Q. This is the interview for Richard Sisson, who was Provost at Ohio State and then Interim President for a period of time. And this is his oral history. I’m introducing him to you. I am Albert Solloway. I’m Dean and Professor Emeritus at the Ohio State University. With that, let me begin the questioning. Your recollections of life as a student at OSU, both as an undergraduate, graduate including social life, influential teachers and others.

A. Well wonderful memories. I came to Ohio State in the fall of 1954 from a rural area in southern area, the Appalachian foothills in Gallia County. It was quite a cultural shock to come to this great big, huge, urban place. As a matter of fact, I grew up on a farm. As I recall, when I came to Ohio State it was the first time I ever had pasteurized milk. It was very rural where I grew up. I did grow up in a rather educated family, however. My grandfather was a member of the first graduating class of the medical school at the University of Louisville in the middle part of the nineteenth century. Let me go back a little bit. My grandfather died when my father was quite young. He was quite old when he married my grandmother, and she raised three kids on the farm and was herself a school teacher, had been educated at a normal school, was a fine musician and interested in the arts and literature and things of this sort. So this transferred to her kids including my father. And she wanted him to have the fullest educational opportunity that was possible. So she sent him back to a prep school in the east, Mt. Herman, a religious school or at least it was religious affiliated with the
Methodist School. So he was there, graduated there, came back and went to Ohio Wesleyan and got his Master’s degree after that here at The Ohio State University. He got his Master’s degree in biochemistry. My aunt also came up here and got a Master’s degree in English and Latin, which was in the latter part of the 1920’s, early part of the 30’s as I recall. So I was surrounded by a love of learning, a love of knowledge. But all these past generations everybody went home; everybody went back to southern Ohio; everyone went back to the farm. My aunt was a schoolteacher and my mother also, although she’d come to Ohio State didn’t graduate from Ohio State. Was a school teacher and a dietician at the hospital down there. My father also taught school and for some time taught at Rio Grande College and also a small college down in Kentucky. But it was still a big leap coming to The Ohio State University. I was interested in going into music at this time, and had a scholarship to Cincinnati College of Music. This was the one time in my growing up I really didn’t have family support. In everything I had extraordinary family support. There wasn't anything I couldn’t do. If you just put your mind to it you can do whatever you want to do. Even though you don’t have money, even though we were poor, you can go out and do whatever you want to in the world, but education is critical. Which is logical coming from a family of educators I guess. And so we didn’t have the money for me to go to a major private school and Ohio State had been looming large in my family. So I decided I wanted to come to Ohio State.

Well my dad brought me and four of my classmates from Gallia County High School up here just to look at the University. We were all country boys and
all wanted to go to college. So dad brought us up and showed us around the
University which he just deeply loved, and said “Well, let’s go over to Townsend
Hall. I think that maybe somebody in the College of Agriculture over there might
meet with you. So let’s just go over and see.” So we did. And John Mount met
us and he was an Assistant Dean at the time, something of this sort. And spent
time with us. And talked with us about what it meant to go to College and what it
meant to graduate from College, and why it would be great for young men like us
to come to the Ohio State University. And he said, “I think there’s someone else
who would like to meet with you.” And it was Leo Rummell, who was Dean of
the College of Agriculture at that time. So he spent time with us. This was in
May; I think it was, of 1964. Everyone of us came here and everyone of us
graduated. So my first year was tough. I decided I wanted to major in music still,
but I wasn’t really happy doing it. I wasn’t sure that that was the career that I
wanted to have. I just floundered around like many students do. And it was
really after my first year, in the summer between my freshmen and sophomore
year. I was a member of the symphonic choir and we took a tour of Europe and
we were in France and we were in Belgium and we were in Germany. We were
in England and we were in Wales. And it was during that time that I said, “I
really want to be a part of the world.” And my family was internationally
oriented, talked and discussed things that were happening around the world. And
so that was when I decided to continue my love of music. I played in the
symphony the first two quarters that I was here, was in the symphonic choir, was
a member of the men’s glee club and loved it. It was part of my social life as well
as deeply gratifying just to create music with others. But I started looking around
at things that I wanted to do. And took advantage of the student advisory services
which were very helpful. People as well as the information that was available
there. And I thought I wanted to go into pre-law. That lasted for a little while.
Then I said, “You know, I want to go into something having to do with the world,
with understanding the world.” I should share something with you about the
European tour. We sang at Flingothlin [Llangollen], Wales, at the International
[Eisteddfod]. And the choir competed. We did quite well. We also had the
women’s chorus. We also had the men’s chorus. And the men, we thought we
were the most extraordinary thing since sliced Wonder bread. We just sang our
hearts out. There were extraordinary men’s choruses there. Well the one was
from Vedana, Italy, and they were marvelous, just absolutely marvelous. But they
won and I think we came in second or third, something of this sort, and it was just
heart wrenching. It was just an awful feeling. And this lasted for us, for a long
period of time, till maybe it’s been ten years ago I learned, and several others
learned, that one of the tenors in that Vedana choir was a man by the name of
Luciano Pavarotti. So that lessened the hurt a bit but not totally. But it was a
wonderful, wonderful, exhilarating, extraordinary experience. Learning about the
world, learning to live in the world, hearing the sounds that you didn’t hear in
southern Ohio or central Ohio. And was part of really my voyage, big part of my
voyage in life.

I decided to major in international studies. It was a wonderful major for
me because I could [put] my major together myself. And there were certain
requirements. There was a core course that was a research-oriented course. And it was there, the teacher, the professor, was Louis Nemzer. And one of the reasons that I am sitting here today is because of him. He had an enormous impact on my life. Instilled in me a love of discovery, of thinking critically about things, of learning as much as you can, of being comfortable with uncertainty, feeling that you understand things well. But always being prepared for the unexpected and finding out that you really need to revise things sometimes. So he and his wife, Daisy, invited us students over to their house every quarter for dinner. And I think it was Friday nights and I think it was for Shabbos. And it was around this dinner table where [I met] students from all over the world. And we had had a seminar in their home. I did that every year that I taught. I had one of my classes at my home, every year from the time I started teaching until this last year. And I was just so exhausted and busy that I was wasn’t able to do it. And I regret that very, very much. I remember in one class, with Professor Nemzer, that I had gotten a B- on a paper. And I was distraught. And I talked with a couple of other students in the class and looked at their papers, and my paper I thought was better than theirs and they had B+, A-, something of this sort. They didn’t have straight A’s as I recall. And I went in to see him, to talk with him about it. He was very crisp in what he told me. He said, “You can do so much better than that. This is your grade. You can do so much better than this.” And that set me off. I worked hard, I studied, I wrote and rewrote things and became far better. It was a branch point, a change in my education and the way that I read about studying and what I thought of myself, what I expected of myself. It was absolutely extraordinary.
Kazul Kawai was a professor of political science and history, had been the editor of the, I think the Japanese Times or the American Times. I forget what it was. It must have been Japanese Times in Japan I think during the war, just before the war. Came back to the United States, a person who could write and lecture with uncommon eloquence. And I took every course I could with him. And would write, I remember a paper that I wrote for him, I thought it was just one of the most elegant things that had ever been composed, ever had been committed to paper, until I got it back. And this was a period of my life when I was sort of a romantic, wanting to use as many adjectives as I could possibly dream up and conceive of and put together with nouns. And he showed me how one can be eloquent in composition but also studious of brevity and getting to the point. He was very instrumental and Nemzer were the co-chairs of my master’s committee. This was at a time when Professor Nemzer’s, as I recall his father was very, very ill and he had to spend time out in Los Angeles. So Professor Kawai sort of took over guiding my thesis. Every week, during the last term, before I got my degree, he would invite me to come up to his house, [which] was on Iuka Avenue as I recall, where my wife and I lived the last five years here in Columbus. We would have tea and he would discuss my work. And it was wonderful that a professor would take the time to, these were on weekends, on Saturdays, to have a student come up to their house and spend an hour or two with them just talking about their work. Huge impact on my life, Kazul Kawai.

Sydney Nettleton Fisher, professor of history, Middle Eastern history, a real expert on Turkey but also on the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East in
general. Lectured without notes. Couldn’t believe it. Couldn’t believe it. The first time he came into class without notes, I said, “Well this is the first lecture of the quarter. He’s not going to be able to keep this up.” Next class, no notes. Next class, no notes. Not just generalizations but an extraordinary reservoir of evidence that he brought to bear. I took every course I could with him. He took a real interest in me. And I was disappointed I think that I decided to go into political science and not into history. It was a toss-up. And in a sense, much of my work has been historical, historical political sociology really. A lot of it is due to him.

One other in college, Foster Rhea Dulles. Didn’t get to know him so well. Took as I recall two courses with him. But the seriousness with which he took teaching was extraordinary. And the eloquence with which he can present arguments was stunning. So this was an impact, in a sense, of a professor from afar. The other three I knew and they really knew me. They knew what made me tick. They knew how to get the best out of me. But professor Dulles, I still remember some of his lectures as a matter of fact. I still remember his style in front of the classroom at the lectern. And this focus that he had in imparting information to his students.

I had a great education here at Ohio State University. And a lot of it, Al, was also finding out things for ourselves. There were a number of young faculty here at that time searching minds I think. It enabled, made us feel that it was okay to be critical of existing situations, to question and to challenge. Harvey Goldberg, the Department of History, who ultimately went up to the University of
Wisconsin at Madison. Dick Fulk in the law school, went to Princeton, although they don’t have a law school. But two other members of the law faculty who I can’t recall right now but I remember them vividly. One went to Duke. But they were here all at this same time. And interestingly, Melvin Seaman, young professor, assistant professor of Sociology. Went to UCLA. We were colleagues at UCLA. And when I was Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, he was not a consultant and not an assistant. An associate, a paid associate in helping me with academic dossiers. We were doing academic dossiers. And I just heard from him. He just sent me an e-mail the other day. He’s 85 years old. And we’re going to be getting together when I go out there to California.

So these are some of my immediate thoughts in response to your question. One other thing. It’s a big thing. I lived in the George Wells Night Men’s International House for over three years. And that was when I really decided I loved the world and wanted to discover the world. There were students, primarily from third world countries, what we now call for the last three decades have called third world countries, many in the case of Africa, from countries that were not independent. And these students were involved in nationalist movements, which I was studying in class, when I was studying. And it was just, living in that house, at 104 East Fifteenth Street, was like an unending seminar in international politics. It was unending. From morning to night, whenever there were two or more of us together, we were talking about things like that. So it was a real heady experience. That was at the time when east of High Street was really a part of the University. Where High Street did not divide intellectual activity and
engagement. There were seminars over there currently in the Men’s International
House and also as a matter of fact in some of the fraternities and sororities, which
doesn’t exist anymore. There may have been, there’s some self-selection here of
course, but in my case it was absolutely true. The seminar room followed me
wherever I was and I am forever grateful for that.

Q. You were at UCLA for 25 years, first as a faculty member in political science and
ultimately as Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. What factors
prompted you to accept an administrative position?

A. Random chance. No plan at all. None at all. I really didn’t trust or hold
academic administrators in high regard as a faculty. I thought they got in my way
of doing what I wanted to do. And I think there may be some truth to that. There
was some truth to that then and probably truth to it when I was an academic
administrator. I was always engaged in things. I was engaged in the life of the
University. The Academic Senate was a powerful, powerful institution in the
University of California. Far more influential than the University Senate that we
have here at Ohio State. And I learned so much and I hope that I contributed too
in the work of various committees. I’ve always had an activist side to me. When
I was here I was president of a number of the organizations here at Ohio State,
students organizations that I was a part of. And the same thing had been true in
high school. It was just natural for me. But the first time I was asked to be a
department chair I said, “No.” It was a little early, I was only an associate
professor. And there were other things I wanted to do and I could see how it tied
you down. And I also, in a sense, resented my generation of faculty in my
department at UCLA. Resented the fact that the generation ahead of us and then the generation ahead of that had left the world of scholarship and teaching and had become academic administrators. And it had sort of left our, these fine minds had left us and were not there to serve in a mentoring role for us as scholars. So a number of them became university presidents, provosts and other provosts back at Johns Hopkins for a long period of time. Chancellors. I think half of the Chancellors in the UC system came from the Department of Political Science at UCLA including Chuck Young, who was Chancellor when I was Vice Chancellor. He was Chancellor for 29, 30 years at UCLA. And so I did not want to have anything, I didn’t want any part of that. I was asked to serve on the most important committee in the academic senate at UCLA or on any campus of the University of California. It’s called the Budget Committee or the Council on Academic Personnel. And what that committee does, is review all appointments, every single appointment except beginning assistant professorships, all promotions, all major jumps in salary throughout the University. And there were 13, there were 13 of us. We met twice a week for a full day, twelve months a year. And it was a seminar two days a week, twelve months a year. A seminar, a continuing seminar on cutting edge research over the full gambit of human knowledge and discovery. The second year I was invited to be chair of that committee and still reasonably young. Had just become a professor as I recall and most of the people were a little senior to me. And learned so much and had so much fun, fun doing this, that when I was asked to be chair, when I was still chair of that committee I did agree to do it. And that experience was quite
extraordinary. And what is interesting here, is that the Council on Academic Personnel was the faculty parallel to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. And the Vice Chancellor for Faculty Relations at that time and there would be regular meetings between the chair of this committee, every week, and the Vice Chancellor to discuss difficult cases. So I got to know what the Vice Chancellor did. And the Vice Chancellor of course had also formally, at that time, had been the chair of this committee. I think everyone had. Just to come Vice Chancellor, at least a member of that committee. So when I was asked to be chair I said, “Okay, I’ll do it.” I like several in my generation there had had opportunities to go to other universities. And some did. But several of us said, “We’re going to stay here and make this one of the finest Departments of Political Science anywhere in this country, anywhere in the world.” And we did it. We were outraged that our department was ranked, this was in 1980, 15th, tied for 15th in the country. And that was just not good enough. Here is Berkeley, I got my degree at Berkeley, I got my Ph.D. at Berkeley, here is Berkeley, it’s number two, something of this sort. This is unacceptable, just absolutely unacceptable. So we had a review of the department, an external review. And that review was extremely critical and I and several others, I was chair, took that and ran with it. And used it for productive effect. So in 1993 or 1994, whenever the last NRC study was made, the department was seven or eight. We made a huge difference. And I went back to the faculty, had absolutely no interest. I had done my thing. I think in any great department, every senior member of the faculty has a responsibility, is called upon, to serve as chair. Not for a long time, for a short
period of time and then get back to your work. And that is, the work of a professor, of a teacher and a scholar. And a public servant but primarily a teacher and a scholar. And that’s what I did. The Dean of the Social Sciences wanted to take a break but his break was to go to the School for Advanced Studies to do his own work. He wanted to continue his own scholarship. The School for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford for a year. And he and the Provost wondered if I would serve as the Dean for that year. I was so committed to the changes that were taking place, enhancing the quality of academic programs at UCLA at this time that I said, “Yes, I’ll do it.” And so I did that for whatever period of time it was. It was 15 months I guess, something of that sort, a summer and a year and a summer. And enjoyed it. We got a lot done. We didn’t lose a step from the time that David Sears was the Dean. Distinguished psychologist. From the time he left to go to Stanford until he came back and continued his work. But I went back to the faculty with absolutely no interest in academic administration. Well that’s not correct. With no plans to become an academic administrator or do anything else. But I kept getting inquiries. They just kept coming in. And certainly from the University of California system and also from other universities around the country. And I kept saying, “No, no, no. Not interested in doing it.” I was working on a book. This was a distraction. But then finally I talked with a few people and I talked with my wife, Willa, who had a senior position in Human Resources in the College of Letters and Sciences at UCLA. “Should we think about moving some place and taking a position?” Well we decided that we would look at things within the
University of California system. That’s all. It’s a big system, eight universities plus the medical school at UCSF at San Francisco. Not just the medical school but the whole health sciences. Quite an extraordinary institution. So we did that. And the Vice Chancellorship at UCLA came open. And I would like to think that they wanted to keep me at UCLA. And I was the outside candidate for the Provostship at Berkeley. There were two of us. An internal candidate up there, outstanding person. And I was offered the position. I might as well get these things on the record here. The position of kind of an executive Dean of the Arts and Sciences at Davis, which I declined. I was interested in going back to my alma mater but was not offered that position. That went to the internal candidate. And was offered the position at UCLA and I took it, and enjoyed it enormously.

Q. That’s what it’s all about, isn’t it?
A. It is. Enjoying it and feeling that you make a difference.

Q. What do you view as your significant administrative accomplishments during your tenure in that position at UCLA?
A. Enhancing the quality of the faculty. That is what I focused on, and that is what I loved to do. In the Political Science department first, then in the social sciences, and then for the University as a whole. I was not a Vice Chancellor for a long period of time. I was Vice Chancellor for Faculty Relations for one year, and Senior Vice Chancellor for two years, or something like that. But that was my focus. And then the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, not just faculty but also academic programs, primarily graduate programs. Professional programs and doctoral programs.
Q. Was there an administrative disappointment that you felt, or did things just go very well? What was the greatest administrative disappointment?

A. We reorganized the structure of the senior administration at UCLA. And it was not an optimum organization. The budget responsibilities of the Academic Vice Chancellor were not really what they should have been. And so that was something of a disappointment. That has subsequently been rectified and changed because the university is an academic institution that creates knowledge and funding needs to follow how best to create the finest knowledge. But that was something of a disappointment and one of the reasons that I was ready to do something else.

Q. After many years at UCLA, what factors were responsible for your return to OSU as Provost?

A. An enormous change. And there were a number of factors. Let me first say that there was no place, I don’t think there would have been anyplace outside of California that I would have gone to, [or] have taken an administrative position, other than my alma mater. That was the most important consideration. To be the Chief Academic Officer of the place that you graduated, that launched me in life, that gave so much to me, made all the difference in my life. I went to Berkeley and had a wonderful time at Berkeley as a doctoral student, but it was really here that I decided what I wanted to do and that I became who I am. So it was certainly worth exploring. I have family back here. All of my siblings are back here. Each of my siblings is back here. I wanted to come back and try to give something of what I had learned in the world to a place I love.
Q. Good reasons.

A. That’s why I came back. And it was a great position. Being a Provost at the Ohio State University is like being a Chancellor within the University of California for sure, or the President at most universities. It’s an extraordinary Provostship. There is no more challenging Provostship anywhere in higher education than here.

Q. The variety of programs.

A. The variety of programs. The complexity of the place. So everything was there and it was a great thing to do.

Q. Has the role of senior administrative positions changed during the ten-year period of UCLA and OSU?

A. The importance of funding has changed. It started to change before that but we have seen it played out during the last ten years, where public universities have changed. The University of California, the Ohio State University, from having close to two-thirds of their budget funded by the state to less than one-third being funded by the state. The importance of seeking external support, of convincing faculty. It’s not so important, it’s not been such a challenge in the medical sciences and some of the experimental sciences. But in the rest of the University to explain the importance and get faculty to become engaged in securing external support. It’s absolutely essential. And this is true not only in contracts and grants; it’s true in development campaigns. It’s also true in trying to devise, and this is something that has a certain economy to it, to capture the ownership of the intellectual property that we create. And where the University, in conjunction with the inventors and the discoverers, own that intellectual property. This is a
big change; it’s also one of the most critical challenges in higher education. Universities have more attentive publics than they did in the past. It used to be that the University was, in a sense, revered, unquestioned with respect to its performance.

Q. We’ve talked about changes that have occurred. Do you have any reaction to the Gee years? That’s not my question but it’s an important question.

A. Yes, it is an important question. I have not studiously read Miles’ book but I think that it captures the tenor of Gordon’s presidency. He was quite, I think, an extraordinary president and one of the things that made it so attractive to me, is that he was sort of hands off with respect to the Provost managing the University and leading a team of senior administrators of managing the University. The one thing that is missing, I think in the book, is a sense of the, and this is quite ironic as a matter of fact, a sense of the extraordinary academic accomplishments that occurred from the time Gordon started and when he left for Brown. It’s a book that looks more at the outside of the University than the University in its publics than the changes in the academic programs that occurred within the University during that time. And they were quite extraordinary. Attracted national attention, became models for other universities. But this is a book about the President and the President was a Mister Outside in the managing of the University but attentive to things that were going on in the University. But then there was Mister Inside or Mister and Mrs. Inside that really managed the University. So the book is, I think, a very fair and balanced portrayal of the activities of quite an extraordinary President. But there is part of the book that is yet to be written about the soul of
the University, the academic core of the University, the faculty, what they do, the
new things that they have accomplished, the extraordinary changes and the efforts
that went into changing the quality of our undergraduate student body, and the
way that we supported and invested in our undergraduate students as a
consequence of the recommendations that came from the King Report, the
Committee on the Undergraduate Experience, which perhaps we can talk about in
a while. But there are a few things missing there. But as these books go, it’s a
good book.

Q. Well let’s go on to the next one. One of the many changes during the Gee years
was the official establishment of benchmarking institutions. How did that come
about and why did it include non-Big Ten institutions?

A. Good question. Why did it come about? It came about primarily as a way of
discovering information and compiling information about major institutions of
higher education in the country. And also to have some, to have a way of
comparing at a particular point in time where we are on a number of indices of
performance compared to other institutions. Why non-Big Ten? This is a
national University. This is a national University. It is not a University only of
the Midwest. It is not a University just as [of] Ohio. One of the things that I’ve
always been concerned about is the way that, there is a tendency for us to
compare ourselves with other universities within the state. That’s not the
comparison. You are a big time national University, and that’s where we are and
we should be closer to the forefront of those universities. National. And I don’t
care whether they’re public or private. We have plenty of healthy and wonderful
competition among public universities and it’s more reasonable for us to compare ourselves with public universities. There is a danger with benchmarking. And that is, that it’s sort of a regression to the mean, phenomenon that occurs here. That if you’re doing pretty good you can become satisfied. And that’s just not acceptable. You also cannot look at what other great institutions are thinking about, because all institutions are on the move or should be. And to do better, to be more effective, to change themselves, to make tough choices. So if we focus upon benchmarking too much, the next time we have a benchmark and we haven’t been looking at what others are doing, we can find ourselves slipping even though we have been trying to do better. But it’s a good starting point. There is the old saw that I started early on in academic administration. That universities study everything except themselves. We don’t know enough about ourselves and we are one of the great institutions in human affairs, universities. One of the most important institutions in human affairs. There are governments, very important institutions. There are religious institutions, very important institutions. Long lived institutions. And there are academic institutions. So we have to study ourselves in order to decide what we can best do to make a difference in the public good.

Q. Restructuring was a major focus in the early years of the Gee administration. Some colleges did it; others did not. Can you provide some overview of the process and the expectations?

A. That’s a very important question. Let me start with this observation. When I decided to come back as Provost there was not a budget crises. Within a month
after I decided to come back and had been invited to come back and responded positively, was honored to have been invited to be the Provost of the Ohio State University, there was a huge budget crisis. I became Provost effective August 1, 1993, and that was a Sunday. On August 2, every college had been mandated to provide a budget reduction plan. And my first responsibility was to cut the budgets of all colleges within the University. So I spent, I must say I did not sleep an awful lot during the first year that I was here. Then, shortly after that, we found that there was an even more severe budget problem, and that we would have to plan for an additional, I forget what it was, five or seven percent budget reduction that very year. The same year, FY 1994, that is the 1993-94 academic year. And there had been budget reductions before this, a couple of years before this. I decided that it would be just unacceptably irresponsible to conduct budget reductions in a way that was ad hoc rather than principled. And we had to do this in a thorough and systematic way. So what I decided to do was to use cash for a short period of time to meet budget shortfalls. But then I invited all academic units to give me a plan of where they would take fourteen percent of their continuing funds budget and how they would reallocate that to invest in their highest priority programs, looking to the future in a way, and how they would restructure their units to enable them to bring out the best of their faculty, to create the finest programs, to support the finest programs, to invest in new programs, in joint programs, in a way that help[ed] move Ohio State further to the forefront of the great universities of this country. And I decided that this was something that there had to be discussion about this. It’s not something that can
be imposed, could not be imposed from on high. The President and the Provost
don’t and can never know enough, can never know enough to structure the
University the way that it should be without the voice of deans, department chairs
and faculty. So what we did was to create an oversight committee, a joint
oversight committee with the University Senate that was composed of faculty,
academic administrators, and students to review all plans and to hear voices of
dissent as well as voices of applause. And then the Provost made the decision as
to what should be done. The major restructuring occurred in professional schools,
in the College of Engineering, in which there was a considerable recombination of
departments and programs. And the same in the College of Agriculture. There
was change in Human Ecology. Also reorganization in the College of Education.
There was some reorganization and change in departments within the Colleges of
the Arts and Sciences. But there was less reorganization and change than there
was in a number of the professional schools. It was also essential, it seemed to
me, it was absolutely essential, because with any recombination of administrative
recombination, where we have tenured members of the faculty, we still pay
salaries. The only saving that can be secured immediately is to reduce staff. We
do not have security of employment. And some do have security of employment
in a sense, in civil service. But it would take an enormous period of time to
accrue the savings that were necessary to meet this budget shortfall. So the only
way to do it, would be to have an early retirement incentive program that was
thoroughly thought through, so that every Dean in the University developed a
plan. He or she didn’t know exactly who would take early retirement, but we had
a pretty good idea. We plotted what the savings would be over a five year period, and then we had a plan about how new faculty, young faculty primarily but some senior faculty, would be recruited to take the place of those who left. And this was over a period of four years. And also, the recruitment of faculty in highest priority areas. But also obviously in some areas, there’s some areas that may not be the highest priority areas but are also critical for the academic programs of a college or a department. And so faculty had to be replaced there. But this was all part of a rather large complex plan of, even as we were cutting the budget to invest in our future, and invest in ways that would give us a kind of a leap in programs that could bring us to the forefront.

Q. Was there any thought of eliminating programs?

A. There was, and there were some small programs that were eliminated. But with the elimination of programs, it’s a long term. It’s an avenue for long term savings. It’s not like a corporation where one can say, “Okay, we’re going to divest ourselves of a particular college and sell it to a competitor. We’re going to sell the College of Mathematical and Physical Sciences to the University of Michigan.” And we get paid for it. We can disestablish a program but it takes a long period of time for students to complete because you have contractual obligations to students, to complete their education. And this is something that universities should do as a regular practice, not in crisis financial situations. It is a matter of serious and solemn thought, which brings me to another important point. I think it is an important point. Universities, every university, every college wants to be a university. Every university wants to be an Ohio State.
Every university in the State of Ohio wants to be like Ohio State University, funded like Ohio State University, have all the programs that Ohio State University does, and as many students as the Ohio State University has. Maybe not quite as many students but to become a large university. Higher education cannot afford this anymore. We are seeing here at Ohio State, as the land grant university, and we are the land grant university of the State of Ohio and it is a proud tradition. To offer access to the sons and daughters of the agricultural and manufacturing classes, I think something like that is the wording, in the enabling legislation. We have a responsibility to have an enormously diverse campus and student body community. But in this state and it’s not just Ohio, it’s practically every state, there is a plethora of institutions in higher education. And there are doors of access that didn’t exist in 1970 here in Ohio, that didn’t exist at the time that other major universities were created in different states. So we at Ohio State, there are other universities that share this land grant tradition, or land grant responsibility. Other universities, no matter how much they are going to invest, cannot become first-class comprehensive universities. We have duplications in law schools in this state. We have duplications in medical schools in this state. And so the whole system needs to be restructured. It’s sort of ironic that that state calls upon particular institutions to restructure themselves and become more efficient, which we should do. We cannot do at Ohio State do everything that we have in the past. No university can and it needs to be a part of our institutional psyche to understand that we have to be constantly vigilant about this and review and make decisions about programs over time. The next five years, ten years,
twenty years, fifty years, but the same thing has to be done with respect to the whole system of higher education, not just in Ohio but every state of the union that I am familiar with. I think that the restructuring also occurred within academic support units. We cut 20% of the budget in academic support units. We combine a variety of functional units, and I think they have become, they are just efficient, if not more efficient and it’s cost, at least for a while, far less, because we had the savings in hand. You know Al, another thing that we had to do, was we faced a 42+ million dollar deficit in cash, not just in continuing funds, in cash. And that was also part of, not so much a part of restructuring but a part of the budget reduction process. And it was concentrated in a few areas. But that’s another thing that the Vice Chancellor of Finance, Bill Shkurti and I, spent an enormous amount of time dealing with.

Q. According to the Barroway book, the Kellogg Commission was a driving force for change on campus, especially regarding the undergraduate experience. Can you comment from your perspective as a former student as well as Provost?

A. I certainly can and from my perspective as a former student, the intent of the Kellogg Commission certainly was to return the University to what I experienced I think as an undergraduate student. But Ohio State was ahead of the Kellogg Commission. The Kellogg Commission was established in what, 1996. As a matter of fact, the work of the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience here at Ohio State had a huge impact on the studies of the Kellogg Commission. We had already started doing what the Kellogg Commission was talking about. Now one of the interesting things here, is that Gordon, Gordon Gee, President Gee, was
the chair of the Kellogg Commission. One of the first things that the Kellogg Commission did was to ask the Provosts in the Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, to provide advise to study and provide advice and reports to the Kellogg Commission, to help them define their work. Well, the Provost asked me to be the chair of this, I had been the chair of the National Council of Provosts, and this was the next year as I recall, when I stepped aside as being chair. But I chaired this ad hoc committee of provosts to advise the Kellogg commission. And we provided five reports on each of the areas that were addressed by the Kellogg Commission. And there was a lot of Ohio State in that. So I think that certainly the intent of the Kellogg Commission was to do what, to change the character of the campus community, to develop greater attention to undergraduate programs. But alas, it is on shelves and not read. And in itself, has not had the impact that local reviews, where you invested in doing something important, can really make a difference. It just didn’t have the impact. Presidents can enunciate things, write reports, and it gets great press, but has minimal consequence. And that’s unfortunately, I think, as much as I loved the work of the Kellogg Commission, believed in it, tried to as long as I was the Provost and even when I was the Interim President, to urge that presidents take this and provosts take this, and make it a part of the discussion on their campuses. It never happened.

Q. That’s an interesting and damning comment, isn’t it? But a true one.

A. Certainly interesting.

Q. What was your working relationship with Gordon Gee like?
A. It was wonderful. It was a joy to work with him. When I came here, it was at sort of a branch point in his presidency. He’d gone through a difficult personal time. He also wanted to spend a greater amount of his energies in dealing with external constituencies to the University. We were also thinking of a big development campaign and that takes an enormous amount of a President’s time. The President, only the President, the Provost can’t run a development campaign, Presidents run development campaigns. But let me comment on the role of Provosts in the development of development campaigns. So during the first year he and I were joined at the hip in the restructuring process, although I had responsibility for it. Gordon, I discussed things with Gordon consistently. And he discussed things with me. So this was a joint operation, though I had full responsibility for making the decisions and doing it. But after the first year, he, I think, felt comfortable with me as the second guy and felt more comfortable spending more time dealing with external constituencies. And they are important and they are powerful. That includes Office of the Governor. It includes the General Assembly, both houses of the General Assembly. It includes a number of professional associations around the state, who have an interest in higher education, what the Ohio State University does. It includes an enormous alumni association. It includes an extraordinary, an extraordinary cadre of donors to the University, who open their wallets for this University. And it was at the time that we developed the development campaign. Gordon and I met every week, and then the last couple of years we would take off a day and sequester ourselves periodically and have a long, well not so much a long, but a very meaty agenda.
So that we would be able to discuss things without interference. Not interference, but without interruption. And he was just fun to be with. He had a wonderful sense of humor. He elevated the spirits of those around him, and there was buoyancy. He brought buoyancy. He is quite extraordinary in that way.

Q. The second thing really relates to the first. Did his interest and time devoted in relating to the entire community in Ohio influence your role as Provost?

A. Yes. Absolutely. I was pretty much given responsibility for managing the affairs of the University. But in a team-like way, in a team-like way. If one goes through the things that we did, they will find, for example in creating the selective investment program, in creating that, although it was really the Provost’s initiative, it was done jointly with the Vice President for Research. The Committee on the Undergraduate Experience, Provost’s idea, Provost’s initiative, but it was doing jointly with the Vice President of Student Affairs. Financial things. You can’t do them. It has to be done jointly with the Chief Financial Officer, with the Vice President for Finance. So it was a team effort. As a matter of fact, we created a Coordinating Council, in which a lot of these things were discussed. So everybody, the top administration, including deans, had a voice on these matters. But it was a team effort but at the end of the day, the buck stopped with the Provost.

Q. The next one is, what do you see as the key challenges facing public universities such as OSU?

A. Funding is critical. Absolutely critical. Assuring that students are attended in discovering themselves and discovering knowledge. That’s absolutely essential.
This is what prompted the creation of the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience. The Undergraduate Experience is more than just the classroom. But faculty student relations, engagements, intellectual exchange outside the classroom. To assure that the University is totally a learning environment. That’s a major challenge of the University. Another challenge is to set priorities and stick with them, be sort of versatile and flexible. You have to because the terrain is always changing around you and you have to be able to adapt. But to set priorities and decide where it is that you can make the most important contributions for the public good. And when I say the public good I include the creation of knowledge as well as the dissemination of knowledge that helps us understand the world and makes life better for people. Those are the great challenges. I suppose the last one is to be able to communicate what we do in an effective way to the variety of publics that attend us. And to do it in a way that is not contradictory. Different things have to be explained to the different publics in different ways. And that is a real challenge, a fundamental challenge.

Q. Public universities including OSU are and will continue to experience decreasing financial support from state government. And yet demands upon institutions are increasing. Has the University administration responded adequately and appropriately to that?

A. I think the University has responded the best it possibly can. This certainly was a fort of Gordon Gee, President Gee, of Brit Kirwin, and I think of Karen Holbrook as well. There are limits on the sources of funding for a university. There is the state. There are contracts and grants. There is tuition. And there is the other
range in development activities. That’s the range of funding for the University. The creation of revenue streams from things that are invented within the University. On the other side of the coin, is cutting the costs of the University. And that is a long term, all of these are long term issues. And that is to decide what things that we might like to do, but decide that we won’t be able to do. And the savings that are accrued there, for the slowing of cost increases, are multi-year affairs. But this is where hopefully the President of The Ohio State University, will be here for a reasonably long period of time, where there will be a Provost here for a period of time that can conduct the kinds of reviews that are essential to put initiatives like that in place. It takes time and it takes commitment, and it takes the same people there to carry it through.

Q. Do you feel that there have been too many discontinuities?
A. Absolutely, especially in the office of Provost. And I was the second longest serving Provost, I think I’m still the second longest serving Provost in the history of the University. The Provostship is not a career position. It isn’t something, it’s in a sense not like a dean of a medical school which is sort of the apex of one’s career I suppose. And where there are deans that continue for fairly long periods of time. Or where presidents, at least in the past, have been in their position for a period of time. Or where they move from presidency to presidency. Provosts don’t move from provostships to provostships. You don’t do that. You either become a president or you return to the faculty. That’s what one does. Like deans. You’re still an academic if you’re a Provost.
Q. Do you think we’re attracting people in the Provost position that aspire to presidency?

A. Well it seems to have been the case here at Ohio State. I think most of the Provosts have gone on to become Presidents. That certainly, I would bet that over 50%, I don’t know whether this is true or not. But from the time John Corbally was Provost in the late 60’s, I bet 50% or more of the Provosts have gone on to Presidencies. Certainly from the time of Ann Reynolds. And John Huber, who was Provost just before I became Provost, Interim Provost. She knew that she was just going to do it for a year because there was a search on. So that wouldn’t have counted. Let me take the opportunity to make this remark right now. When I came back as Provost everybody thought I was going to leave within two years. I came back here because I wanted to do something here at the Ohio State University. I had no interest in becoming University President.

Q. You and Al Kuhn were the exception.

A. Al Kuhn and I are the exceptions. You’re right. I think that is right, Al Kuhn and I. And I think both of us are academics. And he returned to doing things. I returned to doing things. I must say that there are certain appeals of the presidency. Maybe we can talk about those at some time. But they’re not overwhelming appeals. They were not overwhelming in my case.

Q. I think that question you’ve already talked about a little bit, how should universities prioritize their various missions.

A. It has to be, it’s a constant process. It’s a constant review. There are very few universities that do this. Northwestern does it and they have established priorities
a point of what they’re not going to do and they’ve disestablished programs. That’s very difficult to do. Just very difficult to do. But they have done it. And it’s a constant process. It’s a constant review process with that in mind. We don’t do that.

Q. Do you think you could do that at a state university?

A. It would be very difficult. It’s very difficult. It’s very difficult to do that. I tell you, I made comments that I thought were very innocent when I first came back, and I had incoming mortar fire from places that I didn’t know existed. It’s just different being a state university, but still a state university has to do it. I mean, we have to do that. It just has to be done. Programmatic review, constant programmatic review, and it has to involve strong members of the faculty.

Q. There is a direction, especially in professional science and engineering programs, both faculty contributing increasingly to their own salaries through clinical work, grants and contracts. Do you think [this] is a desirable trend, and how do you think institutions should respond?

A. This is a troubling concern. I think that in certain areas it’s appropriate for faculty to supplement some of their salary through contracts and grants. If every member of the faculty, and clinical work, if every member of the faculty has to do that, I think the quality of our programs is going to decline. I’m reminded, I don’t remember what department it is, I think it may have been Pathology at the University of California in San Francisco, where there was, it’s a leading department. Whichever department it is, I can’t recall which department that I was told about by a member of the academic leadership at that institution. But
what they did, was to have certain faculty whose primary responsibility was clinical. Other faculty, but not exclusively clinical, other faculty, whose primary responsibility was teaching, though not exclusively though. And another segment of the faculty, whose responsibility was primarily research, but not exclusively so. Everybody had to do something of something else. So there was a network here. One of the finest universities or departments, whatever this department was, in the country, but everyone was advanced on the basis of the performance within that rubric that they were primarily responsible for. And so some of the clinical income was used to support those who were teaching. Some of the funding from grants, overhead from grants, was used to support activities of those who were teaching. So it was, I can see this kind of mix. But when it is spread across the board, nobody is going to be doing what they can do best.

Q. What is your view regarding the maintenance of tenure as we have known it?

A. I suppose I’m a bit old fashioned here. I am committed to the idea of tenure for the support of freedom of inquiry. One of the most important things within a university, and this [is] certainly true, perhaps even more true of public universities, that faculty should be able to pursue research wherever their minds take them. They should also have the freedom to teach what they choose, in the way that they choose, with the text that they choose. There are certain limits with respect to that. That is, that it’s the lecture hall, seminar room, cannot be a soap box. There has to be compelling evidence that is verifiable compelling evidence that is marshaled in the defense of arguments. And arguments have to be open to contestation in the classroom and without. One of the problems of tenures have
been found particularly in medical schools and that has to do with the proportion of time, when faculty support part of their salary from clinical practice or from grant support. The University has to be prepared, or the faculty member has to be prepared, to have only a partial part of the salary committed to the tenured position and it has to be a very clear contractual arrangement. Or the University has to be prepared to make up the difference in the case that grant support is not forthcoming, or clinical practice declines. So this is a very, very important issue. I think it was [at] MIT a number of years, the supporting tenured positions almost exclusively on grants and funding started to decline. And so there was a real rush to decrease the number of positions through attrition. And I think perhaps they may have had to call upon endowment funds. But this is a critical, critical issue. Most recently this has visited the University of Minnesota. And this was a number of years ago. And the Board of Trustees, the Board of Regents, whatever the governing authority is there, seriously considered abolishing tenure at the university. But it was, I think, a misguided direction on their part, and ultimately this was not done.

Q. Managing For the Future Task Force was a major initiative. What appeared to work and what didn’t, and please reference responsibilities-based management.

A. The Managing for the Future Task Force had several reports. I read them all before I came back and I thought they were very good reports. I think the most important consequence of these reports was getting universities themselves to look at themselves more closely, and we certainly did that here at Ohio State. Also, one of the mandates was to create a mission and vision and mission
statement, and the important part of that at Ohio State was not so much the report itself, but the discussions that went into coming up with the report. It was like sort of a campus debate. Not everybody got involved in it but it was like a campus debate. Much like restructuring, the review of restructuring within the University, was a campus debate. And in a sense it contributed to the campus discovering itself. The University discovering itself. Particularly the faculty discovering who we are and what the range of all of us do. Responsibility based management. I initiated this, a review of the responsibility based management here at Ohio State, in the sense that it seemed to me important that we use this as a way of finding out how much it costs us to do things. And to have a more systematic understanding of what the cost of different activities and functions within the University is. It can be taken to an extreme in the sense that everything becomes entrepreneurial within the University. And that every little, there are a lot of tiny little tubs and every tiny little tub is on its own bottom.

Q. Do you think that’s a good idea?

A. It’s only a good idea when there are subventions that can be used to support intellectual pursuit without which a university would not be one. And that is where it’s very important for the provosts, for deans, to have a substantial tax or tithe that is used for supporting things of this sort. Maybe this is my generation, I can’t imagine a university without a Department of Philosophy, without philosophers. And it would be very difficult for a Department of Philosophy as one example, to pay to have fine philosophers on the faculty. There are some of our finest students within the University who major in philosophy. They go on to
do extraordinary things. It’s a very, very small sample, but those who major in philosophy and go on to medical school become some of the finest physicians. It’s just a quality of mind. And so this has to be attended to. It was not attended [to] at Indiana University, which was one of the first [to] adopt responsibility-centered management, which is for anyone who is listening to this at anytime, is in a sense the creation of a free market. It’s creating within any university an unregulated market, in which only those departments that get grants and students and a certain number are going to survive. The others disappear, like so many firms disappear in the free market.

Q. Survival of the funded.

A. Survival of the funded, that’s right. Not of the fittest even, but of the funded. That’s quite good. It is in the end those responsibility based budgeting systems that are going to work for the betterment of universities. Are going to be those that are [a] just system in which one just looks at the budgeting process a bit differently. But the allocation of funds will not be that much different. Wisdom, judgment, has to play a compelling role in this.

Q. Do you perceive the OSU diversity plan as successful in the recruitment of racial and ethnic minorities? Does diversity encompass diversity of ideas?

A. Diversity certainly, well diversity as it’s normally employed, has not attended diversity of ideas. It’s just assumed that a university is a place of diversity of ideas, and there has to be a diversity of ideas. If there isn’t a diversity of ideas in a university, where in the world can there be a diversity of ideas?

Q. There have been some very successful economic departments, very monolithic.
A. That is true. That is right.

Q. And do the favor to the students by not having a diversity of ideas as well as diversity.

A. Yes, but usually in economics departments where there is not a great diversity of ideas, there are other areas on the campus where there are economists of other stripes, whether it be in a business school or whether it be in a law school. I’m thinking of University of Chicago of course. UCLA also was referred to, where I spent 25 years, the Economics Department there was often referred to as Chicago West. But there was, they were in a sense a divided department. They had arguments about how you do economics. But that’s a kind of a, sort of an extreme example, economics departments. But then there are certain other areas that fit there too. But on the whole, it is unhealthy, I think, to have a methodological or an academically ideological straight jacket in departments.

With respect to racial and ethnic minorities, I think our plan is a very fine one. I think it is a good one. I think we have made considerable progress with this plan. And it’s been a plan that has not just started four years ago or five years ago. What Brit did, Brit Kirwin did, President Kirwin did, was to say, “I want this to be a visible high priority.” And that was a wonderful thing he did. But it was a priority before. And it was a priority for Gordon and me. It was a priority for Ed Jennings and the provost that served with him. Because it was under his leadership that the faculty hiring assistant program was created at Ohio State. And Gordon and I rejuvenated that a bit and developed a plan for expanding funding for minority students. But what President Kirwin did was to really firm it
all up. And I think that the stats show that Ohio State is probably among the most successful in recruiting foreign and minority students. There’s a troublesome part to this. And it has nothing to do with Affirmative Action. That’s not what I’m talking about. What I’m talking about is smaller minorities, in areas in which an institution would want to recruit but in a sense does a disservice to the students. For example, maybe the American students. I think that it’s as hard, I know that it was very hard, for some students who came here from the southwest to study, where there isn’t a support structure and a center of mass of students, a community of students, in which students feel comfortable. Where students feel comfortable. Where you can share feelings and experiences almost without speaking. And I think that if a university is going to, there has to be a fundamental commitment to have a real program for students. Otherwise, it’s not fair to the students. But there certainly have to be universities that do it and thank God there are.

Q. Please characterize your relationship with the University Senate. Do you think it’s been an effective body at the institution of government? And I’d add, if not, what do you think needs to occur?

A. My relationship was a very positive one with the University Senate. I was active in the Senate from my role as Provost and of course as Interim President. I met with leaders of the Senate regularly, at least once a month, and visited with Senate Committees on a regular basis as well. And [I] discussed substantive things with committees of the Senate. Every big initiative that I had in mind, I talked with the Senate first. Those discussions were part of the development of these initiatives.
And in one case I didn’t have much support but we went ahead with it. That was selective investment. But still, there were full discussions about it. Very interesting. There is a leveling, a fear of loss, not of gain, of less. It really is very interesting. A fear that if you’re going to allocate things in a selective way, I’m going to be the loser. I just don’t want to accept the risk of being a loser as opposed to I welcome the opportunity to have the risk of being a winner. And there’s something cultural about this. There’s a cultural quality about this, about us here.

Q. It’s supposed to be an elitist place; doesn’t want to leave.

A. That’s right, that’s right. But in any event, I think that sums it up right there. In terms of the character of the Senate, I did not quite appreciate the structure of the University Senate when I came back. Because I had come from a system where there was a powerful academic Senate. It was an institution of the faculty.

Q. Well this had become diluted and was no longer the institution of a faculty.

A. The faculty has a strong voice in the University Senate, but it is not the voice of the faculty. It is not an institution of the faculty. Its President is the President of the University. In most institutions where there is a strong faculty governance, the chair of the senate is a member of the faculty. Now there have been many chairs of academics, of senates, who become Presidents and Chancellors. But institutionally it’s …

Q. Do you think it should become the Faculty Senate rather than the University Senate?
A. It would be very, very difficult to do. I think that the most important thing is to encourage the finest and strongest faculty to participate in the Senate here. In retrospect, I would have been more comfortable working with a senate that was a senate of the faculty. I had other forums to work with, the administrative leadership. I had a Council of Deans and there was a Coordinating Council and an Executive Committee. Met with leaders of student government on a regular basis. I think it’s important ultimately, I think Al ultimately, if the faculty is going to be one of the greatest faculties in the country, there will have to be more faculty governance.

Q. But you see the whole structure now where entrepreneurship is more important than being on the senate.

A. That is a very harsh rub.

Q. Okay. Describe your role as Interim President. Were your expectations of the position different from your experiences?

A. That’s a good one. This was a defining moment for me. Deciding to be in the Interim President. It’s not the greatest position in the world. But I decided that, I shouldn’t say I, my wife and I decided that we did not want to leave Ohio State; that we wanted to stay here in Columbus, at Ohio State. And that we were not, and I had entertained some presidential searches, the most important one being the University of Texas. And I withdrew from that in order to be Interim President here at the Ohio State University. It was, in one way, a great experience, in the sense that I really found out this early what the role of the President was. I had worked with quite an extraordinary President and I had seen
Chancellor Young operate at UCLA. Two very, very different people but two extraordinary leaders in their own way. And so it was good in that way. It was difficult in the following way. That is, to establish a permanence of authority during the transition. And there were fewer people at one or some point in the process that were involved in the transition. I was head of the transition team. It included members of the Board of Trustees, from the time that Gordon announced he was going to leave. That was in the summer, in June of whatever it was, 1997. And it included executive deans and it included other senior administrators. It was a small, small group. Gordon was still President but he was starting to think about leaving. So during this period of time, until I became the Interim President in the first part of December as I recall, there was this transition team that was really for all practical purposes running everything. But also the President. So I had the responsibility of coordinating with Gordon about everything, but also continuing to manage even more than I had before, and keeping all of the major groups connected and comfortable as they could be in the transition. Cause it’s a disruptive process. And this was going to be a long transition. It’s not a President who decided to leave and then he’s gone in four months. This was an eight-month proposition. Then, when I became Interim President, the President was still here and was not assuming the presidency there, as I recall, [until] sometime in January. So there was that kind of duality. There was another duality after Brit was named the President. And so part of my job as Interim President, not to just be the President and run the place but also to continue to do a lot of the provostial things as well, although Ed Ray was a very, very able Senior Vice Provost, who
was the Acting Provost, did a superb job I thought. But then to keep things, to manage things in such a way that it would be also comfortable and prepare the way for the new President. Then the Chair of the Board of Trustees was very active at this time, Alex Shumate, [an] extraordinarily able person and deeply devoted to the best for this University. But assuming a role as a head of a committee to primarily manage external affairs. So as Interim President, I was not just President of the University but also managing these other, not curiosities but centers of interested authority in this transitional period. It’s not the kind of thing one wants to do for a long time. And I think that was a good test of being a President for me. A good taste of being a President.

Q. The next two are really connected. Which of the administrative decisions at OSU do you think are especially noteworthy and will have a significant impact on the future? Are there any administrative decisions you made at OSU, which in retrospect you wish you had made differently?

A. In terms of decisions that I made that I think have had an impact and will make a difference, are selective investment. And this was done in conjunction with a program called Academic Enrichment. They were conceived as twins and I also conceived them out of the restructuring process. The first one that I put in place was Academic Enrichment. And this was a program, a competitive process, that was primarily focused on interdisciplinary activity. And funds up to $150,000 were allocated to this. But also required matching funds. So it really yielded up to $300,000, in some cases more. In some cases all continuing funds. In some cases part cash and part continuing funds. But the idea was to create, not to
create, [but] in some cases to elevate existing programs, interdisciplinary programs. In other cases to create them in a way that would bring synergy between existing academic unit[s], poor academic units. Selective investment was to invest in colleges, departments, programs that were excellent already. But had they had to have some kind of interdisciplinary connectedness to other academic units. So it was going in two different ways. And the idea of this was to do things where we had potential to become elevated in the quality of what we do, where outstanding faculty were committed to seeing this through, and to being reviewed on how they did at different times. These funds, there were new funds, absolutely new funds, that came to the University that were allocated for this purposes, and part of it came from a tax that I imposed on all units. So there was a redistribution of funds to a certain extent. In all cases there had to be matching funds. Deans had to come up with money; chairs had to come up with money; faculty had to come up with money out of grants or whatever. In the case of the academic enrichment or the selective investment, the allocations were up to half a million dollars. Then there was matching funds. So there was some that made a difference. Another thing that I hope makes a difference, and I think that it has, (and it comes out of my own experience as a student) was the recommendations out of the Committee on the Undergraduate Experience. And to make sort of a short hand for this, to make the total experience of our students a learning one, from particular knowledge through social activity to leadership experiences. And another part of that was to enhance the quality of our undergraduate student body. As we enhanced the character of our faculty, we attract better and better graduate
students, professional students. We also should attract finer undergraduate students. So considerable pressure was committed to this. But I found it unacceptable that we had a new SAT score of entering students around 21. I think that I made this a mandate in a statement to the University Senate that I expected at a certain point in time, I forget what it was, that we would have a new score of the entering class, the SAT score, of 27. Of 27. I knew that was a stretch but I wanted to get people’s attention and I did. And this last class, this entering class, this year, 2003, is 25.5. It’s a combination of things. And we worked on it and we worked on it. But I think that’s something that I’m very proud of.

Restructuring the University I think, it’s not so obvious now. It’s ancient history. But I think that that, if one were to do a study of the University over the last 20 years, ten years from now over the last 20 years, I think that will show up.

Another thing is the elements of the academic plan. We have, I think, a very good academic plan. Much of what had been done previously as a part of that academic plan. But I decided that at a retreat, we were talking about what this University wants to be and how we set goals and objectives. And I came up with two things at this retreat that we should really do. Twenty-ten and 2010. Ten of our departments, at least ten of our departments, in the top ten nationally in 2010. And that another 20 of our departments in the top 20. Thus, 2010 and 2010. This came from what was it, what in the world was it? The idea of, there was a chapter in this book, Collins, Jim Collins. Big, hairy, audacious goals. And what he and his co-author had done was to look at companies that had made a huge difference by taking a risk and stretching. So I said, “We’ll do this.” I don’t know how this
next one is played out. But graduation rates. Part of increasing the quality of our students, the graduation rates are going to have to improve. Otherwise, we’re doing a terribly, unacceptable job of educating our students. And that is, 80 in 08. Eighty percent of our, within six years, the six-year graduation rate, being 80% in 2008. Now we’re getting there. We’re moving in that direction. But all of this [is] what brought me back here in the first place. To help bring this institution, this alma mater of mine, smack dab in the forefront of public teaching research universities. Unquestionably in the forefront. Unmovably out of the forefront of the finest universities in this land.

Q. We’ll tap those goals.
A. Oh it is.

Q. Are there any administrative decisions you made which, in retrospect, you wish you had made differently? That can be difficult.
A. That’s a difficult one. I think that if I would have been more aggressive, if I had known more to have restructured a bit more during that first year. But there was so much that was coming all at once and there was so much to learn, that it would be very difficult. It can backfire and then you can do nothing. Then you can do nothing. But in retrospect, and this is a retrospective question, if I knew then what I know now, there are a couple of things that I would have pushed on real hard, and they would have made a difference.

Q. Would you care to comment about any other administrative issues?
A. I think we’ve covered them.
Q. At the end of your interim presidency, what influence had persuaded you not to return to the provost position?

A. Good. I had committed to Gordon that I would serve as Provost as long as he was the President of the University. And at the time I became Provost he had anticipated being here longer than he was. So I thought that it would be a seven or eight year Provostship. I had no plans of leaving to go to any other institution at all. I mean I had come home. And at my age you don’t move to do things like that. And I had wanted to return to the faculty. My plan had always been to retire as a professor and I have, as a professor. I entered this world as a professor. I wanted to leave this world as a professor. And there was another instrumental calculation. And that was, President Kirwin came here, just about my age I think, a year younger than I. It was not going to be a long, long presidency. It might have been a five-year presidency. I thought it would have been a five-year presidency but not much beyond that. I did not want to continue for a long term or a second term as Provost. If I had stayed on for an additional year, it would have made a national search difficult because anybody who would be thinking about coming here as a Provost would also be wondering how long the President is going to be here. And if you take on a Provostship, I feel, it’s important, or the kind of Provost that I would have want to recruit, would be somebody that’s going to be there with me, and that we can make a difference, make a real difference. That’s it’s not a step in the career pattern of this person, but it is a step in the career pattern of the institution, of the University. So I would not have
done it for seven years. So I decided this was a good time to step aside, and also
give the President an opportunity to choose someone.

Q. Did you consider leaving OSU at the conclusion of the Interim Presidency?
A. No, no. Not at all. This was home.

Q. You had become significantly involved in the Encyclopedia of the Midwest.
What prompted you to undertake this project? As you can see, I didn’t know very
much about that.
A. Roots. Initially when I was approached to see if I would be interested in doing it,
I said, “No. I don’t want to take on anything that has, that is going to absorb a lot
of my time in a way that I really don’t have control over it. I want to return to the
faculty to do research and to teach.” But then a month after I had been
approached. I had been thinking about it. And I’m a Midwesterner. I taught that
way. I breathe the air that way. Midwestern things resonate from me. And this
would be a fun way of really discovering where I’d come from. So I agreed to do
that. If I knew then what I know now, I’m not sure I would have agreed. It is a
monstrous project. But it will be worthwhile. It is worthwhile. And I’m enjoying
it. It will be published in 2005, The Encyclopedia of the American Midwest and
will be a reference that can be used by anyone from eight to eighty and beyond.
And will be used by all inquiring people, from middle school to the academy.

Q. That sounds like a very important project.
A. There’s stuff in this encyclopedia that really sings.

Q. The next question is one that really interests me. Ed Jennings and Al Kuhn
returned to the faculty after completing senior administrative decisions. Do you
think in the future, because of financial disincentives, it will be possible for other
senior administrators to return to the faculty? And in a sense, to feel, while they
are in administration, that they’re really still part of the faculty.

A. Yes. It will be less common, and it will be more difficult for the most senior
members of the administration to return to the faculty. And I doubt if very many
will. I think that it’s extremely important, however, for a substantial proportion of
academic leaders, and here I’m talking about deans to return to the faculty. There
is an extraordinarily important role to those who have served in academic
administrative positions, when they return to the faculty, to provide insights into
the way that the University runs to their faculty, and to play other leadership
positions. I think with respect to the question that we were just discussing and I
was commenting upon, having to do with senior administrators returning to the
faculty, financially it may be a problem. But I think that it’s important that a
number of senior administrators need to return to the faculty. Deans need to
return to the faculty, because it provides a reservoir of knowledge and information
that is vitally important for the welfare of the University community. And it also
I think keeps academic administrators, University leaders, sensitive to the
interests of the faculty just by anticipating that they are going to return. And it’s
not in an instrumental sense, but to have them, that they remind themselves that
their soul is still there.

Q. But it’s very difficult if you’ve not maintained your academic skills and
scholarship.

A. It is very difficult. It is very difficult.
Q. Teaching is possible but to maintain your academic skills in terms of scholarship.

A. That is difficult and it is particularly difficult in the sciences. Things move so fast. It’s difficult in my own field, in political science. And it does take time. But it was very interesting and I’m very gratified that, a year after I stepped down, within a year after I stepped down as a Provost, I was invited to serve as co-chair of the national annual meetings of the American Political Science Association. A young colleague of mine and I decided we really wanted to do something with this to make a difference. And we created an a number of panels in which there was a single paper presented by a distinguished member of the field, which reviewed the natural history, the development of fundamental findings, the debates, the puzzles, the contestations, in twelve different areas of political science. And then there were commentators who wrote mini-papers about this, that were standalone papers for all practical purposes. Two volumes had been published out of that. And I also, as I indicated, it does take time and you have to have an inclination in this way, but a former student of mine, my last doctoral student, who now has an endowed chair at Berkeley and I, conducted a national survey of public opinion towards having to do with public authority in India. Seven thousand interviews in eleven different languages. And we will be writing a book on the political mind of India.

Q. Wonderful.

A. So it’s possible to do it, even when you retire from a position of Provost at age 61 or Interim President, whatever I was at that time.
Q. This leads into the next one. You’ve had a long and successful career in political science relative to India and Pakistan. What has given you the greatest satisfaction in this professional area.

A. I think it’s been in doing the research. Doing the research is easier than writing up the research. That is hard but that is also fun to do. But I think the most, the funnest thing that I did, was the interviewing of all the principal decision makers in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who were alive at the time I was doing this study with the College of Berkeley. Dealing with the countdown for the Bangladesh war. The foreign policy decision process and the domestic decision process. In the countdown to the war that no one wanted and no one anticipated would happen between India and Pakistan. So it Mrs. Ghandi all the way down, all the political figures both within the Congress and the opposition and also the military figures, as well as with Pakistan and _______kahn. And all of the principal military decision makers. And party leaders at the time and the same way in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh a number of senior political decision makers had been murdered, and in the case of Pakistan the day that I arrived to start my interviewing, __________ Alebutto was hanged. But it was just extraordinary. Just absolutely extraordinary.

Q. It’s a very interesting area and I just would like to ask one question. Do you think if England had been more effective in preventing the split of the Indian continent we’d have a much more peaceful environment.

A. That certainly is possible. This is one of the big issues that has been debated from the time of the British, Lord Mountbatten, who was Viceroy at the time, decided
to divide India. It would have been a different kind of state and it might have been a more peaceful place. One can marshal arguments that it could have gone both ways. It’s an unsettleable issue.

Q. Finally, are there any questions you wish I would have asked?
A. This was an extraordinarily panoply of questions that you have posed to me. I have enjoyed reminiscing [on] this period of my life and of the University. It’s given me enormous satisfaction and pleasure to do so. I really can’t think of any other questions that I would want to address.

Q. I appreciate you taking the time, coming out and sitting with me.
A. And I have enjoyed it immensely and have been honored to serve on the faculty of this institution in the positions that I’ve held. Thank you.

Q. Thank you.