

Garnett Kilberg - Cohen

It is May 19th, 2004 and this is an interview with Garnett Kilberg Cohen, Chair of the Department of English at Columbia College Chicago.

All right well if we could start by if you can tell us when you came to Columbia and what the circumstances were?

Okay, I came to Columbia, I think it was in either '86 or '87 because I moved to the City of Chicago for reasons that had nothing to do with Columbia College, but I was looking just for a part-time position for first year I was here. And there were several places that contacted me when I sent out resumes and one of them was to Columbia College. And I was interested in Columbia College because of the fact, I knew of some of the artists here, one of whom was Hollis Sigler, whose work I admired a great deal. So, when I got interview I decided to teach at Columbia College and I was there a year or a little over a year when the search for the Director of the Writing Center was going on. I didn't initially apply. It was a national search, but I didn't initially apply because it was requesting a Ph.D. and my graduate degree is a MFA. And I was approached by people on the search committee and asked to apply. They had applicants nationwide, but they had several people in who weren't working out and they were having a hard time. Well I was actually asked why I didn't apply, and I said because I have a MFA instead of a Ph.D., and they said, but you have training in composition and basic writing and all of these areas. So I applied based on

actually a request, you're being asked to apply for this position. So I started as the Director of the Writing Center and the coordinator of writing across the curriculum in fall of 1988 I believe.

And what was your understanding of what the purpose of the writing center, now you had been here a year, the purpose of the writing center and the initiative of writing across the curriculum.

Okay, it was previously at The University of Pittsburgh, I was familiar with their writing center there, which was a fairly small operation. And at Columbia the way I was introduced to it was by Lya Rosenblum, who was the dean in the interview, which was really that they wanted to grow the writing center quite a bit and which is understandable given that we are and were an open admissions college. And at University of Pittsburgh where I had formerly taught, they aren't an open admissions institution. So its less likely you'd have as large writing center. So one of my goals or one of the objectives I was given was to increase involvement in the writing center with students. And but also, to tutor them at all levels of writing and to make sure that people understood that all writers need feedback, whether they're at a, you know, fairly advanced level, whether they're an "A" student, or whether they're a developmental student. I mean, I myself was even at the time I was hired, a published writer and I understood that I got feedback still in my work. And I think the idea that was to increase enrollment in the writing center and also encourage the notion that there's no stigma attached to going

to the writing center, that all writers get feedback for their work.

And what about writing across the curriculum how was that, or were you designing that program?

At the time I was hired and I learned of this, I had only applied for the Director of the Writing Center. But I learned about the writing across the curriculum program in my interview with Dr. Rosenblum, and she said the college had just been awarded a Lilly Grant by the Lilly Foundation, had been awarded a grant for writing across the curriculum program, and would I, if given this job, be willing to also head the writing across the curriculum program. And that was at that time our college was considerably smaller and at that time it was really to serve sort of as a facilitator organizing faculty in other departments, sort of a, although I hesitate to use this term, a trickle down method where I would really be gathering information and meeting



with what were sort of termed master teachers from various departments. Meeting with them and they would go back to their departments and have meetings with faculty in their departments, and work with them about different ways to use writing in the classroom. And we would also have number of large school events where we might have a panel discussion or a speaker come and people from around the college could come to those events as well.

And what were or are the specific challenges at an open admissions college with a writing center and encouraging writing to be part of the basic curriculum?

You know actually I felt that the writing center itself as wasn't as much of a challenge as it was at other colleges, that it is at other colleges getting students to come regularly. Because one of the nice things is I think a lot of the students although they may have excelled in photography or have a huge interest in film, a lot of them understood that they weren't perhaps as successful academically as they would like to be. So it was interesting to me that it wasn't as hard to get students to come to the Writing Center as I think it is at some other schools as long as you spend an awfully long time getting the word out. And at the very beginning we had fewer than a hundred students using the writing center. There was one person who ran the center for one year before I took it over, but we had fewer than a hundred students. But by making regular presentations in the Writing Center and visiting classrooms, as long as the word got out that this was available for them, I'm happy to say the Columbia's students at that time were happy to avail themselves of a service like this.

And what would you say, now were you at the writing center for six years?

About six, six - seven years.

And did anything, did you add anything or did anything change (inaudible)?

Oh yeah, I mean when I first took over the writing center, there was no secretary of the center, there were very few tutors, there wasn't an Assistant Director. And I was really pretty much doing it all myself. I think it was the second year I was there when we got a secretary. And now the writing center its been, well you know, its been a while since I've been head of it, but now the writing center has a full-time Assistant Director, a full-time Administrative Assistant, a full-time Secretary, and a number of student workers. But when I started there were just student workers that was all there was in the Writing Center.

And were you training the student workers?

I did a tutored training for Writing Across the Curriculum course where I trained student workers. We also hired some people from the outside. We hired the first learning disability specialist at the college and we hired a few other people from the outside, but most of the tutors were student workers.

And were you teaching as well while you were directing the writing center?

I taught the tutor training for Writing Across the Curriculum and I taught Intro to Short Story because that's my primary area of the main area where I publish is in the short story.

And I will come back to that. If you can talk maybe then a bit about the writing center you said was part of the English Department. What was your transition? Can you describe the transition out of directing the writing center into...?

Well I guess I always felt a part of the English Department because it was, those were the people who hired me, the search committee was composed of people from the English Department. I previously taught part-time in the English Department and it was for a little over a year, so I already had a relationship with some people in the department. And of course, the school was much smaller back then and I went to faculty meetings within the English Department. And so the transition I guess, the writing center by the time I had left had grown from fewer than a hundred students a week using it to over four hundred students a week using it. And but I was always remained fairly active in the English Department, so the transition—so it wasn't much of a transition in that sense. Going to the position of being chairperson was a big transition because going from most of the people who I worked with on a day to day basis were student workers to most of the people I worked with on a day to day basis were full-time faculty and full-time staff.

And was there any position between those two?

No position between those two.

Oh, can you talk a little bit about that? I mean was that unusual or, you know, how did that...?

Well, the Writing Center was an administrative position, so in that sense it was probably smoother for me than it would have been for

some other faculty members in the English Department because of the fact I was accustomed to being there five days a week and a more or less, you know, nine to five schedule. So in that sense I think it was easier for me than other faculty, but it still, you know, a fairly large leap.

And I have to ask you because I've been interviewing in this round a couple of they're current, but the last chairs for life that were hired by Mike Alexander.

Was your role different...?

I was one of the first, I think I was one of the first who wasn't "Chair For Life" because I was hired through the process of the search. When I was initially hired to the college as Director of the Writing Center and it was an election within our department and I was told at the time that they would be three-year renewable contracts. And I think I was one of the very first in that category, there may have been a couple before me and I don't remember, you could probably check the dates. And yeah, that answers that question.

And so when they, you were acting chair for a year?

I was acting chair and I may not have this a year or two and then I became, I probably have it on my CD. But and then I was, then we had an election and we discussed whether to have a search or whether to have an election and if anyone else is interested in the department. And we had an election and I was chosen as chair in that.

And how many, then college wise, how many other women female chairs were there at that time?

There was only one other female chair at that time that was Shirley Mordine. And she didn't come very often to the chairs meetings because of the fact that the Dance Department was on the north side of town so it was a big trek down for her. So for the first year I was pretty much the first, the only woman chair in the room. She would occasionally come, but not that often. And I would also say the first year when I was acting chair they wouldn't let me come to the meetings. That was how they did it back then. They wouldn't let acting chairs come to the meetings, which made it very difficult. And then when I became a full chair then I was allowed to go to the meetings. And I think shortly after that they changed it to allow acting chairs to go. And you know, it wasn't really that long ago when you consider it was like 1995 or around then, but it was surprisingly patriarchal. And I also remember when Lynn, wait no, I was the, the other person, the next person to come and be a chair who was a woman was Rebecca Courington and I mean Shirley Mordine was still a chairperson, but as I said she didn't come very often. And before Rebecca Courington came I would sometimes go to the chairs council meeting and we met in the boardroom because there were fewer chairs then also, be as there weren't as many departments and some of the positions that are chair positions now weren't called chair positions. I would sit on one side of the board table and like everybody else would sit on the other side. So then I would go to the next meeting and I sit on the other side and

everybody would sit on that side. And I thought you know, this might be a fluke or something, but then when Rebecca came we just started like sitting on the same side and they'd all sit on the side and then one time we each sat on different sides and they sat on the end. So but it was, you know, I mean...

Did they feel that it was, female is contagious disease?

I don't know if it was female or whether it—I think that was probably partly it, or whether I don't think they were conscious of this, but I think—but I also think it was part, it was partly, you know, the gender thing, but it was also partly the thing of most of them at that time were still sort of the chairs for life. And so I think that it was also the idea that this was sort of a club that you, you know, and these were not real members of the club because they weren't chairs for life.

Did that change? Has it changed? (inaudible)

Oh yeah, its changed completely. I think I was the first, I'm sure I was the first woman elected chair of the chairs person council. And since then, I mean Margaret Sullivan has been one, and now Bonnie Brooks is one, and I think there might have even been someone else. But, and it was, you know, it was an election and often times its just, its just sort of who wants to be it in the nomination, but its not contested. And it was contested and it, you know, it was, it was, it was interesting, it was interesting. But I would say now its completely different. I'd have to go around the table and count, but I'd say just about half the people probably are

women. And that changed under John Duff, who changed a number of the positions that were formerly director positions into chairperson positions like Suzanne Cohan Lange became a chairperson and she'd formerly been a director.

Someone else mentioned that too changed at Columbia when John Duff was president. Was there any other things in your ten year here that have shifted, I mean as a woman at Columbia or (inaudible)?

That was the thing that I was most conscious of obviously since I was the only woman in the room, but probably if you mention something, I mean but, something triggered my memory, but I can't really think of anything off the top of my head right now.

Okay well yeah, if something comes up we can come back to that. So as chair of the English Department though, you also noted that you taught throughout your time here at Columbia as well and can you talk a bit about that and maybe start with your, did you develop the short story course?

I don't know if somebody taught it before me or not other people have taught it, but I'm the main one to teach Intro to the Short Story in the, in the department. I think I was the first one to teach the tutored training course. Other courses down there, I developed "Literature of Plays" and I believe I was already chairperson or acting chair at the time that I developed that course. The other courses were, I think were existing. I might have been the first one to teach "Intro to the Short Story" I'm not sure, but I didn't, but I was asked

to do it by the chairperson and so I didn't, you know, I developed my own syllabus, but I don't know if it had, it probably had been on the books before then.

Well how if it was or not, what is your, like what did you bring to it that is perhaps different or unique because obviously that's your specialty?

I mean I think one of the things is as a writer of the short story, I can look at it both from the perspective of writer of the short story and a literary critic. I mean I also write book reviews and have published book reviews about short stories. And I was an undergraduate literature major, so I bring both perspectives to the class. Although, the main focus since it is a literature class is the critical perspective. But I'm very cognoscente of how the short story is evolving and changing so that's something. And once again both from a critic's point of view, but also from a writer's point of view I'm always able to talk about that in the class or bring things that are very, very fresh that aren't even—they're just what people I know who are writers are doing. Whether its you know, trends like the linked short story, or the flash fiction for the very short fiction. And so I guess that would be, and I think everyone always brings to a class their own, their own favorite writers and their own, and so, or the things they think are interesting or important about the subject. I mean one of the areas I really focus on is the structure of a story, a short story. And also I think by being a writer of the short story, I can also look at the fact that usually writers don't talk about a short story by breaking it up so much, so I can break it up and talk about it, but I can also talk about how this is in some ways a false

device. Because of course that you know, a short story writer doesn't say, well I'm now going to write some character and I'll come back later and do the plot or vice versa or something like that. And I think sometimes some teachers of literature, who aren't also writers, not all but sometimes they approach it with a different understanding. I mean or, yeah I guess different understanding.

You were recently honored for your work, but I'd like to ask you about how have you, and this is kind of getting into the subject of workload. How have you found time to do your own professional, I don't (inaudible) your professional work as an artist, as a writer and with your, the expectations of the job titles that you've held here?

That is such a hard thing to do as I'm sure you know and anybody who's here knows that it's a hard thing to do. And I guess I really use the time that our breaks between semesters, whether it's the, you know, whether it's the Christmas break or the time between semesters through the summer. For instance what I generally do is, because I think its good to have some consistency, you know, with the chairperson over the summer, but what I generally do is divide it up and I take half the summer and somebody else takes half of the summer and I have also taken the summer off. And then during a break I will put days on the calendar where as a chairperson you still have to come in during the break, but I'll try and put one or two days a week in so that I can come in, so that I could stay home and write during those two days and keep those two days free. And I have to say I wonder sometimes if the busi-

ness of my job some ways had an affect on my writing short stories instead of longer pieces, instead of novels because of the fact that usually the periods of time come with long stretches of not having periods of time. And you can pretty well get a short story down in a few days, I mean then you have to go back and keep revising it and doing other things to it. But it's more harder if you're doing a novel and you have to leave it for long stretch of time and come back to it. So I mean, I think in some ways probably the heavy workload I've had has, you know, played a role in that. Although, I love the stories that form and I love writing the short story and I could go on and on about that, which I won't. But there's probably some small role in which my work schedule, my extreme work schedule has contributed.

And then if, you know, kind of change hat, does your role as the chair or the advocate in part at least for your department, your faculty, can you address that too as a workload? And is it getting harder and...?

I think as chair it's getting harder to, I think the workload is increasing as chair. And I think it's increasing for faculty as well because of the fact that I think more—it's increasing for faculty who have been here a longer time because I think the emphasis on faculty development has intensified. And so I think its increased because of that and because we're a larger and more complex institution. I know that the provost has been talking about reducing teaching load. And I think that would be one of the best things for, you know, if we want to continue to

attract, you know, attract strong and productive faculty members we have to have a reduced teaching load. And if we want to do the best jobs in classes, I mean you can't prepare for four classes and have, I mean I have twenty students in my class this semester, you can't have, I mean you can't have like four classes and add up to eighty to a hundred students and do the amount of writing you need to do, and assign the amount of reading, have them do the amount of writing and have it be the quality class unless you're either giving up your faculty development or you're giving up your community service. And I mean, I'm someone who does like to juggle so there's a part of me that enjoys it, but then there's also a part of me that thinks, oh my gosh, this is, this is a lot. But I also think its important for chairperson to be working in her field because I think its important that faculty know that a chair person doesn't get a free ride in some are because of the administrative load, so I think its really important. And I think it's important too to not have lifetime chairs. I mean, I think long-term chairs can be good and some chairs could work out for twenty years and be perfect in that role. But for the most part I think very few people stay in a job in one position more than ten to twelve and don't either become stale or something, you know. So I think its important to sometimes, you know not, I mean some people can do it for twenty years and its fine.

What about you, do you when you see the future do you see yourself as a faculty member (inaudible)? Your department might not let you go back.

Definitely. Oh they will, but I think its important to, you know,

also as an advocate for faculty be constantly aware of the fact that you're going back into that role at some time. Whether its, you know, three years away or five years away or whatever, I'm planning on going back, I'm planning on only doing this for another year and then going back as a faculty member. But I always had it in my head that I'm going back as a faculty member. And I think that helps you be a stronger advocate and understand better what's going on. And I think you are, and I'm sure other chairs have said this, in this weird in between land where, which is true not just at Columbia, but all institutions where you're not, you know, you're not an upward administrator, but you're not really a faculty member. You know you just and, you're behold-ing to both and, but I think you're better off if you know that, you know, eventually you're going to back in the faculty, right.

Well I've and this kind of speaks for that as well, but before we leave some of the points you've brought up, the course you designed on the literature (inaudible), could you talk just a bit about what that is and why you wanted that here at Columbia?

Well I've always been interested in the idea of setting and the role setting plays in story or in literature and how it affects characters. I mean I think settings in our own life affect all of us. So I wanted to explore that and give opportunities for students to explore, you know, in a structured way and not just on my own. But, so I found that that was good way to do it. I also thought it was sort of a nice tie-in

with Columbia because, you know, there's so many other things going on in the arts that have to do with place, whether its you know, landscape, photography or the setting in films. But I really think that everything in literature plays a role in how a character might behave or explain a character, but particularly the place where that character is, the landscape of where that character is.

So, and then what else in your, you know, when you think about returning or becoming a full-time faculty member at some point. What else would you teach or want to teach or have you thought about that at all?

Well next year I'm teaching comp course called "Creative Pros Narrative", and one of the reasons I'm teaching that is because I have found myself so interested in structure in my own work and in the short story. But also because I do think this would more of a blurring of lines between different genres, where now the prose poem or the lyric essay and sometimes it's even hard to tell the difference between fiction and non-fiction. So I think it would be nice in a classroom, so that's the course that I'm going to teach next year and it will be nice to explore just where, you know, where you draw the lines, and what's the difference, and is it all going to be one thing at some point and...

That's interesting because that came up with those book discussions on Tim O'Brien's book?

Oh yeah, wasn't that interesting because the whole thing with Tim O'Brien...

I should say the things they carried?

The things they carried, yes. Because it is these, because the whole discussion about students being upset because they think its, they think its non-fiction and they find out it is fiction. And...

The use of the first person?

Right, right. So its, so I think that's all very interesting and I'm really looking forward to doing that course. There's also other courses I'd like to do which I haven't had an opportunity to do because I've been chairperson because you really, at least in my department, which is huge, I can only teach one class a semester. And I also think its fair for me to teach sometimes composition because that's one of the heavier workloads. And so I know what's going on in the composition classroom, and it's all incoming students and I'm familiar with all that (*inaudible*) important for me to periodically do that. So if you take it that I'm only teaching one course a semester and I'm periodically doing composition, that removes others from the, from the cycle. So I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to teach more a wider of selection of courses. I'd like to teach review writing and this narrative pros course is a, as I mentioned and other types of literature courses. I've been thinking about different types of literature courses that I think might be sort of interesting.

What is tell me, describe the department? What is the size of the department?

There's thirty full-time faculty, we have a major in poetry, awesome MFA program in poetry, we have minors in professional writing, literature in poetry. And we also

share a creative non-fiction minor with journalism and the fiction-writing department. And, but we also in addition to those area that have programs and minors, we have an ESL program, a speech program, a reading program, a composition program. And the composition program is probably the biggest program in our department because we work with basically every first year students who takes Composition I and II.

Those programs you just mentioned, do they all have directors or coordinators?

Depending on their size or their scale of what they need to do. Many of them do have either a coordinator or director. The largest ones with the most responsibility have directors and then some of the smaller ones have coordinators.

Because then you're working with several, it's not simply chair and the faculty members?

Yeah, I'm working with the coordinators and the directors and we have a faculty meeting about twice a month and so work with the whole faculty then and then I meet separately with coordinators and directors. And we also have committees within the department. And we have three publications within the department too. We have "South Loop Revue", which is creative non-fiction, "The Columbia Poetry Revue", which is poetry and the magazine is edited by students with faculty assistants, and then we have "Court Green", which is a national poetry magazine, which is edited by three of the full-time faculty. And so there's a lot going on.

What would you say—I don't even know if you could do this, could you talk about the division of your job? And like what do you spend the most time on and what takes up most of time?

This year, and you know it changes from year to year. This year, probably the poetry program is taking up more of my time because for several reasons, one is because it's a new MFA program and a new program and having grad students around, that there's so many changes and so much stuff going on with that, so probably this year the poetry program. There have been other years where the composition program has taken up more of my time. So once again it comes back to the idea of juggling, because if you have a new director in one area she might not be as experienced so you have to put more energy into that, or if you're trying to develop a new area. I mean the way I'm looking at it next year is I'm looking at putting more energy into professional writing, that program and because I think that could use attention and development. And it has because we put so much energy into the poetry program and comp program it's been ignored a little.

What would you say has been the greatest challenge or the most difficult obstacle as chair? And then the thing that you're most proud or happiest about or...?

The biggest, there's been lots of little challenges. One of the things is juggling everything, that's a huge challenge. And in terms of what I'm proud of is that for the most part, I think we have a faculty body that works really well together, there are exceptions. But for the most part I think the faculty, it's a

department that's huge and complex, but for the most part the faculty has gotten along really well. And so I'm very happy about the spirit of collegiality that is existed for the most part, and once again there's a few exceptions. But and the accomplishments of the faculty, its interesting to me and its something I wonder about if this will change when I'm not chairperson anymore but, when somebody gets a good publication or does something impressive, I'm you know, I'm not as happy as when I get one myself, but I'm really sincerely, sincerely excited and happy and I feel so good about it. And I'm hoping that will stay, I don't know whether it will when I'm no longer chair, but I'm just very happy about the accomplishments of the faculty. I mean there's other things we've done, like we've created a scholarship for first year poetry, for one first year poetry student every year. I'm, you know, the "South Loop Revue", that journal was started since I've been chairperson so I'm pleased. And I'm pleased about getting a major in the department that was started during my time there. So there's a lot of stuff I'm happy about and pleased with that has happened in the department. But I guess its faculty accomplishments that are the main thing.

Could we talk a bit about the students at Columbia and I don't know if you want to distinguish or talk about it, I mean have the students changed since you've come to Columbia? How have they changed? And what do you think their needs, or have their needs changed?

I think the students have changed since I've come to Columbia. But I'm not sure, I mean I've always,

because the last place I mentioned that I taught was at, well before I came to Columbia was at University of Pittsburgh, where I'd also been a grad student. And its interesting that's still my main basis of a comparison, I occasionally teach a seminar or something in fiction someplace else other than, but its not a full semester class. But the thing about that I love about Columbia students is, and that hasn't changed, changed a little but not much, they're not often as worried about their grade as they are about doing well. And I remember when I was at University of Pittsburgh, I would half the class saying, well I need to get a "B" because of this for my average, or I have to get an "A" because I'm going to dental school and if I don't—you know, there would be the—and at Columbia its changed a little more and there's a little more like grade will I get, you know, I need this grade—there's a little more but still for the most part, its still more how can I do better, what do you think of my writing, you know. And they really do seem a little more interested in the work than in the reward for the work. So that's something I've always liked a lot about Columbia students. And I think it has changed, but not that much. One thing that's changed is when I first started teaching here, the disparity and ability in a class, and this was I was teaching composition, was so enormous you didn't know how to direct your teaching efforts. Because there would be someone who I think would have difficulty in a eighth grade writing class and somebody else who I think could be competitive at University of Chicago in the same class. And I

think what's happened is we probably gotten better at doing placement and making sure that someone who has developmental needs is in a developmental class. As a matter of fact we didn't even have placement when I started here, so we definitely gotten better at it because it didn't exist. So I think the disparity in a classroom and composition had gotten better. That's all I can think of right now.

Okay and I think that the next thing that the kind of relationship or within the college community. And I know in the chair its more difficult because you're a chair and like you said, you're kind of in between the two, but maybe looking at the big picture for Columbia, where its gone and where its going. I'll start by asking you, you know, why do you stay here, what keeps you here?

But this plan my long life I just, I mean I feel like so much a part of Columbia and that I've, you know, helped build Columbia. And I also think Columbia is so integrated into the city. And I live in the city and I'm a part of the city, that all those things are really important to me. Columbia is so Chicago and I like the fact that its open admissions and provides opportunities for students who might be extremely talented or extremely bright, but you know, just for whatever reason weren't into it in high school or you know. So I like the open admissions policy, I like the fact that its an urban campus, I like the fact that the emphasis is in the arts. I did like that it was a small college, its not really a small college anymore, but you know, things change and you go with

what the changes are. What I, and there's some things I think are better about it being larger. I mean it presents more opportunities in some ways, but then there's also the fact that I think you lose the real sense of community it had when I first came here, where you know, practically everybody in the school knew everybody else and that was great. But that's just not going to you know, things change so that's you know, and that was fun and that was great and but, you know.

Is there anything that you are worried about or concerned or think that the school has to pay particular attention to?

Well I think probably managing growth, being very conscious of managing growth, and maintaining a sense of community as the school continues to grow and maintaining diversity. And I think, you know what, I'm impressed though that the college is committed to not raising tuition next year, so I mean and that certainly is going to help economic diversity and in some ways ethnic diversity as well. I think we have to be careful as we get larger and larger not to lose sort of the heart and soul, and that's kind of vague in general. But I think whenever anything becomes, and this isn't just particular to Columbia College, but the larger and bigger something gets the less attention you can pay to all the parts and all the people and everything else, so I think its important not to lose that.

We were talking about, and we touched on this earlier, but with workload but related that, ten year expectations; have those risen, is it harder to meet those and does your department, there's been some new initiatives to—I'll throw out some words that have kind of been thrown out about, you know, with national reputations and having a more diverse faculty; has that been something that your department has had to deal with?

Yeah, our department has dealt with that and I think its something that has created growing pains particularly for people who have been here a long time. Less so for me than a lot of people who have been here a long time and I guess I think, you know, its one of those things too where I think the whole ten year situation has created some stresses and unpleasantness that wasn't here before, but at the same time its also created attention to higher standards and a self examination process that wasn't always here before. So I mean, I think there's real benefits to it and for instance, one of the things that I think used to happen is when it was probationary—non-probationary, it was just basically if you were here the whole time you kind of slipped into being non-probationary without, with that. And I do think if you're getting something that, if your getting something that's basically a job forever there should be some process you go through. And its unfortunate that sometimes its stressful and painful and—but you know, there's also benefits that come with the new ten year process.

We didn't talk about this but you certainly talked about the collegiality of your department that you really like. How would you describe your leadership style as a chair?

Well I would hope it would be described as collaborative for the most part where, I mean I don't think there's much that takes place that I don't at the very minimum consult a wide number of faculty. But and that's the minimum, but I'd also, you know, if its—but a lot of things, have votes or have long faculty discussions about some—I guess I'd say its collaborative, I hope its collaborative, I hope its supportive. But I also think that I'm someone who does like to get something done and so I mean, I like to be somewhat goal-oriented. And if we are talking about doing something at the beginning of the year, if we're talking about three or four things, that at least one or two of those things is done by the end of the year. So, because things move slowly in academia and so and you can begin talking about something and it could be years later and its not done. So I guess that's how I, you know, describe it.

I can't imagine your faculty meetings and I only have our department to compare to, but you said there's two a month and thirty full-time faculty members. Is there a typical meeting, I mean do you, is, I, you know what?

Well I mean, I would have to say, although I said that about the faculty begin all collegial and I think supportive of one another, for the most part there are exceptions and I just don't want to be dishonest. But I say over the last couple of years maybe, things have

been slightly more contentious, only because—but I think once again that's growing pains, and so many changes are happening and they're some things that we didn't really need rules for in the past. Like if you had a much smaller faculty and you could kind of just talk to everybody or call, but now there are more procedures and rules needed and you know. And so I think that's the thing that we want to be careful with probably college wide too, is make sure we don't go overboard and legislating every single thing, you know. But I think we're working through things in our department to our own growth and the college growth and to—so I think I'm fairly good at running a meeting and getting through the items in the agenda, but making sure most people have an opportunity to talk if they want to talk, so...

If you had thirty full-time, how many part-timers do you have?

It varies, I think we probably this semester have about sixty, but it's gone as high as ninety, I mean sixty to ninety. Boy, I hate to give these figures when I don't know...

But still approximately you have twice as many part-timers as full-timers. And how do you, and again this is an issue that this department struggles with, how do you reach out and get full (inaudible)?

Its hard, it is hard and I have taught part-time myself and I know you want to be a part of it. But I also know you're busier and you have other commitments and some people are teaching at two other institutions who might have another job, so it is a struggle too. One thing I do is I do meet with the P-Fac representatives in my

department at least once a semester. I just met with them a couple of weeks ago and to hear what issues they might have or concerns they might have. And then I kind of disseminate the information among directors and coordinators and staff if there's, you know, something they want to be more involved in, or somehow they felt they've been excluded, or they have ideas about something or something they need. So because you get those thing passing in the hall or when there's a complaint or something, its nice to have scheduled meetings where its not necessarily because something's gone wrong. The other thing is there's at least one meeting a year where all part-time faculty are invited to attend. I mean that's a problem because there's so many that it's hard to have substitute discussion if you've got so many people, but we do put out the invitation. And then there's also the biggest contention of our part-time faculty are in the composition program. And so there's two retreats a semester for composition faculty and so they go and talk about issues that are particular to the composition program and especially in teaching. And we used to do it with Jean Petrolle was really the person who instituted the retreat. And we used to do it with, maybe every other week having some kind of seminar for part-time faculty, and they would come and get fifty bucks or something like that. And Jean when she took over as Director of Comp noticed that, you know, not that many of the part-time faculty were coming, so she worked it out if you did an all day retreat they could be paid quite a bit more. It wouldn't be such a

difficult thing in their schedule because they just had to schedule, you know, one or two days a semester—wait is it once a semester? I guess its once a semester, did I say twice a semester? It might be twice a semester, I've got to find that out. But it's either once or twice a semester, but if this is of any importance you can call me and check on it. But at least once, I think twice because I think that I am remembering one when they come in in the fall and then there was one in December so, which would be before the breaks—I think its twice a semester. But it and its an all day, so its like their retreat is the same way the School of LAS has retreats so the college used to have a retreat. So that's another with, but it is hard and it's all with a challenge. And there's always things you don't do as well as you wish you had.

Because as well sometimes would you, do you feel that perhaps teaching composition, we'll use that as the example, at Columbia could or should be taught differently than at our neighboring institutions? And if so, and again this something that we struggle here, you know communicating that to such a huge faculty?

It is hard and I think it already is taught differently than at other institutions and I think it's important in Gen-Ed especially, I don't know if—how long have you been at Columbia?

Since '90, and you know, I was part time until three years ago. Because I think that's one of the things that, I mean because it used to be—I don't know if this is—I think that some departments

outside of the Liberal Arts and Sciences would sometime you know say, you can take your Gen-Ed courses someplace else, its a lot cheaper at College of DuPage or some other community college. But the truth of the matter is that we, it already is different at Columbia because we have eighteen, and we'll raise the cap to twenty maybe. But a lot of the community colleges have twenty-five or thirty or more, so you're already getting a better deal if you're in the class here. But I also think there should be something distinctive and there should be something tied to what our whole mission is. And it is hard to communicate that, particular—and I think one of the things that really help with the part-time union was the increase to three classes, or nine hours I think it is, and because before you would have some really incredible teachers and you could only give them two classes and then they would need to go someplace else to pick—so they were a little more divided. But now some people can, you know, can make due on doing three classes here and then they can really be more dedicated to the way, you know, to looking at composition, you know, in a particular way instead of a generic let me do what I can do easiest across three schools or something.

So, and your department has kind of implemented that work giving like you said the nine hours?

Yeah, I think we try because it also it helps quality if you have a smaller group of people, you can work with them better than if, you know, if you have a hundred people each teaching one section, its much easier to work with forty people each teaching two and some of them teaching three sections. And

that's, so our part-time faculty has probably, has definitely reduced since I've been here because of the increase in the number of courses they could have, but I think that improves quality.

We are out of time, but if there was anything that I didn't get to that you felt should be on the record, I would love for you to share it—not to put you on the spot.

I can't think of anything that, I mean I'm sure I will later, but I think its great that you're doing this. You know, so much stuff gets lost and its nice that you and Louis are doing this and working to save something, so...

Yeah, its really Louis' baby and I think its important as well, so I thank you very much for participating.