Q. Today is October 27, 2003. My name is Marvin Zahniser and I’m Professor Emeritus of History at the Ohio State University. And I’m sitting with Professor Herb Asher, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Political Science in the seminar room of the OSU Archives Center. We are here to explore Professor Asher’s recollections of his many activities as a special assistant to the University President for Government Relations between 1983 and 1995. During those years, Professor Asher represented President Edward Jennings and President Gordon Gee. I remind the reader that the years of Edward Jennings as President were 1981 to 1990 and Gordon Gee from 1990 to 1997. Well Herb, tell us about your recruitment by Ed Jennings to serve as his Special Assistant for Government Relations. Had you, for example, worked with your predecessor Bill Napier on some issues, so that choosing you for the position seemed easy and natural?

A. I hadn’t worked with Bill but I knew Bill quite well because he had been a graduate student in political science and was earning his Ph.D. in the department. I had known Ed somewhat because when he arrived on campus and faced that budget crisis, I was the Chairman of the University Senate Legislative Affairs Committee and one of the things that Ed Jennings did, was when he had that first major budget crises he really brought the faculty, the faculty leadership, the University Senate in in terms of the discussions that he was having. So I got to know Ed there, probably was ’82, I was elected to the Steering Committee of the University Senate, and I was Chairman of the Steering Committee. In ’83, Bill
Napier told me that he was leaving and asked me if I was at all interested in the position. And that sort of took me by surprise. And I thought about it and about a day later I indicated, “Yes, I would be interested.” And he actually I think communicated that to Ed Jennings. And I found out after the fact that Ed probably was interviewing about six people for it. I got the position and we agreed that I would do it for nine months. So the title was Acting Special Assistant to the President. I started, I think, in January. When the summertime came, I said to Ed, “This has been sort of fun. I wouldn’t mind staying on.” And he said, “Well that would be fine.” And so for rest of his presidency I was his Special Assistant and then Gordon inherited me. Throughout the time period it was always half time in the President’s office and half time in political science. I taught a course every autumn and spring quarters and continued to conduct research and publish.

Q. Once you were brought on board full-time, how did he work with you? Did he bring you into the cabinet discussions? Maybe you should answer that first.

A. From the very beginning, Ed’s cabinet and advisors were more than simply people with the title Vice President. So he brought a number of people in. So yes, I was at the key meetings of the leadership group that he had.

Q. Were there certain legislative issues in which he used individuals other than you, or did you become the man so to speak from the outset of your appointment?

A. Yes, pretty much. Basically back then our government relation’s activity was basically sort of a one person or really a half-time person activity. We didn’t cover Washington all that well but Ed and I would go in periodically to the
congressional delegation. I didn’t cover the agencies in Washington. We covered Capitol Hill a little bit. But it was mainly focused on the state legislature and even there, there were so many issues in the medical area. Ultimately we expanded our government relation’s staff. Today we have somebody who works for the medical school who is part of government relations. We have somebody in agriculture. But back then was basically a one-person operation. I had a staff assistant who handled a lot of the constituency casework that came from legislators. What’s the status of this constituent’s application, or how do I go about purchasing football tickets, or things like that. So I did have some very good assistants there. But basically back in the early 80’s it was pretty much a one-person operation, with the President playing a very important role.

Q. How was your work with Ed? How did you keep each other informed? How did he lay out his program, and how did you report back to him?

A. Both formally and informally. Ed was a person who was very comfortable with the formal channels of communication and informal ones. You could simply walk into his office and tell him what’s going on. He had a very good style, very receptive to information. One very important thing, which was very similar to Gordon, was that he truly respected the legislative process and understood it. He wasn’t as perhaps as visible or flamboyant as Gordon was in the legislative process, but I think just as the legislative leadership really liked Gordon, they really liked Ed. Ed had a very, very good relationship with the Speaker of the House, Vern Riffe. And I think one of the stories that are not widely known is that the Research Challenge program that we have in the State of Ohio, that really
benefits Ohio State University, was really something that Ed Jennings came up with. And he first shared the idea with Vern Riffe, the Speaker. And that was the program whereby the state would provide some matching money to each institution based upon the number of research dollars that it earned from external sources, non-state sources. Ed was the one who came up with that. I was with him when we were talking with Vern Riffe about it. Vern Riffe was a true supporter of Ohio State University. You think of his help on the arena and things like that but he understood that Ohio State University was the state’s premier research university and Ed explained to him that having some unencumbered research dollars, which really is what the Research Challenge does, would enable the University to enhance its research activity. Vern really understood that that was very, very critical and he went to the Governor. This became part of Dick Celeste’s selective excellence package. But it really was Ed Jennings and Vern Riffe that were responsible for it.

Q. Was Vern Riffe an alumnus of Ohio State?

A. No. He eventually became one when he got an honorary degree. But no, he was not an alumnus. He was from Scioto County, Portsmouth but he viewed Columbus, Central Ohio and Ohio State University as core parts of his constituency.

Q. Could you tell us a little bit about the educational lobbying activities at the state house? One question we begin with here, do the many lobbyists representing the institutions of higher education work cooperatively or is it pretty much each institution for itself?
A. It’s a combination. There is an umbrella organization called the Inter-University Council, which represents the 13 four-year public universities plus the two free standing medical schools. That organization has various committees. There’s the Committee of the Presidents, the Committee of the Provosts. On a regular basis the lobbyists for each of the universities got together. At that time, and it’s pretty much true today, most of the lobbyists, in fact all of them at that time, were University employees. They were not hired guns. They were not lobbyists who had 20 other clients. They were people who worked for the University. We routinely got together to fashion a common strategy. And one of the things that helped with that is that the core part of higher education funding was at that time called the Instructional Subsidy. I think it’s now called the State Share of Instruction. But everybody had a common interest. The more money that was put into that pot, the more each university would get. There would certainly be some arguments about the distribution of that money, the formula and things like that. But that kept us together on those kinds of issues. Plus a lot of other regulatory kinds of issues. Now universities had their own set of line items. We had medical line items and agricultural line items and so on; things like that you were off on your own. And there were times that some universities would be pursuing their own agenda but one expected that. The nature of Ohio’s politics, given that many of these universities are in major population centers. There’s the notion of higher education being a little bit of a pork barrel, where each region is going to try to get more money for its own institutions. That was to be expected. But I think on core issues we worked together reasonably well.
Q. Did you meet with the other institutional representatives from time to time to try to coordinate?

A. In fact on a regular basis, when the legislature was in session, we’d meet weekly down at the Inter-University Council offices. So the IUC was a good umbrella organization. We did get together routinely and sometimes we shared information and other times perhaps people weren’t as forthcoming or whatever.

Q. And then when the Presidents would meet did they have a President for the IUC for the year?

A. Yes, exactly. It was a rotating chairmanship for the IUC presidents and they basically rotated by alphabet, of the university’s name not the president’s name. Which were both good and bad. It took care of the leadership succession question but it meant from one year to the next you could have very differing styles and qualities of leadership among the organization.

Q. Did the Ohio Board of Regents prove helpful at all in terms of lobbying with the legislature?

A. That’s a very good question. And I think the answer by and large is not very helpful. And part of it has to do with who the regents are. The regents, the Board of Regents itself is appointed by the Governor. There’s an administrative staff. That’s a staff that has no constituency, doesn’t teach a single student, and is basically in Columbus. So I think in most instances, where one needed to get a message to the legislature, it was more important that the University Presidents spoke in a harmonious fashion than counting upon the regents to deliver your message. I’d say in a vast majority of cases the University Presidents and the
Board of Regents and the Chancellor for the Board of Regents were in fact in harmony, but if you’re asking a question, how significant were the regents in the lobbying activity, I don’t think all that significant, although once the regents hired Bill Napier, that certainly gave the regents more entrée into things. But again, I think the University is more significant.

Q. Let’s go back here to this Inter-University Council. Once the Presidents for example had decided on maybe some general policies, was the President of the Council for the year the one who was to carry the message?

A. It depended on which Presidents knew which legislators. If in fact the Cincinnati legislators were very, very important and President Steger wasn’t the head of the organization that year, we’d still count upon Joe Steger to make sure he talked with Stan Aronoff and Bill Mallory and Dick Finan and things like that. There was a division of labor there. Oftentimes they would pick a subset of Presidents if we were having testimony. And here the regents played a role too in terms of coordinating testimony before the appropriations committees. You might try to get somebody from northeastern Ohio, somebody from central, somebody from south or southwestern Ohio. There was always an attempt to try to put forth a balanced presentation but almost inevitably there was the expectation that the Ohio State University President would be a part of that presentation. Now in addition to the IUC, there’s also an organization for the two-year colleges, the community colleges. And of course the private universities have their own organization too, independent colleges and universities. So there were multiple voices speaking on behalf of higher education and there were times when in fact
the two year sector was very, very skillfully and sometimes successfully attacking the four year sector, trying to get dollars switched from the upper level, support for Ph.D. and Masters and junior/senior down to the freshmen/sophomore, which of course is typically where the community colleges and technical institutes were doing their teaching. There were times of course when the private universities were trying to get into the state budget and making the argument, “Well if we weren’t here you’d have that many more people going to public universities and it would cost the state even more; so therefore give us some state money to make sure that we stay solvent.”

Q. So did the IUC try to keep on top of what these other interests were?

A. Certainly yes. Certainly did. And sometimes you tried to put together a coalition of the whole if you could, but there were other times where you could see these other interests trying to take something out of your hide. You tried to resist that.

Q. Sure, sure. Who were the key legislative players during the Jennings years? To whom would you go for reliable information and for support for the University?

A. Well I think on the House side, again throughout that time period the Democrats controlled the House and clearly Vern Riffe, the Speaker, was absolutely critical. Again, a good friend of higher education. Another person who was very, very helpful was Patrick Sweeney. He was actually number three in the leadership ranks at the time. He was a representative from the Cleveland area. Our own local state representative, Mike Stinziano, was very, very helpful. He was very close to Speaker Riffe and so I think those three were sort of the key people. A story about Pat Sweeney and this I think anticipates a question, but Pat Sweeney
was very instrumental in the development of the Ohio Super Computer Center. As you may recall, Ohio State University had actually put in a proposal to the National Science Foundation to create a national super computer center and we were not successful. We were not awarded one. That led us to plan B. There were discussions down at the Board of Regents about maybe somehow the State of Ohio would in fact be establishing a center. We had been working with Pat Sweeney for a long time and another person at the University who was involved with this besides Ed Jennings was Jack Hollander, who was our Research Vice President at the time. And I remember being in Pat Sweeney’s office while Pat called over to the Board of Regents and spoke to the Chancellor. I think it was Bill Coulter at the time. And of course poor Bill didn’t know I was sitting there listening to the conversation. But Pat said, “Well now those clowns at Ohio State failed to get a super computer. What are going to do here in Ohio because we need one of them?” And then Pat started pushing and said, “We need to have it here somewhere in proximity to the Ohio State campus. It would be a state facility.” And here’s Coulter who of course wanted that but again here is Sweeney sort of defining what the parameters were going to be. And on the Senate side, a very key person was Stan Aronoff, Senator Aronoff, for whom we just named a building. Absolutely critical. So I think again, key people, other legislators certainly on the Senate side, Paul Gilmore, who had been Senate President and later was succeeded by Stan Aronoff, were certainly very, very critical. In the 1980’s the Senate switched partisan control a number of times. So that made for a somewhat different environment, unlike the stability on the House
side, where if you had Speaker Riffe on your side, that was pretty much the end of the issue. It was a much simpler era.

Q. In terms of your own activities and those with whom you tried to keep in contact, did you try to work mainly with the legislative leadership and say the educational and the appropriations, or were you busy touching base with all members as you had time to do so?

A. Yes, more of the former. As I had time to do I would try to touch base with more people but I really did maintain a half-time appointment in political science and I actually kept on teaching. I always taught at least two courses a year. I tried to be somewhat productive and actually got some writing done, books, in that time period. So I was not downtown as much as some of the lobbyists from other universities, who when they came to town, stayed in the hotel downtown and were downtown twenty-four hours a day for three or four days a week. And I was probably able to get away with that, particularly in the 1980’s, because in fact you had strong leadership. And we had a very good delegation from Franklin County and as long as you stayed on top of those people and stayed close to them, that worked fairly well. Now again, I did eventually get to know every member of the General Assembly but I wouldn’t say that I spent a lot of time downtown sort of schmoozing, wining and dining as many other lobbyists did. And I would guess today that the way I allocated my time would not be good today in the era of term limits and so much turnover and things like that. The other thing besides having strong leadership is that when you didn’t have term limits, you really had substantial stability in membership. So if you didn’t get to know everybody right
away, you still got to know them. And again, we did a number of things that I think were sort of efficient. We would try to invite all the newly elected members to campus for a dinner, so you’d get to know them early on. After in the even year, after an election, we would invite them to the first home football game, which almost inevitably was the Michigan game. And they would be invited to the President’s pre-game brunch. We’d put something on the scoreboard welcoming the newly elected people and also thanking the departing party members, whether they were leaving voluntarily or because they got defeated. We’d send pictures of the scoreboard welcoming or wishing God’s speed to the departing members. And so there were ways of getting to know people right away which you took advantage of at Ohio State. And so I got to know all the new members right away, at least in terms of meeting them. But once they got into sessions I wasn’t downtown, although I’d always make a point of making sure I stopped by a couple of times, just so the name and the face would be familiar. But again, I don’t think I did as much as many other lobbyists did in terms of just being down there and wandering the halls and being there for all the sessions.

Q. Have the educational institutions in Ohio gone toward a system of not having part-time lobbyists who were teaching in the University, more toward having people that would be there full-time?

A. Most universities even back then, had full-time lobbyists and they were employees of the university. There’s a little bit of a tendency now for universities to be looking at perhaps hiring contract lobbyists who might not work full-time
for the University, might have other clients or whatever, or even if they have a lobbyist they still might feel the need for additional representation on certain kinds of issues or whatever. But again, by and large today most of the universities still have as their lobbyists their own full-time employees. I can’t remember if there are other lobbyists who have in a sense had another career. Actually I shouldn’t say that because Akron for a while had a lobbyist who would also have responsibility for their alumni association. So I think they have had lobbyists who have had multiple responsibilities.

Q. Alright. Well let’s move on to another question. That last question has so many ramifications and we may want to pick it up a little later. What is your explanation for the decreasing percentage of University revenue provided by the legislature? And I’ll suggest two or three. Is it new expensive and competitive needs, or is it a loss of confidence that a high quality or higher education system will pay off for the state economy, or is it that there are too many institutions to support with no one willing to give up the duplications in programs?

A. If this weren’t happening in most states, the declining share that higher education gets from the state budget, then you might look to number three and say, well yes, the problem we have in Ohio is we have such a dispersed population. We have so many universities and colleges and so many medical schools and so many law schools and so many Ph.D. programs. You might attribute it to that. But in fact I don’t think that’s the explanation. That may be a problem in terms of how we allocate the resources that we do have, but in fact we’re seeing the same kind of pattern happening in a lot of other states. I do think that Ohio has some unique
problems and one unique problem is that we have I think traditionally under-valued higher education in Ohio and I think for a very simple economic reason. That the older economy, the manufacturing economy did not require workers to have a higher education. So I think we had a business community that in terms of its work force did not really look to higher education. I think some people in that manufacturing sector understood though that engineers and inventors were in fact important. But I think many of them were much more concerned about the work force. And that meant what? High school and technical institutes. So you never really had that voice that we’ve had in some other states including California, Virginia, Georgia and North Carolina, where a business community came together and said for the longer-term future of the state we really need to be investing in higher education. So I think that’s part of the problem. I think another part of the problem that is somewhat unique to Ohio, while it’s true in many, many states, is the fact that there are parts of the budget that Bill Shkurti once described as the Pac Man, just sort of gobbling up. And certainly one thing is Medicaid. And all states have problems with Medicaid but Medicaid is more than a unitary program. States make decisions about what kind of Medicaid coverage there’s going to be. But in fact within Medicaid there’s also the whole issue of the nursing home coverage. And in fact I think most people cite in Ohio, and I don’t know the exact statistics today, but probably 40-45% of the Medicaid budget goes to cover 6% of the recipients, and those 6% are people who are indeed in nursing homes. And we in Ohio, if I were giving investment advice in hindsight, over the past 15-20 years I would have encouraged you to invest in nursing homes. We in Ohio,
we’re getting a little tougher now, really did not reign in nursing home costs. And in fact for a while we were reimbursing nursing homes on a cost plus basis. So whatever your costs were, add a certain percentage. I think we saw a tremendous growth in Medicaid and that wound up really eating up part of the state budget. On another topic, even though we never went to three strikes and you’re out, nevertheless any legislator knows that one of the ways to establish a record is to have some bill pass that either criminalizes a new activity or increases the penalty for a current criminalized activity. And of course that means that the prison system grows and the costs in terms of facilities and guards continues to grow and whatever. So you have that. And then at bottom you’ve got the whole issue of primary and secondary education. And throughout the 1990’s you had a strategy. Let me back up here. Governor Voinovich was a wonderful Governor in many ways. He was a very atypical Republican in many ways. He resisted the right wing of his party. He was not going to get into issues about challenging Affirmative Action. The right wing of his party wanted to talk about English as the official language of the State of Ohio. And of course Governor Voinovich, coming from an ethnic immigrant family, was offended by that. So in so many ways he explicitly rejected three strikes and you’re out, because he said that would just be a budget buster. But having said all these good things about what a sensible Governor he was, when it came to higher education, Governor Voinovich had a blind spot. And it was really a blind spot that I think really related to faculty. I think he by and large saw faculty as privileged people who did not work very hard. If I were assigning some labels to his views, I’d say in this case
he was sort of an urban ethnic populist. He sort of resented the elitism symbolized by university faculty. And so I think that was also reflected then in his budget priorities. One of the key things that happened, and this was back in the early 90’s, when we were having those major budget problems, when Gordon Gee was President and our budgets were being cut. The State of Ohio gives the Governor the unilateral power to cut budgets when the state’s budget is declared out of balance. I don’t remember the exact numbers but there were three rounds of cuts. In the first round of cuts, higher education was about 13% of the state budget. We got almost 50% of the cuts. And the second round we got 30% of the cuts. And this was happening I think for two reasons. Once Governor Voinovich said we’re going to exempt primary and secondary from the cuts, and of course one of the rationales for exempting primary and secondary, was that back 1991 we had DeRolph filed. So once primary and secondary is off the table and meanwhile Medicaid either we can’t or are not controlling and prisons are growing, it’s almost inevitable the arithmetic says that higher education is going to suffer the brunt of the cuts. But even on top of that, I don’t think the Governor really felt bad about those cuts. I think he thought universities were fat. And we can talk more about that later. I can continue talking about that now but there really was I think an animus, just a dislike that he had. We lost budget share in the 90’s and haven’t really recovered. And meanwhile the same kinds of patterns have continued in terms of Medicaid growing and the need to put more money into primary and secondary education. Meanwhile we as a state in Ohio are not a state that is growing very many new jobs. We have prosperous areas within the
state but overall the state is not this wonderful economic engine. So if you really are seeing competition from primary and secondary and you’re seeing pressures from Medicaid and prisons and other things like that, well who is left to balance the budget. And another problems here is that, it goes back to a point I made earlier about the business community but it really is, what’s the constituency for higher education? And one could argue that higher education hasn’t done a good enough job building grass roots support as primary and secondary has. In primary and secondary you’ve got the school boards and superintendents and the principals and the teaches and the PTA’s and all of that. But you probably have that because there’s a sense of urgency. And where is the sense of urgency in higher education? I think a lot of people sort of believe we’re doing okay. If you look at the numbers and see Ohio is an undereducated state in terms of advanced education. But still there isn’t that sense of crisis and there certainly wasn’t that sense of leadership coming throughout the 1990’s about the importance of higher education.

Q. Maybe the parents’ sense that higher education was something less crucial than the earlier years too might have played a role. When you think of all the educational institutions we have within just a few miles of each other, you would think there would normally be a tremendous constituency. So it must be an attitudinal problem in part.

A. Yes, I think you’re right. Attitudinal and cultural. And I’ve long argued, and I think the regents are now doing something about this, that if you looked at Ohio, and not look just simply at our regions but you looked at populations within
regions. If you look for example at Appalachia, and particularly looked at poor whites, I doubt that no matter how much we’d say there’s financial aid for poor students, many residents of Appalachia would say that college is not accessible to them. In fact, when you look at higher education, it’s oftentimes the middleclass and lower middleclass that are more likely to get squeezed than economically poor students. But if you come from a culture where in fact your high school guidance counselor or your family says, “That’s not for you. You’re not welcome there.” Or, we at the universities are constantly talking about how expensive we are and how high tuition is, you might very well scare off white Appalachian residents of Ohio. Also look at some of our urban centers. Look at white ethnic families that had a tradition of working in the mines and mills and factories and whatever, you may be talking about families that literally had grandfather working in the steel mill, father working in the steel mill, son working in the steel mill, and then the steel mill is suddenly gone. And never was there the culture that somehow you needed higher education. In fact, a lot of these unionized jobs in the steel plants and automobile plants paid better than what you’d make in the average job when you graduated with a BA degree. So I think you had that going on there in that culture. And then you also had the central city African Americans. And not just the central city but we have pockets of the African American community in some of our smaller cities, for which also higher education was not seen as particularly welcoming. And then all the discussion about cost probably set up another perceptual attitude and barrier. So I think we’ve had a problem there. I think another problems that we have is that, if you
look at our major cities, that really is Cleveland and Columbus and Cincinnati, Cleveland does not have a major public institution. Cleveland State is an access institution. And Cuyahoga Community College is very, very important in the lifeblood of the community. But surely if you’re part of the Cleveland elite, you don’t look to public higher education in the Cleveland area, and you probably don’t look to public higher education in Ohio, which is unfortunate. And so where do you look? You look to the east coast for private education. You look to Michigan perhaps for public education. Cincinnati is a little different. The University of Cincinnati is certainly a comprehensive university, much more so than Cleveland State, but I think we didn’t have that tradition in Ohio of looking to public universities. I think that’s a little different than Illinois for example. The University of Illinois was certainly always valued. And Wisconsin and Minnesota were valued.

Q. And I think Iowa is too.

A. Yes, I think you’re right. And of course Minnesota also had the advantage that the bulk of the population is in the Twin Cities area. So therefore in fact, if you’re thinking about higher education, you’re thinking about Minnesota, if you’re going to go to a major university within the state. So I think we have other things that have to do with unique features of Ohio. But there isn’t this set of advocates that are out there that are saying that higher education is the number one priority. There aren’t many people saying to candidates or to the Governor, “If you want my support you have to support higher education.” And even if you did say that, you then have people worrying, it’s not just supporting higher
education, I want you to support my institution. So it might not be very good for a candidate for Governor to say, “Well, I’m really going to build Ohio State and make it into one of the nation’s premier public universities.” And others will say, “What about my institution? What about Toledo?” And of course the Toledo mentality, as you well know, was prominent in the 1990’s. Toledo was at war with the rest of the state, creating this movement called “The Other Ohio.” Clearly there was a very counter-productive attitude whereby at times you felt that Toledo and particularly the Toledo Blade would rather see nobody get anything than have Columbus or Ohio State get a little bit more than Toledo. That’s a very bad attitude.

Q. In your discussion about Governor Voinovich, did you ever have any interaction with him about higher education, so that you discerned his attitudes from what he said, or did you watch his feet rather than his mouth?

A. Well a little bit. I think in many ways he’s very, very impressive but the other thing I had access to his communications. After Gordon Gee made the comment about the Governor being a damn dummy, and Gordon meant that the cuts to higher education were a dumb thing to do, but Gordon was out on High Street and he did say it to the Lantern reporter. Gordon worked very hard to rebuild that relationship and he would routinely send notes to the Governor talking about what’s going on at the University and how hard faculty worked. I’ve got a couple of good stories to tell you actually. As I started to say, after Gordon Gee had made that comment, he was rebuilding the relationship with the Governor and he routinely would share information with the Governor. In fact, they were
practically neighbors and they interacted informally too. But one year Gordon sent the Governor a report that had been done on campus about how faculty members spent their time. And this report indicated that tenure track faculty, the core faculty of the University, were working an average of about 56 hours a week. And Gordon wanted to share that with the Governor because he was concerned that the Governor really didn’t appreciate what faculty did. And so he sent that report to the Governor, and the Governor read everything. The Governor was very good about reading things. The Governor sent the report back to Gordon with a penned note that said, “Yes, Gordon, but how many of these are hours in the classroom teaching undergraduates?” I saw another message from the Governor where the Governor was concerned about a college graduate who in fact I think had gotten a degree in communications, and had now gone to work in a bank, and he was upset that the bank had to train the person for the job. And some of us wanted to write to the Governor and say, “No, Governor, the fact that the person could be trained, that this person had a basic set of skills and could learn was really the key thing here.” Another story, in the summer of 1990, when Governor Voinovich and Tony Celebrezeze were running against each other for Governor, the Inter-University Council invited each of them separately to meet with the University Presidents. And some of the lobbyists were present for the meetings and I was there. And Tony Celebrezeze came in, came in with briefing books. He had done an awful lot of preparation for the meeting and had a lot of questions and things like that. And then George Voinovich met with the Presidents, and it was a very cordial meeting, but basically Voinovich said to the
Presidents, “I’m not even sure why I’m here meeting with you. Cause you guys are doing a good job. My problems are with primary and secondary education.” So it was sort of nice words or whatever and it really was a cordial meeting, but it wasn’t very substantive. Well after Voinovich was elected, a couple of weeks after he’s now the Governor-Elect, before he’s sworn in, maybe a couple of days before Thanksgiving I get a call. And the call is from a friend of mine who says, “Herb, I was just at a meeting the Governor-Elect had with some business leaders and the Governor is really quite upset about Ohio State University.” And I said, “Why?” And he said, “Well evidently you guys hired a faculty member away from Case Western Reserve and that person is getting paid more and teaching less, and the Governor is really upset by that.” And I said, “Oh, that’s interesting.” It was around Thanksgiving and I didn’t follow up on it. Then a couple of weeks later, now we’re getting towards the middle of December, I get a call from another person who is at another meeting, in which the Governor tells the same story. I said to myself, “Okay, Herb, you better follow up on it.” And I followed up on it and it turned out that our College of Dentistry had hired an oral biologist away from Case Western Reserve University and while it was true that she was getting paid more, she was getting paid around 1990 all of $70,000 a year, and it was true she was only teaching one course, but she was also spending half of her time in the dental clinic supervising students. So I got the information. But now it’s getting a little close to Christmas and I thought, ”Well, I’ll just wait until January to convey the true story to the Governor’s Chief of Staff.” Well, early January, I get a call from Speaker Riffe and the Speaker tells me, “Herb,
Governor just had a meeting with legislative leaders and he told this story.” And I said, “Mr. Speaker, here’s the facts.” As soon as I got off the phone, I called Paul Mifson, the Governor’s Chief of Staff, and told him what the facts were. But that gave me some insight, that when it came to higher education, I believe the Governor had a blind spot. I think of one other story. I went to the Governor’s re-election kickoff, which was down at the Great Southern Hotel. The Governor was giving a speech. It was a very intelligent speech. He’s talking about the accomplishments of the first term and he’s talking about how we have to reform welfare but in a constructive way, not a punitive way. He talked about his opposition to three strikes and you’re out. Just making an awful lot of sense as a good administrator. And then he gets to higher education. He looks at the students, and a lot of them are my students because I teach the courses on Ohio Politics and Campaign Politics, and he gets animated, his face gets sort of red, and he says and this is almost verbatim … oh I should tell you one other thing. Right before that, he talked about the aspiration to make the entire State of Ohio into a research park. So he had talked about that as one of his goals. And then he gets to this point in his speech and he looks at the students and he says with really great intensity, “And I say to you students, we got those faculty members back in the classroom and not doing that research.” And I muttered something. A friend of mine heard me. I’m thinking, “What an amazing disconnect!” And again, I think to me it really did indicate that when it came to higher education, and particularly faculty, I think the Governor had a very primary/secondary school view of his/her education, that somehow you’re working a full day, teaching
students so they can get their first job. He didn’t really see the higher education for its longer term benefits, that if people got a degree in history or political science or classics or whatever, that these could be well educated people that might wind up doing some very interesting things. We used to hope that John Ong would help make the case that you could actually be a history major and still do something worthwhile. That was the challenge and I think Governor Taft and Governor Celeste, intuitively and intellectually both better understood how the invention and discovery and research, intellectual enterprises of the University, can be beneficial to the state, and are absolutely critical to the state’s economic development. But I do think Governor Voinovich, in that one area, that was a challenge. When you look at some of the numbers, again all states in the early 90’s were going through bad times, but when I looked at numbers between ’91 and ’93 for the CIC institution, the Big Ten plus Chicago, there were only two institutions that in that time period actually had a decline in state support. Decline in state support. And we by far had the larger decline. So these were real tough times. These weren’t Washington, D.C. cuts, which are cuts in your rate of growth; these were real cuts. And I think that did say something about the priorities of the Voinovich administration.

Q. That’s most interesting. You mentioned the Governor saying something about making all of Ohio a research park. I was wondering, were you involved in the OSU Research Park planning, and if so, was there a legislative component of the planning, and if so, would you tell us a little bit about it.
A. Well I really wasn’t. I was in on some discussions and as you know our research
park endeavors sort of went in fits and starts. I remember Art Adams was initially
involved there and I think we never really got to the point of a research park.
Moving forward on the plans for the current activities, I think there were some
differences of opinion among some members of the Board of Trustees that
delayed decisions on the current research park. So I was there at discussions but I
don’t think I really was involved on the initial planning. I did get more involved
in my last role. After I took early retirement in 1995, Gordon Gee created the
Counselor to the President. We hired somebody else to do the lobbying, Colleen
O’Brien. And Gordon asked me to stay on and be an advisor, a counselor. I also
wound up taking on some of the responsibilities not as a lobbyist, for rebuilding
the relationship between the University and the City, because the arena wars had
really soured the relationship between Greg Lashutka and Gordon. I like Greg,
although I was on the point on the arena battle, but we got along reasonably well.
So as we moved to the next iterations on the research park and were trying to get
some money from the city, I was involved in some of the discussions, but again I
don’t think I was really very central to that, except to offer advice when I had the
opportunity to.

Q. Ed Jennings thought that he had really not conceptualized that park in the way
that made it more certain to be successful, and indicated if he were doing it again,
he would reconceptualize it.

A. Yea, I think Art Adams worked hard, and I think he encountered problems
internally. I don’t think the internal support was really there. I don’t mean from
the President. To get something done at Ohio State, you need to have your bureaucracy, which really means your lawyers and other people helpful. If they’re not helpful then they’ll find a million and one reasons why you can’t do things.

Q. Alright. I’d like to ask you another budgetary question. Did you on behalf of President Jennings and Gee represent the budgetary needs of the medical school to the legislature, and if not, how were the needs of the medical school represented. And how did this structure of representation affect the programs of the non-medical areas?

A. Initially I did represent the needs of the medical school. And keep in mind there are six public medical schools. So within the Inter-University Council there are six universities that have an interest in medical education, and all six of those universities get a clinical subsidy line item. So again, you had natural allies there. But one of the challenges was, how did you establish priorities for all of higher education, because the other seven four year institutions, actually the other nine because two of them are free standing medical schools, really had no interest in medical education. So it was always a balance within the higher education community that you first talk about the core funding, which was the instructional subsidy or now the state share, and from there you would talk about the needs that you had, whether it was in the medical line items, the cancer hospital, which was actually something that was very, very important to us and we had an operating subsidy for a while. But we had agreed that that subsidy would in fact be phased out. We had a lot of good friends downtown who supported the medical school
and Manny Tzagournis, I’ve said even though Manny was not officially a lobbyist, there was no better fundraiser for the University. Maybe Gordon was, but Manny really was just a wonderful person, wonderful doctor, wonderful friend to many of the people downtown, so that for many people downtown when you thought about medical schools you thought about Manny and their first inclination would be to be supportive. But again, we went through some tough budgetary times, and I think the more serious thing that happened, there were a whole variety of other issues that were not direct budget issues but were about various kinds of issues, whether they were research issues, Medicaid issues, certificate of need for a building, new facilities, things like that. It had become very clear that we needed somebody who was really an expert in those areas, and eventually we ended up hiring Jerry Friedman. Jerry came to the University, left the University, and is now back working for Fred SanFilippo. But I think we recognized here that there were so many things that impacted the wellbeing of our health center, that went well beyond whatever state dollars we were getting. So the direct state dollars probably in the grand scheme of things were less important than whatever decisions they would be making about Medicaid reimbursement and things like that. Today for example, and again I’m not involved but I talk to people, but this whole issue about boutique hospitals or specialty hospitals is a major issue that will have a lot to say about the bottom line of our hospitals and in the Central Ohio community hospitals. I think life is getting more complicated. Also, a lot of these things that affect medical education are in Washington. So ultimately we decided that we really needed to have somebody get more involved
in the Washington scene. And initially Dick Stoddard. And Dick is still here and was very much involved in the Washington scene. Then Jerry Friedman worked on medical things, both in the state and in Washington along with Dick Stoddard.

Q. Alright. That helps to understand that. Now here you’re going to have to talk for quite a while, so you might want to take another sip on that Coca-Cola you have there. And the question is this. One always wonders how certain building projects are selected for support by the legislature and how certain other building proposals lose out. Tell us a little bit about how the system works so we can understand better how capital budgets were built that resulted in such additions as Cottman Hall, Hayes Athletic Center, Black Studies Community Extension Center, the Ag Engineering Project, the Davis Medical Research Center, and the James Cancer Research Hospital. Who were the decision makers on these capital projects within the legislature?

A. Well there are really at least two separate processes. And one process, which I’ll call the traditional one, involves the University, the Board of Regents, and the core part of the state capital budget. One of the things that Ohio does do well, although it’s getting tighter now, is that we actually do have a capital budget. We have an operating budget, it’s a biennial budget every year, and then we have a capital budget. Typically in the capital budget, one of the largest chunks is spending for facilities and renovation in institutions of higher education. And in the past Ohio State typically expected to get, depending upon the overall size of the capital budget, somewhere between ninety to one hundred million dollars for renovations and new construction. And typically what happened here is that the
University would have its own internal process. Again, that would be the
President, the Provost, the Vice President for Business and Finance Bill Shkurti,
where we would in fact prioritize what our University requests were. Then we
would submit that list down to the Board of Regents. Now typically what that
meant was, that a university project first had to get on the list. Oftentimes the
needs of the University could be for $200, $300, and $400,000,000. So clearly, if
you’re only doing $90,000,000 every two years, once you get on the list all you
can do is sort of move up the list and in many cases that was the history of various
projects. They got on the list. Things that were higher in priority always got
funded and so it was a fairly clean process. That process probably explains the
vast majority of buildings on campus. So it’s a fairly clean process. It’s one that,
once you get on the list, you move up. Now, having said that, not every building
got to move up. Sometimes buildings moved up and then something got placed
above them or whatever. So it was not an absolute pure process. Then they’re
also this whole notion of community projects. That was a part of the capital
budget in which the legislature and the Governor would say that there are a
certain amount of dollars that they in a sense control. We’ll hear from people
about what they want but in fact it may be the case that the Cleveland community
will come forward with a request for dollars for arts facilities in the Cleveland
area, or that Central Ohio will come through with requests for various projects or
whatever. And it’s really sort of that process that explains the Schottenstein
Center. We can talk about that later. But it also turns out that, going back to the
core process where you actually establish priorities, what happens if indeed you
have a renovation or a building on the list, and then you find out that you can get a private donor to pay for half of it if in fact the state will ante up for the other half. Is it appropriate then to move that building a little higher on the priority list? Sure it is. It’s a way of actually getting more bang for the buck or whatever. So what we have here then is a process. In contrast I think the Hayes Athletic Center for example, that I think was totally done by University bonding, wasn’t it?

Q. I think so.

A. So that’s a third way to fund capital projects. The University in recent years has gotten much more into the whole paying for facilities out of bonds that are sold presumably with some sort of revenue. In contrast, the Black Studies Community Extension Center renovations were done through some money out of the community capital pool. I think one of our local legislators had the ear of the leadership and said, “We need a little money. We need to do something with this building.” So that’s how that went. James Cancer Research Hospital, that was a very special deal going back to Jim Rhodes and that was one where I think there was an agreement that the state would do it and it was separate from the capital process as I recall. That we would in fact do the equipment and furnish it and all of that. But again, if you look at most of the buildings on campus or most of the renovations, it’s a fairly standard process. But it means oftentimes that it may take ten, twelve years before your building gets high enough on the list to get funding in the state capital budget, which of course then provides another incentive, for people to look toward private money. Or for people to try to play some political games. One of my favorite stories, and this actually happened,
dealt with our law school addition. And the law school was told that it would indeed need to raise some money privately, and it would be on the state’s capital budget request, on our capital budget request. Capital budgets are unlike operating budgets, which take months and months. Capital budgets often get worked out behind the scenes. They get introduced and they pass the House one day, and have a committee hearing in the morning and maybe a vote in the morning or the next day. Goes over to the Senate and it’s an agreed upon bill. No changes are made or very few changes are made. And the reason simply is, that nobody wants anybody to start thinking of a capital bill as a Christmas tree where you’re going to try to hang more and more ornaments on it. Well, one year capital budget, they’re working on it, and I get called into the office of Senator Aronoff and Senator Paul Pfeifer was there and he’s now a Supreme Court Judge and Senator Barry Levy, who is now retired. Wonderful people. Really good friends of the University. All graduates, and Senator Hobson who is now Congressman Hobson, all graduates of the OSU law school, not Aronoff. They’ve heard from the law school and the law school would like to expedite its planning for the law school addition. So the law school is looking for a million and a half dollars. So they call me in and said, “Well Herb, we’ve heard from the law school and they’d like a million and a half dollars.” I knew where they were going. But I was a little bit a wise guy and I said, “Well, if they like it I’d like it too. So we’d be more than happy to in fact take another one and a half million dollars in the capital budget.” And they smiled and said, “That’s not one of the options.” The capital budget was already out. It had come out of the House. And
I said, “Hmmm, well what are the options?” And they said, “Well, we need to transfer a million and a half dollars from another OSU project so that we can in fact say, “Here’s one and a half for planning money for the law school.” And I said, “And you want me to tell you where to take the one and a half million from?” And so they said, “Yes.” And so I sat there and I said, “Okay, look, we’re going to piss off somebody. Let’s take it from Hamilton Hall. You’ll have the doctors mad at you.” And of course that meant they had to do an amendment and this was the only amendment to that capital bill. So in the Senate Finance Committee, an amendment gets introduced, and the Democrats on the committee, they were the minority at the party at the time. People get along fairly well. The Democrats knew what was going on but insisted that I testify. They asked, “Now where does this amendment come from?” And they knew darn well where it came from. They said, “Did the University ask for this?” And I would say, “Well we didn’t ask for this,” and eventually they did it. So at times you can get that kind of political interest in projects or whatever. And that certainly happened a number of times. But again, I think we need to separate out what I call the community capital. Again, one other thing that happens there is, that there are times when, and I think the laws have changed now some, but there were times when the legislators wanted to support certain initiatives from community capital dollars but since the bonds they were selling might either have been authorized under the higher education bonding authority or whatever, they needed to somehow channel money through an institution of higher education. So if you think about the international floral show, Ameriflora, that we had, the City of
Columbus was successful in getting some money in the community capital budget for this major initiative in Central Ohio. But the way that the law read, that money was actually channeled through Ohio State University, even though it really wasn’t our money, and we and Ameriflora signed a joint use agreement. Similar thing happened with some of the state money that went into The Wilds, that animal refuge out in Zanesville area. That the money got channeled through the Ohio State University, the rationale being that we had a College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Agriculture, so there were some common kinds of interest there.

A. Alright. A follow-up question on development and the legislature. Both Presidents Jennings and Gee expressed concern that a successful development drive might suggest to legislators that less state money could then be provided by state to Ohio State. Did you see any evidence that such concerns were justified?

A. No, I didn’t. I do recall when we started our first development campaign that we did internally raise the issue, would this be helpful to Ohio State or would this be harmful. Would they believe that if we were able to raise private money, therefore the need for state money was less. But I think what I saw, and again you had leaders like Paul Gilmore and Stan Aronoff and Vern Riffe and others who, from my perception, they viewed the fact that the University was able to attract private dollars in many cases from great distinguished individuals, as really evidence of the strength of the University, and that suggested the wisdom of the state investing in strong institutions. So I never really saw any evidence of that. I wouldn’t be surprised if some of my higher education colleagues at other
institutions might not have tried to say at times, “Well, Ohio State can raise money privately; therefore, they don’t need as much state money.” But I never got any sense from the legislative leadership or from the Governor’s office that the ability to raise money privately was ever a hindrance. And of course in many cases both Ed and Gordon were just very good in using the right language. And of course it was the language of public, private partnerships. It was the language of leveraging public dollars. It was the language of, were we getting more bang from the buck for the people of Ohio and the legislators and all of that. So I think they did a very good job in really framing that as a demonstration that Ohio State University was a good investment for the state to invest in.

Q. Did they go down and talk personally with the legislatures on these kind of issues?

A. Oh sure, sure. I think Gordon more so than Ed but in fact both Ed and Gordon had very, very good working relationships. And again, legislators, public officials in general, can tell when a University President really respects the legislative process and values what they do. I won’t mention the name but we had one President of an Ohio public university whose contempt for the political process could not be disguised. And he would come to town and sort of have the tin cup out, but sort of shy away from getting too close. And then he would meet with his regional legislators and just bad mouth them, or bad mouth the process or whatever. And when the tape is off I’ll tell you who it was. You know the person but it’s not Ohio State. The day that Ed told me that the position was mine, Ed said to me, “Well let’s go down to Speaker Riffe.” Of course I had never met the
speaker up to that point. I had heard about the speaker. Even back in 1983 he was mid-way through his speakership and was very, very famous. Ed just simply called up and said, “Vern, can we come down?” And Ed said to me, “Boy, what a great relationship we have.” Gordon’s first day on the job, I said to him that Speaker Riffe was in the hospital having some sinus surgery. And what I started to say to Gordon was, “Speaker Riffe is in the hospital. At some point you should probably go over to visit him.” Before I got the words out, “Speaker Riffe is in the hospital,” and Gordon said, “When are we going over? Now?” And so I think that really said something about Ed Jennings and Gordon Gee, that they really established very, very good working relationships. Relationships of trust and respect. That made my job so much easier, because I was representing them. And they were highly regarded. So there’s nothing more that a lobbyist could want than to have a boss, a university president, who enjoys the process, respects the process, wants to be engaged in the process. And not just at the time that the budget is being dealt with, so that on a fairly routine basis Gordon and I would go downtown when they weren’t in session and just wander the halls. “Let’s go downtown,” and of course you would always run into somebody. In fact, it was really funny. We’d run into Stan Aronoff who was the Senate President a number of times when they weren’t in session. And Stan would wander up and say, “What are you doing here?” They would just start talking or whatever. Or, you’d stop off in the legislator’s office, they weren’t there, but the staff would be thrilled to see Gordon Gee. And he’d say, “I stopped by and was wondering how he was doing.” Again, it was a way of signaling that you really valued what they were
doing. Again, I was really so lucky to have, in Jennings and Gee, people whom … I’ve now seen University Presidents at other institutions for which this is not a priority. I think one of the first times that Gordon and I went downtown, he was only here maybe only two days. In fact, I don’t think the legislature was in session, but we went downtown, ran into a number of legislators and actually ran into a number of students including a couple of students of mine who were working as pages or volunteers. And Gordon met them and would ask, “Where are you from, what are you majoring in, what do your parents do?” A couple of weeks later we went downtown again and Gordon ran into some of these same students. Just as I started to whisper to him, “We met them a couple of weeks ago,” Gordon would say, “Well hi Tom, how are you doing? How are things on the farm? How are things up in Coshocton?” And I was absolutely astounded that he had that kind of memory. Of course, that made people feel so good. Ed Jennings too, in terms of those one-on-one, could really make people feel that for that one minute, you’re talking to them, that you were the only person there. And again, it was just the idea that the University President being so accessible, so human, so much concerned with the other, it really helped break down barriers. And of course in politics that’s very important. That’s very, very important.

Q. And it made your job easier.

A. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Q. Okay. Well let’s talk a little bit about tuition. And I’ll go at these maybe in three parts. Would you describe the process between University and legislature in
arriving at setting tuition levels for the next biennium? How long does this process take, and who are the major players?

A. There really are a number of different things going on here. It really does depend upon which particular budget cycle you’re talking about, because typically what would happen is that the University would say that, “Obviously our tuition will be dependent upon the level of state support.” We’re talking over the last 20 years, ’83 to today. And oftentimes there weren’t explicit discussions that got to a great level of detail about what our tuition increases would be if x and y happened. Except to simply say that we would in fact behave responsibly if in fact the state carried out its obligation to higher education. Every once in a while, when I was a lobbyist, we would get into some very, very private discussions with people downtown. And this was after Senator [Eugene] Watts became a state senator. And of course he was concerned about tuition levels at his own institution. And I can remember one year in which I had a conversation with the leadership of the senate and this was controlled by the Republicans at the time, in which it was going to be a difficult budget year and tuition increases were likely to be high, but there was a world of difference between a nine point nine versus a ten percent or more increase. And there were explicit discussions about what would it take to keep Ohio State’s tuition increases to less than ten. And we actually gave them a dollar figure and said, “This is what we would need in terms of the state subsidy.” So that got to be a very, very specific thing. There was one year a couple of years before that when in face we had said in general terms that if the legislature and the governor provided ample increases for higher education, we would behave very
responsibly. And in fact Ed Jennings decided that after we got the budget, it was a very, very good budget, that we did not have any tuition increase in the second year of that biennium. There were no caps at the time. But we were at zero percent. And that was simply a way of sending a signal that if you do your job; we will try to restrain tuition increases. There were some people who thought you should never leave any dollars on the table but at the time we thought politically it was an important statement to make. That they’re not independent decisions.

Now, even though I wasn’t directly lobbying on this, clearly what’s happened in the last couple of years was in a sense very skillful lobbying by Brit Kirwan with the Governor’s office to try to in fact give Ohio State University more relief from tuition caps, but also recognize that Ohio State University’s mission is quite different than most of the other institutions. Here we were sitting with among the lowest tuition among public institutions in Ohio, which made no sense whatsoever. Typically in most other states, the flagship institution has the highest tuition and here we are sitting with a tuition that at one point maybe ranked 8th among the 13 public universities. And the only institutions being lower than us were Central State, which is obviously is primarily an African American institution, Shawnee State, which was a new university down in Appalachia, Youngstown State. And so here we are with just very, very low tuition. You can live with that if the state is in fact going to be funding you, but in fact the state was not funding us very well. I think Brit Kirwan and Bill Napier and others including the Trustees did a very, very good job in the last number of years in trying to give Ohio State more freedom. And again we even got some freedom
this year in the budget process that we could get another three percent. Now what’s happening here of course is that we’re saying that the state dollars aren’t coming in at the rate we want. But University budgets are increasing but they are increasing because in fact the tuition is increasing at a rapid rate. So it used to be the case that two-thirds of our core-operating budget, leave aside the medical school and the athletics and the dorms and all that, it used to be the case that about two-thirds of our budget came from the state and one-third tuition. And now it’s pretty much fifty-fifty, actually more from tuition. So what that means now, and this is one of the challenges, is that as tuition goes up, if tuition goes up twelve percent and the state goes up zero, the University is still getting an increase of about six percent in its core funding, which is actually not poverty. That’s actually a fairly decent increase but I think one of the concerns right now, is at what stage will these tuition increases come back to be a political issue, an issue that you cannot answer by simply saying, “The states aren’t doing their job, that’s why we have to raise tuition.” And of course in Congress right now there is that issue in the U.S. House of Representatives, where in fact they are simply rejecting the idea that, “Don’t point the finger at the state. Your tuition increases are more than you can justify.” And I think we can justify them in terms of talking about our critical role, the changing nature of knowledge, the rapid accumulation and expansion of knowledge and research and all that. So in fact here there are different kinds of processes, but really in the last couple of years, and again I wasn’t directly involved but I’m familiar with this, in the last couple of years there were direct conversations with the Governor and the legislative leaders
about providing Ohio State University some relief. And of course as we carry that issue a lot of other universities benefited also by it. And of course Miami University just came up with a new tuition scheme that Jim Garland had proposed and we’ll see where that goes. But back in the past, it was the case that we were sensitive about what we did with tuition. We were also sensitive about talking about faculty salary increases because oftentimes those things are happening in June. And of course June is the time that the conference committee is dealing with the budget, so you want to be careful that you don’t announce salary increases lest the fact that people downtown will say, “Oh my God, look what you’re doing here. You’re spending too much money.” So those were timing issues here. But sometimes there were explicit discussions and other times it was more anticipatory. We would think, what would fly and what can we say at what point in the process or whatever. So it really depends on which biennium you were talking about.

Q. Alright. In the last several years Ed Jennings has publicly suggested that we might think about the state taking over the capital funding projects only and that in return the University be allowed to set their own tuition rates. Was this an idea that is his idea? Did it come out of the legislators in any way?

A. Ed is a very creative person. But in fact this issue had come up in the context of Miami University, where there was some thought by the Miami Board of Trustees some years ago, if the state would give us the physical plant and maybe carry us on the capital budget for a couple of years and give us total freedom on tuition, we could make it. And it’s an interesting thought. If you think of, let’s say, that
we get between the line items and the core subsidy $400,000,000 a year, and if
you think of 40,000 undergraduates, what would you need, assuming that it was a
dollar for dollar thing, what would you need from 40,000 undergraduates to make
up $400,000,000? And I think the answer is something like $10,000, if I’m
getting my zeros all correct there, and could you do that? All of a sudden you’re
talking about tuition of, let’s say, $16,000 a year or $17,000 a year, which is still
fairly cheap. But of course cheap is relative. Cheap as compared to Harvard but
not cheap to comparison to a lot of other institutions. What do you do about
financial aid? But I think it was a very useful thing to think about, because if the
numbers don’t work immediately, they’re not that far off from working. And so it
starts an interesting discussion about what’s happening with the future of funding.
And again, I think Miami came up with a somewhat different way but really of
addressing the same kind of concern here. What Miami is doing right now is they
now have the full price of the cost of education, and then any Ohio student
automatically gets the state subsidy subtracted out. And it’s sort of a discounted
rate. But what happens in the future if the state subsidy doesn’t continue to grow
and meanwhile the costs that Miami incurs do continue to grow, then the real cost
of going there is going to increase for a student. And who would be able to afford
to go there? And Miami used the argument that they are trying to get greater
diversity in their student body, greater economic diversity, I can make an
argument in fact that if current patterns continue, Miami might have adopted a
system that’s going to guarantee that more of the students are going to have to
come from wealthy families. I might be wrong about that but again I think when
Ed had talked about it, he did put in the same kind of proviso that you would have to put a certain amount of money back into scholarships so that access was not denied. But I think part of this was Ed just wanting to get an issue out there.

Q. Thinking out loud on an important topic.

A. Yea, I think so. And again, given what you had asked before about what’s happening to higher education in Ohio, right now higher education is facing similar issues in just about every state. But the fact is that historically higher education has always faced tough times in the State of Ohio. We had some good times in the 1980’s when the state had money and had a Governor in Dick Celeste and a legislature who were supportive. There was one point in the 1980’s when the Democrats controlled the House and Republicans the Senate. We actually got spoiled. We’d get a good recommendation out of the Board of Regents. The Governor’s executive budget would be good and then the House would add money to the Governor’s recommendations. Then we’d say to the Senate, and we had a lot of friends down there then, and we’d say, “Well the House added some, what are you going to do?” And they had some money and they had some people who were very supportive of higher education. So the Senate would add some money. Then we’d get the conference committee, and of course you’d think, if the House was at one number and the Senate was at a higher number, they’d split the difference somewhere in between, but there were a couple of years where in fact the conference committee gave us more money. I think there were a couple like that, where you start thinking, “Oh my God, there really is support.” And in fact the State of Ohio moved up in its rankings and support for higher education. But
that really was the exception. In the longer term, it has always been one of Ohio’s somewhere in the 40’s in terms of per capita support for higher education. Ranked 41st. I think one year it might have been ranked 48th in the country. So we’ve always been a low state in support for higher education. So when people say today, “Well every state is going through problems,” that’s true for just about every state. But we an Ohio have always started from a lower base, which of course we’ve means we’ve always had a higher tuition. It’s funny, as we make the argument that the tuition at Ohio State is low, it is low in comparison to other universities. I think we’re still only number seven in the state. But if you compare our tuition to the tuition at flagship institutions throughout the country, we’re pretty high. And of course the State of Ohio on average is pretty high in tuition, somewhere in the top ten. And again, there’s a direct relationship between what the state does and what tuition levels have to be.

Q. Coming back to an earlier issue, I heard some people comment that they think that a system of higher education was pushed by Rhodes, to saddle the state with educational costs that it really was not prepared to bear over the long run, and that handicapped the other institutions that had been long established to try to get what they needed from the legislature. Is this something you would comment on?

A. Well, I’d like to hear what planners and economists would say about this. It’s very clear that in terms of medical schools and law schools we are unusual. But let’s go to our core institutions. Again, we have 13 four-year institutions. And one of the things that Jim Rhodes did was bring a number of municipal universities into the state system. So we have now Cincinnati and we have
Toledo and we have Cleveland State. What if we didn't have those institutions, some of those institutions? Presumably people would have to go somewhere, at least we’d hope have to go somewhere. I guess they could go out of state or whatever. But that probably has negative policy consequences for Ohio if more of your good students go out of state. I can’t get past the notion here that we have a rather unusual population distribution. Fifty years ago we were the only state in the country that had eight cities in excess of 100,000 populations. Cleveland at one point was almost a million people, and certainly northeastern Ohio was the dominant population center. We still never had the kind of situation that you had in Illinois, with Chicago and Cook County comprising almost half of the state population right there. Or Detroit in Wayne County in Michigan. Or New York City in New York State or whatever. We had this much more dispersed population. And while the center of population was in northeastern Ohio, that’s shifting obviously, where was the northeastern Ohio major public university? In fact, Cleveland State is a relatively new University. Obviously Akron and Kent are much older. I think Akron had been, I’m not sure about this, but I think Akron had been a municipal university, but I’m not positive about that. So again, you wind up with all of these urban areas, major cities, Toledo is sort of off by itself. Dayton, close enough to Cincinnati and Columbus, but still Wright State was created. And you start wondering, how much money would the state have saved, and they would have saved some on capital, if you simply said, there were going to be fewer choices and Wright State didn’t exist and I’m not sure who else? Obviously Miami and OU are historically early ones. And of course there they
are, in the middle of nowhere, Miami and OU. You can get a sense of why Cincinnati is important and Akron is important. Do we need Akron and Kent? Again, do we need Bowling Green? But if you didn’t have them, what would you do? There were plans at one point; I guess Jim Rhodes once had a plan for Ohio State University to be 100,000. There was going to be on west campus many Lincoln and Morrill Towers. I don’t know if there were really plans, just the ideas or whatever. So I understand the frustration that we all have about the facilities, but maybe there’s less savings there than we might imagine. Maybe it’s really more the programs that we should be focusing on, rather than the facilities themselves. And even here, clearly people can talk about program duplication. But clearly any undergraduate institution has to have Political Science and English and History. So the question really becomes, are there some undergraduate programs that you need not have. And then at the graduate level, what should you have? And clearly there’s a difference between Master’s degrees and Ph.D. degrees. And you can imagine, given the nature of Master’s education, a lot of people they are place bound or you need Master’s degrees. As we got into the issue, and I was involved here, we talked about duplicative programs. I’d love to see the cost savings at various universities achieved by eliminating their History/PhD. Program. If you think the Ph.D. program as in part serving one function of providing sources of not cheap, but relatively cheaper labor to cover some of your undergraduate offerings, maybe the savings aren’t as great, although by definition if the state withdraws dollars in terms of subsidy for Ph.D. programs, then the state is saving dollars. But it’s not entirely clear that the
universities are saving anything there. But I guess I’d rather see us as a state
think about the programs. Recognize that probably if you didn’t have the
University of Toledo there would be opportunities lost or that the other
universities might not be able to accommodate, or you’d have to build more
dorms and more buildings or whatever. I’m not sure that it’s facilities that are
really the problem. But the programs are a different issue. But again, it’s easy to
pick on political science and history graduate programs, but when you start
talking about law schools and medical schools, that’s not going to happen.

Q. No. Alright. Well I’m sure you were entertained for a time by the arena wars as
they were called, the contests of where an arena was going to be built. Should it
be on campus or someplace downtown? We know that Gordon Gee ultimately
decided the University must have its own arena. How was the contest between
town and gown acted out in the state legislature, and what was your role in all of
this?

A. I was very much involved in this. But let me give you a little background because
when Gordon got here early on I sent him a memo about the history in this
community, in Columbus, of trying to build a downtown arena. We had had a
number of issues on the ballot that had been defeated already before Gordon even
got here. And I told Gordon that one of the concerns that he might have is that
there might be an effort by downtown business leadership, perhaps some of our
own local state representatives, to say that downtown Columbus needs an arena.
In order for it to work we will need Ohio State University basketball to be played
downtown. Now we will give you the ticket revenue for 13,500 seats, which is
what St. John’s hold. We’ll build an arena for 20,000. We’ll give you perhaps
concession revenue for 13,500 and we’ll keep the rest of the concessions.
Nobody had ever put this plan together. But I said to Gordon, “Watch out,
because right now there is no prospect for an anchor tenant.” At that time there
was no hockey, there was no pro basketball coming to Columbus. So you need to
watch out here that you don’t have the downtown establishment put the squeeze
on you to in fact, and this was ’91, that would squeeze you to move Ohio State
University basketball off campus. That if people start complaining about how
inadequate St. John arena is, watch out that what they don’t propose to you is,
“Gordon, here’s a new arena downtown. And in fact that arena downtown is just
as close to your students on south campus and south of campus as St. John is.” So
we had talked about that a couple of years earlier. And then in 1992, very, very
privately Vern Riffe had raised the issue of a new arena for the campus. And
Gordon really had to basically say no to that, because we were going through
those major budget cuts and there would have been no way, even though there
might be different sources and streams of funding and all that, in no way could
you begin to explain how you could even be talking about that when you’re going
through major budget cuts. So it was on the agenda. And a year or two later
Speaker Riffe once again, actually in a public setting down at the Chamber of
Commerce in Columbus, said, “We need a new arena in this community,” and
actually mentioned the University. And at this stage I think we recognized a
couple of things. One is that St. John has wonderful character but it was
undersized, and that this might be the last chance in terms of having a legislator
sponsor, who might look out after our interests as opposed to the downtown establishment’s interest or whatever. And so we got into this. It became public. The city aspired to get money in the capital budget. The Speaker said he would get $15 million. We had come up with an estimate of an initial cost of $60 million, which was totally understated. At the time it wasn’t that outrageous but knowing that the thing was still years ahead, it should have been inflated more than that. And so we got into this battle. And basically what we had here was that the House and the Speaker were very much on Ohio State’s side. I don’t think Governor Voinovich really had a lot of sympathy for the city. I’m not sure if he was on anybody’s side per se. And on the Senate side there was sympathy for the University and there was sympathy for the City, but it did not appear that there could be two arenas. Speaker Riffe had indicated that he was more than willing to put into the budget a million dollars for planning for a downtown arena. But a number of people didn’t like that. So we wound up with $15 million, through the community pool, it did not come out of that normal Board of Regents capital money. It really came out of Speaker Riffe’s sort of share of the community pool and went directly for the Ohio State University arena. And this really ticked off the people downtown and made the Mayor very, very upset. And so as we’re going through the capital bill, there was various language put in which we negotiated, that there would have to be cooperation between the University and the City. I remember at one point talking to the Budget Director, Greg Browning, about some language that would allow the city to save face. I didn’t particularly like the language and Greg said, “Let’s just put it in and just ignore it down the
road.” So we wound up getting the money and the city was very, very frustrated. So we won that. There were some negotiations. We had a negotiating team headed by our trustee George Skestos meeting with city people and presumably there were going to be some restrictions on what we could do, that we weren’t going to build sky boxes and things like that. So if there ever were a downtown arena, they would have that revenue stream. And we agreed to some of those things. And then we even had talked about an arena between campus and downtown. We had some meetings and even had some sketches done of an arena somewhere between downtown and the campus. Somewhere east of High, north of Fifth, just wiping out that entire area. But that was never I think feasible. The idea of actually putting an arena in a densely populated area would have cost too much and there would have been too many protests. Even in that area that now is called the “war zone,” it still would have been displacing too many long time residents. And the Mayor wasn’t happy either, because it wasn’t a downtown arena. It still would have been north of fifth. So we went ahead and we won that war. But then there was a second round as the city began talking about a ballot issue. I think this would have been the third ballot issue. But now this was a ballot issue that was a little different. Because now they’re actually talking about the possibility of an anchor tenant, a hockey team. And they had the guy who was the head of the New England Whalers and they were moving their hockey franchise from Connecticut and they were looking to maybe moving to Columbus or maybe moving to North Carolina, where they finally went to. And then we had the new team together here with McConnell and others. And so there was a team
put together to support a ballot issue. And Gordon Gee was one of the chairs, honorary chairs. And one of the prices that Gordon had extracted for his support, and this was actually a discussion he had with the Titans, that no matter what happened, Ohio State University would be free to go ahead and do whatever program they wanted to do and build sky boxes in our arena, and all of that. And so Gordon was one of the honorary chairs. I worked with the campaign and of course that campaign was defeated. One of the things that happened was the letter that Constance had written and I know for a fact that Gordon was totally innocent in this, if you want me to tell the story I can. But in fact that arena paid for by the public was defeated soundly at the polls. That night I was down at the campaign headquarters with the arena supporters, and one of the people working on the campaign, David Milenthal, said, “Well, now we get to plan B.” And I said, “What do you mean, plan B?” And he said, “Well, Herb, there has to be a plan B.” And I said, “You mean a plan B without public dollars?” And he said, “Yea.” And I said, “Son of a gun.” We went through this whole exercise and sure enough, there was a plan B with Nationwide and the Dispatch and McConnell and others. And so we wound up having two arenas. But it was very bitter and Gordon and Greg, that really just spoiled their relationship. Then when I took retirement in ’95, and I sort of stayed on as Gordon’s counselor, but part of my job too was to try to repair the relationship. Again, that relationship was made worse by the fact that Constance had this letter. And again, Gordon did not, I don’t know if this is appropriate or not, but Gordon did not know about the letter ahead of time. And then when we did find out about it, the letter had been taken
care of, that it would not be published, and we did not quite have the same
understanding as Constance did about the letter.

Q. Well here we are, one week later. Same time, same place. We’ll just pick up our
discussion. Both President Jennings and Gee agreed that the academic ranking of
the University was less than it should be, and both pursued a variety of programs
aimed at upgrading the level of students entering Ohio State for example. In part,
through giving rising departments additional assistance in hiring distinguished
faculty and in seeking funds to establish professorships and chairholders
throughout the University. Now as we think about these many initiatives, could
you tell us what reactions were in the legislature toward the policy of selective
admissions of undergraduates?

A. Back when we started with conditional admissions and then we moved to
selective admissions, I don’t think the legislature had much of a reaction. I would
tell people, give them a heads-up of what we were planning to do. And I think a
lot of legislators reacted to this in the context of remediation. And I think many
of them were upset by the fact that somehow the taxpayers were paying for this
twice. Once in high school and then with providing remedial math and English in
college. And they thought there was something wrong there. So when they heard
about our efforts to in fact enhance the quality of the student body, to the extent
that that meant less by way of remediation, they were I think pleased by that. I
think later on it became more of an elitist kind of thing. But one of the things we
did early on, and I remember this was Ed Jennings and we had to get approval
from the Attorney General to do this, but we first established conditional/
unconditional admissions. And that was a statement to high school seniors that if
indeed you did not have a certain number of credits in sciences and English and
foreign language and math and all of that, then you would have to make up those
credits your freshman year at OSU and those credits would not count towards
your graduation. And what the legislature liked about that after we explained it to
them, is that just by putting that into place that changed the behavior of some of
the high school students and some of the guidance counselors. It was somewhat of
a tradition in some schools in Ohio that your senior year was the blow-off year.
You didn’t have to take very much and you got into Ohio State and other schools
anyway. And so when we could portray this as a no-cost way to get students to
do in high school what they should have been doing all along, that was very, very
attractive. That had a nice conservative argument to it and we also reassured
people that again, the students would still be admitted to Ohio State, but they’d be
admitted on this conditional basis where they would have to make up these
deficiencies and the coursework they did would not count toward graduation.
Eventually we moved to selective admissions. But even there, maintaining the
open admissions aspect of Ohio State, if you were a graduate of an accredited
Ohio high school, if you had a diploma from an Ohio high school, technically we
never rejected you from the Ohio State opportunity. We might say to you, “You
can’t start in Columbus in the fall quarter but you in fact could go to one of the
branch campuses.” Over the years we gradually tightened that up, but we really
had a lot of loopholes there so that technically speaking, no graduate of an Ohio
high school would be denied some kind of an Ohio State experience.
Q. Did you find the Board of Regents effective in persuading members of the legislature to assist in funding such efforts as Selective Excellence and chaired professorships?

A. Yea, they would say the right things. But I think the cases were made better by the universities. Back in the 1980’s, Governor Celeste had his Selective Excellence package or programs that included Eminent Scholars. And I think the universities and the Board of Regents were in harmony in supporting it. When you ask the question, how effective were the Regents, well it probably was more effective that this was the Governor’s proposal and that the universities were supporting it. But it was certainly nice that we all saying the same thing.

Q. Alright. Let’s talk about a different subject, and this is one I’m waiting to be informed about. Many faculty hear relatively little about the problems some of the colleagues encounter in carrying on animal research within the University. Would you describe the most troubling problems that you had to deal with in this area, and how Presidents Jennings and Gee used you in responding to legislative concerns, and possibly indirect ways with the questions raised by animal rights organizations.

A. Well over the period of ’83 and ’95, when I was a lobbyist, we had a much easier time downtown at the legislature than some of our researchers had on campus. And I say that because in that entire time period there was only one piece of legislation, there were a number of other issues, but only one piece of legislation that actually got some hearings and was taken, at least at the outset, somewhat seriously. And that happened sometime in the mid-1980’s and it was a bill
introduced by a Democratic House member, Leroy Peterson. And because he was in the majority party, you have to give it greater credibility or seriousness. Leroy had a bill that basically had the effect of saying that no animals shall be used in research unless those animals were specially bred for the purposes of that research. And I think Leroy was given this bill by some animal rights groups or whatever and thought it was a relatively harmless bill. But in fact it was not a harmless bill. It had such obvious consequences. If you found a fish kill, you couldn’t study why the fish were killed because they weren’t bred for that purpose. And here’s one issue I really took a lot of pride in because I put together a statewide coalition, Ohio State was in the leadership position, but we got some of the medical schools and hospitals. So we had a very good biomedical coalition against this. And we testified on the House side and basically shot it out of the water. Speaker Riffe would have killed it anyway. But we actually got the heavy guns in there and actually as I recall now, there was a funny story that happened. There were some conservative members, I think it was the House Agricultural Committee that actually heard the bill, and there was some conservative members who had no use for animal rights people, because oftentimes the animal rights people were going after the farms, farm production and all of that. But there was one very particular conservative member who was interviewing, questioning a witness who was in support of the bill. This was an elderly woman, elegantly dressed, but she was really an animal rights person. And he looked at her and asked her, “Madam, what would you suggest we do? If we can’t use animals for research, what should we do?” And she responded without hesitation and said,
“We should use prisoners.” And this conservative legislator gave it some thought, then realized no, no, no. So basically I’d argue in part because we had put together this coalition, and again it was a coalition that involved Ohio State, Cincinnati, Cleveland Clinic, it was a very, very good coalition. I felt that between ’83 and ’95 down at the legislature, we didn’t have any serious threats at all in terms of the legislature passing something that would make animal based research more difficult to do at the University. That’s not to say that the University didn’t have challenges on campus. As I said at the outset, I think things were easier for me at the legislature than they were for researchers here on campus who were in fact being directly confronted by various animal rights groups.

Q. On campus others were really handling this kind of problem.

A. That’s right.

Q. Another area. I suppose in the last 20 years or so even the general public has been hearing about the University claiming intellectual property rights and economic rights in the discovery or inventions of their faculty. Faculty of course often sees these rights in a different way from their employer. In what way did questions relating to property rights spill over into the legislature and how were you used by the administrations to work through to policy resolutions.

A. I really think there are two important things here. One was the whole question of intellectual property as it related to public records, and this I did work on directly. We realized that in the mid-90’s, maybe around ‘93-’94, that Ohio’s public records law basically meant that just about anything we did was indeed a public
record. Not everything. If you did some proprietary research for a
pharmaceutical company and you had signed a contract, which perhaps might
have had some protection. But we began to recognize here that an awful lot of
what faculty did by way of manuscripts, grant proposals, and could be viewed as a
public record under Ohio’s laws. So we put together a package of things that we
wanted to get exempted from Ohio’s public records law. And as I recall, there
were five things. One of them was external promotion and tenure letters. We
weren’t successful in that one. And in fact the two things we were successful in
getting the Ohio Public Records Law modified, and we finally got this done after
I had stepped down as the lobbyist, but then Colleen O’Brien was representing us.
But it was a multi-year process. But the two things we got exempted from the
public records were intellectual property and donor profile records. And the
argument we made there was that oftentimes we’d spend years cultivating a donor
and that donor tells you all sorts of private things. I don’t want to leave the
money to my kids because they are deadbeats, etc. And you need to keep this
stuff on file; development officers come and go, so you need to have a fairly good
file. These are people who are going to be doing something charitable and
philanthropic. Why should their private information be part of the public record?
We said at the outset that of course any gift that they give us and the terms of that
gift have to be a public record. How we spend that money obviously is a matter
of public information. But the files we keep on the donors that should be exempt.
In fact, the legislature went along with us on that. We actually had some
discussions with the Ohio Newspaper Association, which is adamantly opposed to
exemptions from the public record. But on the two that we got, I think they understood that there were other arguments to be made. And one argument that was made on the intellectual property was the argument that the current Ohio law, the law at that time actually, put Ohio’s public universities at a disadvantage, a competitive disadvantage with respect to private universities within and outside of Ohio and it also put our public universities at a competitive disadvantage with public universities in other states that did indeed have protection of intellectual property. We actually, even though this never happened, we made an argument which I don’t think people could actually refute on legal grounds, that if you were preparing an exam in your office, that was a public record. A student could request it. Now obviously by the time you said, “No,” and the student went to court, you had already given the exam. A proposal that you’re sending to the National Science Foundation could in fact be viewed as a public record. The fact that those things might be considered public would put us, Ohio, Ohio’s public university faculty, at a competitive disadvantage. So we got those taken care of. Later on, and I was no longer the lobbyist, in fact I saw this more from my perspective as a member of the Ohio Ethics Commission, the universities, Inter-University Council, went to the legislature with requests that would make it easier for universities and faculty to benefit by their invention and discovery. We increasingly began talking about, if you have this research going on, we then want that research to lead to commercial applications and technology and technology transfer. And obviously we want that to occur here within Ohio. And there were a number of aspects of Ohio’s laws that made it difficult for faculty members to
benefit by their own invention and discovery, and so we eventually got some changes made to Ohio’s law that created more incentives for faculty members to stay here. In some places the law would have said to a faculty, “Well if you really want to benefit from this, maybe you ought to go to a private university or leave the State of Ohio.” And so we were able to get that done with appropriate and substantial discussion with the Ohio Ethics Commission, so that you didn’t open the door to blatant conflicts of interest and abuse of public dollars and things like that. So I think in the last number of years, Ohio has moved in the direction of protecting intellectual property and allowing faculty and universities to benefit by the commercialization aspect there.

Q. Sounds like a sensible middle ground.

A. I think it is. We’ll see how this policy in terms of commercialization works but the Ethics Commission has indeed been looking at the rules that each university has set up, to make sure they fit some sort of model ethics policy. And again, it has safeguards built in, so that you don’t really open the door to blatant self-aggrandizement.

Q. Well let’s think a little bit about politics. Both President Jennings and Gee became involved in public politics during the terms, primarily on policies relating to taxation proposals. How did you view their efforts entering the public arena to lobby on various tax proposals, and how did those efforts play out in the legislature?

A. It was interesting. Both got heavily involved on tax issues on multiple occasions both for Ed Jennings and Gordon Gee. There was one particular proposal that
they particularly got involved in. And I became a lobbyist in early ’83 and in November of 1983, there was an issue on the ballot, actually there were three issues on the ballot, one was raising the drinking age to 21, but the other two were taxes issues that were put on the ballot through the initiative process. They were both constitutional amendments. One amendment would have repealed all of the tax increases that had been put into place since Governor Celeste took office.

And those were mainly that “90%” income tax increase. And the other constitutional amendment on taxes would have required that any future tax increases be approved by a super majority of the legislature. Instead of 50% plus one majority, it would have been I think a three-fifths majority. And the University community got very much involved in opposing issues two and three.

It became a very partisan issue because the tax increases had passed only with Democratic support. The people who took out the petitions and put the constitutional amendments on the ballet were from the conservative side of the political spectrum, mainly Republicans. And I remember one meeting that Ed Jennings and I had with GOP State Senator Paul Gilmore who is now a member of Congress. Paul was somewhat upset that we were getting involved in this issue, trying to defeat these constitutional amendments. And Ed was very direct in saying, “I understand why you would be upset. But from our perspective, no matter how much you assure us that if these things get repealed, if the tax increases get repealed, that somehow higher education will still be taken care of. You’ll pass new taxes in the future. But given the history of Ohio, we have to protect the tax base at this stage right now.” And so indeed we did get involved in
opposing those two constitutional amendments. And I think we were very up front about it. In terms of sharing that with the leadership, we were certainly very, very up front with that. Jumping ahead about ten years or nine years or whatever, to the Voinovich administration and Gordon Gee’s presidency, again I think I had mentioned earlier in our discussion that after Voinovich had cut budgets multiple times, including higher education’s budget disproportionately, he then said, “We need to have some additional tax revenues, otherwise I’ll have to cut higher education even more.” And so Gordon Gee was actually downtown, and I think I told you this story when he ran into the Governor one day and they were both down there lobbying on behalf of the Governor’s tax increases. So I think both presidents were certainly willing to step up to the plate and recognize that the universities are dependent upon public support. And to the extent that the tax base is eroded or is not sufficient, you sometimes have to come out in favor of either increased taxes or protecting the tax base. And both of them were willing to do that.

Q. Did they ask your advice about doing this?

A. Yes. Part of it is you have friends downtown and you want them to support you, but at times you often have to speak up on your own behalf. You can’t let your friends, particularly people in the legislature, be the only ones making the case. And in fact it’s much more palatable to increase taxes or preserve the tax base if legislators are able to say, “Look, the universities are asking for our help,” or “Primary and secondary are asking for our help.” The people who in fact benefit by public revenues. I thought it was important that one participate, but one does
that with respect. You know there are going to be some people who are going to be upset with you. But you don’t surprise members of the General Assembly. You don’t say that people who disagree with you are demons or evil. It's simply an honest disagreement, difference of opinion. I think we go through these things and I think most people understood that in some ways the University really had no choice. University Presidents themselves have constituents. And they are called students and they are called faculty and they are called parents of students and alums. So often times they need to do what they have to do. I think if you do it with a respect for the situation of the people who might disagree with you, you minimize the damage. There is one other thing. I don’t know if we are going to be talking about it but one of the things that Gordon Gee got involved in, and it never went anywhere, but we had some meetings back in 1992, with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, offering to help defeat the proposals to set term limits. And so I remember we met with Speaker Riffe and I think Senator Aronoff at the time and really said, “Look, we understand how hard it is for you to oppose term limits because that’s the ultimate self interested position you could take being opposed to term limits.” We had talked about putting together a coalition. There were already many entities out there, League of Women Voters was against it, The Ohio Council of Churches, and a number of newspapers were against it. And we had talked about putting together a group of political scientists to be opposed to it. And we never got that together.

Q. What did they say?
A. They were very appreciative. They were nervous about somehow being too involved in an effort to fight term limits; it would demonstrate somehow how self-serving they were. And it really would have taken, not so much their active participation, but their help with fundraising, going to major groups, whether it’s business or labor or whatever. And again, particularly on the Republican side, there was a lot of support for term limits because in fact, just like in the U.S. House, the Democrats had controlled the Ohio House for something like 22 years. And so Republicans of course loved term limits, just as they love them Washington. And then when they discover in 1994, when they won the House, in the U.S. House in 1994, they also won the State House that year, but many of those Republicans who were elected in the U.S. House in 1994 who pledged only to serve three or four terms, discovered that six or eight years went by very quickly and they did not keep their pledge. So there were a number of political overlays there. But again, I think the legislative leadership was pleased that, here you had a University President who was willing to stand up for the legislative career.

Q. Tell us a little bit about this interesting, I suppose it was two or three months, where Gordon Gee was thinking about running for the Governorship of Ohio. He told me that he was very serious about it. Is this what you observed?

A. I wish it could have developed. The odd thing or an interesting thing was that a number of prominent Democrats, including former Governor Celeste and Speaker of the House Vern Riffe, were very, very supportive of Gordon running as the Democrat. To this day I couldn’t tell you whether Gordon was a Democrat or
Republican. Coming from Utah he always used to joke that he had never seen a Democrat until the age of 14. So that’s probably the way of telling you that if he were Republican, he was a very moderate Republican. And so he had some people who were encouraging Gordon to be a candidate. But you also had this awkward situation of a Board of Trustees, most of the members of which had been appointed by ’97 by Republican Governor Voinovich. So one thought was, if Gordon ever did run, it would probably be easier in terms of the internal politics of the University and the Board, if he ran as a Republican. Well, the problem was, there was no real room in the Republican Party, although there was one scenario that would have been very interesting. In Republican politics, in 1990 there was a potential Gubernatorial primary between George Voinovich and Bob Taft. And the State Republican Chairman, Bob Bennett, did a superb job of getting Taft out of the race, getting Taft to run for Secretary of State, where in fact in that contest he defeated Sherrod Brown, and that was the key race that year. And Bennett had said to Taft, “Let Governor Voinovich serve two terms and then when he’s out of office, your turn will come.” It’s one of those rare things in politics where a pledge made eight years earlier actually came to pass. So come 1998, ’97 Taft was considered to be the Republican who had earned the nomination. But there was a lot of discussion that Ken Blackwell was going to run for Governor, just as there are discussions today that Ken wants to run in 2006. And if Ken had gotten into the race, then all of a sudden all bets would have been off and conceivably maybe somebody else would have gotten in. So if you had three people already in, then Gordon Gee getting in, he wouldn’t have
been the first in upsetting this nice, cozy arrangement that the Republicans had; he’d simply be one more candidate. And we certainly spent some time talking about this. And certainly one thing that had to be considered was, what were Mayor Lushutka’s aspirations? Because it seemed to me that if Greg Lushutka were interested in running for Governor, that he would have first dibs at being sort of Central Ohio’s candidate. And there are many people in Central Ohio including some very prominent people in the media and elsewhere that would love to see a candidate from Central Ohio. Voinovich was from Cleveland, Taft from Cincinnati. Celeste from Cleveland. And so the real last Central Ohioian is Jim Rhodes. Many, many people in this community would have been very, very happy to have Gordon in the race or Greg Lushutka or whatever. But it just never worked out and then Gordon got the offer from Brown. But there was discussion about Gordon running in 1998.

Q. You mentioned that all of the polls that he had seen indicated that he was running strong in many parts of Ohio. He was greatly encouraged by the polls.

A. Just the polls that had been done in Central Ohio, just the name recognition he had, as a university president was unheard of. The content of that name recognition was very positive.

Q. So that he would have, if he had run, he would have run as OSU’s continuing President. He was not going to resign as President of the University.

A. I don’t think we really ever got to that stage but presumably, this is more speculative, perhaps had he run as a Republican, the Board might have been more sympathetic to the notion of his taking a leave of absence perhaps. And I thought
that would have been a very reasonable way to handle it. But again, we never really quite got to that stage.

Q. Alright. That helps fill out my understanding of what happened there. Well, the project to build a binocular telescope on Mt. Graham in Arizona caught the public’s attention in no small way. President Gee, as we remember, made the decision to bail out because of the projected expense. Was his decision based in part on negative opinions of key members of the legislature? What can you tell us about how this issue played downtown?

A. I don’t think his decision was based on getting pressure from downtown. But in making the decision and making the dramatic announcement of withdrawing from the project, that was a demonstration that the University is making tough choices about priorities and activities. And so certainly that played well downtown. But I don’t think there was really a lot of pressure from downtown. I think there were more people on campus who were sort of grumbling about, could we really afford to do that and how widespread was the benefit and all that. So I think it was really more a matter of internal politics. But it did play well externally downtown.

Q. Dr. Gee was especially fond of what he called his Roads Scholars Program. In fact, he told me he was instituting it down at Vanderbilt. And he was trying to humanize Ohio State’s 88 counties in Ohio. Were you able to use the contacts and friends he made in any way in dealing with members of the legislature?

A. The very fact that he actually brought faculty around the state, and he went into people’s districts was a positive. The fact that he did this outreach, which we
were demonstrating that you actually went to the people of Ohio. That just made Ohio State and Gordon Gee that much more a positive player downtown. It was the ultimate way of saying that we at the University are part of the state, rather than the University as the proverbial ivory tower. So it was a very, very positive thing. Something else that Gordon did and I know Brit continued it. I’m not sure it continues today. But particularly with Gordon, when you went to places in the State of Ohio, you oftentimes tried to do multiple events. Maybe go up to meet with an editorial board, and Gordon was very good, had wonderful relationships with the editorial boards, even with the Toledo Blade, which loved to trash Ohio State. They really appreciated the fact that, here is Gordon Gee coming into this hostile environment and enjoying it. He might then, if he went up to Cleveland, maybe you’d have an alumni meeting, you’d have that kind of event and maybe at that event you might invite some members of the General Assembly to come to it, whether they were alums or not, to be recognized. And at that same time maybe you would do a development event, meet with some donors in the Cleveland area, maybe even invite some legislators to that. On top of all that, Gordon would sometimes go to a high school and talk about Ohio State and be actively engaged in recruiting students. It was a wonderful thing. How often did you hear about college presidents going to the high schools in the Cleveland area, or any part of the state? So I think that was similar. The Roads Scholars was a different activity but they all sent the same kind of message of a University President who is out there meeting the people of Ohio. And then Gordon oftentimes used the term “friend raising.” We had a lot of fundraising but also a lot of friend raising. So it
was beneficial. When you're lobbying the legislature and you represent Ohio State University, and people see Ohio State in your district, that's wonderful. Another example: we had the Cooperative Extension Service, which of course is in all 88 counties and does wonderful work and all that. And when you called, here in Franklin County for example, when you called the extension office, people answered by saying “Extension,” or they say “Franklin County Extension.” And he would be upset by that. And eventually the word got out when you answered the phone you were supposed to say, “Ohio State University Extension.” Maybe then you would say “Franklin County.” Now part of that was, how was the extension paid for? Partly out of funds that the University got from the county, partly from the fed, partly from the state. But he recognized that, here was this wonderful network and people weren’t linking it to Ohio State. Here is the 4H program, which is just a classic, good program, and people didn’t realize that 4H is really an Ohio State University program through extension. So he was very sensitive to those things.

Q. Did members of the legislature respond positively to President Gee’s advocacy of promoting OSU as a great national sports center, with all the buildings and equipment needed in support? Did it cause any tension downtown? I know he was raising a lot of bond money for these buildings. Did members of the legislature think he was going overboard in this area, or did they think he was on the right track?

A. I don’t think they felt he was going overboard. And perhaps one of the reasons why is that except for the arena, which we got $15 million of state money, most of
the things we’re talking about were paid for by the University, through a variety of means, but didn’t come directly from state capital dollars. A lot of the people downtown are sports fans. A lot of people downtown recognize that there wasn’t that much that united Ohio as a state. Professional sports didn’t because you had the Browns versus the Bengals. Perhaps people could get behind any university that was having a good basketball season or whatever. But really the one sport that really enjoyed the focal point was Ohio State University football. I don’t think members of the General Assembly really ever raised any sort of serious criticisms about what the University was doing in the area of sports. Sometimes they might be frustrated about the performance of the teams or sometimes there might be some embarrassment about something that had happened. I think actually the greater challenge was really on campus and really explaining to people, how is it that you can go ahead with a major stadium renovation but meanwhile the library still awaits renovation. And the whole notion of capital budgets versus operating budgets oftentimes, as much as you try to say that capital dollars can’t be used for salaries. They can’t. They’re actually bond monies. But I think there was oftentimes the challenge to explain to explain to people how you could somehow be able to do a building when you couldn’t get a decent salary increase. And then beyond that, even though you were talking within capital budgets, how is it that you are able to go ahead with this athletic building when you can’t go ahead with this academic building. And of course part of the answer there, as we said before, the bonding and the fact that presumably athletic buildings, certain buildings might have revenue streams that
were to be dedicated to paying off the bonds. So I think there was actually more a
challenge to explain this internally than there really was to explain it downtown.

Q. Gordon seemed to think that he could sell the OSU academic side better if he had
a strong athletic program.

A. I think it gave people a sense of connection, a sense of identification, that
somehow Ohio State was theirs. So that if in fact you had a football team that
was having a wonderful year and people were focusing on it. I think last year’s
national championship team, you get the sense of allegiances and identification
and pride. So you hope that somehow you can convert that into broader support
for the University. One of my impressions and I may be the minority on this, is
that I do not over the years really sense. Let me back up. Obviously, when you
have a good sports year, say in football, your sale of merchandise will go up, and
you’ll get more royalties. And we certainly wound up last year getting a couple
million dollars more from the sale of Ohio State University paraphernalia because
of the royalties. But I don’t sense, and you’d have to ask the people in
development this, I don’t sense there really is that close of a connection in terms
of private giving and how well your sports teams are doing. So that I don’t know
that somehow somebody’s going to ante over a big gift just because the football
team is doing well. And I don’t know if somehow people are going to punish you
if the football team is doing poorly, although perhaps if there are scandals that
might be hurtful. And I’m not sure that I ever really saw in the legislature any
great connection between how well the sports teams were doing and how
generous the legislature was to us. And of course part of that is the fact that,
again the greatest share of the higher education budget went into formula funding. So it wasn’t as if somehow you were saying, “Okay, we’re giving Ohio State more money.” You’d be giving all of higher education more money. And then the formula would distribute it. So the athletics thing, it does build a sense of community, a sense of identification, does open some doors. Athletics became a way for Gordon to bring people to campus. It’s interesting to watch how from Harold Enarson to Ed Jennings to Gordon Gee, in terms of what was happening to the football brunches. And each of them made them much more of a sales opportunity for the University, and Gordon especially would always feature at football brunches, where you always have some legislators there, either feature an academic department or program, always have students participate. And it was really just a wonderful way to inform people. He would say, “Well, look this is the price you’re paying for coming up to the game. You have to hear our story.” And of course he would do it with such humor and grace and typically these things were done very, very well. And you’d sit there and say, “How wonderful that he was showing off our faculty or showing off our students.” And then from here we’re going to a football game. It was really part of the strategy.

Q. Well did either Ed or Gordon use you in forums outside the legislature? For example, were you asked to work with members of the Board of Trustees on particular questions, or were you enlisted ever in fundraising efforts?

A. Occasionally but not very often. There were a couple of times when I might touch base with members. I knew all the members of the Board, and I think with Ed there was only one time, in terms of a serious discussion on a major policy
issue before the University moved ahead on it, that I was directly involved. And that actually involved the issue of divestiture from South Africa, and that was a very interesting situation. And then with Gordon, every once in a while you’d share information that you picked up from members of the Board with the President. On the fundraising efforts, I’d be helpful to Jerry May or whoever was there. And then certainly there were times where you’d go and give presentations about how things were going downtown and all of that. As a source of information I was certainly involved but if you’re asking was I ever really asked to make the pitch or appeal directly, no.

Q. Well giving reports on what’s going on downtown is really of direct use.

A. Yes, yes, yes.

Q. Informing, maybe …

A. Yea, and again as you’re here for a long time you realize you know an awful lot of people. So you wind up just becoming part of the schmoozing team.

Q. During the Gee administration, you were a member of the Governor’s Task Force, adopting a two-tier state system of higher education, with Ohio State and University of Cincinnati to be designated as two comprehensive research institutions. Was this proposal dead on arrival as some think?

A. Pretty much I think.

Q. Or was it DOA in part because of Governor’s Voinovich’s lack of an enthusiastic endorsement?

A. Yea, yea, I think both of those things are correct. It probably was dead on arrival and part of the reason why it may not have gone anywhere was the Governor was
not willing to invest a lot of capital in it. But there weren’t a lot of people who wanted to invest a lot of their credibility and prestige. And of course as soon as that was talked about, some of the other universities, some others in northeastern Ohio immediately got to their legislators and said, “Oh, we’ll wind up being diminished. Our budgets will suffer. Our region will suffer.” And all of that. So I guess I viewed it pretty much as being dead on arrival. I think Gordon recognized that it’s not the kind of battle that you really would have an easy chance of winning. That what you needed to do was to really accomplish the same thing through other means. And one of the interesting things at Ohio State for a while there, and I was in the minority on this which I couldn’t understand why, is the language of how we talk about ourselves. And I would always talk about Ohio State University as being the flagship institution. And I knew that would piss off some people perhaps at other universities, and particularly the University of Cincinnati. But it’s true. People on campus at times felt we shouldn’t use that term. It somehow angers people. And I said, “No, no. I think it’s important to use the term.” We are different. The extensiveness and the quality of our graduate programs are different from other universities within Ohio. And I think they finally got a little bit more comfortable in using flagship. I notice this year that we have ads talking about Ohio State University as the number one university in the State of Ohio. It’s true but that’s not exactly an impressive accomplishment, to say you’re number one in Ohio. At least flagship is putting you in the company of flagship institutions in other states. But again, I think that proposal was dead on arrival. There was some talk in later years of
something similar to that, where perhaps what you really needed to do was to
bring private universities, Case Western Reserve in, and therefore you’d have
Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. But I think the best thing is simply to
improve your university and do what you need to do.

Q. Did you have any hint as to why the Governor Task Force threw that on the table?
Was it merely to stimulate discussion maybe toward effecting this in 20 or 30
years after it had been kicked around?

A. I’ll use the word system even though technically we don’t have a system per se,
but that our system of higher education in Ohio was not rational. That we had too
many universities, all trying to do the same thing, that we had mission creep going
on, where a number of the universities wanted to become higher ranked research
universities. And I think a recognition that that couldn’t happen, we couldn’t
afford it. And it wasn’t serving the people of Ohio well. So I think this became
part of a notion here of somehow adding some coherence to the mission of our
higher education institution. There was also some point, I think in the same
report; there was some talk about creating a community college system,
eliminating the branch campuses, converting the branch campuses to community
colleges. And that was something that created quite an outcry at Miami
University, where I think they had their Middletown and Hamilton branches. And
it created an outcry in Marion, Lima, Mansfield and Newark. But there was some
notion at one point people were thinking; maybe in fact a community college and
major research universities could form an unusual kind of alliance. So I think part
of this was really people thinking about how should our institutions be arrayed
and what are the appropriate missions and roles for them to play. I think it was in that context that, and recognizing that indeed in other states, the concept of a flagship institution or a concept of major research universities that receive special consideration was in fact a reality.

Q. Alright. Your appointment included government relations. We’ve heard a lot about the state level. Were you involved in any federal matters related to Ohio State? Tell us about those.

A. Initially, we recognized that we had a lot at stake at the national level, particularly in the area of health sciences and medical education. And so eventually what we did was we finally brought some more people on to really start covering Washington. But the first thing that we really did was just try to get closer to our delegation. Ohio has a very powerful delegation. At that time we didn’t have that powerful delegation back in the 80’s. It was a good delegation but they really have people today who are chairs of appropriations sub-committees and all of that. So I think I describe the involvement in Washington as largely touching base, keeping in touch with friends. We as a University joined an organization called “The Midwestern Universities Alliance.” It was basically a one or two person operation, headed by Newton Catall, who was a higher education lobbyist, really good person. And the members were basically a number of Big Ten institutions, and maybe there might have been a Big Twelve institution in it. The University of Illinois was in it and Wisconsin. I can’t remember whether Minnesota was there. Michigan State was. Michigan was not I don’t think. And so we would meet periodically and that was in addition to of course all the
national associations to which we belonged, including of course the National Association of State Colleges and Land Grant Universities, AAU, and some others. We largely did our federal work in the context of the Midwestern Universities Alliance as well as under the national associations. We weren’t that active. Newton was helping us on some kinds of earmarks but we weren’t really an institution that was heavily into that game, although we always enjoyed some.

Now we also had other people. Clearly, agriculture has major interests in Washington and they always covered that. And today I think they’re just more explicit about having somebody, a lobbyist who works for them, to do that. But I worked closely with the Ag Vice Presidents and so they would have their faculty and representatives in Washington. Again, medicine. What we did out of the President’s office was largely focused on the Hill. And there we tried to be helpful with the national associations encouraging bigger budgets for NSF and NIH. And those were probably the two major funding agencies we were concerned about. I did very little in terms of linking faculty to funding sources in Washington. We viewed that as really being the responsibility for the Office of Research.

Q. It was.

A. So I think the University has gotten much more involved in Washington. I wouldn’t say that I was really all that involved. We sort of stayed on top of things. We had organizational memberships and these associations had some good people that would keep us informed. They would tell us when they needed a letter from the President or we would oftentimes be in a position of trying to
encourage them to give testimony from our faculty experts and our President.

Don’t use a coastal strategy. But again, the vast majority of my time was spent on state stuff.

Q. Okay. I have indicated to you that President Gee loved working with you and one reason he said was that you would tell him when you thought he was going down the wrong track. And Ed Jennings said much the same thing. Do you recall times when you helped the Presidents avoid unneeded trouble by giving them some counsel of a solid faculty member, and even perhaps giving personal advice?

A. Yes, and some stories I won’t say. I know the internal politics of the University. Ed of course had a budget crises right at the very beginning, and he established the pattern right then and there of working with the faculty. And so, I don’t know if I mentioned this before, but when Ed asked me to come on board, at that time I was Chairman of the Steering Committee of the University Senate. And the committee members said, “Well, it’s halfway through the year, why don’t you finish your year as Chairman?” And that’s almost the notion that the Chairman of the Steering Committee can actually work for the President. And I said, “No, I’ll step down.” And they said, “No, it’s fine.” And of course they said that because they loved Ed. And then it turned out that being on the Steering Committee was a two-year term. I was only in the first year of my term and so people said, “Herb, you are going to stay on, aren’t you?” And I said, “Well, I think I’m going to tell the President that I’d actually like to stay on, continue working for him, so that probably means I need to get off the Steering Committee.” And people said, “No, no, working for Ed won’t be any conflict.” And actually I was re-elected as
Chairman. For the first year and a half I worked for Ed I was also the Chairman of the major committee of the University Senate. And I think that said something very nice about Ed Jennings early on. So one of the things that he already had was linkage to the faculty leadership. I mean he knew key faculty and all of that. But I certainly tried to continue sharing. When I would hear things about people, no matter what they were grumbling about, I would give him whatever I was hearing. I had a little fun at times. If I heard something negative from one person, you probably just dismiss it. You don’t repeat it. Two and you start making a judgment about whether or not you need to tell the President something. You get to three and you start thinking, “Okay, there’s something there you need to worry about.” Really more internal kinds of things. If you wind up hearing something from four or five different sources within the University, that’s probably a cascade. And there’s probably something there that you need to share. And I would do that with both Ed and Gordon. Both of them were wonderful, because again, they never shot the messenger. And of course they themselves had their own information systems; neither one would allow himself to be cocooned or just rely upon a hierarchical communication structure. They were both, in different styles, both aggressive in seeking information. So that sometimes you would tell them something, you knew they had heard something already. One of the regrets that I had is that I never fully shared with Ed Jennings my distrust of our former athletic director Rick Bay. And I remember some other Vice Presidents, after we had the Earl Bruce case, and again I thought of Rick’s treachery. A number of people were saying, “I could have predicted that’s
exactly what Rick would have done.” And I said, “I wonder if Ed really understood what a snake Rick was.” And we’re all sitting and thinking, “Well, did we tell Ed enough about that?” And the three of us had that discussion. I don’t know. He may have and it may not have changed anything. But when that happened, the Monday before the Michigan game, Ed had told, I was standing in Ed’s office, Ed told Rick Bay on the phone that after the Michigan game, so coming up that Saturday, that that would be the end of Earl’s tenure as coach. And the intention was always to announce that after the Michigan game. We could only hear Ed’s side of the conversation. But it was very clear that Rick was saying, “I can’t accept that. I may have to go public.” And that’s what happened. He went public the Monday before the game and in hindsight I wish Ed had never told Rick anything. But that’s not the way Ed operated. So that was one that maybe sharing a little bit more about the arrogance of the athletic director would have made a difference. There were some incidents that I had first hand experience with. Did I tell you any of these last time? I can’t remember if we talked about this.

Q. Earl?

A. About Rick Bay.

Q. Just touched on it. I was impressed as I listened to Gordon talk, Presidents must have a hard time identifying people that they regard as solid faculty members who will feed back to them what their regular working faculty think. And that’s what he got from you. He always felt that you were a publishing faculty, you were teaching, you were always involved. You would think that Presidents shouldn’t
have that much difficulty identifying good solid faculty. But they have to have qualities besides just being regular faculty.

A. Yes, and I think the other thing too is that somehow the people who are conveying things have to be comfortable in knowing that you could get it wrong, meaning that I might be hearing some things that just simply aren’t … that you could also be telling the President, again things that are pretty tough and that the President understands why you’re telling him that. So again, there’s no danger about somehow the messenger is going to get shot. And I do think one of the challenges for anybody in leadership is to make sure that all the people around you aren’t telling you what they think you want to hear. Or telling you what they believe you want to hear. And again, I think both Gordon and Ed created an environment where I felt comfortable in being open and honest with them in terms of how I saw things. This doesn’t mean I didn’t make mistakes. And sometimes you’d try to assign some sort of probability. “Ed, I heard this. This may be BS. It’s reached a certain level. Let me share that with you.” And every once in a while you’d pick up something that was negative comments about them.

Q. And they have to believe that you’re reporting things to them not out of enmity.

A. Exactly.

Q. Or you’re not working for a special interest.

A. I felt confident that that was the way they were hearing what I said. So that made it so much easier. Sometimes you might say, “I heard something, people haven’t seen you lately. Where are you? What are you doing?” That was more about Gordon. Or what they’d hear about is that, here he is traveling around the state.
He’s doing his county tours. The Roads tour, the alumni, development. And I’d say, “Gordon, people don’t know that actually you’re on campus. You’re constantly calling people that you actually probably know better than most of us.” And that actually led to some making the President’s activities on campus more widely known. It was an odd, he had such a reputation for being an external President, that it became so easy to say, “Well if he’s such a good external President, then he probably doesn’t know what’s going on at the University.” And that wasn’t true. So that sort of suggested being more strategic in terms of going to various events and meetings, meet with The Lantern every quarter, which is something he loved to do anyway. There were just a lot of things. Again, I was really fortunate that their view was, “Here’s somebody that I can trust and he’s telling me this because he thinks I need to know it.”

Q. Well you’ve had quite a rich experience working with the legislature, with the higher administration trustees. You’re a specialist in politics and state government. But tell me, what have you learned in the arena of politics that you really didn’t know when you first accepted Ed’s offer to come on board.

A. One of the things, I didn’t appreciate as much was the unique role Ohio State University played in higher education. When I started lobbying in 1983, I had been here for 13 years, and I really didn’t have the sense of how significant a player the University President could be in both state issues and local issues. You know it at one level but if you don’t see it, it’s not that real to you. And even the little things, such as the ability of the University President to make the calls. It doesn’t mean he’ll get what he wants but to make the call to the Governor or to
the Speaker and to really be one of the people who are one of the players. And of course one of the things that happened between when Gordon came, is that in the local community, there was a group called The Titans. It was an informal group and it’s been expanded now. But those were basically the seven key leaders, one of them of course being Mr. Wexner. I think Mr. Wexner was very, very instrumental in bringing Gordon Gee into that group as the University President, as one of the Titans in the community. So I actually gained more of an appreciation about the University President as a political leader and a political figure. And really learned, there are different kinds of stereotypes of images of University Presidents. This may never have been true and maybe it’s dated now. But the notion of a University President who has his head in the clouds. University Presidents are always political figures on their own campus, but in fact public university presidents are political figures in the broader political community as involved in state and local government. That was one of the things that I learned. Another thing that I learned, I knew and the fact that I hadn’t started teaching Ohio Politics until 1982. I had been here for 12 years and my area of expertise was really national elections, Congress, public opinion. And I’m sort of the kind of person that when I’m in an environment I’d like to know more about it. And I noticed that we had on the books an Ohio Politics course, which hadn’t been taught for a number of years in Political Science. So I remember saying to [Randall] Ripley, “Now I’m going to teach it but you’ve got to give me a graduate assistant for a year to help me prepare materials and all of that.” And so the first time I taught it was 1982. And it was the next year that Ed asked me.
So I didn’t really have that much knowledge, I knew certain things, certain
textbook kinds of things about Ohio. But it was really fascinating to learn first-
hand about the regionalism of the state, about the fact that, I have a whole sort of
comedy routine that in many ways Ohio is not a state. It really is a series of city-
states. I was amazed by the insularity of the people from the Cincinnati area. Just
simply they didn’t look to Columbus. Cleveland is viewed as sort of alien
territory by a lot of people from other parts of the state. You learn that Toledo
hated the rest of the state. I really came to the realization which I think now in
hindsight is sort of self-evident, about how difficult it is here in Ohio to get our
act together. And that really I think applies to higher education. And again, the
reaction of the notion of Cincinnati and Ohio State being somehow designated as
the two research universities. Once you realize the regionalism of Ohio politics
you know that that’s a proposal that will probably get, if not directly fought or
directly attacked, sniped to death from people on all sides. So really I think I’ve
learned a lot about Ohio’s politics. I learned something too, in watching Vern
Riffe, and I had heard of Vern before I started working on the job, but I do believe
that he was as good in his setting as, and again one of my areas was Congress, as
were the Speakers of the U.S. House of Representatives, for whom House office
buildings have been named. Longworth, Cannon, Rayburn. And this man was
just incredibly talented. And it sort of amazed me, Vern had some good people
around him, but I think so much of the system was really in his own mind, in his
own head. I don’t know that he had as much support or back up, as one would
have expected given how successful he was. He would hold court at the Galleria
on South Third across from the State House. He would be sitting up at the bar and everybody would come by to talk with him and raise whatever issues they had. And I would just be amazed. He often had a drink and if you watched he didn’t drink that much. He’d be there for a couple of hours and there would be a stream of people, each getting their couple of minutes. And I remember a couple of times I’d talk to him on an issue. I remember one night I was with a colleague of mine from Miami University and we had a concern about something that one of the Speaker’s members was doing, a significant member of his caucus. And the Speaker said, “Well Herb, that just doesn’t sound fair. That shouldn’t be happening.” And that was sort of the end of the conversation. And this friend of mine and I looked at each other and we said, “Well it’s healthy that the Speaker agrees with us but what’s going to happen?” And damned if a couple days later this member doesn’t come up to us, just irate, “Why did you go to Vern about it? We could have worked it out.” And I was just amazed that the Speaker, there must have been 50 people who talked to him that night, and he had taken care of it. And there was nobody with him taking notes.

Q. So he had a great mind for detail.

A. Absolutely.

Q. Did he have kind of an intuitive understanding of larger issues?

A. Yes, he really did. Where people underestimated him, because they said, “Oh, he’s from Scioto County.” Just like Jim Rhodes was also a superb politician and people underestimated him because somehow he wasn’t this Ivy League educated person. He was as good as they came. So again, it’s appropriate that the state
building downtown is named after him. Another Vern Riffe story if I could. I remember early on I was with Max Lennon, who was our Vice President for Agriculture at the time, and Max was really a good guy. And we were down meeting with the Speaker. Of course, Max’s predecessor had been Roy Kottman. And Roy was a conservative Republican agricultural leader. And Max and I are meeting with the Speaker. This of course was when Ed Jennings was President. We were trying to get more support. We had two line items on the state budget in the agricultural area that go to Ohio State. One is the research facility up at Wooster and the other is cooperative extension. And we’re talking to the Speaker and the Speaker is kind of, he’s not being as supportive as I thought he’d be and I thought I knew where he was coming from. And I just finally at some point jumped in and said, “Speaker, let me tell you, Max Lennon, Max is a good guy and Max understands two things. That there are two political parties in Ohio and he also understands how to say thank you.” And that set the Speaker going and he said, “Herb, let me tell you it gets me so mad when Roy Kottman always complains, every budget. No matter what we did, he’d always complain how we cut him. We never cut him. He always got more money than he got the previous year. It’s that he didn’t get as much money as he was asking for.”

Q. And that was the cut.

A. Yea, that was the cut. And that was so annoying. And again, never any credit. And the Speaker at that time had a couple of Democrats who were from rural areas, who were farmers. Dwight Wise and Paul Mechley and some others. And he was so annoyed that there was no recognition of them. So we’re talking and
we had amendments, we told the Speaker, “We’re trying to get a million dollars a year more for each of these.” It’s a biennial budget, so it’s a million dollars each, so two million for extension, and two million more for OARDC. And so it was a total of four million dollars that we were trying to get. And the Speaker wouldn’t make any commitment, but we had a wonderful conversation. And then as we’re leaving the Speaker said to us, “What if there were five million dollars available? Where would you put that other million?” And Max and I had to give him an answer and Max and I just said, “Well we believe that Ed Jennings is really more focused on the research. So Ed would probably want that to go into research, a million and a half rather than a million for year for research.” And the Speaker said, “Fine.” And Max and I left. And after we left his office, I said, “Max, it was a wonderful conversation. And as well as I know the Speaker, he doesn’t tease. He doesn’t make promises he can’t keep.” He made no promises whatsoever, but it was still odd for him to ask, “Well what if you could get more than you’re asking for?” And I said, “I think that was a good sign.” So then fast forward a couple of days and the House Finance Committee had taken amendments on the budget. The Chairman of the Finance Committee, Bill Hinig is presiding, and they’re taking all these amendments and higher education amendments are at the end. At one point, Bill Hinig announced, “We’re out of money. No more money.” And he hadn’t gotten to the higher education amendments yet. I was just sitting there just sort of really disappointed. And within ten minutes, the Speaker walks into the Finance Committee meeting. He never goes to the Finance Committee meetings. He said something to Hinig. And the next thing I know,
there is a motion to reconsider an amendment that had been approved. And this
amendment that had been approved was to spend ten million dollars. So there
was now a motion to reconsider and the motion to reconsider passed. So now the
amendment is going to be voted on again, and this time it was defeated. And so
now there was ten million dollars. So Hinig announced that now there was money
again. So I’m watching this and my spirits are boosted or whatever. And they get
to the higher education amendments. There are three amendments as I recall.
And the first higher education amendment was from a Republican in the Bowling
Green area and he says to the Chairman, “Mr. Chairman, I know money is tight so
I’d like to amend my amendment to reduce the amount.” but still he gets
something. And the Chairman said without objection, “It’s approved.” And then
there was one by Dean Conley, a Franklin County legislator, “Mr. Chairman, I
know that dollars are tight, so I’d like to amend my amendment to reduce the
amount.” And the Chairman said, “With no objection, the amendment is
approved.” And then our amendment, for both OARDC and Cooperative
Extension comes up and it was being carried by Fred Deering, who was a state
representative up from Lake Erie. And Fred said, “Mr. Chairman, I’d like to
amend my amendment.” And everybody on the committee thought well, the
previous two had reduced their amounts and Fred says, “Mr. Chairman, I’d like to
amend my amendment to increase the amount from four million to five million.”
And I’m listening to this and by now I’m practically euphoric. And everybody on
the committee is sort of sputtering. Previous people reduced their amendments.
Why are you increasing your amendments? And Fred just said, “Because the
farmers needed more.” And the Chairman of the Finance Committee said, “Without objection the amendment is approved.” And I’m watching this and I’m thinking, this was all orchestrated by Vern Riffè. How in the heck. He had his people in the committee. They must have reported back to him. I just learned something. Again, people talk about him as a tyrant, because he did punish members when they strayed from the reservation, but in fact what he really did was, he protected his members. He kept certain issues off the agenda. Actually both he and Stan Aronoff, who was President of the Senate for part of the time that Vern was Speaker of the House, they would keep issues like abortion off the agenda because it was divisive within their own caucuses. If Vern had a rural member from a fairly conservative district and there was a labor vote, there was no reason to insist that every Democrat had to support labor. All he needed was 50 votes; he didn’t need 60 votes to pass something. So why not let members who have tough districts off the hook. So I learned something about the quality of leadership. And again, I think he was as good as anybody in the political process. There were lessons like that. Lessons about Ohio. Lessons about Ohio State. It was wonderful because it had informed my teaching about Ohio’s politics. At times it increases one’s frustration about Ohio. It’s not just a question of the reason for the state not getting together, but where does leadership in the state come from. If it doesn’t come from the Governor, it makes it very, very difficult to get things done. Fascinating lessons about the media. Because we had so many different media markets, we really don’t have a dominant statewide newspaper or television station. Some of the newspapers within their home
communities are really extremely powerful. Maybe less than ten years ago but you had the sense of, in some ways, newspapers, while they really can’t do very much in terms of setting a state agenda, really just being, very powerful in the local community. So there’s a lot of things by involvement and observation and participation I’ve learned about the state.

Q. They might now be able to offer a course on the history of universities someplace. History of the modern American university. We know that Dr. Gee was invited to become the President of the University of California System. That was a high moment I think in his life. Can you tell us how you heard about this and how you interacted with him on this question?

A. This was the same year, the last year that the University buy-out was open. And I realized that by the end of the window I would have just become eligible. So I began thinking about whether or not I would actually consider doing the buy-out. Gordon obviously had been over the years recruited by a number of institutions. It got to the stage where I could tell by the expression on his face that somebody was seeking his services. One day he came into my office and I looked at him and I said, “Okay, who wants you now?” And he said, “Berkeley.” And I looked at him and I smiled and I said, “Berkeley, take the job and take me with you.” Well it turns out it wasn’t Berkeley, it was the UC system and he would have been the chief administrator. Almost like the Board of Regents if you will. No faculty, no students. And so we were talking and I said, “I can’t see you being happy in that kind of position.” And he was about to be leaving on a trip to Asia. And I asked him, “What do you think the chances are of you taking that
position?” He knew that I had reserved my spot in the early retirement. But I hadn’t made my decision or anything yet. So I said, “What are the chances of you taking it?” And he said, “Probably fifty-five to forty-five, against.” And that puzzled me. With all our conversation suggesting that that was the wrong job, it wouldn’t be as much fun for him. He genuinely enjoys the fundraising and the faculty and the students and all that. But he said “fifty-five/forty-five.” Then he went off to Asia and while he was there the stories came out that he indeed was the finalist, the preferred candidate. And it got to be so specific that there was actually a meeting that had been set up out in San Francisco. He was going to fly through there on the way back. And I thought, “Oh my God, he’s going to take the job.” I didn’t think he would. I do want to protect some people but I got a call from a prominent person in town and this part is all public. A number of the prominent leadership of the community got to work and got to Gordon, I don’t know whether it was Korea or somewhere, but really let him know how much they …

Q. What he told me was that they burned up the fax machine in the hotel he was in, I think in Hawaii.

A. And so the community, the leadership of the community really came together and I think, one knew that at some point Gordon would leave, but I think everybody thought this was not the right thing for him. Obviously the UC system is a wonderfully prestigious collection of institutions and all of that, but the idea … I remember sort of being a wise ass and saying, “I never thought of you as aspiring to be the equivalent of the chancellor of the Board of Regents.” And so in fact he
indeed changed his mind and that didn’t happen. But what was interesting, that just reminded me that at some point he would leave. So when he said no, he said, “What are you doing? Have you made your mind yet?” And I said, “No.” And he said, “Well you’re not going to retire, are you?” I said, “I really haven’t made up my mind yet.” And I think I had until June 30 and I finally decided in June that I would do it actually. The rationale was basically that I didn’t want to be the lobbyist for the next President. I really had been spoiled by Gordon Gee and Ed Jennings. And I figured out that in retirement I would actually have a take home pay a little higher than going back to a nine-month contract in Political Science. And again, throughout this entire period I always taught at least two courses a year. I was still being a political scientist. I knew I could probably continue to do some teaching. So I took early retirement. That was a little rough. I felt somewhat guilty. But then Gordon created this title “Counselor to the University President.” So come the following September, I retired actually on June 30, and for two months you weren’t allowed to step foot on campus or whatever. And so for that seven or eight months I did volunteer work. I covered the lobbying until they hired Colleen O’Brien. But then once Colleen came on board I basically stopped lobbying and I was also appointed to the Ohio Ethics Commission and so I couldn’t lobby anyway. Could not be a registered lobbyist anymore. So I stayed on as Gordon’s counselor. And that was always the fun role, in terms of being the advisor. And I did that and then of course Gordon left to go to Brown. And so Brit Kirwan inherited me not as the lobbyist, but as the counselor/ advisor or whatever. And one of the projects that he got me involved in, it started really
under Gordon and it was really the discussions with John Glenn, both about his papers and artifacts, but also the possibility of creating a Glenn Institute. And the first part of that was to really to get the papers and artifacts thing, but really importantly the whole Glenn Institute discussion moving. It was sort of dragging, so Brit asked me to sort of take charge of that. It was a fun experience and it eventually went to my being the Interim Director for the John Glenn Institute for two years.

Q. What did you do during those two years with the Glenn Institute?

A. Well basically we were trying to do everything needed to establish an institute, trying to get some programming in place for students. We got the Washington, D.C. internship program established. We got the living/learning center established over in Baker Hall. We got the high school internship program established. But the most important thing that I did of course was spend time trying to build an organization which was really quite bare bones at the time. I got involved with such things as the renovation of the old social work library in Stillman Hall and I was actually learning about things in terms of space. And of course you always hear stories about how space brings out the best and worst in people. And it certainly did that with me. Obviously there were concerns about fundraising. So there was an awful lot of administrative work. Getting the whole center proposal through the University procedure was major. People were very, very helpful. But two years was enough of that. One of the lessons I learned from that is that really good administrators are people who are in fact can leave the day’s problems at the office and not let it affect them that evening or the next
day or whatever. And again, most people were very, very helpful. But I found at
time, rather than focusing on the fact that most people are helpful, I’d focus on the
one SOB who was making my job more difficult. And I’d spend more energy
thinking, “How am I going to get even with that bastard?” That was not a very
healthy thing. I think Debbie Merritt is doing a wonderful job. I think the more
difficult part was getting enough resources to really get more faculty involved in
terms of the policy. The institute was the John Glenn Institute for Public Service
and Public Policy. And certainly one aspect here is to get more students involved
in public service. And I think we got off to a wonderful start there. But we also
wanted to do more by way of sharing the University’s policy expertise with
decision makers at all levels of government. And that was more challenging. So
I think Debbie is making some very nice progress. Another thing we got done,
and I give the credit to Brian Gallagher, who was head of the United Way at the
time. But we created an entity called Community Research Partners, which was a
partnership between the City of Columbus, United Way and the University
through the John Glenn Institute. And Community Research Partners really has a
mission of helping social and human service agencies do evaluation of programs,
training people in terms of evaluation procedures. It’s gotten off to a wonderful
start. And in fact this organization did a report for the Columbus Schools. So I
think we’ve got some good things going. I’ve had enough. I always kept the title
of Counselor to the President. Then Brit was here for one more year and then
Karen came in, and for her first year I was counselor. And then in June, I told her
I was going to resign. So I’m no longer Counselor to the President.
Q. We see that President Holbrook has created a Vice President for Government Relations. Would such a title have made you more effective in your work representation of work?

A. I don’t know. It might not have, in part simply because I was sort of a fixture both on the campus and in the community. I think it’s very important today be a Vice President. The other reason why it probably wasn’t as critical was the way that Ed and Gordon organized their staff, their team, the key group, was simply to have the people who they wanted to be around the table, and it didn’t matter whether your title was a Vice President or not. I think more recently typically the cabinet has been defined as the Vice Presidents. If I had not been around the table with Gordon or Ed, then I’d say, “I better be a Vice President.” But that was never really an issue. But I think it’s a good idea to have a Vice President. And again, I think it also suggests too that since we now have more people involved in government relations that probably you want to make sure that the Vice President is in fact the leader of the team. And some of the people who work in Government Relations at Ohio State don’t work directly for the Vice President for Government Relations. I think Jerry Friedman of the Medical School works for Fred SanFillipo and Ted Beary actually works for Bobby Moser. But I think in the person we hired, Ellen Brown, is doing a wonderful job in terms of trying to bring all of the personnel resources together, so that there really is a team approach. So I think it’s important that we indeed have a Vice President. As people look at titles that gives you some standing or stature. But in my own case, I knew people in the community. I had been teaching for years and years, and I
did a lot of media stuff. It’s sort of odd what gives you currency or gives you credibility. The fact that you get interviewed about politics by the local news or statewide or whatever, all of sudden gives you some credibility downtown. “Well gee, if the reporters are flying to him, he must know what he’s talking about,” or something equivalent to that. But again, I think it’s very good that we have a Vice President today. One other thing that’s sort of interesting, in a sense I was Ed’s person and Gordon inherited me. And I always used my job, besides representing the University downtown; I always referred to the job as Special Assistant to the President. Mine was not a line position. I didn’t supervise anybody. I was a staff position. And so you always had the question of loyalty to the President as you represented the institution. And to Gordon’s credit that he intuited very, very quickly, the most important thing I do is serve as an advisor to the President. The most important thing as an advisor, it’s a very personal relationship. Therefore, you should have somebody in that position with which you feel comfortable. I think Gordon recognized, and I said I volunteered to step down as soon as he wanted to. I think Gordon recognized that, here you had somebody who knew the government relations and also understood what it meant to be a loyal staff person. Gordon was wonderful. Here is Ed Jennings’ person and I becoming Gordon Gee’s. And that doesn’t happen very often. I think it’s really sort of a testimony to Gordon on that.

Q. Maybe to you too. Well the OSU Alumni Association has a unit called OSU Alumni Advocates who are supposed to contact legislators on behalf of the
University. Can you recall any instances where either Ed or Gordon were able to use this group to good effort?

A. I think we were used multiple times. In fact, we were just used this past year with Dr. Holbrook. And I think it’s an important organization. Typically where you get them involved is on issues of the budget. Or sometimes on aspects of tuition policy. But more likely it’s funding issues. It’s not realistic to expect that they will have a major impact, because in a budget situation every interest is lobbying and mobilizing. And of course primary and secondary education has so many more advantages at the grass roots than we have. But still, it’s very, very valuable for us to have citizens, friends, and alumni of the University at the grass roots, saying that higher education is important. So it’s a way of the grassroots lobbying on behalf of higher education. It’s one more voice. I think it makes it easier for legislators to remember us or makes it difficult for them to forget about us. In that sense it’s very good. And I think over the years the organization has grown and I think the people who run it are doing a better job of getting advocates who do know their legislators. They are also doing a better job in terms of arming the advocates with the information they need to make contacts. And I think now we’re also using the advocates on some non-budgetary issues. For example, I know the advocates have recently been asked to be involved on the boutique hospital issue, which is a very, very important issue to our medical center. I’m still on the steering committee of the advocates organization. So I think it really has gotten, I think they are really honing and refining the organization. So I think it’s an important organization. But again, when you get issues in which you have
to enlist them, it’s probably because these are significant issues in which lots of
other interests are engaged. And so probably it’s not realistic to expect that the
advocates will carry the day, but it certainly helps the University. One of the
challenges for the University is that you always expect that the President will be
downtown asking for money. You always expect that the lobbyist for the
University will be asking for money or this or that or whatever. And it’s so nice
when you can get other people talking on behalf of the University, so that you can
get alums back in the district. If you can get parents of students back in the
district, that can be very, very important to the University. I think that’s the path
you have to go in the era of term limits, to do more by way of grass roots. And
people all start using the term now grass tops, where you have people out in the
community but they are at the leadership strata, advocating on behalf of the
University. And I think I said perhaps on our first interview, I think one of my
frustrations but it partly reflects Ohio and Ohio’s economy, is I do think it would
be good if we were more effective in getting the business community as active
advocates on behalf of higher education. There is some of that and I think some
of the regional Chambers of Commerce are doing a very good job. Certainly the
Columbus Chamber of Commerce, under Sally Jackson, now with Ty Marsh
leading it, has really done a good job of building a partnership between the
University and the business community and local government. They have been
very, very good advocates on behalf of the University. But at times in the past
I’ve been frustrated that the Ohio Chamber and its agenda really has been less
regulation, lower taxes, and education has really not been central to them. And the
same with the Ohio Manufacturers. And you can sort of get a sense that they do not see universities as a primary concern. The Ohio Business Roundtable, which is really the CEO organization, really was the group I think most responsible for getting the business community engaged in the whole set of issues surrounding primary and secondary education. And I think we need to get them equally involved in higher education.

Q. Alright. Well would you like to make a comment on any part of your career, what you have observed, what you have heard?

A. Well, I came from New Jersey. When I was in New Jersey our state university was Rutgers and Rutgers at that time couldn’t serve the state of New Jersey. It was very small. And of course New Jersey was one of those eastern states that exported students out. And exported students to a number of Big Ten institutions. So sort of in growing up I’d always heard of Michigan and Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio State. And these were always considered to me to be good schools. And I did my undergraduate work at a small private school, Bucknell. And I heard about Ohio State, and thought Ohio State had some very good programs. Did my graduate work at Michigan. At Michigan, there’s incredible snobbery there and elitism and whatever, and of course their two negative reference points are Ohio State and Michigan State. There’s also more positively a recognition that the Big Ten is an incredible collection of research universities. And it was interesting to come to Columbus. I had a choice of coming to Ohio State or Duke. I came to Ohio State because the Ohio State Political Science Department was better than Duke’s back then. And it was amazing to come here and to see how under-
appreciated Ohio State University was. And partly was under-appreciated because people judge universities on the quality of the inputs and the quality of the undergraduates. And of course you go back 30 years ago and obviously you hear stories that a third of your freshmen are going to flunk out by the end of the fall quarter or whatever. And somehow the people who were geographically the closest to the University least appreciated what was happening, in terms of research and graduate education. And even at the undergraduate level. One could make an argument, if you think about the concept of value added, if we take a student who comes from less than a first rate academic background and that student comes here and that student graduates, you may be adding more value to that student than Harvard taking a valedictorian and taking a bright student and having a bright student graduate. So I always thought that Ohio State was under-valued. And that has some consequences for how you get treated in the state legislature and all that. I thought one of the nice things in working for Ed Jennings and Gordon Gee was how they both tackled that issue. Not tackling it simply from a cosmetic, we’re going to do some branding, but in fact tackled it in terms of improving the quality of the student body, not just for the sake of elitism, but to do it for the sake of saying that given what this institution is, you want students here who can appreciate and take advantage of the opportunities. And also in fact doing something on the research profile of the University. But again, with both Ed and Gordon, not allowing the research side of the University to be defined in ways that excluded the arts and sciences. Or excluding the arts and humanities and social sciences. And so I always felt fortunate to be working with
Presidents who really had an appreciation for the complexity of the University, the diversity within the University in terms of academic disciplines and other aspects, and who really made a significant contribution in terms of Ohio State having a more significant impact, but also people who articulated that we indeed are a major, major comprehensive flagship institution. I wish at some point we would just ignore Michigan. They are a different institution. They’ve got a different tradition. Their role within the state of Michigan is different. And I wish, there’s still some people geographically close to Ohio State, who even today still don’t get it, in terms of what a significant institution this is. And it is a wonderful institution, with a wonderful history department and a wonderful political science department.

Q. On that we can certainly agree.