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## Interview with Wim Wiewel

Wim Wiewel

Chris Broderick

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Narrator: Portland State University President Wim Wiewel (WW)

Interviewer: Chris Broderick, PSU Communications (CB)

Present: Cris Paschild, Carolee Harrison (CH)

Location: Portland State University President's Office, Market Center Building, PSU

Date: August 2, 2017

Transcribed by Carolee Harrison, August 7-10, 2017

Audited by Marti Clemmons, November 24 -30, 2020

CB: Hello, I am Chris Broderick from [Portland State] University Communications. President Wim Wiewel is stepping down this month...

WW: Oh, let's start over. [laughter] Let's get the pronunciation of my name right for this interview!

CB: Wim Wiewel [enunciating].

WW: Very good. The emphasis is on the *first* syllable, not on the last. [laughing]

CB: Yes, I know.

WW: You can leave this piece in, as documentation! [laughter]

CB: That's good.

CH: [checking the recording] OK.

CB: [restarting] Hi, I'm Chris Broderick in University Communications at Portland State. President Wim Wiewel is stepping down this month after nine years as the eighth president of Portland State University. Today we are going to talk with Wim about his accomplishments, his challenges, and his legacy. Let's start at the beginning, Wim, why did you come to Portland State?

WW: Why did I come to Portland State? At the time, I was at the University of Baltimore as the Provost, and throughout my career, I've tended to feel after I've been in a job for three or four years that I can do my boss' job better than he or she is doing. And, well, the president at Baltimore had no plans of leaving. I was kind of ready to become a president. I think I'd made the decision that I probably wanted to be a president during my 25 years at Illinois-Chicago. At first the thought had never crossed my mind, but in 2000 I went from being the Dean of Urban Planning to being the Dean of Business. That was kind of a move out of my disciplinary area, and that signalled to myself, "Yeah, I kind of *like* being an administrator—I can do this, I'm good at it." I always joked to people that in the academy, the bar for being a good administrator is really low, because most faculty are not very good at it. By definition, when you are able to pursue a Ph.D., it means you're good at playing along, and spending a long time by yourself,

which is really not the basic attitude that you need to be an administrator. So I'd always tell them, you only have to be just a tiny bit better at dealing with people to become an administrator in the academy.

[0:02:16]

WW: So, I decided I wanted to become a president. But I wasn't quite ready for it yet—it really started with a friend of mine, who was a dean at Western Washington University. They were looking for a president, and he thought I would be great to go there. I wound up not even getting an interview there, but then I was approached by the search firm doing the search for Portland State. I'd known about Portland State since the 1990s, when at Illinois-Chicago I was very involved with planning that institution's urban engagement, and we looked at Portland State as a model. I got to meet Judith Ramaley. She was of course not my peer, but my boss' peer. We were always very impressed with Portland State, particularly because Portland State had driven its engagement into the curriculum. It wasn't just people who worked in research centers or technical assistance centers who were engaged with the city, but it was really part of the curriculum. We were never quite able to do that at Illinois-Chicago; I was impressed by that. So when I was approached about considering the presidency here, I was really intrigued and very excited. One historical piece that I think is worth noting is that when the search committee first put together its list of eight or nine people for the so-called "airport interviews," I was not on it. The search firm, I knew, was very positive about me, so the guy from the search firm called me and said, "I'm really sorry, but the search firm just wasn't excited enough, they didn't want you," and I said, you know—[shrugging] "Fine,"—I was disappointed, but that happens. I wasn't that upset. And then he called back two weeks later or something, and said, "Somebody dropped out"—this was on a Friday—"Somebody dropped out, and it's too late for you to come to campus on Monday, but we can do a telephone interview with you." It was my wife, Alice, who, when I told her about this, said, "Are you crazy? If you're going to do that interview, you're going to *go* there. Get on the plane! Offer to pay for it yourself if necessary." So I called him back and I said, "I'll do it, but only if I can come out and do it in person." And the rest is history! [laughing]

CB: No substitute for being there in person, face-to face.

WW: Absolutely! Absolutely.

CB: So when you came in 2008, you had a long to-do list, you had a lot of goals. Talk about, kind of generally, those goals and how you feel, eight years later—*nine* years later—how successful you have been in accomplishing those initial goals when you came here.

WW: Yes. Well, of course, when I was first hired, I didn't really have goals yet, because I didn't know what the issues were. I did have the opportunity, because I was hired in early May—I had the opportunity then in May, June, and July (I started at the end of August) to come in for a couple of days and find out more about the institution. Based on that, I developed some goals and then right away, early on, I had a retreat with the then-Executive Committee, people like

Provost Roy Koch, Vice-President of Finance and Administration Lindsay Desrochers, [Henry] Chip Lazenby was the General Counsel, the Vice-President for Advancement, and we came up with an initial strategic plan. This was a big decision, because I didn't know whether we should do a full-blown strategic planning effort. I found out that Academic Affairs had done some strategic planning, and we decided that with a little bit of modification and changes that we could formulate five goals that would serve as a strategic framework. Now, those were at the level of increasing the engagement with the city, enhancing student success... they were pretty broad statements. I also had some specific things that I knew right away, and those revolved around increasing international enrollment, increasing out-of-state enrollment, and really doing a better job for our Latino students.

[0:06:52]

WW: I had seen that Latino enrollment at the time at Portland State was maybe about seven percent, six percent of the student body, but there was no Latino student center or anything like that—stuff that we'd had back at the University of Illinois-Chicago. I'd be looking at the census data, and saw that the Latino population in the Portland area was growing very rapidly, and that in the lower grades of the public schools it was as high as thirty percent. So I knew that if we were going this region, we had to cater to the Latino population. One of the first things we did was establish a task force on Latino student success chaired by Professor Carlos Crespo in Community Health. They just did an absolute bang-up job, really figuring out what are best practices to attract and retain Latino students. As a result of that, we created the Casa Latina, a space for students, and we also hired bilingual people in Admissions. Of course, people at first said, "Well, you know, aren't the students that you're going to recruit going to have to speak English?" And we said, "Of course, but their parents don't"—and you've got to be able to communicate with their parents, otherwise they're not going to let their son or daughter come, or it's at least going to be scary and intimidating. So I'm really proud that we did that early on and we were successful in it. In the course of time, of course, there were many other goals that we developed that I can talk a little bit more about, our accomplishments.

CB: Right, let's talk about some of those. Before we get to the other ones—it's a long list in nine years—let's continue to talk about diversity a little. Beyond the Latino, the [...] program that you mentioned, the success program, you also created a Chief Diversity Officer for the first time at Portland State. Let's talk about that, why was that important?

WW: When people have asked me, "What are your main accomplishments?"—now, we have a long list, and we could talk about all of them, but there are three that I always talk about as the primary ones, and I'll get to the diversity one in a second because it was one of those three. But the first one really is that we've elevated Portland State's profile, and I'll talk about that in more detail. The second one is that we have improved the physical appearance of the campus, and the third, and this is not in a particular sequence actually, is that we've really increased the diversity of the campus. So let me start with that third one first, on the diversity.

[0:09:28]

WW: When I came, there was a Special Assistant to the President for diversity—I think that was the title. It was a little bit surprising, because as you know my predecessor, Dan Bernstine, was African American, and it had formally been one of his goals. But in reality, I have to say, there had not been that much progress on diversity on the campus, either in the composition of the faculty and staff, or—a little bit more—on the student body side. So there had already been talk about making that [Special Assistant] position permanent, or maybe needing a Chief Diversity Officer, so pretty quickly we made the position full-time, made it a cabinet-level position, or Executive Committee level position. At that time we called it the Chief Diversity Officer; more recently we changed the title to Vice-President, but it was de facto a Vice-President right from the beginning. Working with the Diversity Action Council, which had been around for much longer already, the people in that position—Jilma Meneses being the first one and then Carmen Suarez the last two or three years now, three years I think—really became an advocate at the table where decisions are made for issues of diversity. Of course, the last few years, it has been further strengthened by the national climate. Obviously, primarily in response to the Black Lives Matter movement and the election of President Trump even more recently, there just has been an increasing focus on what it means to be moving to a majority-minority country. Certainly Oregon is nowhere near that, but it certainly has changed the nature of the debate, the anger related to Black Lives Matter issues has made all of us focus on this issue of diversity much more than we had before. I'm very proud of the fact that we've—we don't know yet for this year, but for 2016 the entering class of freshmen was forty percent students of color. I think the overall student body is now twenty-nine percent students of color, which is far more than in either the metropolitan area or, certainly, more than in the state of Oregon as a whole. The other fascinating development to me is not just the composition of the student body. We have made great progress in the composition of faculty and staff, progress every single year. It's slow, but there is definite progress. We just hired two African American deans, which I think is wonderful—they're just wonderful guys. These things do matter, both symbolically and practically. The latest development that people are really beginning to talk about is the content of the curriculum, and to what extent is the curriculum itself culturally responsive? Does it respect, honor and incorporate the contributions of previously neglected groups of people, primarily ethnic or racial groups? That is going to be an enormous process and project, and it's going to take a long time. There will be arguments and conflict, but that's all good. I think that's just a fascinating new development.

[0:13:04]

CB: So, talk about the other piece of this—besides the enrollment and retention, basically recruitment of students of color, they have different needs when they get here, in terms of support. Beyond academic, obviously; social, cultural. So that's a big piece of this, too, if they want to be retained and graduate. To be successful.

WW: Right. It's very interesting, and I'm very proud of this. When I came, the retention and graduation rate for Latino students was actually the same—I think it was one-tenth of a percent higher actually—as it was for non-Latino whites. And one of the concerns was that as we

started admitting more Latinos that that might be hard to maintain. Because across most of the country, students of color have lower retention and graduation rates than white students do. I'm very proud that we've been able to maintain that. Their retention and graduation rates are still the same, sometimes a tenth of a percent higher, sometimes a tenth of a percent lower, but basically the same as non-Latino whites. For Asian students, it is higher than whites. You have to always look there that "Asian" lumps together quite a broad range of people, of course, so you've really got to start breaking that down into sub-groups. Where we have continued to struggle, and frankly have not made as much progress as I would like, is that the number of African American students has not really changed much over my time. As you know, in Portland, that is a pretty small proportion of the population, so we're just a little bit below the proportion of the population. That does mean that it's harder for African American students, because there are just not very many of them on campus. I think maybe it's six hundred or something—it's not nothing, but... Their success rates are not the same as the other groups, and certainly not where they should be. The same is true for Native American students, an even smaller group, of course, a small proportion of the population, and also their success rates are not what they should be. We, this past year, created a task force similar to the one I mentioned earlier about Latino student success for African American students and for Asian-Pacific Islander students. Those task forces have just completed their work. We did create cultural or educational centers, safe spaces you might say, for those two groups as well; we already had a Native American education and student center, but we have not yet begun the process of implementing specific measures, because those reports just came out.

[0:15:53]

I do think that we have spent an enormous amount of time and money improving our student retention in ways that benefit all students, not just students of color: hiring more advisers, redesigning the whole advising process, becoming much better about how we award financial aid and when we make the decisions about that. In fact, overall retention rates both at the six-year mark and just freshman retention have been going up at about a percentage point a year over my nine years. So it's slow, but still, over nine years that's about eight or nine percent, so that begins to add up. But it has been frustrating, how hard it has been. We'd like to make more of a quantum leap, but it's been hard to find that silver bullet that gives you a quantum leap.

CB: So diversity is also beyond just ethnic; it's also, at this campus, we are a very diverse place in terms of age, background—economic, social—students with disabilities, we have the most veterans of any university in the state. Has that been a challenge, with so many types of students here? It's not the typical eighteen-year-old at PSU who comes in and gets out of here in four years.

WW: To be honest, I think that at times Portland State overplays its hand a little bit on this diversity. Most large public universities have that kind of diversity, and frankly most of them are much more diverse on the ethnic and racial score than Portland State is. We do have more older students, that is true, but I think we need to, at times, tone down a little bit our institutional bragging about diversity, because most public universities have a lot of diversity.

Especially ones that accept, as Portland State does, a broad range of students, where it's not our goal to only accept the people with a 3.8 GPA. Right now, at Portland State, if you have a 3.0 high school GPA, or I think it's a 2.5 community college GPA, you're in! You don't even have to write an essay. People are always stunned when I tell them that. And we're proud of that, because we know those are the students that can succeed here; those are the ones we want to educate. Where I think the diversity does kick in is that we have, I think, something like 20 or 24 percent of our students are parents, have children. That means we are spending quite a bit of money subsidizing the Helen Gordon child care center, the Little Vikings center, the other programs that we have for students with children. We certainly spend some money on veterans, we fortunately get some support from the state for that as well. The most intriguing thing, again, lately, to me, is the emphasis on different learning styles, truly different mental learning styles. Not everybody learns the same way. Certainly in my era, everybody was expected to be able to listen and to read, and that's how you learned, and you could do that for long periods of time, fifty minutes at a stretch at least. There are a lot of other people who are great learners, but it's not that way. It needs to come in shorter bursts; it needs to be much more interactional; it needs to be in small groups; it needs to be much more hands-on. I think that's a whole new diversity, beginning to address these different pedagogies that really work for different kinds of learners. I think it's a new frontier, really. If we do it well, they'll allow us to do a better job for more people.

[0:19:45]

WW: Now, maybe I should talk a little bit about the other accomplishments.

CB: Yes, let's talk about—one of your primary goals was to enhance the campus environment.

WW: Right.

CB: There's been a lot of building here in your tenure; talk about that and how that important that is to where we are. As you leave, you leave with basically ten major projects either completed or going to be completed soon.

WW: Yes. When I came, I heard two things. One is that people felt the campus often looked shabby, and certainly walking around I found that to be the case. And secondly, many people outside the campus told me that you never quite knew where the campus even was; in fact, I ran into people who had been here all their lives and they didn't really know where Portland State was. And I kind of thought, "Well, it's really hard to miss." [laughter] People were always stunned when I told them how many students we have. People just didn't see the scope of the institution. I felt it to be competitive, and I pretty quickly figured out that for economic reasons we had to do a better job at tracking out-of-state students, non-resident students—that that was both a mark of quality (it brings more diversity to the campus in a variety of ways, both racially and geographically) and because, frankly, they pay a lot more tuition, and we needed that in the absence of state support, essentially. It's true that to some extent, non-resident students wind up subsidizing Oregon students. Perhaps that's not desirable, but it's the

economic reality we dealt with. And to do that, you have to look like you are a serious campus that respects itself. You have to have reasonably attractive facilities. You know, there's talk in the academic world about the "facilities war," and complaints about people building climbing walls and lazy rivers and fancier and fancier dorms—we're not doing any of that. We don't have any Brazilian hardwood or gold-plated door knobs. But having buildings that are functional, that are modern, that have the case study rooms, or the small group rooms that students now expect and want and need—that's a part of offering a real quality educational experience.

[0:22:20]

WW: [continuing] Fortunately, there were several projects already underway when I came, but we've continued to support building projects. Very shortly, after I came, we opened the remodeled Shattuck School for [the School of] Architecture, which I think is just a beautiful building. Then the next one that we were fighting to get money for and did was Lincoln Hall. Because of the recession, we were able to do a lot more in Lincoln Hall than we thought, because we got the state money, but then construction costs really went down a lot, so we were able to do that. The students had already voted for an Academic Student and Recreation Center, so the construction on that started pretty shortly after I came, with, of course, the partnership with the Oregon University System that took part of a floor there, and the City of Portland housing its Archives there, and then the Rec Center space, general classroom space, and the School of Social Work. Then we began to push for a joint project with OHSU [Oregon Health and Science University] and OSU [Oregon State University] for the Collaborative Life Sciences Building. That turned out to be an absolutely amazing, beautiful project that's been great for our Chemistry and Biology faculty especially, having great classrooms and research space. Science Building II, now called the Science Research and Teaching Center, was on the list for a major renovation. We were able to get that money and, while inside it's not really a beautiful building, it was totally updated, so it is great—and functional. Scott Dawson of the Business School has been working to raise money for the business school for quite a while. We really hadn't gotten very far, so we were able to prioritize that, and that will be open in the fall of 2017. That is the building that, in many ways, I am proudest of, that I had the most involvement in both in raising the money for it and in the design, with help from my wife Alice Wiewel, who worked for the Oregon University System when we were able to get the funding for the business school. She was very helpful for that, and she was also very involved in the actual design of the school. I think that's going to be just a stunning building for the campus. Then, of course, the Viking Pavilion, which will be open in 2018—a huge fundraising task also, but it was a badly needed renovation of the Stott Center, which was used quite a bit for classrooms. People didn't quite realize that. Having the Viking Pavilion will be a great space that will bring the whole community to the campus, and it's of course also joined with OHSU; they will be holding many of their events there and they provided the major financial support for that building. And I'm very pleased that we were able, two years ago, to get the money for Neuberger Hall, which is sort of the workhorse building, right? Thirty-eight classrooms, office space for a big part of the Liberal Arts and Sciences faculty, and most student-serving offices. During my first week on campus, I got a tour of Neuberger and I described the offices in the basement there as "Dickensian squalor!" [laughter] I'm very pleased that we'll be able to



renovate it, with wonderful gifts from Jordan Schnitzer which will create a beautiful art museum, and our longtime supporter Fariborz Maseeh. The final building, one more project, is the one that will be the Fourth Avenue and Montgomery building that will house the School of Public Health and the School of Education, as well as a department of the City of Portland and pre-dental programs from Portland Community College. All of these take a lot of work, a lot of partners. The other project that I'm very proud of is completion of the Walk of the Heroines. That's not a building, but it's a wonderful outdoor space, which frankly was a mess when I came in the sense that there wasn't enough money, promises had been made for all kinds of features, water features and benches and trees, that there was no money for. We were able, through a pretty tough process of some additional fundraising and negotiation with the advocates, to downscale that enough that it could actually be done. I think it's just created an absolutely stunning space on the campus that sort of complements the Urban Plaza. I think that's the list of all the projects.

CB: The Collaborative Life Sciences Building?

WW: I did mention that, yes.

CB: You did, OK. Because that, to me, is pretty representative of a game-changing environment for our students, as well as a nice building, obviously, a collaborative building, because of the biology and chemistry labs in those buildings.

WW: Well, and it's of course very symbolic of our collaboration with OHSU. We are, at the moment, the largest provider of students to the OHSU med school and the OHSU dental school. So those pre-health programs are very important, and being able to do that in an environment where our students get to mingle with OHSU researchers and medical and dental students is very important. It also gives us room to expand. One of the things that we were working on when I came in was a master plan for the campus, because we had been growing very rapidly. This was certainly one of the things that my predecessor Dan Bernstine was very successful at: growing the campus from about 18,000 students when he came to about 26,000 or 27,000 when he left, almost a fifty percent increase. Growth like that gives a lot of growing pains—I know there was a lot of worry among faculty about larger class sizes. There were physical constraints; we didn't have lab space for students, so we desperately needed a building like the Collaborative Life Sciences Building. There was some talk about how we should create a satellite campus. I think that our location downtown is very important, because it makes our engagement with the city so much easier, but having that expansion room on the South Waterfront, I think, is very beneficial. Although I should say that I think we still need to continue to think—the institution in the future will have to think about how to serve the western part which is growing so rapidly, of the metropolitan area, better. We offer some programs, the Business School and Engineering offer some programs in Beaverton or Hillsboro, but there are a lot of people there, a lot of businesses there, and traffic is getting harder and harder. That's something we didn't quite see in '08 or '09. It's not a great distance, but it can take a long time to get here.

[0:29:31]

WW: [continuing] Which is another reason, by the way—I'm meandering a little bit here, but—why I think we need to be even more aggressive than we have been about developing online learning. For some faculty, that's anathema, but we need strong online programs not to serve people from Kansas or Taiwan or whatever, but to serve people in Gresham and Beaverton! They can still come to campus some of the time, so you still have that personal contact, but it's very hard when you have a job to come to campus three times a week at four o'clock or five o'clock or six o'clock, because the traffic now takes forever. So if you can do it where you only have to come once a week, or once every other week, and the rest of the time you can do things online, I think we're going to be serving our current constituency much better. I remind faculty that sometimes the choice is not between in-person learning and online learning, it's between online learning or nothing. Which is better? I think we need to become more aggressive about offering that.

[0:30:40]

CB: Let's talk about the independent board. Taking a longer view of history here, which is what we are trying to do, that is a significant change. You mentioned when you came here, you were appointed by the State Board of Higher Education, you mentioned that we had the chancellor, we had a whole different system than we do now, when you are leaving. Is it a better system, and why is it better for PSU?

WW: I see the independent board as part of that third major accomplishment. I mentioned the diversity, the physical improvement of the campus; the third one was really raising the visibility of the institution. When I came, people used terms like "an undiscovered treasure" and all that kind of stuff, and as I said, people were really not knowing where Portland State is. The way I've described it also is that at the time, people knew there was UO and OSU kind of up there, and then there were the four regional campuses kind of down there, and Portland State was somewhere in between. Too big for the kids' table, too small for the adults. I think the independent board that we got three and a half years, four years ago, really signified and reflected that now we are one of the big three in the state. Both in terms of prestige—and others, still, have bigger endowments, and they certainly have bigger, better football teams, but people realized that we are as big as they are (and some years one is bigger than the other), and we are as major a contributor to the well-being of the state of Oregon, and certainly *the* major contributor to the well-being of the Portland metropolitan region. The board exemplifies that and is a reflection of that. When I came, this issue was not on the table at all, so this was not one of my original goals. I'd never, frankly, given it much thought. But already during my first year David Frohnmayer announced that he was stepping down as the president of the University of Oregon, and one of the things he wanted to do in his last year was write a white paper about the future structure of higher education. He wrote a paper very much advocating that the University of Oregon would get its own board similar to OHSU, which had got one back in the mid-nineties. When it was first presented to me as an idea, I said I had no idea whether it was good or bad, or whether it's—I thought it was probably not good for UO to get it and not

Portland State, that much seemed obvious. But whether it would be good for Portland State I had no idea. So I commissioned our own white paper that we did internally; we looked at the research, and I pretty quickly came to the conclusion that this would be a good thing. One thing is, frankly, if you look historically, the State Board of Higher Education—wonderful people individually—but as a system it never really was very good for Portland State. Historically, it really was set up, it seems... well, historically it was set up to keep UO and OSU from killing each other, starting in the twenties and thirties. [laughter in the room] And to bring some rationality to that relationship. But then during the fifties, sixties, and seventies, it really seemed to want to disadvantage Portland State, to keep us as sort of a small, undergrad, not very prestigious place, and it did many things that benefited the two other institutions. Then I'd say in the last decade or so, fifteen years, it became more of a defender of the regional institutions, at the disadvantage [of PSU]. Even to this day, the amount of money that Portland State gets per student credit hour or per degree is less than any of the other institutions. It's interesting enough—we're almost the same now with UO, so they have a right to complain, too. OSU gets quite a bit more, and places like Oregon Tech get four times more! The fact that there is some difference is OK, because when you are a small institution, you don't have the economies to scale, so it's going to be more expensive per student; that's OK. But the difference is far greater than can be justified. It's because while there is a funding formula, more and more of the money have been carved out from that and set aside in separate pots that benefit OSU and the four regional institutions particularly. As we know, historically there have been times when the system supported UO or OSU wanting to take our graduate engineering programs or our graduate business programs, or letting the other schools come in and compete with us here in Portland to our disadvantage. Again, I like George Pernsteiner, who was the chancellor who hired me, so this is not against any particular person. They were doing what they thought was right. But I didn't think that the system was particularly helpful to Portland State. So I quickly became an advocate. UO certainly was in the lead on that, but then when Richard Lariviere, their president, got fired for a whole variety of things, at that point it could have died. It was very important; people don't realize. Ed Rey, a very powerful president, of course, of Oregon State University, didn't want it. He didn't think it was a good idea, and the four regional institutions didn't want it. So at that point, if I had said, "I don't want it either," then UO *might* have gotten it with the new president (because they still wanted it), but we could have maintained the system with the other six universities, and it would have stayed that way, it would have survived. But I just felt, "No, it's got to go. We'd be better off with a board." Then we got the legislation passed, and once that legislation started moving, OSU decided they wanted it too, and then the four regionals followed suit. Whether that's been the right decision, I'll leave to history to decide. But there is no doubt that for Portland State it has been very beneficial. It anchored us even more solidly in the metropolitan area; we were able to create an absolutely wonderful board with very strong people on it; I was fortunate enough that Governor Kitzhaber at the time asked for suggestions and he basically accepted all the suggestions we gave him; so these were people who were fully supportive of the mission of the institution, supported my leadership, and we've done a great job in the past four years, three and a half years, supporting us through very difficult decisions that maybe we'll come back to later—tuition decisions, the decision to create a police force. And beginning, after some initial distrust on the part of faculty and students, faculty and students are beginning to see that now

there is actually a body you can go to. In the past, the State Board of Higher Education couldn't know anything about anyone in this institution. I remind people that for a president, in many ways, it's a lot easier if you have a board that runs seven institutions, because you know that they're not going to pay much attention to you. They're not going to ask you any tough questions, they never know enough! Having your own board is actually, from a public accountability point, much better, which means it's harder for a president—because now you've got people who actually know stuff and are going to watch over your shoulder. But I think that's a good thing, if it's a good board. Fortunately we are blessed with having one.

[0:38:21]

CB: The concern was that, without a state system and a chancellor who is looking at the big picture of how to serve the whole state—how we interact with the other presidents—that we would become rivals instead of collaborators.

WW: Yes, and that's been fascinating. It's a great question. In fact, just the opposite has happened, if anything. We were rivals, always. Portland State remembers that the other institutions really tried to keep us down. Remember, we were not allowed to have our own student residence halls as an institution, because OSU and UO didn't want another residential school as a competitor. People didn't make this up—just because we were paranoid didn't mean they weren't out to get us! There was competition. There was also collaboration; we already had the joint signature research centers, and there were many ways that we at times acted together. But what really happened is that when the system disappeared, the metaphor I've used is that when Mom and Dad leave the house and leave the kids alone, the kids can either kill each other or they can decide that if they want dinner, they'd better collaborate. And we, as presidents, decided we wanted dinner! So we started to collaborate much more proactively than before. We created a council, the Oregon Council of Presidents, we all put in money, we hired a small staff, we created the shared services enterprise where a lot of functions, the back office functions, are done collectively. I would say that our collaboration is greater. We own it now, it's not imposed on us by a system. That doesn't mean we still don't also compete, but our collaboration now, for instance, in putting together the joint capital projects request list—that never happened in the past. It was done by the Oregon University System staff, and you never were sure what criteria were being used. I'm not saying, again, that they were necessarily bad decisions, but it was something that was above our heads. Now we collaborate on them, we do it jointly. It doesn't mean everybody's happy—it is always a limited pie—but at least you feel you've had a say over it and know why things happened the way they did. So I think it's been really good on the collaboration side. That doesn't mean that Portland State isn't going to continue to be anxious about whether the University of Oregon or OSU are going to start programs that compete with us in the Portland metropolitan area; that's something that we will always have to be mindful of. But at least we now have a forum where we can first discuss that with the provost, then with the president, and then we can still argue about it in front of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Those fora didn't even exist in the past, because it was whoever got to the chancellor first.

[0:41:25]

CB: Let's talk about money, because it has been a big source of your—

WW: [deadpan] No, let's not...

[laughter]

CB: [smiling] I know you don't want to talk about it, but you have to, because you spent a lot of time on it! First, with philanthropy. That's changed a lot in your nine years here. You've expanded the resources. We used to have Advancement, under the university, but they've split off in your tenure to a nonprofit foundation that we have now with a lot more resources to raise money. How important is philanthropy to PSU now, and going forward?

WW: When I came, PSU raised about twelve million dollars a year. They had ended a campaign a few years earlier, and I think twelve was about the top year, it may have been fifteen once, I can't remember. This past year, we raised forty million dollars. We've now been around forty million for the last three or four years, some a little more, some a little less. Some of that is simply spending more money to raise it—hiring more staff—but a big part, frankly, is to get better organized. We made a change in the leadership there, and while we've certainly had our ups and downs, I think a big part of our fundraising success is certainly being very clear about our goals, pushing our fundraising staff to not just spend time with people they already know and stay friends with them, but actually go out there—you've got to ask for money. You can't just have coffee with people who give you a thousand dollars a year; you've got to go out and figure out who is going to give you a hundred thousand or a million dollars a year. So we have upped the expectations. Moving the advancement operation out of the university into that separate foundation (which already existed, but really only managed the endowments, pretty much) and making them the real fundraising arm has also helped, I think, because it means that there are now people there, a board there that's exclusively focused on fundraising. It's no longer just dependent on the president of the university to focus on it. I've obviously played a very active role in going out for the major gifts and making the connections that have led to the major gifts. We've emphasized more with the deans. It has to be an institution-wide commitment, and all those things came together to make us now a much more effective fundraising machine.

[0:43:51]

WW: [continuing] I think we still have room for growth, without spending lots more money. We are in a "silent phase" as of this time, August of 2017, the "silent phase" of a campaign, which I understand to mean that you tell everybody about it, except you don't place ads in the newspaper yet. We will be going public with the campaign sometime next year. I think we will get to where we raise, routinely, fifty million dollars or more per year. Our endowment doubled, just about, from twenty-five million when I came to, I think it's fifty-five or sixty million now. Obviously the stock market has helped a lot, but we've also been able to put more

money in it. That, still, is very small for a university our size, and we need to get much bigger in all those areas. Going forward, fundraising will only become more important. State support, even though two years ago we had a large increase—in the 2015 session we got a fifteen—no, sorry, a twenty-six percent increase in the budget. But when state support is that small, even a twenty-six percent increase in it still has only a modest effect on your total budget. Given the pressures that we see coming in the next three biennia, with the cost of pensions and health care, there's not going to be a lot more *real* money available to the university from state support. So there will continue to be a lot of pressure on tuition, and on philanthropy, absolutely.

CB: You've spent a lot of time in Salem on the fundraising and state support issues.

WW: Too much.

CB: Yes, too much. So talk about that; do you feel like you've had some successes and setbacks? The effect is felt mostly by the students, in higher tuition.

WW: Right. So in Salem, we have been successful in restoring most of the cuts that were made during the 2008-2013, '14 period. In that sense we are kind of back where we were, not even quite when you calculate on an inflation adjustment per student basis, we're not now where we were in the '07-09 biennium. Now, it could have been worse, but what's even worse is that during this time, the amount of that we actually had to give back to the state for PERS [Public Employees Retirement System] and PEBB [Public Employees Benefit Board] has gone up a lot. In terms of actual real dollars available for hiring faculty or advisers or whatever, we are definitely a lot worse off than we have been at any time except during the 2011 to 2014 period. Again, that's why tuition, of course, has gone up so much, and frankly will continue to go up, no matter what people say. There's just no alternative to it. The taxpayers of this state have proven themselves unwilling to support revenue packages at a level that would allow a significant change. I don't see that really changing in the near future. So I think we will continue to have to increase tuition, and hopefully increase fundraising enough so we can offset the costs for the students who have the least financial ability.

[0:47:12]

CB: So that leads to the question about—you spent a lot of time developing a proposal for a local funding source that would go to the three-county area to support PSU.

WW: Yes.

CB: Which has never been done before. You spent a lot of time on that, and the business folks in this community opposed that because it would, essentially, be a business tax on them. So that was—we put that on the shelf. Then you co-founded the coalition that still is studying this. I know you're stepping down now, but the coalition is still going on. How important is that to the future of access and scholarships, and some kind of local stake in funding?

WW: We started thinking about a local revenue source pretty much right away when I came. Within my first year, I went around to the business community and civic leaders in the region and I asked them what it would take for them to provide more support for Portland State, either philanthropically or through taxes. They mentioned things like, well, you've got to have your own board—that was part of my motivation, by the way, I forgot to mention that was why I wanted PSU to have its own board. I talked to Governor Kitzhaber about this idea, particularly of a business payroll tax, and he thought it made a lot of sense, but he told me, "You have to wait until you have your own board." So as soon as Portland State had its own board, I started being very concrete about what we could look like, how high would it have to be, would it be just for us or joint with PCC and OHSU? And we had various discussions with business leaders and the Portland Business Alliance. This is where, maybe, I once again learned what I have had to learn many times, perhaps, is the problem with "Portland polite." I have found very much that Portland is a community where people hate to tell you "no." They're very conflict-averse. It's truly part of the water, of the culture here. It's, I think, part of that Northwestern/European/Scandinavian heritage. People are very conflict-averse. So when you come up with an idea, until you ask people literally to sign on the dotted line, they say, "Oh, that's very interesting! Yes, that makes sense..." even though at times they may be thinking, "Are you crazy? Not over my dead body!" So we perhaps overestimated the willingness of the business community to support this particular solution to a problem that they all agreed—that we have to charge too much for education. They all recognized that the state doesn't provide enough support. So when we went public with it—I still think that partly it was the bad luck of timing, that the unions, shortly after we went public, came up with their own proposal for a much bigger tax on business, a gross receipts tax—we were hoping to raise about thirty million a year, the union proposal would raise something like two billion a year. An order of magnitude, two orders of magnitude different. But still, the business community was sort of in what I call a "pre-traumatic stress disorder" state, so they took out their anger on us rather than on the unions. Of course they were, in the end, able to also defeat the union proposal, so maybe we would not have had the votes. We won't know that for a while, or maybe never. We did then come up with the compromise of having a coalition that would look at a mixture of state resources, local public revenue, and philanthropy that might raise something like twenty-five million a year for Portland State. The people working on that—I'm co-chairing that with Greg Ness, who is the CEO of Standard [Insurance] Company here—he's very committed to it, and very genuine about it, but it has its challenges. Whether we are able to pull that off in the end, I don't know yet. We will certainly get something out of it, but if it will add up to the full amount, time will tell... [lowering his voice] to quote the President of the United States...

[0:51:33]

WW: [continuing] There needs to be more resources, whether they come from the region, from the city, from the state, because otherwise we will continue to see the increases in tuition that we talked about earlier.

CB: Besides the business partnership with this coalition, what are the other partnerships? That was one of the things that you had a lot of experience with before you came here, and one of the things that marks PSU. We are very proud of the partnerships we have.

WW: Right.

CB: So talk about what you've been particularly proud of in that area, and what you developed?

WW: As I've said, the thing that really attracted me about Portland State was its engagement with the community, so I knew there were literally hundreds of partnerships. Still, I was struck, particularly in the education area, that while we had faculty and students doing stuff with schools all over, even when you looked at the website you didn't really see that. Nobody was really able to tell me, "This is what it is, and this is the difference it makes." So right early on, I said we should form a formal partnership with Portland Public Schools, and we started those discussions. Those were then kind of superseded by a much bigger effort that involved all the school districts in Multnomah County that ultimately became the All Hands Raised, "cradle-to-career" partnership which is modelled after Strive, which is in Cincinnati. Now there's something like a hundred efforts like this across the country. We were among the first six to do it, and it's doing very well. That really re-emphasized to me how if you let a thousand flowers bloom, it's hard to see the impact of it, and that we should find some key strategic partnerships that we really focus on. We're not going to stop faculty from doing whatever they want to do. It's fine having lots of little partnerships, but as a president, as a leader, I felt I had to focus on some really key ones. We already had been talking about the need to create a Vice-President for research; until then, there'd just been a Vice Provost for research, because expanding research was one of the early goals—by the way, I didn't mention it earlier; it was one of the early goals. We did manage to grow it from forty million to about sixty-five million a year. But then we would combine that with somebody who could really focus on the partnership piece. We made it a Vice-President for Research and Strategic Partnerships, and we hired an Associate Vice-President for Strategic Partnerships, Erin Flynn. It was her job not to manage every partnership that the university has, because that's literally hundreds and hundreds, but to focus on the big ones. The big ones became both the one with All Hands Raised, which the Dean of Education and I were managing, and then with Oregon Health and Science University. We really formalized it. We agreed—and there were other reasons why we did that one, related to the pressure from one legislator to consider a merger between Portland State and OHSU—nobody really had a lot of interest in that, but with thought that if we could show that we really worked together, we'd lessen that pressure and we'd really gain the advantages of a possible merger without all the downside costs that we felt a merger would bring. Fortunately, I also had a very good personal relationship with President Joe Robertson at OHSU—it matters, when you just click with each other and you trust each other right away—so we were able to agree that we would meet regularly, we would have our Vice-Presidents meet regularly (and I understand we are now going to drive that down even a little bit deeper into the organization), and developed very concrete plans for what we could do in various areas of collaboration: joint faculty appointments, buildings, community partnerships and so on. So that was one big partnership. The other one was with Portland General Electric, the main utility here, and in that case it really



came from them. We had been asking them for money for the Science Research and Teaching Center, and for other things, and they said, “You keep asking us for this and for that—let’s make a comprehensive plan so that we know where it’s headed.” So there we developed a partnership agreement, we signed an agreement. People meet regularly, quarterly with the Vice-Presidents to figure out what is the agenda for this coming year, and out of that we’ve hired faculty to work on energy and transmission issues, wind energy and battery technology, biomass energy creation; of course we’ve done a lot of work around electric vehicles together. Our partnership with the City of Portland became more formalized, partnerships with Intel. So it’s a bunch of things. With Daimler, we now have a formal partnership agreement. I think those are the big ones, but that’s not to say that all the smaller ones that individual faculty work on, that sometimes go on for decades, like our partnership with the Kiwanis camp on Mt. Hood for instance, aren’t incredibly important. They just haven’t needed the attention from the presidential and vice-presidential level, you might say.

[0:56:59]

CB: Returning to campus now, let’s talk about strategic planning. That was a different approach; instead of a top-down approach to plan the future, it’s certainly the academic side of university. It was more of a ground-up than a top-down approach; talk about that.

WW: Yes. As I said, we had done a sort of “quickie” strategic plan early on, where we picked up what the Academic Affairs division had already done when I first came. Then we did smaller efforts, small efforts to update that, in 2011 and maybe again in 2013. But those were not big, comprehensive efforts. By 2015, I guess, ’14-’15, I felt that because we had a new board, the old strategic plan was getting a little long in the tooth—it was originally, I think, the 2008-2013 strategic plan; then we extended it to 2015, so that had kind of run out. And we’d had very contentious union negotiations with the faculty union. Those things coming together, we thought that doing a very broad-based, grassroots strategic planning effort both made sense for the new board to have that new plan, to replace the one we had, and to really make clear to everybody that we really were ultimately all on the same page. The thing that during the union negotiations perhaps made me angriest was that for a while AAUP [American Association of University Professors] had a poster that had two arrows, one going this way and one going this way [pointing in opposite directions]. There was faculty and students going this way, and administration going that way. And I felt that was just totally untrue, that it did not reflect the reality of where we were at as an institution. I think the strategic planning bore that out, that in fact it ultimately is capsulized in our old motto, “Let Knowledge Serve the City.” That totally is what most everybody is on board about. Now, obviously, the engineers think engineering is more important, and social workers think social work is more important, and the really research-focused people think that there is too much talk about teaching, and teaching-focused people think there’s too much focus on research. But ultimately people really unite under this idea, more than I have seen at any other institution, focusing on their motto—except for maybe religious institutions. I think it’s just amazing. And the strategic planning, to me, really brought that out and reaffirmed that, that no, we *are* all committed to the same thing. That doesn’t mean that faculty wouldn’t like more money and smaller classes or whatever, and as an

administrator you can only do so much. It's not that I wouldn't want it, either, but ultimately I am responsible for making sure we have a balanced bottom line. But if we can get that agreement—and I think the strategic planning effort did that, and it reaffirmed it to the board as well.

[1:00:04]

CB: Let's talk about challenges. You talked about state funding, and you talked about how that impacts tuition. We talked about the local funding effort that the proposed ballot initiative—that did not happen, but did lead to the coalition. So you just mentioned the union negotiations that led in part to a bigger role for the faculty in the strategic planning effort. Talk about that American Association of University Professors faculty strike vote in the spring of 2014. What did you learn from that and how did that change the most recent round of negotiations with the faculty?

WW: That definitely was, for me, the low point of my time here at Portland State. There were a couple of things. One is that we were caught in a fight at the national level of AAUP between those who thought AAUP was really a professional association and those who thought it should be a union-organizing [association]. And for whatever reasons, because our contract happened to be up, Portland State was made kind of a test case of that, and AAUP nationally sent in organizers, who I think created a much more acrimonious situation than had ever happened before at Portland State. There was much more vilification of me personally, of the administration; the lines were drawn much more sharply. At the same time, I think on our side, we had some challenges: we had a brand-new provost, a new general counsel, and honestly in the previous negotiations, as president, I had not been all that involved. It was largely handled by the Vice-President for Finance and Administration, and the then-Provost. They'd been around for a while, and it wasn't like there weren't fights, or disagreements, but it was handled. So with basically new people managing it, I think we came up with an agenda for our side of the negotiations that we thought was pretty reasonable, but parts of which I think were perceived as much more hostile to faculty than they were really intended. If we had better communication channels, and more people willing to give a little benefit of the doubt, I think we could have avoided a lot of the troubles. If there had been more open, better communication early on, there are things that we would have dropped right away and said, "Oh my god, if you see it that way... it's not *that* important to us." But once you get into it, then you begin to mutually, of course, distrust each other. And there were some, I will say, pretty unpleasant people involved at the time. Then again, maybe they were partly spurred on by some of these national organizers. So it became the mess that it then was, and I know it hurt a lot of people. It hurt a couple of careers. But that led, then, ultimately—that's the good part—I think everybody on both sides said, "We don't ever want to do that again." When we proposed to consider doing interest-based bargaining and working with the woman, who is absolutely amazing, from the state mediation service, who managed finally to settle the negotiations in '14—with a little reluctance, the union came around to that. It was not like it was a love-fest by any stretch. There were still plenty of tough things. It took a lot of time, it's expensive and takes a long time. And there was still a lot of old acrimony, but it went much better, and we came up

with a fair agreement. Nobody loves all of it, of course, but it was good and there was never any risk of going to a strike or anything. I hope that that experience will have built trust, so that the next round will get a little bit easier; we won't have to overcome quite as much of the memories and the history. That was very painful.

[1:04:16]

Of course, the other big issue that was difficult was the protest over creating a police force. This was an issue where pretty early on, when I came already, the then-Chief of Public Safety felt we should have a sworn police force. Phil Zerzan, when he was hired, had been, of course, the chief of the Oregon State [University] Police; they had a unit of the state police stationed there. He said it was "irresponsible, because my people can't do the kind of things that need to be done to keep this campus safe." And our Vice-President for Finance and Administration, Monica Rimai—a former federal prosecutor—said it was irresponsible. "We cannot keep people safe, we can't pursue things, we can't go off campus, we can't take care of cases that the Portland Police drop." Some of it was driven by the fear for lone gunmen on campus, but that really wasn't the main—there had been a couple of incidents like that that certainly fed into it emotionally, but that wasn't really the reason. It was having sworn officers who can stop people who they suspect, stop cars they suspect. The officers could reasonably say, "We're not going to do that. We're not going to knock on somebody's door without being able to protect ourselves." You know, you're doing that because you think they're bad guys, and you're not going to do that unarmed. So we had had one task force and another task force studying it, recommending it. The first task force came up with the recommendation that we definitely needed a sworn police force; we could either ask for a special detachment from the Portland Police, or from OHSU, doing it jointly, or create our own, or get the state police—none of these other options... people just weren't interested. The state police wasn't interested, Portland Police wasn't interested, OHSU police wasn't interested. So we were left with the option of creating our own. Then we did another task force to, once again, study that, and unfortunately we brought the proposal to the board. Then Ferguson, Missouri happened, and Black Lives Matter really started up. The people who were opposed to it [a PSU police force] were able to cast this in that light. The board had no hesitance, frankly, when I first brought it to them in September of 20...15 I guess that is? [possibly 2014; Michael Brown was killed by a police officer in Ferguson, MO in August 2014] They were ready to vote for it right away. I said, wait a minute—we need to do a little more studying. So we created a board task force that held extensive hearings, and ultimately we came up with a very good plan that included huge training commitment. Our officers are the best-trained in terms of not just police activities, but on cultural sensitivity, on implicit bias, on how to deal with diffusing conflict. But it became a cause célèbre for a small group of students—which is not to say that if you had a vote that the majority of students might not vote against it, because that was kind of the tenor of the times—but I was, and I continue to be absolutely convinced that it was absolutely irresponsible not to have it [a sworn campus police force]. I like to cite the fact that of the hundred largest universities in the United States, which Portland State is one of, there were only four that did not have their own sworn police force: Columbia and NYU in New York, which have big units of the New York Police Department there, and DePaul University in Chicago, which is right in the

city and has a big unit of the Chicago police there. So I was thinking, if something happens—and by the way, of the three hundred largest public universities, only four percent do not have their own sworn police force. So we were like way outlier! So when your Chief of Public Safety and your Vice-President of Finance and Administration and those data all show you that this is what you need to do—just think if something had happened. Everybody would have said, “You had all these warnings, Mr. President. How could you not have responded to that?” Then we had the Umpqua Community College case, we had the Reynolds [Elementary School] case here. So I felt, I’m not going to have the blood of our students on my hands. I went forward to it—I’ve gotten more nasty stuff, more vilification for that than for anything else, and it has hurt me deeply. People have painted me as if somehow or other I’m against minorities, or love guns. I come from a country that hates guns! But I still think that it was absolutely the right, and unfortunately, the responsible decision to make.

[1:09:23]

CB: Do you feel as you are leaving that we are a safer campus because of this?

WW: Absolutely. If you read the campus police blog ever... Do you read about the kind of people that we get on campus? We get drug dealers, we get felons. Our students are like sitting ducks—or sitting Vikings—in terms of people wanting to sell them stuff and do things to them. This has given our public safety people the opportunity to really protect and defend, even on small things. Just a little case that just happened very recently where one of our recent graduates, an Indian woman, she was on the streetcar with her parents who were visiting for her graduation. It was right around commencement. Some crazy guy started yelling at them, and spit on her mother. Now, this is just shortly after the case on the light rail, where a similar thing happened, and two people came to the defense of the people who he was yelling at—and they got killed, and one of our students got hurt. This fortunately didn’t go that far. Finally, the guy left, and the women called the Portland Police, since this was on the streetcar, it was in the city, and made a report. Nothing happened. A month later, nothing had happened. Finally, she goes to the Portland State police and she tells her story. She had pictures of the guy, I think. Within three days, our guys had identified who it was and had arrested him. And it turned out that he had done things like this before. Now, being yelled at and spit at is not the end of the world—it’s horrible for the person to happen, but it’s not the end of the world, it’s not a murder or a rape. But that’s how you keep people safe! And it’s not that the Portland Police are bad people, but in a city like Portland, they have other priorities, and that was probably the right decision on their side; they have other priorities. But if you want to have a safe campus, you’ve got to make your students feel that you will be taking care of them, and that’s what our people are able to do.

[1:11:28]

CB: You mentioned that some of the student unrest led by student unions, some activists—not a big group, but a small group, a very vocal group. So the other thing that was happening, and that continues I guess, especially with the election happening last November, is there is a small

group on campus that continues to argue against tolerating hate speech on campus. That's happening all over the country, as you know, with universities limiting, banning, or whatever, controversial right-wing speakers who come in with provocative messages that stir people up. How do you feel, as president, what's the right balance between protecting free speech on campus, which is one of our foundational principles, and protecting campus safety?

WW: As a university president, and as, I think, a university, we have to be absolutely committed to free speech. And that includes speech that we may absolutely hate. Now, there's a difference between speech we hate and hate speech! The Supreme Court has ruled that certain forms of hate speech and inciting to violence, indeed, you can stop. But most things that people object to don't fall into this category. It may be despicable, it may absolutely go against our values, but we've got to stop thinking that our students are so vulnerable. They've led a life—and again, maybe that's partly an advantage that we have older students—they've led a life already in a city that can sometimes be rough-and-tumble. We've got to accept the fact that there are going to be people on campus, whether it's from the Right or the Left, who say things that we really don't like and really disagree with. I truly believe that the best defense against speech that you don't like is more speech. Organize your own event. Organize a counter-event. But don't shut down speakers. Shouting down a speaker kind of only strengthens their case. If you think they're so terrible, just ignore them. If there's a pro-Israel speaker, and you don't like it, don't go! If there's an anti-Israel speaker and you don't like it, don't go. Or, hold a demonstration outside, or invite your own speaker. Right now, it's nationally, unfortunately, it's become like this cultural thing where people make big cases out of it, and the press eats it up, of course. This is a situation that will pass. People will only go for this for so long, and then they will tire of it. Unfortunately we will have to, now, deal with it; we have to try to deal with it carefully. But I hope that there will always be opportunities for people from any side of the spectrum to come to campus and make presentations about their points of view, whether they're Republicans, or pro-Palestinians, or whatever. We have to hear all those sides. We have to continue to tell our students that we absolutely respect the rights of all groups, but that doesn't mean that we can protect them from somebody saying bad things about them.

[1:14:45]

CB: We've had a few inflammatory incidents. Nothing like Berkeley or even the University of Washington, but we've had, I know, around the Israel issue—you mentioned that—we've had that, or we've had protests and counter-protests and it got CPSO, the campus police, Campus Public Safety [Office] had to be called in to quell that down. That's been out there with the election of the Trump administration, there's been a lot of protests and counter-protests, and a lot of yelling on campus. How do you, in terms of the balance of that—you have not banned any speakers or anything like that as President?

WW: Right.

CB: Do you feel that you would not do that?

WW: No, I would not... Well, again, you hate to discuss hypotheticals. There clearly are a few speakers on the speaker circuit where it's not at all about getting their point of view out, it's purely about inciting some kind of a demonstration or anger. If one of our student groups wanted to invite those persons, we would hopefully be able to talk to them and say, "What are you really trying to achieve? If you want to get a point of view out, how about having a full day of seminars about certain topics? Isn't that actually much more educational than getting some kind of a firebrand up there shouting, who will then be shouted down and you'll get a whole bunch of people in a fistfight... and what have you really accomplished with that?" Hopefully, if you have good relations with your students, you can get people to see that yes, getting the circus doesn't really accomplish anything. Even if it sometimes happens, one of the advantages of having been around for a long time is that that too will pass, so, big deal. So there is a little scuffle—you hope nobody gets hurt—some people will think it was the end of the world, but we've all learned, no. When I first came to the United States in August of 1968, I watched the Democratic [National] Convention in Chicago, and people thought the whole world was watching. The whole world was, but the world went on, too. And that will be true of this stuff. It gets overblown at the moment. That doesn't mean it isn't happening. Frankly, the more insidious thing, I think, is when people feel that in the classroom that there is a climate of political correctness, on whatever side it is—that they feel they can't really speak out. That's harder to patrol, or watch, or check. Big demonstrations, we see those; public speakers, we see those. But when it happens in a classroom, we don't know, and the students and the faculty who were there know that. I think it's very important... Portland is a liberal city, and Portland State students, of course, tend towards the liberal, so the fact that in the classroom, in many classrooms, there's going to be kind of the atmosphere... that's natural. That's human nature. But you want to have a climate where people can feel free to disagree, because again, if you don't get to take the opposite point of view, if you don't *hear* the opposite point of view, how are you ever going to really learn what your good arguments are or what your strong arguments are? I've certainly learned more by listening to people who disagreed with me than people who agreed with me. I hope that we can get our faculty, and certainly I've spoken with some of our faculty who I feel were doing a wonderful job stopping people from just jumping to the easy, "Oh, we're all on the same page," and saying "What's the other side of this?" For [...] of the people who want speakers to be banned, reminding people that on the whole—and right now that tends to be left-leaning people who want right-leaning people to be banned, that historically it has been the other way around, that it's been used by more conservative people to ban more progressive people. Think about the whole McCarthy era. So giving students that kind of a perspective: "You'd better be careful what you wish for, because that [censorship] has historically not always been such a good thing."

[1:19:04]

CB: Another political issue that has been happening in the past year has been the immigration crackdown by the Trump administration and its impact on our undocumented students, the ones who are registered particularly under the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, the DREAMers. You were one of the first college presidents in the nation to declare Portland

State as a sanctuary campus shortly after the election last November. What does this mean beyond an expression of support for those students?

WW: The most important thing of it was—A, an expression of support for those students, but also a broader expression of support for all people who may feel oppressed or threatened. It also ties in to the subsequent executive order that banned people from six specific countries and only affects about sixty of our students. Sending the message there was again a message to really all people who have felt historically marginalized, saying, “No, as an institution, we support people who are historically marginalized. We want everybody to have an equal chance to get an education.” I think that was really the main message that I was trying to send. Of course, with the DACA students, since we have been so strong about increasing Latino enrollment, because that is where the big growth of students in the school system is, it was very important to speak out on that. I’m glad we were able to do that and have gotten a lot of support. And there too, I’ve gotten “beat up” by some people who think that I never should have spoken about either of those issues. I just disagree with them. As a president, I have tried to be judicious. I’m not going to issue declarations on every political issue that comes down the pike. The world isn’t waiting for the Portland State President to make statements about everything. But issues that directly affect our student body in a significant way—now, you can’t always agree on that either, but that’s where I feel we do have a moral responsibility to speak out.

[1:21:21]

CB: And you’ve also, with those students, when they came to the legislature, you went to the legislature to talk about how important it is that they pay in-state tuition.

WW: Right.

CB: Before, they had to pay out-of-state tuition, which effectively shut them out of their education. Can you talk about that too?

WW: Right. That was fairly early on when I came here. There was an issue in the legislature whether there was an opportunity—again, for me it was a no-brainer, maybe being an immigrant myself, and also coming from a country where even higher education was essentially free, having that commitment—again, seeing the importance of having Latino students and that if you even exclude... even if it’s a relatively small portion of the Latino community, you’re sending a message to all the others: “Eh, we only want you if...” So it wasn’t a hard one for me to say, “This is important.” And I’m very happy. This is one of the advantages of living in a fairly progressive state, that that actually was doable and we achieved that.

CB: Just quickly on the executive order that was another issue that affects our students directly—as you said, about sixty of them are affected, in five of the six countries that the executive order was designed to limit or really ban their entry into the United States, among those Muslim nations. This ban, since then, the courts have been in and out of this case, and it

will continue I'm sure in the courts. What is your view of how it has affected our international students as a whole, since we have more than two thousand international students, and recruitment of those students?

WW: For this year, it doesn't seem to have had much of an effect yet. Partly because... I traveled to India in March, I became aware of how students were worried about this, and their parents were worried about this. In response to that, the Engineering faculty has done a great job redoubling their efforts to be in touch with admitted students. I think, from what I hear now, international enrollment in Engineering is likely to be up from what it was last year. In the other areas, it may be down a bit. Nationally, it is down a bit. I do worry about the long-term effect. Even for students who are coming now, they've been thinking about coming to the United States for quite a while, so they may have persevered even in spite of the climate of hostility that some of these executive orders and other parts of the foreign policy of the United States at present creates. In the long run, I think that will hurt us. Whether we can compensate for that by just doing even more outreach, more marketing... it's going to be an uphill battle. This too, I think these things wax and wane. One of the challenges is always with international—for a while we had a lot of students from Saudi Arabia. Well, then the scholarship program changed there, and the oil prices collapsed, so that went down hugely. And China grew tremendously. I've always had an enormous worry that the relationships with China—it'd only take one incident and [snaps fingers] that door can shut like that. So when you do international recruitment, you've got to be prepared for ups and downs, and you've got to have a diverse enough group that any one thing doesn't hurt you too much. So there will be some tough years, but I hope we will recover again as well.

[1:25:01]

CB: So you mentioned that people from all over the world come to PSU. We have more than ninety nations represented here. They come for the higher education, yet there is a lot of talk in recent years domestically about the value of a college degree versus the cost, the rising cost of a college degree, particularly about the debt that students incur. In your view, what is a PSU degree worth?

WW: Clearly, if you look at the data, there is no better investment than getting a college degree. That has been true for a long time now, and it has continued to be ever more true. The returns for a college degree have continued to go up, partly because the returns to being only a high school graduate have continued to go down. It's still totally worth it, even with the increase in tuition, taking into account the income that you forego while you are studying. But the rhetoric has certainly changed. It was taken for granted that that was the case for a long time, and interestingly enough, even when it was less true, like during the seventies and eighties, there wasn't nearly as big a differential between a college degree and a high school degree as there is now, but people still took it for granted. We partly have a perception problem. It's not surprising, that as you raise the price of a good, people start to question its value more, unless they really see that it is a luxury good. Nobody questions the price of a Rolls-Royce. So Harvard and Princeton and whatever don't have that problem. They've been able to



raise their tuition and people only think it's more valuable because it's so expensive. For schools that don't have that "luxury good" image, it means it's a tougher sell, and we have to just keep getting better at both actually delivering value—that's why I have emphasized so much that our retention and graduation rates still aren't where they should be, even though we have been pushing them up over the years. This is not something that we can just kind of assume, "Well, too bad, these students don't succeed." No, students are going to be asking those questions. We see it with international students. They care about ratings. We can scoff at ratings, but if we want to attract international students, or even domestic non-resident students. They're not going to know about Portland State other than what they see in *U.S. News and World Report* or on the web or whatever source they go to. So we've got to care about rankings and ratings, and we've got to care—a big part of that is whether students actually succeed and come out with a degree.

[1:27:48]

CB: What do you see as the future of PSU in ten years, Wim? Twenty-five years?

WW: I think there's a big difference between ten years and twenty-five years. Ten years from now, things will—it'll still be very recognizable as it is now. We'll have renovated some more buildings; I think we will still have a huge amount of person-to-person, in-class education; we will still be clearly the big player here in Portland. We're going ahead twenty-five—and I still feel optimistic about our growth, because Portland is growing, so the demographic growth will benefit us. Twenty-five years is much harder to say. I really am not making predictions, because I don't know. But there is more of a chance that twenty-five years from now, all kinds of online providers and simply alternative sources of certification will be more important. There's a possibility that more employers will say, "I don't really care whether you have a college degree; I want to know the six badges that you have, or the six certificates that you have." Even though employers like to talk about the value of the liberal arts, when they actually hire people, a lot of them want somebody who can program in language X or whatever it is. So twenty-five years is a long time. We may, in fact, at that point—the campus physically may be able to shrink because more of it is done in an online format, and as I said there may be other providers that compete. Since Portland State has always had a history of being good as a transfer institution, we've been able to work with the credentials from others. I think the Faculty Senate is not doing as much as it should in really supporting the taking of alternative credentialing and credit for prior learning really seriously. It's tough, I understand that, but that's the way the world is moving, and thinking that you can kind of stay on a pristine island—you can if you're Harvard or Stanford or Pomona or whatever, but not if you're Portland State, because people are going to go where they can get the credentials they need at the least amount of cost and the least amount of effort. That means you've got to convince them that our quality is such that extra effort is worth it. You can't just totally ignore the competition. But really, I have almost too often backed the losing candidate in an election, so I don't dare predict what will really happen, I'm just saying that I think people better be prepared for fairly radical changes in the delivery model for higher education.

[1:30:39]

CB: Based on everything we've been talking about, and your nine years of experience, what advice would you give your successor, Rahmat Shoureshi?

WW: Well, the first one is to spend a lot of time listening. He knows a lot; I knew a lot coming in, but you just don't know the local culture, the local issues. Getting to know—you know, this thing like "Portland polite," it takes a long time to really fully understand what that means and how you deal with that. The history of the place, what are the sensitivities? Really understanding what people want, where the true collective goal is and where we do have divergent ways of getting to it. Do not be too quick to decide on what the right course is. Again, the nice thing about being here nine years, I feel there are things that I decided on within the first few months that I wish that I had just waited a little bit longer—some personnel decisions that I—if I had waited just a little bit longer, the world would have been just fine. And to not get too excited about any one drama. These institutions—I have often cited this to businesspeople, that of the hundred institutions in the world that have been around for more than five hundred years, sixty of them are universities. I may be off on the details of the number, but that's the basic idea. So I tell these businesspeople, "All of you guys will be out of business long before Portland State. Now, it may have a different form. It may have merged with OHSU, it may merge with PCC, whatever. But we are going to be around basically forever, long after most other institutions are gone." So, don't hurry so much. The university, I accuse it at times of moving slowly, but there is an advantage to that too. You can't not move—this is where, again, some of my challenges with the Faculty Senate, for example, refusing to take academic program privatization seriously—if you think we can continue to do everything, and do it at the same level, you're just fooling yourself. What you're doing by doing that is abdicating responsibility. Of course, there will be priorities, either publicly and openly or de facto. So you want to be a partner, with shared governance, and a participant, then you've got to be willing to step up and make some tough decisions. But it doesn't all have to be done [snapping fingers] in the first few months of a presidency. There's time.

[1:33:21]

CB: Is there anything else you want to add for posterity?

WW: The other thing I would want to add is that I absolutely have loved my nine years. There obviously have been some really tough times, and so many days, weeks, even months that I would gladly trade or forget about. I wish people were a little bit more forgiving with each other, and gave each other a little bit more benefit of the doubt. Portland State has a reputation of being a really tough place, the faculty has a reputation of being really tough and difficult to deal with. That's not a good reputation to have, I don't think that helps. The administrators are here to make this university a great place; they're here to support the students and be successful. There's too much casting of administrators as the bad guys. I don't think, just because you're going to disagree at times, that that is helpful to the institution. I don't think it makes anybody's life better. That's been my one, really, plea to the Faculty

Senate: to play a leadership role in working with President Shoureshi and tell him about what you're doing! Tell him about all the wonderful stuff that is going on! Just before this interview, I was watching the video that was made of our choir [PSU Chamber Choir] winning the international competition [6<sup>th</sup> International Choral Competition] in Bali. And as I'm doing now—I just choke up... watching the level of excellence, the incredible value that our students get out of being here. And that's a collective effort. I supported that trip, I paid money so that they could go. We're doing that stuff every day, collectively, as administrators, faculty, and students. We've got to celebrate that, and not fight with each other. This is a great institution with an absolutely amazing place in the city, that it's gained through the efforts of many people over decades. Not all universities have that kind of credibility and that true commitment, as I said, to "Let Knowledge Serve the City." Let's be proud of that. Don't hurt it. And [...] to succeed in whatever way, in whatever challenges the future brings. [pauses] Go Viks!

CB: All right! Outstanding.

[Concludes 1:35:44]