got the job.

Now, when you talk about, you went into Mark Shale as a corporate trainer initially?

Yes.

Can you tell me a bit about how that, you grew into the industry with this fashion retail management and then what you brought to Columbia and incorporated, I guess your education and then your interest in this particular industry of fashion?

Yeah, see when I was at the Academy I went back to school and got my master's degree in Management and Development of Human Resources. My goal was to work within a human resource department in the industry, in the corporate world. And I wanted it to be in fashion because—



In fashion, okay.

That's always been my content area, has always been in the fashion. And when I first started teaching, it was more in the design area, I mean, in terms of construction and pattern making and that kind of thing. But then through my master's degree I started moving more towards the business side of fashion. And so I guess that's—that evolution of getting my master's degree and then working in the industry within a human resource department, still teaching but also learning the business side. And especially the marketing side, as communications director, that got me hooked into a lot of marketing experiences, which then led to the DuPont retail marketing rep.

So all of those experiences really helped develop me for the role that I'm playing now at Columbia, because I didn't have that experience before I had gone to Mark Shale at all. And that's really what I'm supervising here. So certainly what I gained in the industry, I'm using very actively in the curriculum development, because I'm in charge of that as coordinator, in my hiring of faculty. And of course, in teaching, the class I teach are a direct link to my experience in the field. I wouldn't have ever gained that experience, had I not worked with Mark Shale and DuPont.

Could you give an example of how that department, you said curriculum and the development of a curriculum, about people that you hire, and your teaching, or what you're teaching? In other words, what initiatives did you bring that you put into work within the department?

Well, when I came to the department, it was very young—or, this program of fashion retail management was quite young. It was only

three years-old. But yet it's one year older than the fashion design program, so it started first within the Management Department. Now the fashion design, you have to understand, is in art and design; it's in a whole different department. So even though we collaborate and we're very highly linked in many areas; and we even team-teach some classes, it's two totally different degrees. So what I think I brought to the program was a more professionally approach to classes. It was a young program; it needed a lot of development, and I did bring that to the table. I mean, I think there were only five classes being offered, and now I don't even know my total number, to tell you the truth. But it has grown so much. And at the time I came, we only had 40 students in the program; now we have 175. So it's really, really grown tremendously in terms of depth and breadth. You know, we've grown with student population and we've grown most importantly with the curriculum.

And could you define what you feel is the purpose of the curriculum, you know, where you think it's headed or what you think it needs to consist of?

I spent my whole first year here researching that. And through the Fashion Advisory Board and through my contacts and networking in the industry, I continue to change and what I feel needs to be changed in the curriculum to accommodate the changes in the industry. I think the purpose of the whole curriculum is to prepare our students to be able to be successful in the current industry and also to have the problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills to adapt to the changes that are bound to

happen. Because it's an ever evolving—just by the nature of fashion—it changes every three months, just from the product point of view. But as we know in the whole business world, it has changed incredibly because of e-business and other types of electronic advances. I mean, the way we do business is so different than what it was three to five years ago, just because of computers have made it a whole different way of tracking inventory, for instance. Of knowing the customer base because of the marketing information, we can glean from the database. Now, we never used to be able to do that. When I was at Mark Shale, that was just very, you know, unknown almost, although Mark Shale was very cutting edge in their computerization of the business. So I was lucky that I was able, you know, to be at the forefront in that area. But how does—what was your question initially?

The curriculum, does it change frequently; are there constants?

Yes, there are constants. But I would say, I did spend a year researching that. I went to a lot of other colleges and visited, especially our theater, what we call the theater schools, like the community colleges in the area. I also studied curriculum at other universities, state universities as well as privates, to see, you know, where they were kind of headed, but then always keeping in mind our mission. Because our mission's slightly different than some universities, especially the land grant universities tend to have a mission that's more scholarly. They're educating their people to be PhDs and to eventually to be professors or researchers in the field of textiles or apparel.

And that's really not our mission at Columbia. And I felt that the mission at Columbia was much more practical based, and that my goal was to make sure that our students would be successful in the field as soon as they graduated, that they would be able to achieve a middle management level at the point of graduation, and that they would also be flexible enough to go from the creative to the most analytical end of the business, if they so chose.

So I was careful to have some constants in the curriculum and I still do. And that's evolved. And a lot of it has been due to very strong part-time faculty who have worked in the field and have given me very, very useful advice on yes, they need to know these fundamentals, and so I have 5 classes, or 4 classes that they have to take. But then beyond that they can tailor-make their own path, their own career path, whether it be very visual and creative, individual display or fashion styling or, you know, photo styling, that kind of thing, all the way to the most analytical buyer. Still, there is a large spectrum of choice for the students.

And a lot of that has evolved. It didn't all happen in the first 2 to 3 years. It changes. And about midway through my curriculum development, all of a sudden it was all these mergers and takeovers in the business, which meant that consolidation happened, which meant that a lot of buyers were not needed because they began buying from, you know, a large mass rather than individual stores.

So that created a void that was filled by another area called product development, which is developing product for private label lines. Or, for instance, Marshall Field's

has a lot of their own lines. Sears has a lot of their own lines, you know, product lines. Well, instead of buying, then all of a sudden, this whole new career option opened up, which was called product development, which meant that I had to take a look at the curriculum and say, okay, wait a minute, now, how am I going to prepare my students to be able to do this? And I reached back into my Mark Shale days because, guess what? They did a lot of product development. And it was just incredible what I was able to bring to the classroom in that area, and it just worked so well. I was thankful that I'd had that experience at Mark Shale, because as corporate trainer, I was very close to the buyers and the people who were doing product development in that company. I even went to New York and helped them select textiles and colors, and that kind of thing for the line.

So it was—that was a direct link that didn't happen right away. It happened about 3 to 5 years down the road, when this new opportunity in the industry opened up. And now it's interesting with 3-business, even though a lot of companies are—you know, there's a lot of shakeout, a lot of companies going under. But now all of a sudden the buying opportunity has taken off again, because these e-businesses need buyers. So it's all cyclical. Fascinating.

Could you speak a little bit more to your necessity to really be on top of things or on the cutting edge? If that is—you know, you say your mission is to really give your students the tools to hit the ground running, right, with their degree?

Exactly. Right.

And maybe also you could also speak to, has that been successful?

Very. I have more jobs than I have students. It's just incredible. I have more job opportunities for my students than I have students. And that's true of internships, too. This city is just rich with the retail/fashion merchandising opportunity.

Do they seek you, or Columbia out, and specifically Columbia grads?

Yes. Yeah.

And I don't want you to necessarily repeat yourself, but why would that be? What sets us apart?

Well, part of that would be, I think in the last 10 years now, we've established a reputation of graduating qualifying people who have, they have some of the content that's necessary for the business, but more importantly, they also have that liberal arts background that gives them the tools to adapt and to problem-solve and the critical thinking. Because when I ask employers, what are you really looking for in employees? And their number one thing is communication skills. And that, too, they're learning from their liberal arts background, but also I have been very careful to incorporate in every single class in my curriculum some form of communication skills that they have to practice. And most of it is in the area of oral presentation. And all of my teachers in every single class demand it. Not only that, but writing. They have to write. They have to have some kind of writing exercises of project.

So I think that that practice over and over again, it's really come home to me a great deal, when in their senior year, there's a cross-listed class, where my students are mixed in with fashion designers

and photo fashion majors. And in that particular class, when they give their presentation, by far and above, the management students are confident, they know exactly what to do, they're organized and they give their team presentation, they just shine. And it's because they practiced it for 4 years. And I think that really impresses the industry.

The other, I think, that also causes the industry to come to Columbia is because of the very strong networking that Dennis and I have achieved. We belong to all the major fashion organizations, we go to all the meetings and events. We make sure we're out there being seen and talking to people, and that we're exchanging cards, and that we do follow-up, that kind of thing. And I think that networking has just really helped us incredibly.

But if you weren't turning out quality students, that networking wouldn't—I mean.

Right. But that also keeps me up to speed on what's happening, because if I didn't have colleagues and friends in the industry that I could call on the phone and say, you know, what do you think about this, or what's happening here? And just always—and I've been secretary, I was secretary of the Fashion Group International Board for two years, I sat on the board another two years. When you go to meetings every month, or twice a month with these people that are in the industry, you hear things, then they talk about what's happening, I ask questions. So that's how I keep up to speed, because right now my position or my role here at Columbia doesn't allow me to work in the industry like I did when I first began. I had to drop that after I was here three years, because I'm just more than full-time with all

the involvement and participation I have in the college.

So for the first three years, even though you were developing curriculum and starting— and that was a full-time position correct? And you were still working in the industry?

Yes.

That kind of leads to my next questions, I'm curious. Has there been a downside or is there any conflict with getting— you talked about you have high-quality part-time teachers?

Yes.

Is it difficult to keep them on the cutting edge? Do you have to let them go and bring new ones in, or are they up to speed because they're—

No, because they're working. I mean, they're there. So I mean, that's not an issue. Again, where I learn a lot about what's happening because—now, I just hired—we just hired, I should say, the Search Committee just hired my first full-time faculty. I was the only full timer in my program for 10 years. And we just hired six weeks ago or so my first full-time faculty and I'm so thrilled. But she had been teaching with us for the last 8 years part-time. She is a Senior Buyer from Marshall Field's. And she would tell me all the time, "you know, Diane, the way I teach buying now and the way we do buying is so different than it was 5 years ago, 3 years ago." She said, "I'm constantly changing." In those conversations, I take my part-time faculty to lunch, so in those more informal conversations I find out more about what's going on and why—or they'll come to me and say, "you know, I don't want to use

this textbook any more. It's outdated," and we get the most recent textbook we can. And they said, "this is not the way the real world is." So we talk and we say, "okay, how can we develop this class to become more real world."

And it's just been so enriching, because I feel like we're really bringing the industry and the real world to the classroom through those experiences. And if it means tossing out a textbook that was published this year but it's not right, then why should we be charging our students \$60, \$75 for these, you know, textbooks that the teacher doesn't believe in? And it's through that process that I also learn well, what is important? What is really the most important thing the students shouldn't be learning to be a successful manager, to be a successful buyer, to be a successful merchandiser? And chances are the textbook isn't going to do it. It's listening to them and then of course, they bring that knowledge, but they don't have the skills of how to put it together necessarily, and that's where I come into play, and then we work together and pedagogically work out a system or plan that can be presented to the students so they can learn in a neurological way.

How do you find the part-timers; do you recruit them, do they more often come to you? How does that work?

A little of both, but I've done a lot of recruiting.

You have. What's the reaction, or I think to some people it might seem a dichotomy that you know, someone that's in the business and then someone that's in the classroom bringing that together? Well, again, all of the part-timers I have are pretty much people that I

have met socially at these professional meetings and professional events.

Do you say, have you ever thought about teaching?

Yeah, I do. Or they'll find out what I do, and they'll say, boy, you know, I'd really love to teach a class. Well, that's my invitation to start a conversation about what maybe they could teach, but are there skills that work with what my needs are. And that's how I've gotten them.

It's interesting. A couple of the part-time teachers, not only do they want to give back—you know, that's part of why they teach, they want to give back. And they want to make sure that they are a part of molding the future leaders in the business. But also, they want to have first dibs on hires, and if they find stars in that class, they're hired. I mean, it's pretty incredible, or they might want a strong intern. I mean, and I've had a couple of teachers tell me that that's one of the reason they teach part-time is because they want to be able to find those really strong candidates firsthand.

That's pretty interesting.

It is very interesting.

I'm fascinated by how your whole department works. I mean, it's in some ways the quintessential Columbia fulfillment of the mission. You've talked about the mission of your department and how you have shaped the curriculum. Could you speak to the mission of the college, is it one and the same to you?

I think it is, very much. That's one of the things that really appealed to me about Columbia. I'm not someone that would be very comfortable in a university setting. Just because

I am very—my philosophy of teaching is very experiential, you know, when we talk about the hands-on, molding the authors of our time and making sure that they really, truly have a passion for what they are going to be doing. And I'm not—I will discourage a student that I feel is just there because daddy says I have to be doing something. If they're not in the program—and I gently do this. I don't just out and out say you don't belong here, but try to help them understand that maybe this is not where they need to be putting their energy, because it's a tough business, and if they want to be in it, they're going to have to love it.

But in terms of the mission, I think that's part of what our role is, is to help inspire, and to have a whole distinct view of how we are molding and guiding our students. Even though I come from a very esoteric or narrow content area, I try to take a broad view, and that stems from the mission when I'm teaching or advising, particularly in advising students, that this is a whole—we're trying to develop a whole person, not just someone who can go out there and buy garments for Marshall Field's or whatever. Our mission is to develop strong citizens in the world, in the community, to care about what's going on around them, to have a social conscience. And so I feel a lot of my role as a teacher, as a faculty member, is to do that, go beyond the subject. And it always filters into the classroom. And I hear my part-timers doing the same thing in terms of ethics, because this is a very strong consideration in retail, and in advertising and marketing and that kind of thing. We talked a lot about that, those issues. What would you do, you know, what's

your moral opinion here? So it goes beyond—and I think that stems a lot from the mission of what we're here for at Columbia, is to build good citizenship.

That's interesting, because you've talked about on the one hand the market really—the market does determine the curriculum, that you have to keep up with what's going on in the market, that you want your students to enter the workforce. And then the most recent things you talked about are almost independent of market changes. Yes? Or could you speak to that a little more? And is there ever a conflict between those two?

Absolutely. There are moral dilemmas all the time, but I think every single one of these students are going to be facing that in the workforce. There's no questions that they will. They're going to have to make some decisions, ethical decisions, about whether they will approve a certain ad, or what kind of consumer attraction are they trying to make in the statement, in the visual statement, and it can be in the purchase of clothing or it can be in window display or whatever. What kind of decisions are they going to be making, hopefully as the CEO or president of a company when it comes to laying off people? You know, these are hard decisions that they're going to be facing. At what point are they going to decide they're going to have to fire someone, and how are they going to tell them? We've even practiced these things in role-plays and that kind of thing in class.

I guess that's what I'm talking about, is how to be a good person when you are a manager, because many of them come into the class-

room and they've worked for managers that they hate. Okay, then how can you turn this around and how can you be human, how can you be a humane manager? So definitely there's a conflict, but I think also we have an obligation to talk about these conflicts with our students, because they're going to be face with them all the time. Just like this latest of Field's, where the two guys you know, stole \$3 million or \$2 million worth of designer—they were window dressers. I mean, these two window dressers for months were shipping goods from the store to their apartment, and then they in turn were selling them on E-Bay. I know.

But these are dilemmas that are faced that we tell them about day in, day out, and as we are preparing the students to make, to be in those positions to make those decisions. And what are they going to do when they're faced with a co-worker that entices them to join their ring? You know, what kind of decision will they make? What about the day that you really need a laptop at home and you just take the one from work? There's decisions that have very strong ethical implications.

Can that come up based on the experience of yourself and your department, and theirs?

Yes.

Have the students changed at all in the last 10 years?

Yeah, I would say, population has gotten more suburban and more international.

Oh, really.

When I first came, it definitely was more urban, you know, city and we've gotten a higher percentage of transfer students from the suburban community colleges as well as other

colleges, especially University of like Southern, Western, and getting a few from Iowa. So it's kind of, yeah, I'd say there's been a shift, and a little bit more affluent students, less that inner city population. Certainly we've had an influx of the Asian international students.

How do you explain that, the increase in the international, Asian?

Some of it's been word of mouth, to tell you the truth. One comes here, they go back or they have friends, and they say, oh, you need to come here, because this is where you're going to be, in a metropolitan city. At the same time, getting an education, you probably what will want. And a lot of them come in and are getting second B.A.s. They've already gotten a degree in Korea or Japan or wherever they're coming from, and I guess they want that American experience, or American perspective on business.

Are their degrees related?

Oftentimes they have a related degree, yeah. It might be that they've gotten a degree in fashion design or graphic design, or maybe even merchandising in that country. But we teach it differently. We have a different point of view of doing business oftentimes. And so I think that's what they're learning. Some of them have a desire to stay here, and some don't, so that's kind of a mix.

You said that to some degree it's student word of mouth. Has Columbia been—have you seen a change in the 10 years that you've been here they improved and promoted themselves? Is it

more well known? You talked about that in Chicago the department's well known.

We definitely have. Yeah, we are definitely—

What about outside of Chicago?

It's getting better, but it's just due to our individuals efforts more so than a marketing campaign by the college. I wouldn't say that the college as a whole has done that well in promoting—and we all know that. The new president, that's one of his priorities is to try to get us known. I mean, we've all said we're the best-kept secret. And part of that I think is our basic 60-sec crown. So many of us come from that philosophy and that ilk and the leaders in the college have too, even the administration. So there is this disdain almost among some of the faculty and some people about commercializing, capitalism.

So it provides a little conflict there, where we're more conscious of taking care of ourselves and our students than letting everyone know, oh, look at us, you know. It's just not in our nature, or hasn't been our personality type, I guess, to do that. And now we're in an economy and a competition situation where we really have to do it. And I guess we're doing it hopefully through our good works, not necessarily a planned out marketing campaign, although that's probably going to change.

But also, we do a lot of traveling in terms of taking the students to New York City. This is our 9th year going to New York City, so we're becoming more well known there. We have a contingent of about 10 graduates that are right there in New York working. So that's starting to spread. We have some out in L.A.

Was that one of your initiatives?
Mm-hmm.

Could you just speak to that? How did that start, how did you get the support for it?

Well, Dennis Brozinski and I decided that we needed to do research trips every year, and we would do those during spring break. I have not had one spring break since I got here, not one. I've always traveled on behalf of the school somewhere, somewhere in the world or somewhere in the country, because that was one of the few times that we could just get away, you know, and have free time. So we went to New York, we went to L.A., we went to San Francisco, Toronto. And then we went to London and Paris. And the purpose of these research trips was to find out again—and we had appointments with people at other colleges and in the industry. We'd sit down, you know like with—

Did you map these out yourself?
Yes. We did that ourselves. And we'd sit down and say, what are you doing? You know, what's new here? Oh, this—and we'd pick up so many interesting ideas of how to change the content of a course just to accommodate a new idea. We both instituted new courses because of these trips. But more importantly, we've also talked to them about transfer or exchange ideas. Some of our people that graduate from here go to FIT, the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, and were given an added post-graduate certificate in something.

But we also were there to find out about job opportunities and internship opportunities. So in that way, we became known because we were representing the college. So that

was one way that we kind of spread the word on a national and even international basis. And we've successfully placed people in London, and New York, and L.A., and Atlanta, and Dallas. You know, various places because of those preliminary touch-bases kind of activity. And also we belong to international organizations that keep us in touch with people throughout the world where we can call and say, you know, I'm a fellow member of the Costume Society of America, for instance. Do you know of an opportunity in your city for one of my students who has these certain skills, or these certain career desires?

So there's a lot of opportunity to reach out and get the college known more. And I think we've been successful to the point where we can do that as individuals. The reason that we were able to do all of that is we have a very generous faculty development fund here. And the more I'm at Columbia and the more interaction I have with other colleagues at other universities and colleges, the more I appreciate the emphasis that the administration and chairs have put on faculty development. We are blessed. There is no other way to put it. Columbia College is very generous. And I think rightfully so. I think it all comes back to help, not only directly in the classroom, but it helps in getting internships and job opportunities for our students. It's just a payback. It comes back in probably unmentionable ways. But it is incredible what we are getting here compared to my colleagues at the state universities. Just incredible.

That specific topic has not come up before; that's very interesting, and obviously important. That says a lot about the traditional priority of the college, that certain faculty, they have had to forego other things that might be more readily available or more traditional in another institution, or more mainstream institution. So that faculty development fund that your department has benefited tremendously.

Oh, gosh. It's not just my department, this is college-wide.

And what was your first exposure to that?

These research trips.

The research trips. But did you know that the fund was there? Is that something that—

It's really discretionary, to tell you the truth. It's really up to the individual chairs to approve these, and to put them in their individual budgets. And then what they have to do in turn is convince the CFO that this is valuable. And they, at least my chair in my department, is quite fair about saying, okay, you got that big trip last year; now this time it goes to someone else, to balance it. And also to meet the needs of each of us. I'm an officer and a regional in Costume Society of America. Well, I have to go to those meetings because I'm an officer, so he knows that. And the same is true of other faculty in my department. But that's part of why we are tendered also, or on tenured track, is because part of our job evaluation and part of our job description is to keep up in our professions. And I'm just really appreciative to the college that they put their money where their mouth is. They say, "hey, we expect you to do this; we're going to give you the resources to do it."

Tenures are a pretty recent development here. Can you speak to how you feel about its importance?

Well, I was president of the CCFO, the Columbia College Faculty Organization, when tenure came in to being. So I guess you could say I'm one of the leaders and proponents of a change in the status of the faculty at that time 5 years ago. We—I was an officer and CCFO and assigned to the Faculty Status Committee, that was an ad hoc committee of CCFO, and then I moved into the presidency for 3 years.

Can you say years?

Let me think.

That's okay; if it comes to you, you can bring it up.

I can go backward. It was 3—my last term was 3 years ago.

'98?

'98, so then 3 years before that.

I was talking about tenure. The reason—'87 was the faculty, I think that was the road to tenure. It think it was because they felt they needed at this point in the development of Columbia College and in the growth of Columbia College that we need a credible status, one that was not only credible inside the institution, but outside the institution, because as the college grew we were interacting more with other colleges and with other academic bodies. And so say that you're provisionary, and non-provisionary kind of leaves you a little less than honorable in the eyes of ourselves and the outside world. But the credibility in academic circles was one reason. Another reason, is that the faculty were treated and evaluated inconsistently among departments. And the

faculty felt that there needed to be a college-wide consistent system of evaluating faculty. And tenure seemed to be that system that would be best and most acceptable.

We also felt that having the tenure system would attract more quality faculty, because if you come from an institution where you have been tenured or you've been on tenured track and go to an institution, why would you come here? Because then if you left here, you've lost that time in a quality tenure perhaps somewhere else. Or if you're here and then you get transferred, maybe your family has to move or for whatever you leave here, you've spent all those years teaching but haven't acquired the expected credentials in the academic world, and what are your chances of being a valid candidate somewhere else? And the previous faculty evaluation system was very cloudy and was practiced as I said in different ways, depending on the chair of the departments. [So we wanted to make sure that it was a three seat?] We wanted to make sure that our status was clear, and that the process to get status was clear, and that it was consistent and equitable for all faculty, and that credible. So clear, consistent and credible was kind of our motto; we even put it on flyers.

And it was a campaign. I mean, we worked hard on this. And we worked so hard. And we had the support of president. And it was interesting, we had a struggle convincing the Board of Trustees, and it was after the Chair of the Board of Trustees pretty much rewrote the document. I mean, the spirit of it is still there and that

kind of thing, but he put a lot of language into it, especially with the 5-year review, which is post-tenure review to appease some of the nervous Board of Trustees people who were afraid of acquiring dead wood in our tenure system. And that's not to say we wouldn't have had an enrollment. We did. It's there; it was there.

But I think all in all, the tenure system—well, we've had mixed reviews on it in the three years that it's been in operation, it's very, very narrow and we're still going through growing pains. And in fact I'm on the committee, and now we're going to start meeting for the first revision of the document because we've lived through it for three years; we know where the workload stress is and we're trying to relieve some of that for faculty. That's been probably the biggest argument, or the biggest complaint about it, that it's caused a lot of work, committee work. Because tenure means that you are really policing your own. And I shouldn't say police, it's a negative word. What we're trying to do is develop the strongest faculty you can have. That takes a lot of time and effort, it takes mentoring. It takes sitting on committees and suggesting ways of improving, or encouraging people to continue doing what they're doing because it's important. Because they get tired; they get burned out. And that's all part of what the tenure process does, and you're working with colleagues and building each other up.

I think it's valuable. I believe that we need to work on it, but I think it's valuable, and I think we're headed in a direction that's going to be extremely supportive and encouraging.

When you were working on it initially, did you uncover how they came up with these labels probationary and non-probationary? Even when you're non-probationary, it's still—

Sounds like you're going to a parole officer, right?

Exactly.

I don't know. That was just in the faculty handbook when I came, and I guess it was just—and you know, it's interesting. That system, probationary and non-probationary, was a de facto-tactic. It really was. They didn't call it tenure, and it didn't have all of the systematic formalization, you know, formal processes, that tenure has, but it was tenure. In other words, you had to prove yourself for 5 years and then you went through a pseudo review. It was as—I mean, our tenure reviews now are quite rigorous, and it should be. If we're going to have all 5 faculty that we're proud of, and if they are really going to take this job seriously, then it needs to be rigorous, just like we expect of our students. And that was not—the previous system was not rigorous. Even though we're still evaluating the same 3 areas, it didn't have the intensity that the current system has. And I guess the opposite of probationary is non-probationary. Who knows where they came up with those terms.

We're running out of time, but I would want to make sure we get to your views on where do you see the college headed, and maybe you could also speak to some of the challenges that Columbia has had to face or is still in the process of facing?

What does it have to take care of as it goes into the next century? Well, I think we have a lot of challenges facing us, but I also have a lot of hope that we have opportuni-

ties facing us. I'll take the opportunities first. The opportunities that I think we have ahead—and we've already started working on this, is incredible collateral inter-disciplinary work. Because we have so many interrelated areas throughout the college that is quite exciting. And I've already been involved in a lot of that in my own curriculum and in my own teaching. I team teach with the Photo Department. I team teach in design. I have some teachers who—for instance, my part-time teacher, Lisa Lenore, who has been Fashion Editor for the Chicago Sun-Times. She has a class that's a mix of fashion management and journalism students. So they inter-relate that way.

We have a lot of our faculty are doing linked classes with the gen-ed class, a majors class. There's just so much, and now that the multimedia component that's become so important in our world, that's another opportunity for us to link together. Even in our own department we have a major called Small Business Entrepreneurship. Now we're starting to do much more inter-creating our courses so that the students will get both sides, retail management and entrepreneurship. So there's so much available in the college. Now, I'm looking at the TV-Film Department, thinking that why aren't we incorporating some wardrobing and that kind of thing to do with them, and styling celebrities, those people on TV. I mean, it's done in the real world; why aren't we doing it here, in classwork.

So I think that's really exciting. I think reaching out—now, we are going to be opening a site in L.A., you know, on the CBS lot. I think we're starting—I think the oppor-

tunity for us to reach out in the nation and the world is stronger than it ever has been. President Carter, is certainly advocating for that and making sure we have resources for that.

I'm not familiar with that. The college—

Has a trailer they're leasing on the CBS lot in L.A.

And is that for students to do internships?

Well, they take classes, and whole classes in this trailer is a classroom. But the important part of it is that they can use the studio lot and the CBS people have been fabulous about letting them wander around and observe how a set is built and run and implemented. The Film Department has been doing this for awhile, but it's been kind of temporary, and now on May 4th they're actually going to dedicate this. But it's a module sized trailer.

And are these students from Columbia College in Chicago?

Columbia College, yeah. I mean, it's ours. We're leasing it. We have a 5-year lease on it or something. But now I'm thinking, hey, I let my students out there in L.A., because they could get jobs styling. So I could use that for a classroom. And so we have fabulous opportunities. And we—I help sponsor an international study tour every year during the semester break. And there's grand opportunities there. We just came back from Rome and Florence. And I mean, there's so much available to these students, and they just get so excited. We took 30 students, and they were fabulous. They had a great time. They got inspired. They got to see artwork that they had seen in textbooks for years, and there was a real thing. And I think those opportu-

nities are growing and growing and growing. They're becoming more global, and I think that's good.

I think internally we have incredible challenges with the restructuring of trying to figure out a positive way that's not going to ruin this incredible culture we've established, these hundred years of managing how we do our work. And that really concerns me a lot. I'm really afraid we're going to throw the baby out with the bathwater if we're not careful. And we are not like other traditional schools, colleges; we just aren't. And for us to have a structure that reflects a traditional model, I think is ridiculous. And it really, really concerns me.

And you feel that poll there are forces that would like to go in that direction?

Yes, and that is a big concern of mine.

Does open admission come into this concern?

Not into that, no. I think that the way we are headed in open admissions is positive, and that is, to have a somewhat restricted open admissions. I would never, ever want to get rid of open admissions. That's part of who we are; that's our mission. That's where we've been established from the get-go, and I would hate to see that go away.

And you feel that's safe; you don't see that going away?

No, I really don't. I don't think there's any. I don't see any force out there trying to get rid of it that has any backing. I do see a force out there and among us that believe that there needs to be some kind of restrictions somewhere. There needs to be some limitations. We can't bring in. It's not morally right for us to bring in someone we know is

not going to present. That's just not a moral decision that we can go to sleep at night. That just isn't right. If we know someone that absolutely cannot be successful in a higher educational institution, it's not right. And giving them hope that they can.

And so we've already instituted some ways in which we can catch that with the Bridge Program, to some of the Compass Tests, to find out, and try to give them the chance perhaps in some of the experimental classes, classes that are more appropriate to their learning level. But if they can't make it in those classes, then I think we need to be advised by end of the term. Or to have like with that Bridge Program, where they're really—they're conditionally accepted; they're not totally accepted. And I think that probably is a wise direction. I'm certain they take the open admissions. We need it to accomplish what we're here for. And you know, people in the arts learn differently than students in the straight academic study, and I think we as faculty understand that, or will understand it after we've taught a couple of semesters. We'll learn it the hard way. But you know, they're not read and test students. They're just not. So we teach them in ways that they can learn.

You don't necessarily want them to be read and test students?

No, I hate teaching like that. I don't teach like that. I rarely lecture. I just think most of us are like that, though. We're more facilitators of the learning process.