

B e r t G a l l

January, 1998. We are at Bert Gall's office, the Provost and Executive Vice President here at Columbia College Chicago.

OK, to get started I just want to ask: what were the circumstances that caused you to stay here at Columbia after your graduation?

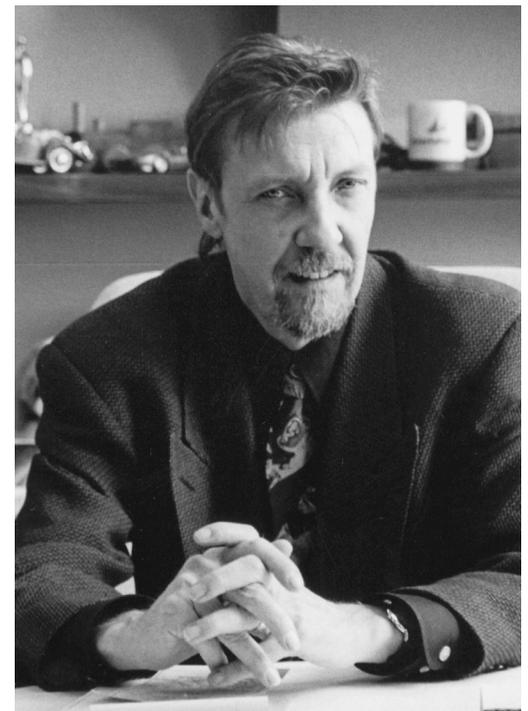
I suppose that you can only answer that by putting it in the context of the times, both the times in terms of the institution and the times in general. I came here in 1966 as a student. I graduated in June of '69 with no particular intent of either staying at Columbia or staying in Chicago. But Columbia was, by then, family, home, community, support network, a place that was hard to imagine anyone leaving. And given that it was the late '60s and there was a country that, in a way, was up for grabs, in some ways that's inseparable from the Columbia story, if you will. Mike Alexandroff persuaded me that I didn't really want to go back East and rather persuaded me that I should work for him, work for the College. Although I will confess it was unclear exactly what he had in mind, I think it was clear to him. I think that there were maybe less than a dozen full-time employees at that point, and Mike felt that growth is inevitable, and success around the corner in some way, and that there were many things that we weren't doing as an institution that we should be doing, or could be doing, or would want to be doing, and that I could play some role in doing so. In particular, although it never actually in a name panned out or fully came to

fruition, the expectation was that I was going to develop, initially, assorted, what now would be called outreach programs or initiatives that connected the College to the community. And while we did some of that there weren't really enough resources to support the endeavor, and there wasn't really enough of anything to support the endeavor I should say. And so we did do some of that. We spent a lot of extra time. He was right. We did grow some and there were a large amount of administrative matters that either were not really being attended to at all or were only tangentially organized or minimally functional. I suppose, to my surprise, I seem to have had some talent for doing those things, and after about a year or two it was apparent that I was more involved in doing those things than the kind of outreach initiatives that had been the, probably the seductive argument about why I would choose to stay.

Could you give some examples of what some of those things were that you kind of grew into and at first...

Well, the College had no purchase order system. You used to walk into somebody's office and you picked up a purchase order and you walked off with it and somewhere along the line somebody would be calling wanting to know why the bill hadn't been paid. So I created what is the origins, now ancient, of our whole purchasing and accounting systems. I ran the bookstore which in those days was—unlike now, it was smaller but it was not run by outside vendors—Columbia managed it themselves. I developed a kind of institutional-wide print

services operation with hiring the first printer and buying the first presses. I don't honestly remember which was the first project. I think I'm right in thinking it was the expansion of the "library," which in those days was a room of maybe five hundred square feet maximum. We made an expansion by converting a room across the hall for another three hundred feet. That was sort of my first experience with a construction project and we built some classes a year later, and so on. So it took over running all the construction, the facilities, the maintenance, the operations of plant as it were. Keeping in mind this was at 540 and, you know, we were tenants, so it didn't have the magnitude of responsibilities in owning and operating properties as we do now would have. So I sort of did that. I developed what I suppose—I don't think I knew the right words at the time—but what would have been a kind of personnel office function, which the College didn't have at all. Hubert



Davis and I persuaded someone to donate this monstrous piece of equipment which was an old punch-card card sorter system, which was “the beginning of our MIS system.” Hubert and I also developed in that same first couple or three years the Financial Aid Office, which didn’t exist. You have to understand, in those days we did have a Director of Admissions, we did have a Registrar, we had a Dean, we had, of course, President, we had three or four clerical kinds of jobs, and maybe three or four full-time faculty, and that was it. There wasn’t more, everything else was student workers or it didn’t get done. So, you know, all, a lot of the systems that now have become part of institutional life in a kind of primitive way date back to that end of the ‘60s, beginning of the ‘70s period.

Did you have a model or did you go to people or was it, you know, you saw a need?

I got, well some of it, you know, I didn’t strictly know anything about running buildings. And there was a board member at the time, Bud Perlman, who on and off was the chair of the Board, and who was Vice-President of Arthur Rubloff, which in those days was the biggest real estate operator in the city. And for reasons, in retrospect, I never understood—but he was a very kind and generous man—took a liking to me and spent a lot of time teaching me what I needed to know. In fact, [he] sort of turned me over to a woman named Mary Lowe who managed a property at 500 North Michigan in those days, among others, and was the first woman commercial building operator in the city. And Mary was just wonderful about teaching me how union rules work and how to interpret bids and what to do with... issues and what to do when the

Building Inspector shows up and so on and so forth. So between Bud and Mary, they taught me that part of it. There was a wonderful Board member named Gus Cherry, unfortunately died a few years ago, who was the Vice-President of Metropolitan Structures—which was one of the largest builders in the world in those days. He built the facilities for the Montreal Olympic Games, among other things. And Gus taught me—a great amount of investment of his own time—how you run construction. So I had this, you know, remarkable opportunity to learn from two or three people who were extraordinarily, on one hand, generous with their time, and on the other hand, you know, were really expert in their fields. So yeah, I sort of learned that part from them. I don’t remember there being a real model. I think it just sort of emerged

Was your background, like, what did you study as a student? Was it, did it prepare you at all?

Oh sure, literature is good for everything.

That’s right.

You know, the curriculum in those days was very, very different. The core program, as it were, was a series of courses that introduced to each student the things Columbia taught, like journalism, television, radio, art, advertising, theater, a couple others. And that, in a sense, was the core. In other words, every student was expected to have an exposure to each of the media or arts areas we taught in so that they would have an interdisciplinary, well-rounded set of skills and preparation. We took, if my memory is right, it was either a hundred and thirty two or a

hundred and thirty-six credit hours as opposed to the current hundred and twenty-four. And with the exception of the new courses that were beginning to be offered in Fiction Writing, everything was a two-credit course. So you typically took nine courses a semester. And there weren’t majors per se; formally there were no majors, there were certainly no minors. You had to take this core and you had to take some core of Liberal Ed and English courses. But if you really wanted to take forty-four hours of literature you could, or social sciences, or whatever. I don’t, you know, I guess technically I had a degree in journalism because I took a lot of writing. But my most conscious memories of classes were mostly in the humanities, social sciences, and literature areas. So no, it had nothing to do with managing purchasing systems or any such useful sort of thing.

I guess maybe the better question is—and you get to talk about yourself—but what do you think Mike Alexandroff saw in you that...

You know, he was around there and I never knew who he was for the first year or so; I didn’t know he was the President. There used to be a restaurant called Sherman’s down in the first floor of the 540 Lake Shore Building, I seem to, for reasons I don’t remember, show up early so I would go down there and have a cup of coffee in the morning. Mike invariably was in there having coffee. And I don’t know, somewhere along the line, I do know: One morning he was having coffee with Harry Bouras and I had had a class or two with Harry and gotten to know Harry. And Harry said, you know, “Come have coffee with us!” So that started and we started doing that as a pattern...

What did Harry Bouras teach?
Everything.

Everything.

Humanities really. He had a show on WFMT called Critics' Choice, he is a leading art historian, he was an artist who did both print-making and collage, he was the world's leading expert on medieval medical practices, he'd come from Princeton and the University of Chicago; he was a remarkably talented and bright guy, very big. So maybe by '68 I'd start having breakfast with the two of them and of course this was the height of the Vietnam War, I had gotten a fair amount of coverage and exposure around town and regionally for my role in anti-war activities. And Harry's politics and mine on most, on almost everything, but certainly on that issue, were certainly in synch so we got to be friends, I suppose. And the only other formal contact I've had with him really, I didn't even then know who he was, somewhere after I had been there a year. The woman who was the combination, at that time, Director of Admissions, Registrar, Bursar, I don't know, she probably had a couple of other jobs, a woman named June Rogers. I had come in to register and she said, "Well, you need to take..." whatever it was. And I said, "I really don't want to take that." And she said, "Well, you have to." And I said, "No, I really don't want to." June said, "Well, see, Bert, here in the catalog it says..." I said, "I see that's what it says but I'm really not interested in doing that. It's not useful to me, it's not interesting, and it's not something I want to do." I honestly don't remember what it was. I actually think it was the Intro to Television course which... I had no interest in doing. June said, "Well, stay here!" and she disappears down

the hall and she comes back and she says, "You have to go see M.A." And this was really before the breakfast scene started, I went and saw him. We spent about an hour talking about politics and art and history and books and the war, student movements, and then he said, "Oh yeah, why did June send you down here?" And I said, "Well, because I don't want to take this course and if I have to do that, I don't see the point of being here next semester." And he said, "Oh, well, that's silly. You have a point. Just tell her I said you don't have to do it." I went back an hour later; I told June that he had said I didn't have to do it. She was not happy but...

So that was actually, now that I think about it, the first formal time I met Mike, and still I didn't realize quite who he was, I just thought he worked there. Just, you know, it was a really informal community of people. And, you know, it took about eight weeks to know ninety percent of the students. Everything was on, in those days, two floors—or actually a floor and a half—of one building, you know. If you took eight, nine courses a week, in the course of a week you ran into virtually all four hundred and eighty, or whatever there were, students. And it was probably around that number. You didn't really know all the faculty but you certainly knew Thaine Lyman, who ran TV, whether you were taking TV or not, and Gene DeKovic, and Jean O'Hara, and Irv Kipnis, and a little early for Paul Carroll, but certainly Gwendolyn Brooks. So when you asked the question to begin with, about why did you stay, it was more: Why does anybody leave their family? Because it very much felt that way.

And it's very hard to look at where we are now and have any sense of the origins and the character of the community, I suppose it's more like, you know, a small family business that, you know, suddenly gets bought out by some international corporation. You know, if you've been there before and you were there five years later, you go, "Wow, things have really changed" You didn't realize it but they do. So, you know, they were really fun, exciting, you know, rewarding times. It was hard not to like being there.

You've mentioned several people that—and we, you can come back to that if we have time, but some of the people that you remember were most influential. But I'm interested in how you would describe the mission here at Columbia College in relation to, you know, the society at large, to higher education and how that relates to the arts and communication. And what's Columbia's contribution been?

Well, that's a question we can take the rest of the time and we won't have any time... We very much consciously, and certainly if you've read some of M.A.'s early speeches or speeches from that period, saw ourselves as a pioneering, crusading, alternative to a higher ed. system that was not responsive to the needs of anything other than upper and middle class and upper-middle class kids. In particular we were an alternative to the arts and media areas which in the main, and still today of course, in the main are the province of the few and the privileged. There was a conscious sense that we were preparing students to do things that were going to make a different world. The notions, a priori notions, if you will, of authoring the culture of your times, if you were gonna char-

acterize the institutional mission, it was to make accessible and available education in areas in which people were going to make a difference in how the world viewed a particular issue, problem, neighborhood, or constituency. And there was an overwhelmingly conscious, operative commitment to that. And, you know, if I showed up on some campus to speak and then talk about when I was a student and I was, in the region at least, I would say, “Columbia,” and it was real clear, “Oh yeah, you’re from that place that’s trying to make a difference.” And, you know, some of that is dated, and the ‘90s are certainly not the ‘60s. I think some of that is still embedded in the fabric of what we do and who we are and how we try to translate instruction and curricular decision making and to a different generation of people. Although I don’t think that anybody would argue that those issues, the notions, of giving access and opportunity and of preparing people for fields in which the product of their work is going to influence the worldview of whatever the issue is or community is has changed very much. Not only do we use the rhetoric as aggressively, I think some of it has gotten subsumed in size, if you will, but I don’t think that’s changed all that much. I think that it was a combination of, of, in other words, I don’t think it could’ve, Columbia could’ve happened in the middle of Iowa and it could have happened ten years earlier or ten years later, it was really a confluence of right place, right time, right vision—which was M.A.’s, and his unique ability to attract an extraordinary group of people. Gwendolyn Brooks, the Pulitzer Prize winning poet, her first teaching job is Columbia College? Nobody else would hire her?

And when I came I was nineteen, I was amongst the youngest. A lot, a lot, a lot of students were five or six years older which, you know, nineteen or twenty-five, you know, are thirty or ninety when you’re nineteen; very much a working class student population. My memory is, or my impression of my memory is everybody had at least two jobs. Part-time faculty were, you know, literally household names. You picked up the paper and read about one every day or you turned on the TV, if you had one, and there they were and so on. So you felt a part of something that was much bigger than these two little floors. They were important, just the people connection. It was Father Jones, and it was all these people that, you know, you’re reading their stuff in the Trib in the morning, or actually more accurately, the Daily News—Howard Zinn and those people. You were connecting to the larger issues that were, you know, headlines. Somehow those headlines were in the classroom in front of you in a pretty current and pretty consistent way.

And the student population, I don’t think it was just all progressive because it wasn’t. It was a kind of division, within the student body certainly, at least around the war issue. I don’t want to suggest there is a population that singularly thought Vietnam was wrong, that isn’t accurate. There was a large, vocal population that was, but that wasn’t universal. It wasn’t even universal with the faculty. A couple of them were really upset with sort of the characterization of the institute as this kind of hip, progressive, arguably left wing place. There’s a lot of interesting, the faculty... So, and some of the things that we retain to this day, the

notion of the importance of part-time faculty who teach what they do, just were absolutely unacceptable to the higher ed community in those days, “You can’t have part-time faculty. It can’t be real, it can’t be any good.” It was a real challenge to the higher ed establishment. The notion that you didn’t have to have SAT, ACT, you know, standardized entrance types of requirements was, you know, at least in a private institution, was essentially unheard of. The fact that you didn’t have to have a portfolio in an arts institution was absolutely unheard of and of course is still somewhat unusual. So when we were—you asked, I’m taking you back to the question, you asked: What was the challenges that we were about of the higher ed? I mean, we were viewed as a threat, as unacceptable, as a place that shouldn’t be. And Mike changed the status quo of very comfortable institutions who, in the main, were facing the same kinds of changes in their own student bodies—looking out the window wondering why, you know, there were three thousand people picketing the President’s office—and in some ways sort of blaming people like us for this happening on their campus. So we were a pariah in every sense. You know, we had no money, we had no endowment, we had no lengthy history, and we didn’t have the trappings of the academy. And yet here we were growing and getting all this sort of public attention and recognition and producing students who seemed to be getting jobs and seemed to be being successful, and suddenly were, you know, had by-lines in the local press, and running the credits—if they knew what they were looking at—on every TV station in town. If you knew what your names meant there was nothing but Columbia people. And Bob Sirrot, not too

many years later, is the most popular DJ in the city, and Bruce Dumont and Pat Sajak and all those people. And so, "What are those guys doing over there? This can't be good." And of course it was very good. I know that when we went to North Central for our first accreditation, which, by the way, the very small number of full-time faculty that we had did not want to do, because they were desperately concerned that being accredited would force us to lose the things that mattered

When was that?

It was '76 and it was really, they didn't want to do that. They didn't want to move to this building either...

...the part-time faculty, a resistance...

Oh, part and full by that, by the mid '70s there was a small core of full-time faculty. If my history is right, Bill Russo, I think, was the first full-time faculty member. But he came the same semester I did, which was Spring '66. And, you know, each year thereafter there was another couple: John Schultz, Betty Shiflett, Bob Edmonds, Mike Rabiger... I'll forget somebody. But the notion was we had this fragile, precious, special, alternative opportunity, experiment. And that if you became part of the mainstream—i.e., got accredited—then you of course sacrificed all of that, and there would be rules and requirements and bureaucracy of processes that you simply had to adhere to, and the trappings of all of that would diminish the uniqueness and diminish the value and turn off the potential market of students, which was a particular market of people in mind. It didn't turn out to be true, by the way, although size may have

made that somewhat true, but not the notion of being accredited. But yeah, I think there's a kind of collective of people who certainly weren't doing it for the money, because there was none. They were doing it for the sense of being part of creating something that mattered. And doing it for the sense that those that came through the doors and went through the process were gonna be humane, enlightened, skilled, perhaps progressive, agents of change for the good. And so that kept it all together. It didn't ever, I mean, one of Mike's claims to fame was he never missed a payroll. Well, that's true but we came awfully close.

Don't cash your check till

Monday!

That's right, and that didn't mean he didn't miss payrolls, because he regularly did. Selectively, now and then, so did other people. The thing was, I mean it was audacious and it was brilliant in its conception and Mike's originality, but also his ability to find and put together the right group of people, which he did out of this litmus test of, you know, go out for lunch with Mike and come back two days later and if you're interested, you're really interested. He could persuade you you loved something better or he could persuade you you could be an important contributor to something that matters. Lots of people, fortunately for the institution, you know, were so persuaded. And I don't remember ever hearing anybody say that they were sand-bagged or they regretted it, either. But it was, you know, I remember a few years ago someone who I knew who had been here in the late '60s, early '70s and hadn't been here since happened to be in town and came by, somebody who had been in film. And walked into the Film Department, I mean, they were

stunned, absolutely stunned. I mean, I remember we had one camera, you know, which, Mike worked a deal with a really wonderful student—his name is Kaza Kala, a year or two ahead of me. And I knew Kaza, I still know Kaza, I still see him. And Kaza was and is a very successful cinematographer. And they were building Lake Point Towers right across the street from 540 North Lake Shore. So Mike, somehow, talked them into, a great idea would be to have a visual documentation of their building the building. And he volunteered Kaz to do it in exchange for which we got our first high quality camera, that was the deal: Kaz got to do all the work and the College got a camera.

There were thousands of cases like that, thousands. And out of inventiveness it was necessary to keep it going day to day, week to week, semester to semester. It was really remarkable; speaks to the ingenuity and imagination that comes out of a group of people who truly feel some compelling commitment to an idea. Because I don't think it works unless it's tied to an idea.

The idea was valid, the idea still is valid, and the idea is still compelling. It's, I think, harder to see now because size and buildings and layers and process and commitments and all the unavoidable, in some cases desirable, trappings that are the consequence of size tend to disguise that essence, tend to hide the realities of it. But it's a, it's a pretty amazing story. I mean, if it was a business, you know, Forbes and those people would be writing about this remarkable success story. And again, I don't know what they gave you to read but if you go back and read the piece Tom Cottle did on the College at the very begin-

ning of the '70s for Change magazine; I mean, what he talks about is—I mean, brilliant writer, scholar anyway—he talks about going to the Dance Center with me and watching Shirley Mordine teach and this wasn't about dance: this was about life, and this was about war and peace and racism in America. And the remarkable kind of energy and creative tension that could be produced in a dance class... While, by the way, we were also teaching sound technique and so on, you know, in a neighborhood that was, you know, a little on the seedy side but the heart and soul of the city. And how the arts thing got connected to the neighborhood and, you know, people thought about them because it's there and sometimes got engaged by them because of its connectivity and accessibility.

That was one of the things that didn't work as well as we would've liked, is the whole effort to decentralize the campus. Which, you know, was an extraordinarily good idea, it was just extraordinarily impossible to do. You know, the notion was we'd have Theater over here and a Poetry Center over there and a Visual Arts place over there. And we'd scatter throughout the area, or throughout the core of the city as it were, and you would then be able to develop all these neighborhood connections. And you'd be able to, you know, do murals in this community and theater on the street corner in that one. And you would connect audiences that never get a chance to be around the arts and you would deliver messages, and that the product of the work would be informed by the experience in the community; students and faculty were adding... Well, it was a great idea, it was a wonderful idea, it's still a great idea. It's just

hard trying to manage something that dispersed. You couldn't figure out how to get the student from here to there, you couldn't figure out how to get the material from here to there. You know, in those days, early '70s, you know, the jobs were in the Loop, more so than they are now, part-time faculty couldn't get there. I mean, you know, it was just logistically not feasible. But it was another of those kinds of notions in which the College was trying to originate, trying to define mission in a way that it was consistent. You connected the relationship between the arts and media to communities; they respected the role of the community. It gave to community and allowed community a chance to inform the students' learning experience and therefore their point of view—whether expressed as a journalist or as a filmmaker. That was a really wonderful experiment which lasted for about three years. But if you read the Cottle article, it's doing that period and it talks about Shirley and the Dance Center. Shirley I should add to that list too, she came, I think, in '69. Actually that's, there was probably a... in reason. One of the problems was Shirley was teaching dance on the fifth floor of a building, the 540 Building, and the tenant underneath, which was a toothbrush company, would come up to my office going, "They're doing it again. All the light fixtures are shaking." "Well, OK, I'll ask her to turn the music down," and of course I wouldn't calm them down. But it became apparent you couldn't really teach dance in a building like that, with tenants at least, you know. That was part of the genius, sometimes it was just pure...

Move them on the ground floor...

...no, but no, it connects to the notion of the dispersal in the communities. Some of it was because it was practical; some of it was because it was philosophical. And the ability to merge those two was one of Mike's great geniuses. And Bill Russo and John Schultz and others, I don't think you can give Mike quite all of the credit, but he certainly gets the lion's share.

You've touched on some of this already but, you know, something specific about, has your personal vision or what you, you know, bought into here at Columbia, has that changed? And then maybe if you could also, I know, I've been told that open admissions, that philosophy, is extremely important to you, you know, personally as well as part of what you think Columbia is. And then, if we have time, you know, any of the important events, you know, that you haven't touched on that you think were particularly... You know, you talked about the '60s and anti-war and how that helped the College define itself or reacting to it... on higher education, but anything else?

Well the, I guess I divide the College's life, at least within my own experience with it, into two periods. One is the demarcation, one being '76 when we moved to 600. It was the pre '76, pre 600, pre grown-up College, as it were, and the post. Yeah, open admissions is surely central, I guess how I view the world, not just education. It is an admittedly controversial—interestingly, it's still controversial thirty years later, for somewhat different reasons—for similar reasons, perhaps. I think that that, as I suggested a moment ago, I mean, I think that the essence of the mission of the institution is

just as valid now as it was ten years ago, twenty years ago, thirty years ago. I think it's a much more complex society, I think the rigorous instruction is much more challenging. I think, generally speaking, student skills are not as good as they were and that makes the challenge in the classroom harder. Open admissions assumed a certain amount of things which, give or take, in the mid '60s or early '70s, tended to be more true than it is now, which was that there was a, more of a common set of skills that one could reasonably expect out of any given thirty students than now there is. Now part of that is because, frankly, in the early '60s, I remember somebody mailed in an application and it had a suburban address, everybody in the College knew it because nobody in the suburbs went to Columbia. It was a city place for city folk. That, of course, has changed. So that given the disparity in the funding of public education in this state—if not, indeed, in the country—then the variance has gotten much larger, just the consequence of that changing student body. So the challenges for open admissions are different in some ways than they were then. Open admissions was not about, "We're gonna take you because you don't read well enough to get into somewhere else," it never was. Open admissions was about, "You didn't get the benefit of twelve years of dance lessons or three days a week at Second City or the Kids Program at the Art Institute. And you went to a school system that didn't have an art teacher or if they did, they actually were the gym teacher." You know, so what you didn't have was take talent and desire, translate it into a sophisticated portfolio or ability to audition. And so what open admissions was about was about not

being excluded from an arts education because finance, culture, bad luck, etc. prevented you from getting those opportunities.

Now when we use the word it's thought to mean something entirely different. And so if I'm disappointed, which I think was what you asked or at least implied, it's that we lost sight of the fact that what open admissions was about was about not being a closed, social environment which precluded, other than those of privilege, from an arts education. And we have, like most of higher ed, redefined it almost unconsciously—indeed, I would submit unconsciously—into it meaning something else which is not different than what junior colleges, by their charter, are required to do. So, you know, if you to talk to Mike Alexandroff, he would tell you that there was never a time that we didn't turn down students. We always turned down students because they seemed to lack the ability broadly defined. We didn't hold them to a particular narrow measure. We didn't say, "How is that SAT score? That's all we're gonna look at, folks." But it was the conversation that occurred in that application process and the examination of what you've done and how realistic it was and, "You're working three jobs? Forty-two hours a week, huh? Well, you know, we really expect you to do all that homework. Arts demand a lot of independent... When are you gonna do that?" So one didn't turn people down, one counseled them to other choices. We somehow have lost that notion in the last years, which isn't, in my mind, and never was, a contradiction to the notion of open admissions. The contradic-

tion to open admissions is to set arbitrary, stringent, mechanical kinds of standards and say, "On them you're out or you're not gonna get in." So, yeah, I think we sort of lost the essence or some of the essence of what we mean by open admissions. So I suppose, yeah, I mean, I still believe what we believed then is absolutely as relevant. I mean, every public school system I know of—and I do follow this very closely for obvious reasons—hasn't been hiring more art teachers, hasn't been hiring more music teachers, hasn't been investing more in their theater programs, and so on. So the need for what Columbia believes in is just as true now, arguably more true because the role of media has become even more important in this society, than it ever was.

I mean, that would be the one, one big thing. I guess, you know, Columbia never had any money. We never had an endowment. I don't want to get into it, we will if you want, an extended explanation of the economic history of the institution, which I could do. But everything was pay as you go, pretty much as it still is. And so the only way you could fund improvements when you were here—whether improvement was rent one more room or buy another camera so you had three instead of two, or hire a full-time faculty member or, you know, get a full-time secretary for the President's office or whatever—was either by, well, was simply by generating more tuition income. You could do that by two ways, obviously. One was simply jack prices, which we resisted doing because of course that would contradict making it available and accessible to the very pool of people that we wanted to make it accessible to, and

conversely, the other choice then, by default, became get more numbers. And so we got into this numbers game. And every year you could be a somewhat better institution in some way, manner, or shape, or form because you had more students. And they simply generated more revenue that you could reinvest into the operation. And that's really how we funded it since, even before I was there. Well, the price you pay for that is, I think there is a size, I don't know what the size is, in which trying to maintain all of that, I don't know, connectivity, community, relationship, sense of spirit, sense of being in a special place gets lost in the size. And I know your institutions were fifty thousand students but I don't think they ever had that and probably don't care whether they have it. But for us... it was the glue, it was the essence. And, you know, it's still, you know, there's vestiges of it, there's moments of it, there's pockets of it, there's opportunities sort of consciously worked at by some numbers of people who have been here for a long time but very hard to do in an environment our size. We refer to us, ourselves as a small institution, a small college. By anybody's definition close to nine thousand doesn't qualify as small anymore. And it's very hard to have that sense of alternative, sense of special, sense of community in an environment of that size. So those would be the two things that I would say are struggling to be what they were for a wide number of reasons.

The kinds of ways in which Columbia might have or might continue to challenge the "higher ed" establishment, I think, is an interesting question. Because I think, in effect, I think we've

changed the higher ed establishment. I think a lot of attitudes about a lot of things that once were viewed as unacceptable, as a pariah, as uncollegial, whatever, now are standard fare on campuses all over the country. And I'm not gonna say we were the singular originator: Evergreen State, Antioch, Goddard, Franconia are the ones that come to mind; they were, in the same period, doing a lot of the same kinds of experimentation that we were doing. All influenced accrediting bodies; all influenced other institutions. And laid the groundwork, I think, for the whole rush into the '70s on for non-traditional student populations having opportunities to go to college, which wasn't something that higher ed saw as its role historically. Certainly the use of practicing professional part-time faculty at both the grad and the undergraduate level, it's common practice all over the country. It wasn't in the late, mid '60s. That was unheard of, the notion that you didn't have to be a comprehensive institution but you could still be a liberal arts institution—which we didn't talk about—but that was, you know, a radical departure from the forms that were available. There were art schools: Kansas City, The Art Institute, but we weren't that. There were liberal arts colleges but of course they didn't have occupational focus. They didn't have the kinds of X amount of work that you could do in a major, they were generic liberal arts experiences. So we were neither and we were chartering this new path for higher ed for a "specialized institution" that still had its roots in a liberal arts experience. Now there are others of us that do that, but that was a pioneering effort that suddenly said to higher ed, "Gee, we don't all have to be the same." We don't all

have to be just this or just that. Maybe global community ought to matter. Maybe the kind of constituency of the students you want to serve ought to be particular rather than generic. And I think, I think we were one of the few, or one of earlier institutions to see those kinds of possibilities. And, you know, I think our place in history has something to do with that issue, along with practicing professionals, along with, most importantly, open admissions, open access and the whole notion that, which I would brand as perhaps a debatable point—about the occupational outcome ought to have some relationship to what you spend to go to college. And that's obviously still up for grabs in the society as a whole, but I think those were legitimate contributions that Columbia, not singularly, but importantly made that have given a lasting, appropriate place in higher ed history. You asked me another question...

Any important events or...

Well, the '76, the sort of the change in the era, you know, the suddenly owning a building. Certainly the 1972 accreditation, which gave us a kind of respectability. Now the President could attend meetings that he wasn't allowed to attend. You know, enrollment growth began to be significantly greater, more rapid because of that. And that is not just because we were accredited; it's because once accredited, levels of public financial aid which students could draw on prior to that, to come to Columbia, were now available. So getting accredited and acquiring a "real campus" were certainly crucial issues. If you're gonna talk to John Schultz, there was an Arts in the Inner City Conference that you

should remember to ask him, which was another sort of seminal moment. If you talk to Lya ask her about the first retreat of the full-time faculty; it brought them together as a faculty as well as some important curricular things came out of those.

It didn't happen at a moment, it happened over a period of time, but the development of a cadre of full-time faculty. I'm telling you that I came and so did Bill Russo, and he was the first full-timer. So getting a full-timer was a significant moment but the evolution of that into a core—even if it was only forty to fifty people, perhaps, by the time we moved here, which was probably roughly the number—it changed the character of the institution. I'm not saying it was bad; it was good. I can't put a moment in time on it, actually, but as an accumulation in changing the culture, that was important. I think the involvement of the CCFO organization was important. I think the, each of the accrediting visits and the reaffirmation of Columbia as a legitimized option in higher ed was important. I think the development, the initiation of and the development of the graduate program—which we also talked earlier about—was another of those benchmarks by which at least maturity and public recognition and so on were the consequence. You know, it said you could be both. It said you could have a selective graduate school and still stay true to your mission and not lose sight of your goals and do the other as well, and not send such a mixed message to the public that nobody knew who you were. I mean, we did it in a rather carefully managed way.

Was there a period, it sounds like when you were talking about the '60s, where Columbia was doing or trying to accomplish, was somewhat fairly well defined and then did it lose some of its definition or... I mean, was there a trade-off, I guess I'm asking, in the accreditation and being alternative?

Not the accreditation. I think if there were trade-offs they weren't conscious and they had much more to do with size than... It was, you know, the President suddenly saying, "You know, I used to know every single person that worked in the Records Office and I knew their spouses, their children?" And he said, "There's five of them, I only know two of them. What's happened?" And then that, that was to me the most profound change, was simply the size. Whether it's headcounts of students, faculty, staff, all of the above that really made a difference. I also think you'd have to look at the role of Dwight Follett as Chairman of the Board. And he really supported, pressed, encouraged the notion of getting accreditation. Dwight was the head of Follett Publishing and Follett Bookstores and all of that; remarkable man. He died, I think, two years ago. And getting Dwight on the Board was an extraordinary accomplishment because he was this, you know, nationally known, high...