

R o s e A n n a M u e l l e r

All right, it's October 31, 2001. This is an interview with RoseAnna Mueller, Professor of Foreign Languages in Humanities in the Department of Liberal Education at Columbia College Chicago.

And we'll start the interview by asking you to when did you come to Columbia and what were the circumstances that surrounded your arrival?

I had been teaching at a community college not too far from here, Morton College and I was on sabbatical from that job and that spring I happened to look at an ad in the Tribune. And the ad was for a humanities generalist, and the way the description was written, they made it sound like my ideal job, like I, I would have written the ad myself. So I decided even though I had a full time job that I would apply, and I did.

And I was offered the position and came here in 1991, in the fall of 1991. However, during my interview when they discovered that I had been doing a lot of work with foreign languages, rather than just teach humanities they decided to offer me the humanities generalist position but also to sweeten the pot a little more and bring me here and make it interesting for me. They decided that they also needed a foreign language supervisor to give some, some form and shape to what was then a very rudimentary language program that needed beefing up and, and supervision. So I started with teaching two humanities courses, one foreign language and then putting together what was really a foreign language program.

First why don't you talk a little bit if you remember what was it about the ad if that—if you had written it, that would have been the ad you wrote, but what intrigued you.

Well, I had been teaching a class called Humanities Through the Arts and I, I liked the way that students were learning that way and that, that was part of the ad. The ad said that this was a school that specialized in the arts and communication, and I liked the, I liked the title of humanities generalist because that's, that's what I always wanted even, even though I didn't know it at the time.

And describe your first impressions of Columbia. Had you heard anything about it before you applied and arrived here? Did your impressions match the reality or, or did—

I actually—I had heard of Columbia College and I had been here because at Morton, I was doing an honors program. I had been asked to put together an honors program called the Metropolitan Scholars. And the program was—had, had to serve three functions. Number one, it was to show students who, who were going to, to a community college that if they worked hard they would be accepted as a four-year school. So I was reaching out and branching out with colleges in Chicago like the University of Chicago and Northwestern, all the four-year colleges and I also brought them to Columbia.

So my, my first trip here was years before I even taught here. And at that point, I liked the way the students were treated by the administration. I liked they way we were invited to come and I liked they way they—the students were encouraged. If you can make it through these two years at the community college we'd be happy to have you. So I knew that Columbia and I knew that their mission was different and special. So when I saw the ad I, I jumped at it immediately.

And what—maybe before we go on, if you could speak to what some of the differences between teaching at a community college and coming here—were there things that got better? Were there things that got worse or maybe—

You know—

—looking at the student population, or can you even make a *(inaudible)*.



It's, it's interesting that, that at my interview I was asked, "how do you feel about teaching at an open admissions college?" And I said, "that's what I'm doing now. The community college is open admissions." And it meant open admissions for people out of high school, for people who had not done well in high school, for adults who—this was their first. So I really didn't find that that was going to be challenging to me. I, I knew how to do that already. The only difference here was we didn't have a lot of adults.

I—when I first came the population was definitely 18, 19 and 20 year olds. But I had those too at the community college. I was also asked, "would I mind teaching at an urban college?" and I said, "no," because that's where I went. I went to a school in New York City and it was an urban campus. And you know the elevator connected the floors and there was on quad. So this was—this felt like home to me.

What were some of the courses that you first taught and can you describe some of the courses that you've developed here?

Well, strangely enough since I came in 1991, I immediately started a class because I knew at the time there would be a lot of interest in 1492. And you know through my conferences and professional journals and all of that I realized that people were gearing up, you know, about the conquest. So I—

The anniversary of—

The anniversary of the 500th anniversary of the so-called discovery of the Americas.

Right.

So I proposed a class called 1492, discovery, invasion or encounter and so I taught that for a whole year. And eventually that class became the Latin-American Art, Literature, and Music. So that developed that (*inaudible*).

And that is it a permanent offering?

That is a permanent offering which is also part of our Latino-Hispanic minor. I was also able to introduce Italian and the, the Latino-Hispanic minor and I am currently working on the women and gender study minor.

Okay, and we'll come back to that but if we can maybe look at the, the—

The classes?

—well and the, and the language programs that you were brought in—not only oversee it but it sounds like organize it. What, what did you have to do that and what, what did—what was expected of you and then how did you shape it?

At the time what was being taught was Japanese one and two, French one and two and Spanish one and two. I developed Spanish three and I also realized that it was a whole population here that needed special attention so I developed a class called Spanish for Native Speakers. And then Italian, also overseeing the, the instruction, overseeing the part timers and you know how they were teaching and bringing up the standards and discussing text books.

Also at that point we decided that the students needed tutors and the, the Liberal Education Department sponsored tutors so that student could come and get help for free in

all of the languages they were taking. We also started taking tapes for them to do at home. We don't have a language lab. We, we never have had one and since we don't have the major in languages we really can't justify one. So we now make tapes that students can listen to individually.

I was also asked through the center for teaching and learning a year ago if I wanted to have a class for faculty and staff. And we call that class getting along in Spanish. It's during lunch hours. I taught it two semesters. This is my third semester teaching it. And there's enough of an interest so that next semester I'll be teaching, getting along too.

And maybe talk a bit about that. Were they popular? Did they fill—
Yes.

—and what, and, and explain that. Why do you think—

Well I think a lot of people are looking for development, personal development. I think they also need to show to the administration that they're continuing in their education. There's a lot of interest in, in being able to communicate more with the large Latino population we have. And some people have said, "well I took it in high school and didn't learn anything, so I thought maybe this would serve as a good refresher."

So there's many reasons. Some want to travel. Some want to refresh what they know. Some don't know anything and want to learn from scratch. Some are interested in the culture. But I think personal development is important, and I think the school is beginning to stress that.

Okay. If you could—a lot of people are talking about, and at the recent faculty retreat that came up, the relationship of the Department of Liberal Education to the college. If—could you speak to that, how that's changed in the decade or so that you've been here. Has there been a positive change and if so, you know, what have you seen?

I, I think we have a long way to go. It's definitely changing from when I first came here when it was very much little fiefdoms. We, I—you know that's always been what you hear, that each department has been a little fiefdom sort of guarding its own territory. I think Columbia was at a point a few years ago where they had to decide what were they going to be. Were they really going to be a four-year collage or were they going to be a trade school or an art school? And I think at some point a decision had to be made.

And if they wanted to be a four-year college, which I think is what they want to be and compete with, with and give a, you know, a BA and an MA and a BSA and all of those degrees. I think they realized that they had to really invest and, and pump up and beef up whatever you want to call it the core curriculum areas, English, Science, Math. And I think that's, that's what I've seen happening. I think those, those areas have been strengthened. Now is it where it needs to be?

I think there's a lot of work to be done, but I see a lot of work in, in many other directions too. I think the general—the people who, who provide gen, gen ed and the people who provide what is called the professional aspect of education really need to talk to each other more.

So it has to come from within what is now what is called the school?

Yeah, I think the restructuring is, is going to help a lot.

Do you think how and talking specifically about the Department of Liberal Education now within that larger scope, do you think that the way liberal ed sees itself matches how the rest of the college sees liberal ed?

I don't think so. I think there's a real disjuncture there. Just as, just as we don't know what they're doing, I don't think they know what we're doing. And I think you know dialogue has to start, a conversation has to start about what kinds of learning go on and, and how a major can be enhanced through the right classes and, and general studies.

And how do you see that happening?

Again, I don't think we're talking to each other as much as, as we should. I, I don't think we know what each other does. We see each other at the retreat and then we're talking about other issues. But you know I, I visit other classes because of the supervisor as a coordinator. I have to visit other classes and I know what's going on in Liberal Education, but I've never seen how a class is taught in any of the other parts of the school which would be interesting.

Yeah. We talked about having a retreat on campus, tours for faculty and you know that's something (inaudible). Well related to that what, in your own words, how would you define the mission of the college and has that since you've been here changed or been redefined in any way?

Well the mission has always been to create students who, you know,

quote, author the culture of their time. Now I'm hearing the word in the next ten years it's going to be the premier school of, of this. So I guess now we've set some real goals of when, when we're going to do it. And, and how we're going to do it and what it's going to take to do it.

And does, and maybe we can talk a little bit about your academic and, and maybe personal interests and how that ties in. How, how is liberal education or have you felt welcome and will that—do you see that as being a part of the future of this school?

I think Liberal Education has to play a very crucial role in, in the future of this school. And things like the cultural studies major, that we're developing in our department I think points in that direction.

Okay, maybe you should speak to that and then, and next we'll talk about the, you know, how you feel about the cultural studies and the importance of having a major perhaps and then we need to talk about the women's studies, minor.

Well I'm not on the Committee for Cultural Studies, so I really can't speak to it. I think I know what it's trying to do and I think it's something we all do anyway. It's just a matter of giving it a name and giving it a sequence. As far as the Women's Studies and Gender Minor, we are the only school in Chicago that doesn't have anything that addresses this issue. I think the last statistics show that there are more women than men at the school.

And all the literature points to the fact that women have had very little voice in the past few centuries. They've had very few classes, in which they can be

inspired to see how other women have handled—so I'm, you know I'm very much in favor of this. I'm going to add here that I have applied for a center in Costa Rica which is dedicated to the, to the study of women and it's always interesting to see what other people are doing. But for example, I knew you'd be interested in this because here's what this school is trying to do, and that is they have a whole program which is dedicated to women's history, retrieving women's history.

The project to save and rescue women's history.

I mean, why aren't we doing this?

Right, right. Who initiated the women's studies?

I did.

You? Okay, and maybe speak to that. Who did you bring on board—you've talked a little bit about why it is needed here and did you—was it well received and supported the whole way along or did you have obstacles that you had to overcome?

The, the Women's Studies Minor, which was later changed to Women and Gender Studies, was really the tail end of a grant that I got involved in. We received a Lilly Grant, here at the college and I was part of the team that helped to write the proposal and then carry it through. And basically the, the umbrella term was diversity. But then we started looking at other kinds of diversity and we said well women, you know, that, that's something we should look at.

And at that point, but the grant had run out. But the money had run out. But the point of the grant was to get seed, seed money so we could get projects started that the school would continue to, to

process and maybe support. So there was a little bit of money left over, enough so that I was given the opportunity to do some background research on how to get something started here. So I started looking at what else everyone else was offering. And, and that really grew out of that Lilly Diversity Grant.

And what year was that grant?

Gee, it, you know, I'd have to go and look it up.

Okay.

I'd have to look up my—it was a three year-long grant and, we, we were able to sponsor a class—the Italian class was an outgrowth of that too because I said, “well, if we're looking at diversity here's a diverse group of students who are looking to study this language.” So women's studies and, and the Italian grew out of that. We had a conference. We also had a publication. So it was a really exciting grant.

And then how did you translate that into your proposal of programming and how was that received?

Well, I, I basically went through the catalog and I showed that we were various departments. We're doing some aspect that involved women in their courses. And it was just a matter of having an introductory class and maybe a capstone class. And then giving students a coherent sense of how to go through studying this. You know take one—writing a menu saying take three from here or two from here.

And that was how I had written up the Latino Grant too. I was aware, that for example, we were offering

Spanish and the Art Department was offering three classes that had to do with Mexican painting or muralist painting, and various other departments—film for example had something in international cinema. And once in a while they would focus on a country in Latin America. It was just a matter of writing it up so that the students would have a coherent set of, set of classes to take.

When I first came here, you got the impression that students came here because it was very hands on and they could do whatever they wanted and they could sign up for Lab Tech Three, without taking Lab Tech Two. And they could sign up for a rather more advanced class without taking Comp One and Two, and then they would flounder. I think one of the changes I have seen while I've been here is that students have been now prompted to take one thing after another; in a certain sequence. And that's how I see the majors and the minors working.

They, they give a sense of structured way of going through classes. And now for example you have to take freshman Comp One and Two quite early in your career. I had some registrations sessions where students were ready to graduate and hadn't taken that. So I, I see these as a way to really see a coherence in what you're studying and a relatedness, too. I think a relatedness just because something is being offered from a different department doesn't mean it's not related to what you're doing.

Traditionally, Columbia has been known for nurturing entrepreneurship and letting people experiment and introduce new things. What obstacles did you come about with

the women's studies and you know, are they new obstacles? Would this have happened do you think earlier or—

I, I think the obstacles I faced were purely political. And I think it has to do with the little fiefdoms and, and the fear that if students are taking something outside of your department then they might get interest in the other department.

So that's really a universal theme in higher education?

I believe so. I believe so.

Same here, here as (inaudible). Let's see, I don't want to leave women's studies quite yet, but with that have you seen an interest or is it filling a need that people are, are interested in, in declaring a minor? Do they do that? Do they declare a minor in women's studies or how does that work? Did they—do they enter the program and start in a sequence and have you had increased interest?

Well since it's not done yet, it hasn't been announced yet, it still has to go through the curriculum committee. But it, but it, but it works this way in the Latino minors which is I, I draw up a little, you know, little menu and students who are interested come to me and I'll say, "well, you know, here's what you can take and you have a choice. Make sure you do this, this and this. And then you have a graduation audit and then you're declared a minor."

And how many minors does Liberal Arts have?

One.

Just one? Now?

Yes.

And that's the Latino?

Yes.

And women's studies will be a second?

Yes.

And if we get the cultural studies, that'll be our first major?

Correct.

And again do you think that's part of the, the maturation of the department that were, I don't know, growing up?

Yes.

—or taking a place at the table that—

Taking our place at the table, is a good way to up it.

And what are your predictions down the road? I mean do you think at the faculty retreats they'll have workshops on liberal education where the faculty there are showing what they're interested in or what they're working on?

Why not, why not? You can do that now. You can showcase your work now.

Right, right. I guess I associate that still with the other departments that are more, are more high profiled. And do you feel a change in the department since you came here—

Definitely.

—of wanting it to, to be more or different, or how would you describe it?

I think we, we've always wanted to have a more higher profile, but it hasn't—with, with things as they were, it was not possible to do that. I think individuals within the department could establish a high profile. But the department, as a whole, wasn't seen as a cohesive unit of the people who were doing that.

Now I want to switch gears just a little and, and speak to you as a woman at Columbia, your impression of has that changed in opportunities or as what the role of women might be at the college, has that shifted or changed?

I think it's shifted. I think that you, you see more women in, in the administration which is a very good thing. My first impression of Columbia was that there was an old boy's network and it was very active but that, that I think had to do with the vision of the college. The initial vision of the college that it was run by a family out a, you know, shop front and Mike Alexandroff was very proud of the fact that, you know. He heard an interesting speaker and the next day get on the phone and say, "I want that person to teach here."

Well, okay, so that's, that's the way it was. But I don't think you can run a four-year school, on that model. And so since that has changed I think, also the number of women faculty and women administrators has had to reflect reality. Who are we teaching? We're not just teaching men. We're not just teaching young men. We're teaching a lot of different kinds and I think the administration and the faculty has to reflect that reality.

And do you, do you think that that changes certain characteristics or aspects of the (inaudible)? I mean I guess I meant (inaudible).

Yeah, it makes it like real life.

Explain that a little further. You know what, what do women bring into college that was missing before?

Leadership. I think they bring leadership. They bring a different

teaching style and definitely a different administrative style which is good.

More—
Different.

—cooperative or, or different, okay.

Different, okay, it's just different. They, they handle, they handle emergencies in a different way. They look at life in a different way. I don't want to use the word nurture, so I won't.

Too overused, right?
Yeah.

Okay, what do you think, and, and we've, we've made these— touched on some of these but let's talk about from your perspective what the major challenges that you think maybe you could identify two or three that Columbia has had to face and also think successes. And again you know if we have talked about it, just—you can just mention it again—
Well—

—to note them.

—as, as your project proves there, there is a history here and there's also a mythology here. And I think it's nice to have a mythology, but when that mythology holds you back from being what you really can be. I think it becomes dangerous. And I think you know, you hear—I mean ever since I've come here I, I hear about the Columbia mission and the Columbia culture. I think I know what the Columbia culture is all about, although there's no real definition of it.

But we're made to feel as though we're different. We're made to feel

as though we're doing something unique. But you know let's face it, we're a four year urban institution with a skyrocketing enrollment. We can't be that little ma and pa shop run out of a storefront. We have to be a real college. And that has been a real adjustment. I've been to curriculum meetings where people have said, "you expect me to write a syllabus, what's that? I've been teaching, you know, 30 years, what, what do you mean all of a sudden I have to have a syllabus?"

So if you're going to be a real college you have to act like you are and you have to have structure. You have to have syllabi. You have to have curriculum review. You can't, you know, get on the horn and call interesting people. One of the things that I'm—that kind of surprises me, is that I'm also on the Sabbatical and Faculty Development Committee and there are a lot of people who've been teaching here for many, many years. And I'm sure they've very good at what they do, but they don't have their masters yet.

And so they're looking you know when, when they take a sabbatical, half—a lot of the times they'll say, well you know, I started my masters X number of years ago and now I really need to finish it. And I think the, the review process, the fact that we now have tenure and five-year review has made people rethink, what is it to be an academic? And this is the real difference between the departments. I think the people who teach in gen ed are academics. They have degrees. They've gone, you know, through a certain—whereas the people who teach in other departments are good at what they do, but maybe they don't have that

academic background and now they're finding that they have to do that.

Not necessarily because they're expected to but they, but they want to do it you think or—
I think because of the direction the school is going.

And would that be, when you look at the successes do you think something like putting in place the tenure process with the positive good that that has been a positive change for the college?
I think so. Again if we're going to be a real school we have to have the things that all the other schools have.

Can we be that real school and maintain that unique character—
Absolutely.

—identity?
I think you can do both.

You can do both?
I think you can do both.

And maybe explain or, or give your insight into how that can happen, because I think a lot of people feel it's either or.
Well if you're going to do either or, what's the either or. Either you become a conservatory and a trade school and then you don't have to have all that stuff that we've been dealing with, or you become what we are and then you have to have all that other stuff in place.

Okay, I guess I'll ask you a different way that what can you do here that you can't do in other four year institutions? You know that—

Here? Myself?

—like—right.

Personally?

Right, yeah, you know what, what can you do at Columbia as it takes on these more traditional— I've always been an academic, the traditional academic. I'm, I'm not in those departments who are threatened by the fact that—

Oh, okay.

—we've become more academic. So it, it doesn't bother me.

But I guess I'm not talking so much about that but what—when—with Columbia, is it becoming like everyone else or— More traditional?

Yeah.

I think so.

Or do you think it's maintaining its character?

Well the structure, the structure has become more traditional, but the structure and the character are not necessarily tied together. I think you could still have that—well by, by virtue of being open admissions, that, that's going to be what it is. We're going to attract the students who are—and I want to talk about that. I want to talk a little bit about the kinds of students who are attracted here, because this is related.

One of the things that makes it very challenging and very positive to be at Columbia is—and I have taught at private institutions, public institutions, state institutions, community college—everywhere else I've been you get the sense that people are marking time. They're there because they know they have to be there for four years. They're there because their parents want them to be there. You talk to

them and it's like, why are you here? Well my mom made me go or you know, this is the thing I have to do.

One of the refreshing things about Columbia College students and I don't know that they will do what they say they're going to do but at least they come very, very prepared to follow their dreams. They, they think they want to be something. Well that may change in the four years they're here. But at least they have a sense of this is what I think I can do. This is what I'm interested in. And that makes all the difference. They're not just marking time.

They come here because they want to be here. Whether or not they succeed is a different story but at least that spark is there, that initial spark, that determination, that sense that they feel talented in, in some direction really makes a big difference.

Can you give some personal—if you could share a couple of examples of that maybe with your own students in your own classes where you've seen someone, maybe you've had them more than once or develop or find something?

Yeah, some have gone into teaching. They've gone into bilingual programs. They get involved in the Spanish language and then they find that it's, it's definitely a plus on the market. A lot of them have gone on to study abroad or go overseas or travel, having, having known a little bit about the language and the culture has inspired them to do that. All kinds of success stories.

Who are some of the individuals that you've met at Columbia that you either admire or that you think made a particular difference?

You know I haven't been here long enough to buy into the nostalgia of the place. So I'm not, I'm not going to speak to that.

Okay, okay. Let's talk—let's go back to your areas of interest then and how you see them—your professional interests and your, your personal interests and that—how do I say it—culturally the auspices that they've looked at, at the arts that perhaps human relationships, human interaction, how have you brought that to your work, to the college, you know and to the department? I mean and have they found a home or relevance here?

Oh every—yeah, the things I teach?

Yeah.

Have, have really found a home here and I've been allowed to do all kinds of things; starting from doing special classes, special topics classes, developing minors. Another area I'm interested in is study abroad and I've taken students—well right now it's in its initial stages, but I'm doing semester breaks. I've been able to take students to Mexico. I've run three trips to Mexico.

One summer I took students to Italy. And when I was on sabbatical, I was able to take students to Guatemala for their, their Easter celebrations. And this is something that I think more and more people are interested in. If you were at the retreat it was a real presentation on how it changes people's lives, outlooks and I think an impassioned plea for more of it, which is definitely what I'm interested in.

And what do you think that introducing other cultures and not focusing necessarily—because a lot of the, the focus in other departments would be on the culture of the United States, not exclusively but that might be predominant. What—maybe you can speak to the importance of that and what your experience has been in introducing to the students?

Well, you know, even if they never learn about another culture, even if they don't agree or experience another culture, I think it makes them stop and think about what culture is and examine why it is we do the things we do; in this culture. So even if, you know, it makes you stop and think. Why do I do the things I do? Who, who taught me to do the things I do?

Why, why do I get sanctioned for some things and slapped for others? And people never think about it because they're living it every day. But unless you stop and really analyze what culture is and how it influences so much of your life, I think it opens that in, into self-examination. If, if not, the examination of, of another culture.

And maybe we can return to, to just what you were talking about with the study abroad. There seems to be a real call or attention play from that. Is that something that is new? Is that something that you've seen as identified as perhaps lacking and, and—

I, I think the, the new administration certainly has an interest in that whereas before we were more insular. So I think some attention will be paid to that and I think people have been doing it on their own, anyway. The Film Department does it and Randy Albers does it with

taking students to Prague and, and writing there. Different people are doing it, but there's no one—you know different people don't know that other people are doing it.

Right.

There's no real course.

Well didn't you do with Diane Erpenbach or—

Yes, we're going to—

You're going to?

Yeah, the thing with Diane—

Talk about that—

—yeah, that's interesting. As I mentioned, I used to run these trips myself and the Fashion and Management Department runs a trip also. And so we would always ask each other, "well where are you going this year and when are you going?" So that we don't, you know, sort of step of each other's toes. Well this year something interesting happened. They asked me to join them as a leader. So now Liberal Education is getting involved with a trip that was really the idea of someone from, from marketing. And I think that's the way it should go. I, I would love to see more interdisciplinary trips planned.

Jay Wolke, in Art and Design is planning a four year—four week trip to Florence. And he's invited me to give the humanities class there. So, I think it's interesting that someone from the Art Department is saying, hey, we need a humanities person on board. We just can't teach drawing and painting. Let's look at what, what made Florence what it was in the 16th century and why are we still feeling the repercussions now.

I, I don't want to labor this point too much because obviously these grew out of personal relationships that you've had with these people.

Yeah.

But on another level, it is partnerships with the higher phys—the more visible majors, partnering with Liberal Ed, which seems new. And again maybe that is part of, you know, evol—the recent evolution.

Yeah.

Or that, that this liberal—suddenly seen as, as a worthy partner or more legitimate.

I think that, that, that and I think you have new people at the helm, who have come from different models where this is done. To, to us it's something new, but if you look at a lot of other colleges this is done all the time. You have the language teacher traveling with an archeologist. You know everyone enhancing and here as I said, "it's always been," well this department does this. This department does that.

Yeah. Have you—have, have these collaborations or is it too early to tell, you know, have you benefited from them or, or has it opened new—

I haven't benefited yet because the trips haven't happened.

Right, right.

But I think yes, I think it—but it will benefit me because I'm not doing the entire publicity for the trips.

Right.

Someone, someone is helping me who knows how to do publicity. And I'll do best what I do best there, speak the language and take people around. So I think it's, it's a mutual benefit.

And that's interesting when you talk about speak the language. I'm just wondering do you know if these other people?

No, they don't speak it.

Yeah. So that has to add a whole new aspect, that when you have a nat—someone that speaks the language, it moves you a little bit away from simply being a tourist.

Exactly.

So that's an interesting role that you, you will be filling. Too bad that we can't put that—pause the tape until you get back and, and hear more about, hear more about that. Sticking with language for a moment, do you think that it is necessary to know a language to understand the culture and what I'm asking is how—you know what is the role of language and it's relationship to understanding culture?

I think it's very important and I think you have to be open to it. I think you have to be open to, to realizing, that again, it's a whole different way of learning. It's a whole different way of seeing the world and it really adds a dimension to your own. Even if that dimension is making you stop and think. So it's, it's crucial. It's crucial. But I've never taught—no way, where I taught language, have I just taught it in isolation because that's im—impossible. Language and culture are, are entwined. It's very hard to teach one without the other. So I've always introduced art, literature and music, catalogs, whatever to everything I've done.

Okay, what are Columbia's biggest challenges ahead?

What—put on your, you know, visionary glasses.

Yeah, yeah.

What does the future hold for the institution?

Okay, well I think one of them I mentioned already. We, we can't keep wallowing in our mythology. I think we have to say that, was very nice but that was then. Look how we've grown. Look at the, you know, many things that we've done since those years. I would like to see, you know, the human factor grow. I, I see a lot of emphasis on infrastructure and buildings. But I think a lot, a lot of attention has to be—we're getting all these students.

Where are we putting them? What are we doing with them? What is the quality of their life? Obviously they see us as, as offering something they can't get anywhere else. I very much believe in open admissions but I, I don't believe in bodies crawling all over each other either. I think we have to—we have to realize that more students are coming from out of state. They're coming from out of the country. I think we need to change the calendar to make it more palatable to the international students. I think we need to raise a lot of money. We can't keep being tuition driven. The money has to come from somewhere, from donors, from corporations.

I think we really need to reach out and, and get the money that's out there. I see places like UIC, getting top named scholars and paying handsomely for them and then you know, they manage to get a lot of publicity. We need to get more of that positive publicity. We're doing some very fine things here. But as one of our recent hires, that I love it here. This is a great place.

Why hadn't I heard about it before? So we need to raise that level nationwide of what it is that we do, who we are. And one way to do that is, is ask the people who have money to contribute to the cause. So I think the administration, and I really, I really, you know, believe they sincerely want to be the premier school in the next 10 years, but just to make that happen I think we need a huge infusion of bucks. We need a huge infusion of, of talent. People with, you know recognizable names, scholars, people who are good at what they do and are known for what they do, and have a national reputation.

Is that—I don't want to say moving away but traditionally, if I can use that, that—what has been touted as our strength is people, professionals who work in their profession doing teaching? It sounds like you're—it's saying something different or that drawing in these larger names, people that are known that will attract attention might not necessarily be someone at our local news station that's a great, you know, producer of news that also teaches here. But, you know, (inaudible).

Well, you know I've always worried about that because that, that's a two-edge sword. And, and you know maybe this is just what I see in my mind but, but I see when the school started off, okay, you know Joe Blow, works at Channel 9 and makes tons of money, so Joe Blow doesn't need tons of money to come here and teach a class. He'll do it because of the love. That's fine. I don't work at Channel 9. I don't make tons of money. What I do, is what I do.

So I think that works okay, for the so-called professional departments, where you can get a lot of outsiders; a lot of part timers, because I have different interests and other things to do. They can come in for one class. I don't think it works in gen ed. You're a historian. What do you do? You teach history. That's what historians do. Maybe some day you'll write the book and you know—but most—

Be an author.

—most of the time people here make—and the department that I know best, make their living teaching and maybe other departments can function with lots of part timers who are doing something else elsewhere, but for the general ed people I don't think we can function on that level. So that may work in, in some departments. I don't think it works in ours and I'd be glad to see that. That's, you know, what we do is our profession. We teach. That's what we do.

And so when you talk about bringing in some of those names, you're talking about perhaps attracting academic.

Yeah.

You know internationally or internationally renowned to come to— Maybe visiting or—

Yeah.

—or—

Applying some of the things that other schools have done in the past with the same principals.

Yeah.

You know, okay. That's—

And, and also cut down on, on the part-time. Our, our—we can't keep running the place and be credible with, with as many part timers who

cannot be offered full-time jobs. And I think one step in the right direction is the Lectureship Program. It's certainly, you know, makes it a little bit more stable for people to want to stay here. And we do want people, good people to stay.

And that's another area where other schools, departments have had those in the past and (*inaudible*) just now.

Beginning to—

Beginning to get them, yeah.

And I think it'll make a big difference.

Before I ask you about your vision of education, has that changed, I do want to just return to you had so many recommendations or things that you feel that Columbia needs to be aware of or look at, but one, I wanted to return to and look—it seemed like you might have been identifying—I don't want to—if there are new—but student needs that you're, you're—you talked about the human factor and that more attention has to be paid to that. Are you seeing needs of students that aren't being met that, that concerns you, that has to be addressed? And is that related to the college?

I think, I think a lot of has happened in, in very recently, for example at the retreat it was pointed out that for students who pay their bills, they used to have to go to three different offices and three different floors. Obviously, that was ticking them off. The whole registration process still continues to, to tick them off. I don't see why we can't do it over the phone or why the whole thing

can't be computerized. The registration process has been frustrating for students and for faculty ever since I got here. That's what I mean by the human factor.

Okay.

Take, take out those things that are frustrating, difficult that make you feel like you're a social security number, and I think that's being addressed now. I know that there's a need for student housing. That needs to be addressed. I don't think people thought that we would ever have so many international students and now we do. Things like that.

Okay, has your vision of education changed or can you define that as Columbia influenced it?

Well I think it's made me a better person, doing what I do. It's given me a lot of opportunities to keep studying, keep traveling, keep suggesting new things and most of the time the things I suggest, get a yes. I've been very fortunate, in that we have a remarkable library and I was told when I first joined here, you know, if there's a certain gap that you see, fill it. Just order things and I just—I've been ordering things in Spanish and in Italian and in films and videos.

And I've never been turned down for any request. So I think that's great. It's given me a chance to go out there and see what, what are good books, what are good movies that, you know, the students would, would enjoy. So it's been, it's been a wonderful place to be, to grow professionally and be inspired by the students. They keep me going. They, they have a way of looking at the world, that is not like mine, but I keep learning from it and they keep seeing things that I don't see and pointing them out to me.

Have, have they changed since you've been at Columbia? I mean could, could you point to anything—

Not really.

Nothing surprises you?

Not, not at all. More international students.

More—great.

I've noticed those and more students from out of state than before.

And did that bring something new to the (*inaudible*)?

Yeah, more diversity, more interests, different needs. The international students have very different needs than you know, your kid who's coming back and forth on the El.

Anything that we have not touched on that, that you think might need to be addressed or mentioned?

I don't think so. I hope it does become the premier, whatever it is supposed to be, in the next 10 years. I, I think the college has a corner on a very important aspect of higher education. And I think it's too bad that we're still a secret. I think in many, many ways and maybe this could be part of our outreach, we can serve as a model to other institutions of higher education. But no one knows we're there and we don't, and we don't, you know, toot our own horn.

The only thing I'm worried about is that you have been involved in a lot of initiatives, in different activities. Is there something that I've missed or forgotten to ask you about?

The other thing is—

Or that might be coming in the future too, that I didn't touch on?

No, no, the other—aside from the Lilly Grant, the other thing that was very exciting to me was the FIPSI Grant, the Federal Incentive for Higher Education. And I was involved in that for two years and was the beneficiary of that because I got to work with two instructors, who showed me how to use websites in class; how to, you know, how, how to use the web, how to use the internet, how to make learning more interactive. So I, I was happy to be on the Lilly Grant because that helped me to do some cultural diversity projects. I was happy to be on the Fipsi Grant because that helped me to enlarge the way I teach.

Was that using technology?

Yes, using technology in humanities. It, it was a grant.

In humanities?

Yeah.

Okay, and can—do you remember when that was?

Two years ago.

Okay, and the Lilly Grant was before that?

Yeah.

Okay, all right, well thank you very much.

You're welcome.

I appreciate your time.

