

W o o d i e W h i t e

Okay, today is March the 8th, 2001. My name is Erin McCarthy and I will be interviewing Woodie White.

If you would please introduce us and give your title here at Columbia?

I'm Woodie White and I'm Vice President of Institutional Advancement, which is the office that deals with fundraising, media relations, alumni affairs, community relations. Its the external affairs office at Columbia.

Could you tell us when you came to Columbia and what were the circumstances that brought you here and the first position that you held?

I came to Columbia on May 7, 1990, to be the at the time I think was managing director of the Dance Center at Columbia College. I had run an arts festival in Madison, Wisconsin that had dance as its primary focus and a man named Edward Volella as its artistic director. And there was some relationship between the manager Edward Volella and Shirley Mordine, who was at the time chair of the Dance Department at Columbia.

I came to develop and expand Columbia's public program in the dance center, which at the time was actually fairly distinguished but now is the leading presenter of contemporary dance in the region and one of the major players in the U.S. program.

Okay, we'll come back to that. But I would like to know your first impression of the dance

department and of the institution itself when you first came if you can remember?

Yeah, I don't know. Certainly you can't really speak about my impressions of Columbia as a whole because at the time the dance center was quite removed physically and geographically from Columbia. The Dance Department and program was extraordinarily impressive to me as someone who had been an arts manager, but also a dean at the University of Wisconsin. I thought it was an extraordinarily comprehensive, high quality instructional program and with very strong students and certainly appeared to be one of the strongest dance programs in the country in terms of the quality of the students being produced by that program.

Columbia was a little bit more of a mystery to me because I didn't really have very much to do directly with it. Though of course, over time with the development of the Dance Africa Festival and other things, I had more contact with the institution, but you know to me it was an interesting, exciting, innovative place. I'm a historian by training and my area was cultural and intellectual (*inaudible*) development of colleges and universities and academic disciplines and cultural institutions and to me, Columbia was just astonishing (*inaudible*) because I think it's one of the most important institutions of higher education in existence now. And that was kind of clear then because of the kind of point of view that it had and the differences that really made it unique and innovative in American higher education. But those were vague

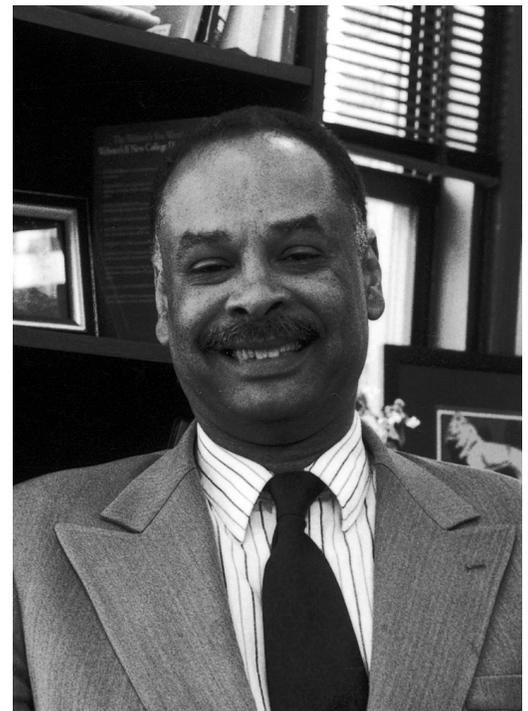
impressions. It was only in 1993, when I came Downtown, that I really got a dose of the place.

Who were some of the people that you worked closest with at first, developed relationships with when you first came here?

Well, those were primarily, almost exclusively within the dance program. So the faculty, the Dance Department, the Chair, Shirley Mordine, the people who worked for me, Julie Simpson who is now the Head of the Office of the Community Arts (*inaudible*) here. Those were the primary relationships in those first few weeks.

And is that who you interviewed with, Shirley Mordine?

I interviewed for the job of managing director for the dance center, I interviewed with Shirley Mordine, Richard Woodbury, who are both on the faculty. He's the music Director of the Dance Center and she's the Chair, and Burt Gall.



And I want to come back to the fact that you just said that you consider today and it kind of was in sync with your first impression that you consider Columbia College one of the most important institutions in higher education. Could you expand on that? You know what—?

Yeah, I don't think there's any question about it. The model of the educational experience and process here is very different and I think this is really, very different from traditional universities and colleges that have a different curriculum focus. But that's not what I think is unique about Columbia, that certainly is unique, but a kind of point of view about the nature of inclusion and democracy and education. Most institutions that haven't experienced a kind of growth in income, students and stature as Columbia has for the last ten years become more exclusive and exclusionary which means that fewer people can have that experience. I mean that's the tradition of American higher—I mean for a country that claims to be so democratic, I just find the educational experience here to be astonishingly undemocratic. In other words, the bigger and better you get the more elitist you usually get. That process has been resisted here.

The other thing that was different and what I found interesting was the connection between what goes on in the classroom and the larger world and the real commitment to the relationship between the classroom experience and the development of art forms, the development of communities. That I think is another major innovation and has really I think fueled some of the success that Columbia has had in recent years. Those are very different models of American higher education.

Okay. Before we leave you work with the Dance Department, can you tell us how long were you there and then maybe summarize what the major accomplishments you know during that time?

Exactly. I was there for three and a half years. The public programming budget of the dance center went from a hundred thousand dollars to two million. Within that period of time we created the country's largest festival of African Dance and a whole series of other events. It was the first time the dance center had ever produced anything, outside of that building on North Sheridan Road.

And I certainly can take some of the credit for it, but I think that the public partner with the dancer center was dramatically transformed and expanded during that period of time and it became a major player in Chicago which is how I got the kind of job I had. Because when you're present—well, at the time for example, 70% of all corporate and foundation money coming into Columbia as grants and gifts was coming through the dance center so that's impressive.

Maybe talk a little bit more about that, the new President you referred to is, John Duff.

The new president at the time, he's still the new president now, was John Duff. They had had, the people who had occupied the position I have now had all not succeeded. They had spent a lot of money and energy looking for people outside the school and he decided he would look internally. So he began to look at any money that's being raised at Columbia, who is raising it? So the finger got pointed at me.

And what was your mission or job description as you remembered it when he spoke to—I mean you were recruited obviously for this position?

I was recruited for a slightly narrower position than the one I have now. I was recruited to be the Director of Development and then very quickly, I think within two years I was made the Vice President of College Relations and Development, which is essentially those areas I just talked about, media relations, fundraising, alumni affairs. So I went from being just the director of development to oh, that other stuff fairly rapidly.

And again with all the things that you were, under that job description, maybe if you could speak to the similarities or differences with what you did at the dance and brought—

Oh, well you know there are many similarities, one being the fundraising aspect of it, the other being the kind of development of a public profile. In the case of the dance center it was for the dancer center's presenting program. In the case of Columbia College its enhancing and developing the public profile of Columbia so they're very much related, the scope is now much broader than it was when I was in the dance center. But it's very much the same kind of thing, fundraising and media relationships.

I developed an extensive community development office as an extension of the dance center's program and I also three years ago created the office of community arts partners here to link Columbia's faculty more effectively with the community. Now that's unique and innovative, but it's also an extension of my understanding

that there had to be a relationship between communities in order to have audiences for contemporary dance and for this gigantic thing called Dance Africa.

So the link with the Dance Department is very much still alive certainly with your new position and you see that as a huge link between the college and the community in the Chicagoland area?

Yeah, well they continue to be a major player in the dance world. They now have this gorgeous facility at 1306 S. Michigan Avenue. They continue to be very successful in their fundraising efforts. They've brought I think Columbia very positive attention, both locally and nationally and their department of the college. And I try to have relationships with all of the programs in the college, but obviously I would have a certain affection for that program because I had such a lot to do with its current status.

Since you came here maybe since '93 when you moved into the development office, have other departments used the dance center as a model or have you seen other successes?

Well, you know Columbia I think is just full of successes. I think that in the last ten years in particular the world has begun to discover that this is a place full of those kinds of interesting and innovative programs from the Center for Black Music Research, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, to the Dance Center, the Book and Paper Center. I mean Columbia is full of these kinds of public programs that are linked to the instructional aspects of the school. I mean I think that it's been the thing it's given Columbia some notoriety and public profile.

Some of those things have existed longer than the last seven years or so, but what has brought them to the country's notice as opposed to being more parochial?

Yeah, well I don't know. That's a complex question. I'm sure that the general progress of all of those programs as well as I think the more coherent vision of how you market and promote the corpus. Now when I first came to Columbia the dance center had a status above and beyond the college. This is true of the museums, it's true of the Center for Black Music Research. So one of the challenges at that point was acknowledging that this is somehow connected to Columbia, but also it's broadened the fact that people had the perception that it wasn't quite the same thing as Columbia. Well, that had to change and people—and of course I was a good person to be involved in that change because I understood the impulse to not on some occasion, depending upon the particular funder you were talking to, not emphasizing the relationship of Columbia.

Can you explain that or expand on that?

Well, yeah I'll tell you exactly. Lots of people—the dance center and some of these other programs have achieved even before I got there, achieved some kind of stature on their own, which was light years ahead of Columbia's stature as an institution. So one of the major funders in this city who I will not name said to me, Columbia is nothing but a trade school. I'll never give a dime to it. I'll give money to the dance because I perceive that as

different. Well, actually it's not, but his perception of that difference meant he could give us some money while he continued his refusal to give it to Columbia in general. And there was a lot—when I first came into this position there was a lot of that.

The Museum of Contemporary Photography, one of only two accredited photography museums in the country had a similar kind of problem because it was perceived as this major museum, but it was in this kind of institution that not everybody thought was a real college. Well, I think has—with every day Columbia sheds that image, I think and we've worked rather hard to do that.

Talk to that—

There's more coverage of Columbia College than any other college or university in this region now. There's more day to day line items in newspapers devoted to Columbia than any other college in this region. I mean I think a lot of that has to do with public programming, all the massive public programming that Columbia has. But I think it's, my sense is that it's begun to substantively transform the reputation of the school. And certainly in terms of increased donations to it and the increasing volume of people who want to go here, that would suggest that I'm right, but something is better about people's perceptions.

But of course when you have this kind of unique lock on certain aspects of the marketplace maybe it's not so hard to do that. When you are the largest film and video program in the world and you're the only place in the Midwest where you can study filmmaking, it helps.

And that's what I'm trying to get at. Did that come from without because Columbia was finally recognized or did it come from within and say hey, take notice—?

Both ways.

Okay.

I don't think any one single factor explains why the reputation in any way seems in transition. I think it's all of those things. I think it's all of those ways. I think it's the increased public visibility, the increased successes in getting people to understand the similar nature of Columbia in relationship to American higher education, the coming of the visual age, you know the leaving of a linear world and entering a visual age I think has had a huge amount to do with the success of Columbia College.

You know, Columbia is poised because of its curriculum and what goes on here to take advantage of a whole new paradigm of how and what people learn. Now that was some might argue luck, that luck has always developed a lot of this. Being at the right place at the right time institutionally and exploiting that position of being at the right place at the right time. You know when I was coming up, people wanted to be doctors and lawyers and professors. Now they want to be moviemakers and I mean it's graphic designers, it's a totally different world. That Columbia is completely posed to exploit in a way that no other institution is positioned to do and I think that bears a lot of the responsibility of what has happened here.

And we just you know did it right and are at the right place at the right time and to catch up with us

takes a huge amount of time and a huge, financial investment because of the capital and equipment intensity of most of what goes on here. You can't overnight create—you know they've all figured out the school of the Art Institute and University of Illinois that maybe they should be teaching people how to produce film rather than just a film aesthetic. But you can't make that transformation overnight, because that is not like history where you have a classroom, a class board, a history professor and off you go, very different experience. So it's given us this huge, huge advantage. So I don't want to underestimate the kind of real paradox shift in terms of how people experience the world that is in the process of happening and Columbia's relationship to that I think is crucial.

Can you speak to the student body? Now maybe you can explain that, if there is a direct relationship certainly if there's been a shift or change? Are students coming—?

You can see that.

In what way, what's the evidence?

There are two things. Well, one of the major, the income and ethnic nature of the school as some would argue is under some transformation, that the school was somewhat whiter and somewhat richer in terms of the student body I want to say 10 or 15 years ago. That seems to be the case. Places like New Trier and Highland Park, have become huge feeders to the student body here, in ways that used to only be true of the Chicago Public Schools. And the other element is the huge increases in applications, from people who live outside the region, that's been the other mani-

festation of it. That's when you really tell that you put yourself on the map when you have hundreds, a third, I don't remember what the percentage is, but it's pretty large and people who are applying really don't live in this area. That's been a big transformation and that's in the last five years.

Good. We've spoken to several of Columbia's successes or things that you think Columbia has done well. Since you've been here, what would you say are some of the challenges has had to face and still maybe has to face?

Columbia is not as integrated an institution as it should be. It was organized and developed around these kinds of, some people refer to them as fiefdoms of people being invested in a specific area and then exploiting it and developing it and of course at the time developing a tremendous amount of power over those particular areas and never the trains shall meet. And so there's probably within the curriculum more replication that you'd find in other institutions.

The other problem is that, let's see, how can I say this? You know the other thing, it needs to find a donor and support base that really is sufficient for the size that it has become. So the Board of Trustees needs to continue to be upgraded and changed so that it reflects the size and the importance of the institution. That has not yet happened. The other problem is that the school is organized as if it had a thousand students in it structurally and that is insane and if this place isn't fixed at the top that is to stay structurally so that you have some support for what is becoming size, than that's a big problem.

And the accreditation team that came a couple of years ago said that, that they had never seen an institution as big as Columbia as thinly organized. That usually in Americanized education you have the opposite problem of there being too much bureaucratic density, here it's too thin and that's a serious problem and I think it has led to some unfortunate mistakes and probably situations that—I think that Columbia has been outstanding in its instructional service to its students but has failed miserably in the kind of ancillary, auxiliary experiences so that students we know that when you graduate from Columbia you don't identify with Columbia, you identify with your major. And one of the things that means is that you aren't of a mindset to contribute to the institution because you haven't identified with the institution, you've identified with that specific area. That's got to change and it can't continue to happen, that kind of alienation from the school.

And I think it's because again this kind of thinness has not supported some of the other organized activities that bond students to an institution. It's not just the fact that we're a commuter school primarily, it's that we really haven't serviced that portion of the student's experience very well and we're paying the price for that.

Any suggestions of what would improve that or—?

We need to build a student union. You know the evidence of how you do this is clearly there and you know that's what's planned on that space across from where Buddy Guy's is.

Right. Right.

But yeah, I think we need to enhance the institutional experience that students have here so that they will be—you know I went to Wisconsin as an undergraduate and the people are incredibly loyal to that place. And when I think back on my life there it was a total life and yeah, some of it had to do with the fact that it was a residential school, but it also had to do with the kind of infrastructure and life support activities that that institution provided. Well, it pays off because those people give you money. Those people identify with you for the rest of your life. Those people hire your students, those people—and we need to do that and we've done a really bad job.

I think the faculty has done an extraordinary job in its instructional experience with their students. I think that that's been the saving grace of all of this, but everything else is I think dreadful.

And I was going to say dragging our feet but that layer of organization or the revamping of the structure do you see coming in the 90s or in 1990, do you see historical reasons why that's slow and coming or why there's resistance to it?

Yeah, I think part of the culture of the place and the identification that the real heart of the place are in these very separate departments and programs mitigates against this kind of organization that I'm talking about this kind of you know blast from the 60s notion that seems to under gird everything that goes on here I think. And as a person devoted to that era—but you can see kind of the institutional issues that don't get resolved because there's that kind of point of view. But it's going to happen.

I mean I don't know if you're aware of this but there's this controversy going on now about the reconstruction of the school and the creation of deanships, etc. So within the next year it's going to be restructured. Many people may go kicking and screaming, to that restructuring, but I don't see how you have the rather largest art school in America and you're—I mean look (*inaudible*) surveys. You're organized exactly as you were when you were a thousand students. Now that alone should tell you that something is wrong. We have the same organizational structure when you were—

A reoccurring theme that has come up through these interviews and you spoke to fiefdoms and I didn't hear that in a negative way and I'm certainly not saying—

Well, by the way I mean it built the school.

Right.

So you have to be careful in criticizing it because on some level it worked. Now the question is what works now? And clearly some kind of relation—I mean I've never been in an institution of higher education where there were not cross disciplinary courses. That is amazing to me. Now I'm not sure I completely understand why there are not cross disciplinary courses here, but that's very odd you know and maybe it has something to do with the way in which people's successes are judged as to say credit hours becomes what drives your budget. But it's very peculiar here not to have—and other places where I'm familiar, Harvard, University of Chicago, Wisconsin, that was a very common practice. Here's it not and that's just one

manifestation I think of the kind of separateness, which also of course suggests that probably buried in the curriculum is massive duplication of stuff.

Yes, and these people I got the impression they were saying a lot of the heads of the department that have been here since the 60s, 70s that they were brought here to create a department, literally from nothing. And increasingly they're being expected to be more of an administrator or a bureaucrat. Do we need—how can those people be transformed? Do we need a new layer? What do you think about that?

Well, most of them are retiring and dying so if you—

That's why we're doing this project.

Yeah, if you look at who's in that mix there are very few of those people left, Sheldon Patinkin, Bill Russo, not very many people from that era left. But remember this is the other piece in organizing those areas often times heedings the dance center until 1990, often times their chair was also the only full-time faculty member. And that has had I think interesting kind of consequences for the development of the faculty and it's obscured in some ways the reality that the faculty of any institution is really the heart of the institution. And that's only now I think emerging as a reality. So this is a great period of transformation.

I'm sure that you have chairs who believe and I think there is some reason to believe this that their powers are going to be diminished in this reorganization and I think there's just no way. You know there

have been many ways to operate as deans so now they're going to be asked to be chairs. Well, there's going to be some alteration of those power relationships and people are very upset, people at that level are very upset about that. But I just don't see any way around it. I just don't see how you can continue this fantasy that—and I think in a kind of way it will enhance the faculty because the faculty really has to be the heart and in reality has been the heart of this institution.

Yeah. I just want to go back, you said fantasy. Is the fantasy that we can somehow be 8, 9, 10 thousand but maintain this family like one thousand structure?

No, I just think that's crazy. No institution can function that way and I have fear that if we don't do something soon we're going to really implode because it's not working. We're living on borrowed time I think in that kind of organizational sense and of course what it does is it loads all kinds of expectations on the person at the top of the institution who can't possibly fulfill those expectations. You know when your academic leadership is in transition as it is now with the search for a new provost and blah, blah, blah, we got to fix all this stuff or else we will not make that next developmental leap and I think Columbia could make that next developmental leap. And that next developmental leap is not just being the biggest but being understood as the best. And I think that can happen if we don't butcher ourselves in the process.

Just when you talk about the heart of the institution, when you came Mike Alexandroff was—
president, the king.

—the president and he's the king. You've been now—
Through three of them.

—through three presidents and there's only been three men since it's renaissance.

Yeah, the modern version of it, there have only been three.

Could you speak to what you see as their, what role they played?

Well, Alexandroff is the classic founder, classic, larger than life, big, huge vision, classic. John Duff was more of the kind of the consolidator, some reorganization went on, the faculty, the bringing of tenure to Columbia, that's what he did. Warrick Carter, is too new to know exactly what he's going to do. I think that he does see himself as being the person to evolve Columbia to this new status and I hope he'll be able to do it. But that's sort of, they're very different individuals, very different individuals. And the institution was at various different points in time.

In their own way all three of them while they're very different are very, very smart men. You know I think in John Duff's case people often underestimated him but he proved to be a very shrewd and smart person. So he sort of brought the institution to more organized legitimacy.

Okay, so you were just finishing on John Duff what he brought to the institution and that kind of—
Somewhat more organization and you know a real functioning board for the first time, Board of Trustees. You know some sense of how you manage a complex organization, I think he did those things.

Do you see him as kind of, because if I remember correctly wasn't it pretty clear that he was

only going to be here a certain amount of time? It wasn't an open-ended—

Well, but I think that's true of American higher education in general. You know you may know that the tenure of American university or college presidents average is something like six years.

Oh really? I did not know that.

Yeah, it's a very short period of time. He was there eight so—

So Alexandroff is the exception that—

Yeah, not the rule. Most people don't survive more than six years. It's a very, very difficult position to be in and so John Duff was not unusual or typical, he was actually more typical and stayed you know beyond the average lifetime of a college president. Alexandroff was again the founding person. if you look at the history of American education these are very different experiences, very different people who are larger than life. And in the case of University of Chicago, William Rainey Harper died, but I think he probably would have been there forever if he hadn't died. That's not an uncommon experience for founding presidents. I think Warrick Carter probably will be here the same length of time as John Duff. Eight years is considered a long tenure for presidents.

Okay, you have spoken to this but I think it would be beneficial to come back and maybe be more specific in your definition and description of the mission of Columbia College within the cultural context of our society, our country and higher education and then arts and communication and that role it plays?

Well, the mission to be primarily a teaching institution in relationship

to these arts and media disciplines within the context of a liberal arts degree though that's changing too and with a relationship more clearly connected to the outside world in the context of a diverse student population and diverse populations in general, that's in my opinion the mission of Columbia. And within that context there are all different kinds of relationships.

I mean there is the relationship to the general student population, people within a certain age category. And then there are the relationships with the arts and the communications industry which actually are not unsubstantial. They're pretty strong here and you know as we look at some of the programs like the dance center, the whole world of dance in Chicago has been helped immeasurably by the existence of the dance center. I don't think there would be a dance profession if there weren't the Dance Center at Columbia College and that's not so unusual in other realms. I mean the New York Times, in looking at the Chicago theater scene about a month ago, acknowledged that some of the success of that, you know theater in Chicago and many people perceive it to be stronger than the theater in New York they say, has to do with the presence of Columbia College, Northwestern and DePaul.

So I think those are basic relationships that the college has actually been better explored. I mean I'm going to see Amen Corner at the Goodman Theater. Who is the director of the Amen Corner? Chuck Smith. Who is Chuck Smith? A full time professor of theater in the Theater Department at Columbia. You know if you look at the kind of artistic landscape

here you will find many Columbia people. I'm president of the Honor Arts Alliance which is the leading association of artists and arts organizations in the State of Illinois. Now that gives me an immense role in the life of organized professional arts activity and in my other life I'm vice president of Columbia College. Now ten years ago I wouldn't have been in that role, but the perception that you can't really ignore Columbia and its leadership and perpetuating the support of arts activity I think has just been widely acknowledged in recent years.

So in the 90s it sounds like you're saying that there's been a sense of legitimization or something that possibly already existed but the community outside of Columbia—?

Yes. There seems to be, I don't want to exaggerate this but there seems to be a greater sense of the importance of Columbia. Now I think we continue to struggle with people's perception, but some of that has to do with the rapidity in which this place has grown. You know when you tell people that Columbia has all these buildings in the South Loop they're shocked. Or if you tell people this is the largest art school in America, people are incredulous that that would be the case, but it is. And more and more people I think are beginning to aware of it.

The College Art Association just had its annual meeting in the Hilton Hotel and Columbia did a project called the Art of Columbia College, which I think was immensely successful in promoting Columbia to professors of art across the country. In fact we were accused by the University of Illinois, of hijacking the whole

conference. Well, those kinds of things I think have an impact on the larger perception of the importance of the institution and I think the school has been successful in altering and expanding that perception, so that now for example, my little balancing act in the early 90s, between the more generally positive perceptions and the importance of the dance center verses the “that’s nothing but a trade school”, Columbia in general, seems less and less a reality for people. You know, you no longer have to be embarrassed to be an entity within Columbia College if you gain some kind of national or international attention. That really does seem to fundamentally shift and people are kind of recognizing the importance of it if they don’t know even that much about it.

Has that gone down to the student level yet where the students—?

I don’t know. I mean it’s hard to judge but I get more and more people—you know more and more of them want to come to school here so something must have resonated and you know more and more walk in—now you know some people think this is bad—more and more walk in students want to come here which seems to be a benchmark of some kind of public success. But again I think it’s hard to ignore that if you want to start, that all of these people want to be filmmakers. Where did that come from? And if you want to study film to making a film and you don’t want to live in New York or California, you don’t really have much of a choice. All of that has helped.

In your opinion, where does open admissions fit into the mission, it’s the future, the best?

Well yeah, I think that’s part of the uniqueness of Columbia. I think that the democratic notion of access and opportunity has been at the heart of the mission of the school. I think that’s one of the things that has made the place unique. I think that we struggle moderately to maintain that and that will be the challenge. The challenge will be if the resources can be found to continue to have that kind of democratic view of the world. But I think that we will always be more open to that whole issue. The question may simply become, can we afford it? Big, big, big, big issue, but I think that’s part of what’s been extraordinary.

And in the world of arts and communications and especially the arts world you know where there are different forms of how success and intelligence are measured, it seems quite appropriate to me given what goes on in the larger world. And somehow our view of who should be included should be more expansive. So I think it’s to the heart of the mission. That’s why people have been so resistant to giving it up despite the demands of some people that it’s too expensive to continue to try and do this. I mean that’s how we ended up with the largest film program in the world.

You know nobody does that, UCLA, USC, NYU, these are tiny, tiny programs that you know turn away 90% of the people who applied. Well, we didn’t do that and I think that’s noble not to do that and to really give—and you know you’ve got now a couple of major film makers emerging who

had they been subjected to the admission policies of UCLA and UIC and NYU would never—George Tillman, who did the movie *Soul Food* would never have been able to do that, would never have gotten into any of those major film schools.

Well, that becomes the question if that ever was dropped where would those students go?

That’s a serious, serious problem. I mean that’s my point. But again the other side of the equation is can we afford to do this. The tuition here is rising rapidly. This used to be the cheapest, private school in the State of Illinois. It’s still one of the cheapest, but it’s getting very expensive to go here and you know that’s where the concept of building a board, building an endowment, finding people to give us more money becomes a real challenge. And we’re better off than we were 10 years ago, but we have a long ways to go in that regard.

The whole philanthropy question where people give their resources is really quite an interesting question and we’re not well positioned to do that because so much of philanthropy is tied to status issues and we’re not, while there’s been all this improvement on our public image we’re not the University of Chicago, we’re not the Art Institute, we’re not the Symphony Orchestra, we’re not the Lyric, so we don’t have the kind of social status that drives much of American philanthropy. It’s one of the great sort of negative stories of American philanthropy, but the bigger and richer you are, the more money you attract. Does anybody need to give Harvard another dime with a \$19 billion dollar endow-

ment and raising \$450 million a year? But the status concerns of people who give money is huge? I want to do more, I'm rich but now where do I think I'm going to be most effectively identified in my effort to be identified with perpetuity, at the University of Chicago and Northwestern because they don't have that kind of status issue.

And let's return to the issue of diversity that you said earlier that Columbia is maybe swinging the other way, becoming more white.

Well, it's only minor. Well, here's what's happened it's not had any real substantive impact on the percentages of different ethnic groups within Columbia yet. And what has happened more is that the numbers say of students applying to Columbia from the Chicago public schools has remained constant and then the number from these other areas like suburban and out of state has grown tremendously. Now you know there remains a higher yield from people who are in the city, but you can see that it's going to be—you know it's really—some years, a couple of years more people came to Columbia College from New Trier than went to any other school from New Trier. Now that's an astonishing fact. You know many people consider New Trier to be the best high school in the country. Well, why is that? Because of what I said, this kind of paradigm of change in what people learned and then when you look around. Where can I study film or digital photography or interactive multi-media? There are not a whole lot of places you can do that. You can't do it at the University of Chicago. You can't do it at Northwestern. You can't do it at the School of the Art Institute. So I do think that's going to

remain a challenge too, but that's a general challenge of American society, there's an inclusion of—

You know you have an educational system that's fundamentally unequal. I mean in the Western world you have public school education driven by the wealth of a community. This is an astonishing equity so that you can spend \$18 thousand dollars a year if you go—\$18 thousand dollars a year will be spent on you if you go to New Trier High School and \$6 thousand dollars a year will be spent on you, if you go to a public school. This should be unconstitutional. That's what I meant about the inequity of education, is sort of built in so you have a public school structure that's unequal and then you have a college and university system that excludes you if somehow you haven't been at the top of the achievement curve.

I mean it's really kind stunningly unequal unlike any other country in the world. I mean it's sort of amazing for this incredible paradigm of democracy. Well, if you look at the fundamental way in which people are funneled into society it's the most unequal system you could know. I mean somebody from outer space would be stunned to see how we've organized who gets good public school education and there's a relationship between your wealth and the quality of your education. It's appalling.

That's why New Trier is the best school.

Yeah, I mean at \$18 thousand dollars, three times what New Trier—it's amazing New Trier when I was at Wisconsin and Wisconsin is one of the leading research universities in the country, full professors average less salary

than the entire average of New Trier. The average salary at New Trier is approaching \$100,000 a year. Well, and 62% of their faculty have PhDs. Well, docket all of that as the solution to American education, but it really suggests some enormous inequities that exist. Well, that should be illegal. You shouldn't have a culture where three times the amount of money can be spent on public school education depending upon the wealth of a community, that's appalling.

Well, Columbia has fought mightily I think to change that and to give some opportunity. Again, I think the disciplines that Columbia has make that quite appropriate you know.

Let's look to the future and where do you see Columbia heading and I mean you mentioned obviously that work as you described it we're at the point where we really have to make some major changes. But let's assume that that's happening or that's going to happen, what do you see as a future for the college?

I think if somehow these kinds of structural issues can be dealt with, if somehow they can find somebody to support this school with large, financial support I think that it will continue to grow. I think that it will probably, it's continued reputation will improve, that it will be eventually perceived as one of the best art schools in the country if not the world. I think that if we can make this leap I don't see any, there's nothing that suggests that it can't be all those things. In fact it's everything to suggest that if we can kind of organize ourselves more intelligently, figure out—the faculty is crucial, absolutely crucial to this.

But between the evolution of our faculty, the strengthening of I think the strengthening of the general education faculty here at the school, if we can—the continued acquisition—now this of course is a challenge in boom town that we're in here, but the continual acquisition of some level of property so that we can have and continue to support these programs both in space and equipment. But I think that's all very possible, I'm not nooptimistic about the place, though there are some challenges, more or less challenges.

You just made me think of something because you started the dance there and you said that was kind of the satellite you know within the universe, right.
Yes.

How important is kind of bringing things together and consolidating them?

Oh, I think it's really very important. You know of course that's why they brought the Dance Center Downtown, the recognition—given what we do, Roosevelt and those places can have these campuses in Schaumburg, or Arlington Height, or wherever they are, but we can't do that because it's so equipment and space intensive that the cost of having a dance studio in five different locations is just not possible. So yeah, I think that consolidation has to happen. I think that we need to continue to evolve this kind of urban campus much on the model of say NYU, that needs to continue. There needs to be visible, physical identification of all these Columbia buildings. We need to build a student center so that people can feel like there's some connection they really have to the institution, all those things we need to do.

But if we can do those things I think that there is enormous promise and again I don't—and some of it has nothing to do with anything we're doing, it has to do with timing and luck because something fundamentally has changed about the way people learn and experience reality. We're much more of a visual world now and this place is just crying to do that and be that. So I think it's, if we don't shoot ourselves in the foot we will have a great future.

If you weren't here where do you imagine you would be and what I want to—
I have no idea.

But what I'm trying to get is how has Columbia influenced who you are, what you see as—?

Well, it's interesting. I think that it's had a profound effect, I mean I feel to some degree like I've found the closest thing to a perfect match because I had this kind of background in cultural history and I obviously had as a child of the 60s, a kind of political point of view. So to me, Columbia was the perfect place and it's different. It's not—as somebody educated you know at Harvard, Chicago and Wisconsin, these elite universities, you know you could see the kind of limitations of those institutions. And so to sort of come into the light of a more real democratic experience I think has been wonderful.

If I were to leave Columbia and of course that could happen, I would probably run some kind of cultural arts organization. I couldn't imagine going into another university or college after this experience because there—none of them are in and of the world in the way that this place is. So for me personally it's been

and these you know, I have some very bad days here, but it's been I think generally a good match for me.

So to find that experience similar to Columbia, in your mind there's no match?

In the context of American colleges and universities its hard to imagine where that experience would be.

And you would never describe Columbia as an ivory tower obviously?

No, I don't think it is. And I now, I've had something called the Institute for Community Arts Partnerships which is an organization given money by Lila Wallace, to provide technical assistance to colleges and universities that want to be working communities. So I've now had kind of the exposure to a range of how other art schools deal with the question of community and Columbia is so far beyond any of these other schools that have finally awakened to, we can't really afford to be an elitist or art school anymore, we've got to relate to the world. Well, that was never the juxtaposition of the issue here, but it is for those other schools and it's been fascinating to watch them. God bless Columbia in that way.

So the kind of transformation of places like the School of the Art Institute and the Parsons Institute of Design or Cal Arts, which are these elite, first ranked art schools that actually are fairly narrow in their focus on who goes to them and this kind of realization that they need to be in and of the world too. And then you have Columbia and Columbia is considered narrow nationally by those leading the most successful art school in America, in terms of defining real relations and substantive relationships with the world around them.

That's an astonishing achievement, but one as you I'm sure can understand how we get to that point because it's so embedded in the mission of the school.

And if you could then speak to maybe then the importance, I mean is it vitally important so that it's in Chicago, is Chicago the context in which the school or could Columbia be someplace else?

Well, that's a really interesting question. I don't know the answer to that question, however I do think that Columbia's success and Columbia's growth does have something to do with the fact of what's going on in Chicago because Chicago has also experienced this kind of notion of how reality has shifted in terms of this entrance into the visual aids that I keep talking about and the awareness, several awarenesses that go beyond Columbia that exist because of the Mayor and Lois Weisberg, who is the cultural affairs commissioner, a notion that arts activity, cultural activity is central to people's lives. It has an impact on the economic development of the city, I mean that creation of a theater district I mean it's astonishing. And that the Mayor, I think maybe because of Lois Weisberg, has figured out his relationship between cultural activity and economic development, the maintenance of Chicago as a world class city and the improvement of educational standards.

So that kind of like recognition on the outside world has helped us tremendously and given a central role I think an increasingly more central role in the life of a city like Chicago because it's so in sync with the notion of the powers that be. A couple of years I went to a League

of Women Voter's dinner. I was at a table next to the mayor and we were eating dinner and all of a sudden I heard him like screaming at this man who used to be, I won't name him, but he was a president of Canal Dock & Trust, which has all that land that is near Navy Pier that is under development now. And this guy was a Trustee of Roosevelt and the Mayor was complaining about Roosevelt's departure from the city and Roosevelt should take a lesson from Columbia College, which has made this community and he goes on and on and on about the commitment that Columbia College has made.

That was the first, but not—the conversation was not directed at me, it was at the table he was sitting at but he was so loud and angry. I mean he had a lot at the top. I think he was really mad, but that I think was very—and then when you look at the reality of what the city has done in the realm of the cultural life, look at how—you know that just would never had been true 15 years ago, the whole linch pen. So what does he do, he puts me on the convention (*inaudible*) executive committee. Why, because those are all hotel and restaurant people and he's figured out that the cultural aspects of the city are one of its primary if not the primary selling point to tourism and business traveler

I think that's very interesting so the committee that he's appointed you on are you the only arts person?
Arts person, yes.

And you're from Columbia?
A very strange experience, but yes and the Reorganization of

Investment Business Bureau, they gave I think the mayor two appointments and the governor two appointments because it's a private organization essentially. It promotes visitors and tourism to the city and again I think that they have figured out that you know there's all this kind of maybe it's either hysteria about the decline of Chicago as a corporate capital, etc. Well, there's this sense of maintaining it as a world class city and what they figured out is you can't do that if you don't have major cultural institutions, that that's one of the keys, maybe the most important key to you know. That's what Paris and London and New York are known for. And we are perfectly positioned to take advantage of all of that and so when he makes that kind of an appointment with somebody like me, that tells you again not—I mean it may say some nice things about somebody's perception of my achievement, but what it really says is that this person comes from an important institution that's understood its external role in the world.

And when you are there—
Oh, it's so strange.

I'm just curious.
It's very strange.

Do you see the need for you or someone representing—?
Here's my dilemma there because I think that you know you talk about the culture of an organization or an institution. Because it's been so dominated by the hotel industry there is a kind of myopia, is that the world. I mean it's a real cultural challenge. Now the guy who runs it is a man named Jim Riley, who is the guy who developed Navy Pier. I think he's an extraordinary man. I think that he really did a brilliant job with Navy Pier. I mean what-

ever you think of Navy Pier they set out to make that—they set out to do what they did and they succeeded at it, they did that.

So then he became head of the Convention of the Visitors Bureau, but I don't think they completely grasp yet. Part of the issue is they're focused on business travel rather than the tourist industry and that Chicago is the leading business (*inaudible*) in the world. Well, the mayor though wants to really inject the kind of tourism notion with a greater portion of the mix because that's where the real growth is, people coming to Chicago because they want to have a vacation is really where the growth is.

The business remains extremely important and we must maintain our statuses in the world of businesses destination, but you know that's already—we are already the number one there, in these other areas we're not. We're 9, ranked in international travel. We're 5th, ranked in leisure travel, 6th or something like that. We just passed Atlantic City so that whole notion of being in a city where the city government sees this activity as you know Chicago has the only city supported cultural center, the only one. But clearly this has become an extremely important agenda to the powers that be.

And the recognition of the role of Columbia in that rocked our future.

I think grows—

Growth, okay.

—and will only get better over time because again this has become seemingly such a central activity of the political and business leadership of the city which I don't think is true. It wasn't true when he first

became the mayor. You know this is like a growing consciousness on Richard Daley's part, this kind of notion that you know—and some of it is really risky, I think on some levels. It's very risky to be creating a theater district, you know along Randolph Street there. You've got now the Goodman Theater. You've got the Oriental Theater. You've got the Cadillac Theater. You've got the Chicago Theater. That's a lot of theater that wasn't really there before. But it's the heart of his whole redevelopment of the North Loop, the heart of it. This kind—and the southern end of Downtown is kind of the educational, cultural conglomerate of all these schools that's emerging—