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Interview with Dennis Rich, 2004

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Dennis Rich

Okay, we're all set to go. It is April 8th, 2004. This is an interview with Dennis Rich, Chairperson of the Arts Entertainment and Media Management Department.

Okay, if you could tell us how you came to Columbia and when and what the circumstances were?

Well I came originally as a part-timer in the early to mid-eighties. Yeah, and taught for Fred Fine, who was the founder of The Arts Entertainment and Media Management Program. And at the time I had just left academia, well a couple of years I'd left academia, and was working in the advertising and public relations business for a man named John Iltis, whose business focus is primarily on film industry and other live entertainment things. And I brought him a number of live theater clients as a matter of fact. And John was teaching here and knew Fred and said Fred's looking for someone to teach a course called Body and Development and Promotion. So Fred and I met and I said, okay fine, I'll be happy to do that and did it for I want to say about two years, I'm pretty sure that's right. And then went off on my arts management odyssey, managing a number of theater, a dance company, an orchestra and so on all over the country, well all over the eastern-southern part of the country. And then in 1990 I was at the Columbus Symphony Orchestra in Columbus, Ohio. I saw the handwriting on the wall, which was the orchestra was about to go through an unpleasant transi-

tion. And said, well all right let's start looking for something, and discovered the ad in the "Chronicle of Higher Education" for the then Management Department looking for a chair. And the ad read, honest to God as if it had been written holding my CV in their hands. And so I said, well I got a good job, but you know, what the heck. And that was in April or May and I heard nothing, so I said, fine I've got a good job it didn't happen. October I get a phone call...

Is this '89 or '90?

No '90, still this was from April to October. October 1990 I get a call from Sam Floyd who is the dean, the academic dean, who says you know, the committee and the search committee would like to meet with you. Can you come in? The truth is I thought to myself, this is a good way to get a free trip to Chicago because Chicago is home and my mother lives here. And I thought well you know, I'll go check on my mom. So had the interview, was indeed intrigued. Went back to Columbus, Ohio, some time passes, its now probably late October, early November and I get another call. You know, you're the committee's first choice will you come back for a second interview? At this point I said to Sam, look I have a good job. And he indeed persuaded me to come in for a second interview; we did a second interview. The nice part about this whole process was because I already did have a decent job I was able to do an interview I've never been able to do before. One in which I didn't have to sensor what I was saying through

that, oh I hope they'll hire me filter, because I really didn't care. I told them what I thought was appropriate, which probably is what got me the job. So next thing I know, Sam was saying you're the committee's first choice, we want to hire you and the rest is history here I am. I'm now in my fourteenth year because I started in December of 1990.

Okay, and what were some of the things you talked about in that interview of what your, you know, vision of your role would be and where, because you had some familiarity with the institution already?

Well again I should go back to Fred's vision, because I remember when Fred founded the program thinking, gee I'd like to do that. I said this in Fred's memorial as a matter of fact, you have to be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it. So I knew the program fairly well. God, what all



did they ask me about in the interview... They talked about strengths of the program, they talked about it being a broad based focused on all the cultural industries program, all which appealed to me. It was very interesting, when I left Academia I left because of bureaucracy and red tape. And one of the things that appealed to me about Columbia at the time was you could turn Columbia on a dime, you know, you could make a decision and go do it, and that was pretty neat. The faculty was a good group of people, that was clear to me on the first interview and it reaffirmed in the second one. What else did I want to do? I made them introduce me to some students. Turned out I was the only candidate who wanted to meet students, I didn't know that of course but. And that helped because they were interesting people and not your typical upper middle class, somewhat bored and jaded college student who we all know. These were kids from the inner city, one was Latino, one was African-American, very strong focus of what they want to do and I said, okay, you know, I think I could do this. A member of the search committee actually asked me if I shouldn't be working to shut the department down.

And what did they mean by that?

They meant that, well that—it was John Tarini, there's no reason not to use his name. You know, the Marketing program is very strong, we do what you're doing, I think we should shut this department down. And I remember saying to John, I can't imagine being hired into a position for the purpose of ending the department. I don't know what else to tell you. Ask me another question, its...

Well and so...

I'm assuming you edit this tape so before...

No, so what's on here is on here. But what's on here gets printed?

Yeah.

Even all that we're saying right now? You're kidding me of course.

No I'm not, that's oral history. All right.

Anyway, but lets follow up on that your last response when that comment by the member of the search committee that, well I'm assuming this is implying, what's the difference? We, marketing does what we do and...

Well marketing doesn't do what we did and never did.

And explain that.

I've always felt that managing the arts is in many ways a different beast. And what makes that creature different is the presence of the artist. I teach arts and marketing frequently and the book we use, one I'm a contributor to devote an entire chapter to what it means, the presence of the artist and what that means to marketing and what that means to management. And I that's profoundly influenced not just me, but the entire faculty. So I mean, we didn't get into a big argument, but I just said it ain't going to go that way and that was that. Next thing I knew I'm in Mike Alexandroff's office, I think was, I may have been Mike last hire, if not I was his second to last hire.

And can you tell me a bit about that meeting and your relationship (inaudible)?

Well again, I knew him from, I knew M.A. from my previous life as well, in fact, (inaudible) just did some work for Columbia College back in my youth. So you know, the man was a legend already and I knew that I was meeting this mythic figure, who at the same time was a hundred percent accessible. And we sat in his office, he asked me some questions and I asked him about why is it named "Management Department", you know, we're the Arts Entertainment and Media Management—it was the Arts Entertainment and Media Management Program, and I think that's part of what makes this unique, its part of what makes it fit into Columbia. You know, we're not teaching future accountants. Mike goes, you're right and writes down and says to himself, "AEMMP", and writes it down. It took me nine years to make it happen, but he got it immediately. Another thing I loved that he said, was he said, I have one important piece of advice for you, I said okay, he said, "don't sit in your office". You know, because at the time chairs with Columbia had to be out in the field, if we weren't out there interacting with people who were doing it for a living and say, listen you got to come teach my students, it wasn't going to happen. So it was a pretty exciting time and an exciting beginning for me.

Describe the terms of your employment, you referred right before that to you being one of the last ten year chairs, so maybe you can talk a bit about that?

Well I mean, because at the time they were all ten year, so what the hell did that mean? It simply met

that if I passed my probation period that I had a huge responsibility for life. So at the time it didn't mean anything special, quite frankly. You know, it didn't occur to me having being out of Academia for a number of years, how strange and unique that was. And what an enormous responsibility it was and is. One that could easily be abused and in fact, some of the stories you hear from, you know, the so-called bad old days are about abuses. How long have you been here?

I started as a part-timer in '90.

All right well then you know some of what I'm talking about, because you've been here as long as I've been here.

Although part, you know, part-timers aren't as privy to a lot of things.

No they're not, but they hear some of those things. I mean, the importance of it didn't really dawn on me until, you know, John Duff was here, we changed the definition of the chairperson, we put them on three year renewable contracts. We appointed a small number of chairs. Magic you're a chair. And I don't object to that they're good people, but the whole, the tone, the environment changed. And that's when it began to dawn on me that this ten-year thing actually was a huge responsibility and an opportunity. And every time I think about maybe stepping down, I have to remind myself that if I do that the person who replaces me will not have the freedom I have.

So could you tell us a bit about some of the things that you implemented as chair that might not have been possible in these new circumstances?

Well I'm not sure that there's anything that I did that would not

possible under the new circumstances. I think the only thing that's, well at the time what it did was create a kind of sense of empowerment, I can go out and do this. Now I've never done anything without the endorsement of our faculty. I've never said, this is the way it's going to be kids, I've never treated them as kids I mean these are my colleagues and coworkers and collaborators and its always been that way. But that said, I've worked with those people to try and strengthen each one of our concentrations, you know, how do we make the music business thing connect with being professional and stay connected. I mean it was connected then, but the industry has changed hugely. You know, what do we need to do in fashion management, a new age concentration to make it serve the field. We just hired Diane Erpenbach and she and I went and visited people at a number of places and said, when you're hiring somebody what are you looking for? We were quite surprised by the answers because they were looking more for basic management skills than they were for product knowledge or industry knowledge. Well that gave us some guidance on how to build a program. What else have we done—as a group we reviewed and strengthened immediately and several times since, the core curriculum to make certain that our people not only can get a job in the field, but have the freedom to get a job elsewhere. One of our best music business students ever went in to banking. And while I think the music industry lost a good person, he was quite equipped and ready to do that, it wasn't like they had to give him remedial training, he was ready to

go. That was important to us, still is. The big thing that was different then was the notion of, you know, chairperson as sort of free agent entrepreneur. I remember one of my colleagues saying in a conversation among us about what, you know, the dean said. And this person said, the dean doesn't tell us what to do, we tell the dean what to do. It was true then, much that was better it was just different. That was then and this is now. This is a different era and, you know, a bigger school and a new infrastructure and...

And do you think that, was it because of who Mike was and the way he envisioned it and/or is it that that ten-year chair just (inaudible)?

No I think that the system that I came into was Mike Alexandroff's baby and what Mike had a history of doing was hiring good people and empowering them and say go do it, let me know if you need help. And the great advantage of that was that we created some very interesting unique programs and some rare opportunities for students that I don't think could frankly have happened anywhere else in the country. At The University of Illinois would have been impossible by the time you got through curriculum committee, and this review, and that review, and the digging of the provost of the Chancellor, two years would have passed. That was M.A.'s style, you know, hire good people and turn them loose. The disadvantage of that was it didn't encourage collaboration across the parts. That was the big downside of that was that we had—I heard the departments regularly referred to as "The Vulcan's". And there was some truth to that, you know, we really were unchallenged. And what we

were unable to realize at the time was if you want to get to a better analogy, the strength we would have if we became Yugoslavia, you know, larger and more powerful. Austria, Hungary was a more powerful thing than Austria and Hungary are today. So I don't want to sound like I'm, you know, sitting here missing the good old days, it was a different time and a time in which you really could move out and do it, the ability to do that I do miss. The, I believe we need infrastructure, I believe we need protocols, I believe we need procedures and that said, I miss the ability to move out and do it and wish we could still turn on a dime. But we've become a much larger thing, we're ten thousand students you know, we're more like an oil tanker than a speedboat.

Could you comment on reorganization, do you think that the reason, you know, period of reorganization that Columbia is addressing or its coming through addresses that issue of being able to make collaboration more possible or...?

I think its trying to, I don't think we're there yet, I mean you know, the new structure is still new. And I don't think we worked all of the kinks out, we still have communication issues, we still have territory issues, we still have authority issues. And so I think philosophically we're much more committed to collaboration, I think we've found the language. I think we're much better at saying, well we need to collaborate on that. In some small ways we're indeed doing it, but have we arrived at the kind of integrated institution where people always look at who do I need to partner with, no we're not there yet. Will we get there? Who knows?

Part of the problem that is is that the arts and communication as disciplines don't tend to be collaborative in that sense. I mean theater is a collaborative art, but it collaborates with other theater people, and so on.

I want to back up just a bit because you mentioned Fred Fine hired you in the mid eighties as a part timer. Could you comment on your relationship with him?

I don't know, did you make the memorial service by any chance?

I didn't, but I did get an opportunity to interview Fred for this project and...

I'm glad.

But I would have liked to and I think that it would be nice to have a few words about him.

Fred was my mentor, my idol is probably true word in this case. I mean I said it in the memorial service, I said I always used to say to Fred, you're who I want to be when I grow up. And I said in the service I said, Fred you're still who I want to be when I grow up. Just an amazing man, I mean a visionary with an enormous sense of justice with a sense of, you know, democracy in the arts that couldn't—the reason where arts entertainment and media management, that was Fred. Because Fred didn't want to be some highbrow thing and because if you ask Fred, you know, he could see equally the importance and validity of urban music and opera. And by the way, talk about both of them intelligently more so than I can. But Fred took me under his wing when I arrived, you know, Fred was the guy I could talk to about issues, the guy who I could go to for advice.

And the guy who, you know, who had a vision about what it means to, what the arts and culture mean in the U.S., what does it mean, art and democracy? And how do we en-view our students with that and then how do they in turn serve the artist, the arts community, the greater community and humanity. And those are all things we actually talked about as a faculty, either directly or we're lying in the background informing our conversation, that's Fred, Fred did that. We're very different from typical arts management program. A typical arts management program has one or two faculty in arts management, generally tenured in theater, or in music, or in the visual arts. And then the program collaborates with the business school and for me the problem with that is the students in those programs are the bastard stepchildren of both departments. Because the theater people say, well you're the pagan in the temple, all you think about is money, you know, you're a suit. And the business people say, what the hell do you want to go in the arts for? You know, real people in business don't go in to the arts they sit on arts boards, what's wrong with you? Fred created a place where thirty students can sit in an accounting class and study accounting with the same high standards they would have if there were in a MBA program at any business school. But the examples all relate to culture in the arts, and everybody in that class wants to work in this field. So there are no bastard step kids and no pagans in the temple, I mean the atmosphere is a much more supportive one. That was Fred Fine, thank you very much. And something we work very hard to preserve, I don't mean me, that's not the imperial we, that really is we all of us.

What were just maybe some other ways too he influenced you personally as well as professionally?

Well, Fred was a good friend of mine and that certainly was an influence. You know, we had lunch or tea or whatever, you know, on a regular basis just to talk. And we talked about the political situation, the world situation, you know, what's happening to the City of Chicago, what's happening to Columbia College, what's happening in the department. You know, we had rambling, long wonderful conversations. How else did he interview me, influence me rather than being a, besides being a mentor and a friend? How do mentors and friends influence you, by example, by support, by their enthusiasm, by the way they see things. And that what I said to Fred all the time, I want to be you when I grow up. You know, Fred in his last years was still going to theater three and four nights a week, I mean it was amazing. Nick Rampton called an uncommon, common man and there's truth in that. You know, Fred has a, had a long history as a communist, he was a leader in the Chicago branch of The American Communist Party. He was in fact living underground for a number of years. And even though he left party, in some ways he never left that kind of storm the barricades, you know, the peoples' party kind of thinking in a very good way. What else did he do, this Democratic Vista Series, which is part of the Center for Arts Policy? The Center for Arts Policy was the brainchild of Fred Fine, Nick Rampton and Dennis Rich. And Nick at the time was a funder. And that was sort of, you know, that was profound. The name

Democratic Vista's came from me, we stole it from Walt Whitman and admitted it quite freely.

Maybe you could explain the purpose behind Democratic Vista's?

Well Democratic Vista's were, were lectures and events, still are but we haven't done one in a while, designed to both engage policy questions, engage the community and at the same time connect with an art form in a way that was meaningful. So we tried not to just do lectures, we tried to do—when, when oh what's her name... I'm so bad at names... The opera did an opera about the slave ship—I'm sorry.

No, but that's all right, but it will come to you before the end of the day.

It will come to me at some point.

But the Amistad?

The Amistad, thank you. The Amistad Opera, thank you very much. But when they did Amistad we brought the play right in and not only, you know, we sent kids from the ghetto to see the opera. She went out and talked to people, you know, we dealt with, there are workshops in the city where kids you would never imagine (*inaudible*) right and perform operas. And so we connected all of that, that's Democratic Vista's. If you'd look at both words, there's the vista and it's indeed democratic and that's what Whitman wrote about. You know, Whitman's essay "Not Easy To Read" really is about the connection between the arts and democracy and what is the role of an artist in the democracy. And I think that's the issue we were

always trying to, we begin the first one was Allen Lomax who came in and talked about his life's work and played folk music.

Really? Very important to oral history.

Well, no question. But we brought him in and it was a very good beginning. And that kind of enthusiasm and connection was something that we worked for, not only Democratic Vista's, we worked for (*inaudible*), we worked for it in the way we teach, our faculty tries to do that in the examples we use in the internships we place students in.

I'd like to change gears just a little bit and talk about your teaching experience here that you have also continued participating in as chair. What were some of the, I don't know if you want to talk about that first one the Audience Development and Promotion, that or others that you designed that you thought were important to your curriculum?

You want to talk about class I designed or about the students?

Lets first talk about the class you designed?

Well, what class have we designed? I mean the Audience Development and Promotion class was mine I took it over from Patty Cox, who is now Patricia Hungler, important member of the Goodman Theater Board. But she was the Executive Director of The Chicago Alliance for the Performing Arts and then went off to New York and I got her job. And I took that class and modified it and what was fun in that class was I could bring real problems to it, because I was working for (*inaudible*). And do I could

say, okay guys, here's an issue I'm dealing with, you know, the organic theater is trying to do this, they were one of our clients. And I'd share the materials with them and say to the class, okay you're in charge, what would you do. That was kind of an unusual and unique opportunity and we've tried to do that still. Geez, what all do I teach... I still teach marketing periodically. And I'm not sure the syllabus is particularly unique. I think what's unique is the examples we use and again, the fact that we make the students go out and actually talk to somebody doing it in the field. They are obliged to do a marketing audit where they talk to somebody who's a practitioner and then write a report saying, here's what works, here's what doesn't work. They make recommendations and if it's good enough we'll send it to the real person. What else do I teach? I teach Fundraising, I teach Grant Writing, both of which come from my experience in the field. We do a seminar called The AMM Seminar, which I teach periodically, that's really Chuck Super's baby and by the way, if you have not interviewed him you must.

I don't know if he has been (inaudible).

Chuck is the guy who started our graduate program and he's still an artist in residency, he comes in a week a month. And how old is Chuck now, eight one I think. But another guy, another visionary, someone you need to speak to. But he kind of designed the seminar and the reason we did it is that students coming into our graduate program come in as artists, or come in trained as artists. Most of them want to go into management for good reasons. They then spend

two-two and a half years studying Cultural Management, and at the other end they're not as connected to the art form as we'd like them to be. So seminar takes them back and says, let's talk about aesthetic, let's talk about ethic, let's talk about criticism. Let's, and reminds you guys that you need to be able to be conversed and proficient in those areas, as well as in accounting and how to make a budget and how do good marketing and raise money. So I've taught that seminar always with a team of people.

How old is the graduate program here?

The programs, the grad programs started in 1982.

In '82, okay so that's got a long...

Which makes it by the way, one of the oldest surviving graduate programs in arts management at this point. Some of the older ones, the one that University of Wisconsin was one of the first, it's still going strong. The one at UCLA, which is one of the models for everybody is defunct. God, there was one at University of Illinois, what was it called at the time—Sangamon State, and that program is clinging to life, but quite different than what it was then. But we're, you know, the vision we had then, the coursework has changed, the concentrations are different. But the vision hasn't shifted, it's the same thing that Fred brought to the table these many years later.

And do you teach, let's talk about the students do you teach both under grad and graduate?

I do. I teach primarily graduate students, but I've taught both and will continue to.

Okay, well let's start with undergraduate students, how have they changed over the years since you've been here? How would you describe them?

I think the thing they, well I'm going to start with where they haven't changed because, if you don't mind.

No fine.

I think what they've always had, the ones who really belong here, and there's always a few who you want to say, what are you doing here? But the ones who belong here always had a real passion for the field they want to work in. You know, didn't want to work in the music business, the recording business. And they really are passionate about it and they're not ignorantly passionate about it, I mean they've taken time to learn what the music is and what the musician does and that hasn't changed. The sophistication of our students has changed greatly. I think the students I taught in Audience Development and Promotion were much more naïve than students we have today, they were also less articulate, and probably less proficient in a number of ways that are important. I mean writing is an issue for college students across the country, Harvard faces that challenge as well as Columbia College. But I will say that our students are much better writers in 2004 than they were in the mid eighties. What else—how have they changed—Where they come from has changed, I think we're less and urban college than we used to be. When I started when I was teaching part-time it really was, one of the things that was fascinating about the students was the extent to which they came from places you wouldn't expect college students to come from. We still have those students but in smaller numbers.

I like to ask people when they address that, you know, where do you think those students are? Are they not in college? Is there a place like Columbia was in the seventies and eighties for them to go to today?

Not that I know about, I don't know what they have told you. I think, I mean I understand why Columbia has evolved, and that said the opportunity we offered seems to be gone. I'm unclear that anybody else is offering it in the way we did. You know, M.A.'s vision was, come to us with a high school diploma or a GED and we'll welcome you with open arms and help you pursue your passion. Well we're still, we still admit supposedly on an open admission spaces, but we're not quite as embracing of those people. I mean now they have to take a series of tests and give a summer bridge program and all kinds of. On the one hand by the way, completely helpful, useful, good things that help us explain a higher retention rate, so I endorse them. But on the other had, that kind of open, welcome, come on in and take a shot at it is no longer really here and I don't know anybody else that's doing it. And then what complicates it is cost, because for many years a student could come to Columbia College and if they qualified for maximum public aid, you know, Pell Grants and so on, they could go through Columbia with no debt. And now it's impossible now Columbia is almost fifteen thousand dollars and one of my recent graduates graduated from Columbia with, you know, as an undergraduate about forty thousand dollars in debt, he'll never pay it off or it will be very difficult. So we're attracting a different group of people, and we're certainly attracting a wealthier

group of people than we used to. Again, I don't want to say that's better or worse, it's just different.

Have your graduate students changed? How the graduate program itself has evolved, maybe you could address those issues?

The graduate program in the time I've been here, well in focus it's not evolved a whole lot, I mean it's still the Arts Entertainment Media Management Graduate Program and it's still attempts to train people, you know, to enter the field as proficient beginning managers. The concentrations we offer have changed some, the course requirements have changed, the number of hours to complete the degree have increased and the name of the degree has changed. I think the other thing that has changed over the years and I can't account for it, I'd like to say it's our very good work collectively, is that the quality of student entering has gone up considerably in the time I've been here. And we get students from more prestigious universities, that doesn't mean a thing by itself, but we get our students who are better equipped, who are better prepared, who are articulate, who write well, who understand what is critical thinking, who at least are literate in the sense of having references, although no one has the references I'd like them to have. That kind of broad based literacy that what's his name Hutchins was famous for I think is, or John Dewey it is, that's another era. But I, I think that's not to our advantage. But we do get students now who at least have more points of reference and who I suspect are ready to take on the increasingly difficult challenges of managing the arts in the U.S.

I'd like to maybe go now a little bit broader to college wide. Can you talk a bit about your involvement in various committees around different issues the college has faced? Give me a few highlights the most important ones maybe.

Oh lord, I got to be careful—I'm an impatient human being, I should start there, you know. A democracy is sloppy it's not straight line stuff, you don't get from "Point A" to "Point B" in democracy, you know, you cross over "Points F, Q and R" to get to "Point B". And that's one of the lovely things about democracy at the same time, my impulse is you know, get with me or get out of my way. So I guess being on the committees has been good for me because it's forced me to engage in process, sometimes very effectively and sometimes I've been the fly in the ointment or the resident gadfly. Ed Morris gave me, when he stepped down as Chairman, a book called "The Portable (*inaudible*)", he said you get my title. Since then others have been reading it, I'm no longer Columbia's gadfly.

I won't ask who is?

I could tell you, but I won't do it on tape. I was, well one of the things I feel good about is I was the outgoing chair—what was it called, the old college, it was the predecessor of the college council—All College Council or something like that, I can't remember what it was called now, I have letters. And the first chairman of the college council, and you know, certainly participated in creating the bylaws and in making vote, the new thing happened. And in the concept of shared governments and in Columbia's version of it, which I think in many ways is more inclu-

sive than it is in a lot of other places. And it wasn't an accident, we created the college council, not a faculty senate. And that's a big debate today among some of the faculty and I'm still...

Can you kind of summarize that debate or (inaudible)?

No, the debate is who ought to make the decisions. And you know, the faculty senate people think that we ought to have, that the faculty's province should be the curriculum and academic areas, and that nobody but the faculty can make those decisions. You know, the college council's notion is that we have council that participates in making the institutions policy decisions, all of them. Now what that means of course, is staff can comment on an academic decision, I don't find that threatening. I tend to believe that what is right will prevail in the long term. And I've rarely seen the council pass something that was outright stupid. I've seen them do things that I've disagreed with, but I don't think I can name an instance where I came out going, well that was really stupid. So it's a reasonable difference and it's a matter of who sits at the table to talk about the issue difference. I was also on the committee that reviewed the whole thing a couple of years ago. You know, where should we be now, now we have a little maturity here we go a new system, is this college council still the thing? And what was interesting was to watch the whole committee come to the conclusion that indeed it was a pretty good model, so I mean I felt good about that. I'd been on interesting search committees, I'd been

on—we at one time had a committee on—what was it called, the all college, it was a development committee, advance—It was the All College Advancement Committee, it had about a three year life, one that I wish had gone longer. That was trying to wrestle with what is the world of faculty in fundraising, an issue that has not gone away. I could go on, if I got you my CV you'd discover I don't know how many different committees. I've done the same thing in community committees, but...

No I think its important, you know, I mean outside of departments what the involvement is in the wider college community to know (inaudible).

Well you know, I've tried to be a participant in the community. I'm becoming one of Columbia's gray hairs and so I—You know, hopefully I'm occasionally possessed with wisdom, and I've tried to share that when I think I've got it. And I think, you know, one of the jobs, of the responsibilities we have as faculty and as chair people in my case is both to support leadership when that's appropriate, or to politely disagree, aggressively but politely disagree when we think they're going in the wrong direction. And I'm proud to say I've done both and that's made enemies and friends, and that's okay.

Is there ever a time where its hard for you to be, I mean do you see the chair as chair more an administrative job, and then is it hard to be faculty and chair, do you have to choose between the two often or are you able to...?

The chairmanship I came into was a deanship really and truly. You know, it meant that I was responsible for leading the faculty advocating for the curriculum, advocating for the discipline, helping to raise money and being a spokesperson. And by the way, I couldn't do that if I wasn't in the classroom as well. So the connection between that kind of leadership and teaching for me was a natural one, it was one where you couldn't do one without the other. The difference of course was that I was never asked to teach a twelve-hour load. You know, a chairperson's load was supposed to be one class a semester, I've taught as many as three in a semester. Sheldon Patinkin beats me, but...

By choice or necessity or both?

Both, I mean I could have declined and I said okay because it interested me. I mean, last spring I taught Applied Marketing for the Performing Arts, I taught an online fundraising class, I taught Comparative Cultural Policy. I think that was it, it was nine hours.

Do you sleep?

Not as much as I'd like to.

What do you think is the role of the Board of Trustees here at Columbia? And has that changed, what are your, what's your perspective?

Well, being a manager I got to start with, you know, what's the legal responsibility of any Board of Trustees. And you know, they have a fiduciary responsibility for the institution, it's their job to make certain that we're true to our mission. And if they don't enforce that we're in trouble. And I think they've done a reasonably good job of that actually. A Board of Trustees

has to be an advocate for the institution, has to be its articulate enthusiastic spokesperson, and needs to play a major fundraising role. I think our board has done all but the last quite well, and I think historically for reasons that are not completely the board's fault, we've not had a fundraising success. We prided ourselves for years of being tuition driven and you know, of managing or business at the till as it were. And I think we want to be an institution, if we want to be a university with ten thousand students and the leader in the field, and the best communication in arts college in the universe or the cosmos or whatever it is we're saying these days...

Don't forget student centers.

I left out student centers, but I should have included it. Thank you for saying that. But if we really want to be all that we go to rethink being tuition driven, and that's a debate right now. It's a debate among faculty, it's a debate among management and our higher administration, and it certainly debates still within the trustees. If you want my opinion, they better get with it, you know we will not successfully move forward if we are not committed as an institution at every level to successful fundraising activity. So that's my challenge to the trustees is please help us do that because we can't do it without you.

Maybe before I go any further, how would you define the mission of the college? And has that changed, has your definition of it changed?

I'd actually like to read out of the catalog because I think the catalog definition of our mission is a quite good one. And so if you want to

put a mission statement in my mouth, here read the catalog definition in, because that whole notion of being an urban institution of training students in a communication of the arts and are preparing them to author the culture of their times. I mean it's a noble phrase and one that we make fun of, but at the same time its, missions ought to be an ambition and an ideal—who was it, Plato? It was Plato who did analogy to cave wasn't it?

You're asking the wrong person about Plato, but I'm (inaudible).

I'm pretty sure it was Plato and if I got it wrong those of you who read this, please forgive me. But you know, the cave analogy says that all we see are shadows of the ideal. And a mission ought to be the ideal, it ought to be something we aspire to at all times. And while I can't say and our students really are authoring the culture of their times, of our times they're certainly participating in it. I mean there's example after example after example where Columbia students have done that and are doing it now, and that's pretty neat, and so I would hate to see that go away. And the undergraduate level I'd also hate to see the notion of admitting, you know, on a broad basis, admitting on what amounts to an open admission spaces go away. I think one of our great strengths is the enormous diversity of Columbia students. Sociologically, economically, racially, namely a way of distinguishing and we're diverse in a way that I've never seen any place else. And I think that's one of our great strengths and I'd hate to see that disappear. So the question was what do I think about the mission or where do I see the mission? I

think that's been our mission and should continue to be our mission. How we try that out of course changes with change in the environment, the change in the political situation, the change in the economy and so on. And the change in our sides, but I don't think we ought to abandon that and come up with some new mission, the mission's grand. So is the mission of the graduate school, which is more selective but you know, talks about training people to be leaders in arts and media. And I think we've been doing that and doing it well, and we ought to keep doing it.

I'd like to reference when you said that, you know, if they're not authoring in the culture of their times, they certainly participated in it with loads and loads of examples. Columbia has such a long tradition of being very humble or not self-promoting. Do you think that that's well known enough, the examples of the people that were educated here as participants (inaudible)?

What kind of language am I allowed to use in this?

Anything for adults to hear.

Well I'm inclined to use rather strong language in response, I'll be nice and not use it. But the point I'm making is, I think that one of our great weaknesses is that we've been, we been your (inaudible), you know, we've been just too humble and its time we stop. You know, Columbia is in many ways a unique institution, it certainly has fabulous accomplishments in every one of our disciplines. And you know, Mike used to say that we're the best-kept secret, he took pride

in that and at the time that might have been a good thing. But with ten thousand students and an almost fifteen thousand dollar tuition and the conservative republican administration, we've got to stop being humble. You know, I think its time for us to stand on the rooftop and shout about our accomplishments and say, "Look at me". Is that strong enough? By the way, its part of the reason I travel. You know, I don't know if you know it but... I lecture and consult well, worldwide but primarily in Eastern Europe, and one of the neat things is people in Eastern Europe in the arts know Columbia College and send their people here to study, and believe that we're a good model for them. And I do it because I'm trying to shout out from the rooftops, you know, about our great accomplishments and about the great opportunity we represent.

Why Eastern Europe?

Because they need us badly. And I don't want to sound like the American missionary, because I'm not that. In fact I always say to people when I'm lecturing, the first thing I say is don't trust the American. You know, I can talk to you, but what we do I can talk to you about certain universal principles, but you're going to have to wrestle with your reality and develop systems that work for you. Now the truth is we're becoming more global, we're growing closer and closer together. And so the needs of people in the arts probably are more similar now than they used to be. You know, in the communist regime The (*inaudible*) Theater was supported one hundred percent by Uncle Ivan (*inaudible*). That's not true anymore, you know, the, what we

call the (*inaudible*) ballet in St. Petersburg, if it didn't have members, membership organizations and raise money all across the world they'd be in big trouble because the previous resources in ones head are no longer available. Well that means there's things that we do in the U.S. because we've done this for years and years and years that are useful. And so I guess in that sense perhaps I am a missionary, but I'm not asking for conversion, I'm asking for an audience.

I'm curious and I probably shouldn't spend too much time on this, but that certainly an issue here as well with you mentioned the republican administration and the threats to the NEA, the NEA and this idea of where does the money come from and you know, who's—and if we go to private sources or corporate America, who's defining or do you find that—who's influencing the art form?

Well...

Is it free expression or...?

It's an interesting debate and I'll try and summarize it. But the European model traditionally said, that we're committed to the freedom of the artist. And in order to guarantee the artist that freedom, we're going to remove the pressures of the marketplace and provide that artist with sufficient resources to make his or her art, that's the old model in Europe.

Without censorship?

Without censorship. Now the reality is that none of those things have in fact been completely true, there's always been censorship, either overt or if you're not a good boy we don't

give you the money kind of censorship, which is still censorship. The U.S. model I don't think is nearly as perverse as some of my European students think it is. There is a commitment I believe in the U.S. arts model to the freedom of the artist. But if used the way that freedom happens quite differently. And one of the things it says is, if you have multiple funding sources then none of them can control you, because if one says no, it may be a hardship but its not a disaster. And I think that's an important message actually, and one that some of my colleagues in other parts of the world are starting to hear. Same thing with the marketplace, I mean if you're true to your mission, hold onto your mission, then the marketplace can't change you. You know, if you pander the marketplace, well then you're a prostitute. So I remember students saying to me in Germany once, you know, if we do marketing there will be no opera there will only be Mickey Mouse. I thought that was very funny and it was very funny because it meant they did, they really didn't understand opera audience or marketing. That's a part of my job is been to try and teach what some of those realities are, you know what does a manager really do.

Have you always traveled and done this consulting since you came as a chair?

No, I spent my first about eight years putting structures in place to make certain that, well—I never intended to do it in the first place. When I began working on info structure for the department and making certain we had structures that worked, that was because it was necessary not because I had some master plan to go to Russia. It turned out when I got my first

invitation to travel, those systems were pretty strongly in place, which meant I could go away for a week or more and things wouldn't—it would be okay because we had back-up systems and ways of working. So I guess the opportunity for me came at about the time when we had created some systems that made it possible.

And its still possible, the reason I asked this is that I thought it was very telling when you said, when you were hired as chair, it was closer to being a dean. Today, you know lets say you know, tomorrow you weren't chair and there was a new chair of your department, would be closer, you know, to being more a chair—I don't know a traditional chair as opposed to a dean and would that be possible to have that aspect, which seems so important?

The answer is I don't know. It's very clear that in the new structure we have the kind of prerogatives that once existed, as the chair is prerogative are now shared. There are very few things I feel that have been taken away from me completely. What's happened however is that decisions I used to be able to make by myself, I now have to share with other people. And like any system that has plusses and minuses in it, on the one hand you have the benefit of more than one mind and on the other hand too many cooks. I don't know, when the new administration came in, one of first things that a couple of them said to me...

Duff's or Carter's?

Carter's, although Duff's said it as well to me, but in Carter's administration people said to me, you know, your traveling is good for the

college and if you want I'll put it in writing. So you know, I've never gone without wearing my Columbia College hat and my Columbia College shirt as it were symbolically. But you know, I've always gone as a representative of this institution. And I think that's been good for us and good for the vision of in the world, best student driven college in the world, you know, that means we have to be in the world, people have to know about us we can't go back to the past, we can't be local. And so it hasn't been an issue for me. Could my replacement do it? If nothing else in the definition of a chair changed, probably. And if they want to do it, its strenuous, its I mean, it's exhausting.

I'm just, you know, because you said earlier too you're one of the last ten year chairs. Is Sheldon Patinkin?

Sheldon is one and Charles Cannon is one.

Okay, Charles Cannon. And maybe you want to comment on this and maybe not, but I'm just wondering in the chair's meetings because of reorganization and you're kind of, you know, from the old system and living in the new system. Is there, is it uncomfortable ever, I mean is it—I guess I'm asking if there's resentment by the new chairs or is it okay?

It depends on the issue, I think that there was resentment during the transition. I think when it became clear that some of us had a, you know, a contract for a certain amount of money and others had a contract with a stipend on it, there

was resentment. Well you know, that's old news. And some things have been done to make the situation of those three-year renewable chairs a little more countable and so I think there's less of those kinds of what's fair issues. Then it depends on what are we talking about, I mean there are times when being here for this long or some, Randy Albers is actually one of the long marchers, he's been here forever. So some of those perspectives are very much what is needed in one and there are times when its not wanted. And yeah, there's been some debates coming from how long I've been here and the extent to which that influenced my thought process, ones thought process. But I wouldn't say that in general, you know, it's a group of people that hate each other or who have got tensions based on, you know, who has the most toys.

I always think, you know, as the people kind of got grand fathered in and you know, what set of rules do people have to live by was more what I was curious about. What okay we're coming to the end of the interview—what do you think are maybe the best things that have happened at Columbia as an institution since you came here?

Wow, best things institutionally...

Or the most exciting, or the most positive, whatever it might be?

I actually think our growth has been a very good thing. I am not against the need to grow. I want to find a way to get twice as many buildings because I find it exciting as you know, entertainment in the arts is the only growth industry in the United States at this moment. And by the way, it's our second largest export, intellectual property. Our largest export is unfortunately

weapons. But our second largest export is intellectual property, from high art to Mickey Mouse. And I think its, one of the exciting things is that we've, that as those—I'm sorry I want to start over again... I think when Mike started the college, you know, one of the things about the arts, it was a place, it was an alternate place for people to go. Alright and so if you were, if you weren't Connie Corporate or you know, Bill Debank you can come to Columbia and look different and be different and pursue an arts career and that was okay, but it was an alternative thing. The arts have become mainstream in many, many ways and so I think our growth has been a good thing because its taken that reality as an opportunity and built on it. And it means that more and more of our students can actually pursue a degree here and work in the fields as opposed to pursuing a degree here and then going to work doing something else. So for me that's been exciting and continues to be exciting and I'm looking forward to what are our next steps here. What else has been exciting? The consolidation of the campus has been interesting and good for us. The dance center moving downtown certainly has been a very important thing and exciting thing. And it brings what they do, you know, into the heart of the life of our students and the life of our community. So I think that's an important and significant thing. Not as well known, but I think still important ours is the center for arts policy, the Chicago Center for Arts Policy, which I'm proud to be a founder of, but I think that's in fact an important contribution.

Can you explain that a little more because its sometimes hard to get at what its actually meant just by the title?

Well you know, one of things that's hard to do is to define what the hell is arts policy in the U.S. because we don't have a ministry of culture and we don't have an official cultural policy, and yet there are policy decisions made constantly and they affect the work of artists. And I think the extent to which we can expose students and the community to that and engage those questions in ways that are meaningful, I think that's significant, I think its important. I mean we did a study on the informal arts, informal artists are people who don't make their living as artists. I don't want to use the word amateur because some of them are trained as professionals. But one of the things that's fascinating is that an enormous percentage of Americans participate in the informal arts, I mean well over half the country it's a huge number. And so our looking at that was I think useful and interesting and make suggestions to the community in terms of what we're teaching, what we're doing and what's possible for our students. And what are some the alternatives to the older, you know, the farmer takes his pig to market model of an artist trying to sell his wares or her wares. So yeah I think that, you know and I think we brought some people who've been significantly important to the campus. I could go on, but those are some examples.

Can you name a couple of people?

Alan Lomax certainly was one, I'll leave it at Alan for the moment.

And what do you think are the biggest challenges or the biggest challenge that Columbia had to face?

Well our big, our successes are challenge in a lot of ways. When we were two hundred and fifty students, this is before my time, you know, at the "S" Curve of Lake Shore Drive you know, you could manage the whole thing on a kind of, oh by the way as I'm passing you in the hall basis. Or you could certainly do a you know, a real town meeting. We're now over ten thousand students and so I think one of our challenges simply is how do we keep the vitality, the enthusiasm, the ability to try something new and to innovate in the context of this monster. I think that's one of biggest challenges, I think maintaining our diversity is a huge challenge, the more expensive we come the harder that is to do. That's enough for challenges.

Anything else that I didn't touch on that you think you might want to address before we close?

Not in a public document.

I want to thank you very much.

But I want to thank you, you know, on the record I want to thank you for the opportunity. This has been fun.