Robert Bruininks

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Interview with Robert Bruininks

Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers
University of Minnesota

Interviewed on May 9 and June 7, 1995
University of Minnesota Campus

Robert Bruininks	- RB
Clarke A. Chambers	- CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers and I'm interviewing Robert Bruininks who is currently dean of the College of Education and . . .

RB: Human Development.

CAC: . . . Human Development which is a new name at least, if not a new part of the mission and we'll come to that. It is the May 9, a cold rainy day as though it were March. The interview is being conducted in his office in Burton Hall.

Bob, I suggested before we turned this machine on, and finally got it to working, that it's really useful to begin with a kind of autobiographic, academic, intellectual autobiography, where you came from, how you got interested in education. Some people know they're going to be a medical doctor at age twelve. I knew I was going to be an historian in the second grade, having no idea what that was. So, where does one get inspired? How did you enter the field? Then, how did you get formally educated for it?

RB: I think my career exploration and career path is a little less predicable than yours. I started out actually as an undergraduate with a major in music and had thought about performing and perhaps teaching. I hadn't decided what I wanted to do.

CAC: Were you voice or instrument?

RB: Instrument. Brass instrument. I played the trumpet.

CAC: Ohhh.

RB: What I enjoyed the most was performing; although, I worked my way through school teaching music to young kids and planned to take a teaching degree in music. The inspiration for doing so was probably passed on to me by music teachers in the elementary and secondary grades . . . while I was active in athletics as a young person and very active in outdoor activities, canoeing and fishing and so forth. I was kind of an outdoor kid.

CAC: Bob, where were you reared?

RB: Central Michigan, in the Grand Rapids area.

CAC: So, you had the Upper Peninsula [unclear]?

RB: Yes, and spent a fair amount of time up there. As luck would have it, I was in the university marching band and during the half time of one of the coldest days in the history of the Chicago Bears, we performed at half time. I left my promising musical career on the field trying to play a little bit too aggressively, as I recall. [laughter] I developed some kind of a pinched nerve and it really affected my ability to play; so, I switched to, mainly, a combined major in social sciences and special education as an undergraduate.

CAC: You always could have switched to the trombone, or something with a bigger mouthpiece.

RB: Yes, I tried that, too, but my first love was the trumpet.

CAC: Isn't that something?

RB: I think I was led mostly to pursue a career in psychology and education because of volunteer work that I had done with children who had special needs and the influence of some friends of mine who were active teachers.

CAC: This is when you were college?

RB: Yes, as an undergraduate.

CAC: How is a young person drawn to that kind of volunteer work? Did you do it through the "Y" [Young Men's Christian Association - YMCA]?

RB: I was very active as a youth counselor in YMCA settings and occasionally we would run special summer camps for young people who had special needs. Out of that experience, I felt that that was an area where I could do some good. At that time, it was a growing area in education. There were opportunities for advanced study and, clearly, it was an open job market at that time.

CAC: This is the beginning 1960s when you were an undergraduate?

RB: Yes.

CAC: And the opportunities in special education were already being developed here and there; although, it wasn't a fully grown speciality at that time?

RB: The early beginnings of special education in this country started around the mid 1800s and some of the first special education programs in urban schools developed in the 1880s, in cities like Cleveland, and New York, and Chicago. The early beginnings, it's kind of interesting, grew out of the French Revolution and some people who were refugees of the French Revolution. Talented physicians like [Edward] Séguin who came to the United States and developed new careers, basically working on behalf of people with disabilities. So, this field has kind of a rich historical tradition and much of it contributed by people out of the health sciences.

CAC: Historically, was there some disability more than another? Was there a disability of favor?

RB: Yes, hearing, vision and mental retardation, I think . . . and physical disabilities. Those were probably the four primary disabilities that people addressed. In the early part of the development of services in this country—another thing that you might kind interesting from an historical perspective—many of these service programs were caught in the early eugenics movement and that was very strong. The science of intelligence testing came together with the initial stages of scientific work in genetics; so, a lot of people were doing research to connect—it still goes on today with the *Bell Curve*—a science of testing and measurement with human genetics and accounting for variance in human ability. At that time, there was a strong feeling that intellectual ability was inherited. People like Henry Goddard were strong advocates of that point of view. The twin traditions of special education were this strong humanistic tradition coming mostly out of France, and the French Revolution, and the work of [Lewis M.] Terman, Séguin, and [Jean Marie] Itard and [Maria] Montessori, people of that stature. Then, you had this sort of parallel track combining the science of human genetics with the early beginnings of measuring human performance and that took quite a different point of view. There is a very fascinating and interesting history in this whole area, which tracks very much the social history of this country.

CAC: You bet. Are there good histories printed?

RB: Yes. There are some rather good histories written on this subject.

CAC: At what point does this enter higher education as a specialized field of concern and research?

RB: Probably in the 1920s and 1930s. The University of Illinois had programs. It's interesting that the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee was one of the national centers of scholarship in this area in the late 1930s and particularly the 1940s.

CAC: In a way that would have application in K-12 public schools?

RB: Yes, yes. A person by the name of Samuel Kirk was a very strong and powerful figure in that period of time. Many of the people who developed an interest in special education were also people who were strongly connected to the foundations of literacy in schools, people who grew up in a tradition of developing basic literacy skills in young children. Those same people also worked quite substantially in areas of special education. A parallel area of development was the whole movement toward child study and child study clinics; so, some of the early leaders in special education came out of that psychological tradition.

CAC: Which was particularly explosive in the 1920s, as I recall.

RB: Yes. In fact, our Institute of Child Development was developed during that period of time, as what was called a Child Welfare Station. The same thing with the University of Iowa. They had a very, very famous Child Welfare Department there and did some of the leading research that still is cited today.

CAC: Yes. In this earlier generation, was a lot of the research done in restricted institutional places like the Schools of the Deaf and Dumb, as we used to call them?

RB: Yes. Institutions for the mentally retarded, most of which were developed and expanded greatly. The study of the institutional movement in this country is really a study of a political history and philosophy in many respects because the early institutions in the 1840s, lets say, to 1870 were primarily rehabilitation of habilitation settings. They tended to be small, community centered.

CAC: And isolated from main stream?

RB: Yes, somewhat isolated but also not too far away from small towns at that time.

CAC: Faribault would be a good example of that?

RB: Actually, Faribault developed somewhat later. The early ones had a philosophy of education, and treatment, and return of people to productive lives in society, very much like the philosophy of today. When the eugenics movement really hit and combined with the intelligence testing movement and the quantification of human performance, then we saw a very expansive period of building institutions and segregated living arrangements, many of which lasted well into the 1960s. If you look through that resume, you can see we've done a lot of work on mental health, mental retardation, and public policies in that area and the whole movement toward deinstitutionalization of services in society. That movement didn't really hit . . . it started in the early 1960s and really accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s.

CAC: So, what sets it loose? Where did the green lights come from?

RB: I think a lot of what—speaking about the last few decades—set it loose had to do with changes in the U.S. politics. In fact, a lot of it had to do with the fact that President Kennedy had a sister who was mentally retarded and recently died at St. Coletta [Alverno Cottage] in [Jefferson] Wisconsin. That experience in his life . . . He initiated something called the President's Panel on Mental Retardation. They studied programs internationally and came back with ideas from all over the world, including some exciting ideas from the Soviet Union at that time. After that, the commitment toward community-based services developed, basically in parallel in mental health and mental retardation; but in the mental health field, it took a much different direction with the application of drugs and medications and very little development of community-based services. If you look at the history of the last thirty-five years, both of those movements started about the same time but in the case of mental retardation, you had a tremendous organization of grass-roots parent organizations and parent groups combined with national and state political figures that came together and created this coalition and this agenda together. That eventually resulted in the Americans with Disabilities Act early in this decade.

In the area of mental health, the parallel community infrastructure never developed. The feeling was that medications and drugs would take care of the problems. You'd get people stabilized in state and county mental hospitals, they'd get released to communities, and now we find that a large percentage of them are obviously street people in very dire straits. But you didn't see the same parallel develop in the area of mental retardation and developmental disabilities. There was an attempt to build an educational infrastructure, housing infrastructure, transportation and health infrastructure. Many of those programs are now hitting the press. They are putting a lot of pressure on the state and federal budgets. For example, the Medicaid expenditures, as we have documented in our research, for people with disabilities represents some of the fastest growing segments in the Medicaid budget in the last twenty years. But what people fail to realize is what they would have spent if they hadn't built community-based care [unclear].

CAC: As an undergraduate, you were bright, and sensitive, and already participating as a volunteer. How much of what you just narrated did you know at that time?

RB: Very little . . .

CAC: So, how did you perceive it at the time?

RB: . . . except I was active in programs that had to do with building community resources for children and youth with disabilities either in a special education classroom . . .

CAC: And you came by that in what fashion in your personal career?

RB: Partly through volunteer work and summer employment . . . partly through my first positions as a teacher. I started out in a junior high school and the junior high school setting had

a strong commitment toward what we called at that time integration or main streaming of students.

CAC: Where was that?

RB: That was in Pontiac, Michigan.

CAC: You had the whole range of disabilities?

RB: Yes and quite a number of kids from very tough backgrounds. From there, I went to graduate school.

CAC: At some point in your college career you knew this was a career line that you could follow on professional lines?

RB: Yes. My graduate education was mostly a degree in applied psychology. It would be difficult to tell my degree pattern, and the course work, and experiences I had from the kind of preparation people would get in the normal educational psychology, or applied psychology. I took a very, very heavy dosage of research methods, and quantitative research methods, and a lot of background in psychology. I minored in psychology but it was close to a major, I would say.

CAC: And Vanderbilt was a center for this [unclear]?

RB: Yes.

CAC: And you knew that when you went there?

RB: Yes.

CAC: Why Vanderbilt?

RB: There were three or four places in the country that were nationally distinguished at that time, that had very, very strong leaders. One was Peabody and Vanderbilt. Nicholas Hobbs was the president of the American Psychological Association and had a very keen interest in mental health, mental retardation. Lloyd Dunn was there—he had served on the president's panel—and you had a group of psychologists, rather young psychologists, who were from some of the better institutions of higher education in the United States. Hobbs, and Dunn, and a few people built this very distinguished faculty.

CAC: As a youngster, as an undergraduate, you knew who those names were?

RB: You knew where the half dozen places were in the United States.

CAC: Minnesota would not have been part of that at that time?

RB: It had a growing reputation but it wasn't at that time considered to be a powerful research center.

CAC: Iowa would have been because of their earlier . . . ?

RB: No. Illinois had an interdisciplinary research institute at that time that was very powerful. Peabody Vanderbilt was a powerful center. There were a couple of others like Kansas that were coming up in the world. Minnesota was one of those with sort of emerging programs. Syracuse University had some powerful people and generally these academic programs are very interdisciplinary and involved a very strong merging of education and applied psychology.

CAC: The names that you list would suggest to me that the great private universities of the east were not on the cutting edge of this development at least?

RB: No, no.

CAC: Perhaps, because they were too elite?

RB: Yes . . .

CAC: There's a real democratic kind of ethos underlying this, I'm guessing?

RB: Yes. I would say the only exception might be Columbia. Columbia was fairly strong, mainly because its teachers college had been the center of intellectual leadership and remedial education for decades; but it was not a strong center of empirical research at the time. Columbia was definitely in the elite group of institutions but not as strong as Peabody Vanderbilt, Illinois, and Syracuse. Those were the three strong centers.

CAC: Sometimes I ask dumb questions so I will now. Is this any relationship to what those institutions would have thought of as a Land-Grant mission, of meeting the practical problems of a citizenry in a republic?

RB: I think to some extent programs that have looked after the interests of people with special needs . . . the child welfare stations and movement dealt with early adoption issues, homelessness in young kids, the integration of social, health, and welfare services with the needs of families and communities; so, I think many of these strong programs grew out of the Land-Grant tradition. Iowa would be a case, and here, Kansas. I think the exception would be Peabody and Vanderbilt and I think the exception largely came as a result of collecting a few very powerful, imaginative, and visionary people who were there. It's still a very, very strong center of scholarship in the area of disability studies.

CAC: Did any of these powerful figures become a mentor to you in setting a model?

RB: Oh, yes. Both Hobbs and Dunn. I studied under both of them.

CAC: Their influence was personally powerful?

RB: Yes, very, very powerful.

CAC: What of your peer group? I'm guessing that there must be a kind of excitement anywhere in the academy when new things are happening or coming together? You suggested it's a long trend, and obviously it is, but in the 1960s, it really breaks away?

RB: Yes.

CAC: I'm inquiring to what degree that had an impact upon morale and the learning experience?

RB: Oh, well, it was a time when you could access resources. There were grant opportunities. These academic centers I've talked about were centers that attracted large amounts of development capital. In some cases . . . like the University of Minnesota had a unique opportunity in the late 1960s to build strong interdisciplinary research and training centers in the area of disability studies. We got into some internecine warfare between the College of Education and the Medical School at that time. We lost the opportunity to leverage what was then a $5 million building—a lot of money at that time. Places like Columbia got their act together and managed to get one of these centers. The irony was the University of Minnesota in the late 1960s under Maynard Reynolds, and Fritz Kottke, and some other very powerful figures here on campus could have been an absolute powerhouse center but we couldn't somehow build the kind of consensus across colleges that we needed to.

CAC: This had to be done primarily with the Medical School?

RB: Medical School, Behavioral Sciences, Education, Social Services, Social Work. It needed to involve at least those primary disciplines. They needed to have a strong presence in the Medical School.

CAC: I hear from many that the chasm of Washington Avenue between the Health Sciences and the rest of the university is really a Grand Canyon, or to speak historically <u>was</u> a Grand Canyon?

RB: Yes. I think it's better today in many ways.

CAC: The failure to realize this potential alliance came chiefly from the medical establishment?

RB: Yes, I think so.

CAC: Or is a fault generally shared?

RB: I think there was a feeling that if the agenda wasn't controlled by the Medical School, it wasn't worth pursuing.

CAC: Did they have another agenda in the Health Sciences?

RB: No, I think their agenda ran much more strongly toward the basic sciences rather than the applied science and the integration of science and service . . . I think that's where part of the problem developed. This is sort of a perception rather than any . . .

CAC: Well, spoken words are.

RB: Yes. I feel one of the great strengths of this university has been its decentralization and the creation of cultures that allow flowers to bloom in local areas, in great departments or in great programs within departments. But one of its tremendous weaknesses has been the inability to connect these centers of scholarship and creativity around a common agenda, unless that agenda is developed through some organized entity like the Minnesota Extension Service. So, if it came to agriculture, we did a good job in that area. When it came to areas of education, human welfare, public health, other things that had to do with the Land-Grant responsibilities of this university, we've done less well in connecting those agendas to an outreach mission when it involved collaboration across units, across colleges, and so forth. My sense is we're going to have to get much better at that in the future if we're going to survive.

CAC: This field certainly would have required a major connection to the School of Social Work?

RB: Yes. Social Work, Health. For example, I did grant rounds for the Department of Pediatrics about fifteen years ago and out of that we developed a couple faculty positions that are jointly funded from this college and pediatrics. I reminded the people during my grant rounds presentation that the studies that had been done on the case loads of practicing pediatricians in communities demonstrated that 30 percent of the visits were from families who had children with disabilities. Now, those disabilities account for roughly 1 to 3 percent of the live births in the U.S. population but they accounted for 30 to 35 percent of the office calls. Yet, there was nothing in the organized medical school training to help these physicians deal with these issues. They now have a serious rotation that we have developed in collaboration with the Medical School for all pediatricians going through their training—on the other side of Washington Avenue. That's the kind of thing that needed to be done in the 1960s to capture this great momentum here. We sort of lost the opportunity and we had to come back and recreate it, although nearly twenty years later.

CAC: But there have been in social work, visiting teachers or school social workers ever since 1905, 1908, and that also would have to be part of the alliance?

RB: Absolutely.

CAC: I have a feeling from other interviews that that alliance didn't work out very well here?

RB: No, not as well as it should have.

CAC: So, it's not only the Medical School?

RB: No.

CAC: There were other provinces of the empire that . . .

RB: But I've come to view that as with human beings . . . if you analyze what you regard to be your primary strengths . . . taken to excess, you find that those are often areas where you have weakness. That's true of organizations and organizational cultures as well. We have to learn to better manage that dilemma at this university. I think it's coming. It's starting to develop.

CAC: You came to the University of Minnesota in 1968 . . . ?

RB: Fall of 1968.

CAC: . . . just when these things were possible?

RB: Yes.

CAC: But you're young, and you're new, and you really are not a primary active person in these . . . or maybe you were?

RB: The interesting thing is that several of us arrived at that time. That was a time when universities were hiring a lot of young faculty.

CAC: Yes.

RB: I came out of a culture which had a very strong academic entrepreneurial atmosphere. We had established at Peabody and Vanderbilt some of the leading national/international research centers through competitive grants, and grant applications, and so forth; so, I was always around people who are writing grants. For example, I managed, for fifteen months before I completed my Ph.D., the final years of a Ford Foundation grant to improve literacy and language of young inner city kids in the metropolitan area of Nashville, Tennessee; so, I was in that kind of culture. A few other people came here: one from Illinois, and another young guy from Stanford, and another from Wisconsin, and another from Yale. We all sort of converged at the same time, all from that kind of entrepreneurial atmosphere. The interesting thing is that many of these people who came from different places received a lot of their education from Peabody and Vanderbilt.

If you were to track the graduates of that program during about a ten-year history, they had just enormous influence on the intellectual development as well the public policy development of the field. Just unbelievable numbers of them went to major universities, and into the national government, and ran major grant programs in NIH [National Institutes of Health] and the Department of Education.

CAC: This was your generation so that you were networked with already?

RB: Yes, so I had some network. I played softball with a guy that was the second in charge of the research branch in what was then the U.S. Office of Education with responsibility for funding in this area. That was a small kind of field and so even though I was young, my acculturation, I think, and the acculturation of my peers at that time was much faster. We were into writing.

CAC: You were ready to go?

RB: Yes. It doesn't show up on my resume but two of us young Turks wrote one of the major research center grants; and I think without our sitting down to write that grant, it never would have arrived here. Throughout my career there's been that sort of effort to connect the real science of our field with the needs of policy and practice and to leverage money from government, and foundation, and other sources to try to build programs here.

CAC: At this early point, say something about the outreach of persons like yourself. How many people in Special Education in 1968, 1970, for example?

RB: Close to twelve. It hasn't changed much. It's actually down a little bit from what it was.

CAC: In 1960, there was probably one or two?

RB: Actually there were three or four.

CAC: During the 1960s, and then when you arrive in 1968, and take on, how are networks built to the public schools because to do the research freestanding clearly was impossible.

RB: The interesting thing in those days, back in the late 1960s and even before, there was a strong Land-Grant tradition to the work of this college and so people didn't do work in isolation. They were strongly connected to schools. Much of our work was of a demonstration research nature where we designed, implemented, and researched programs in collaboration with our colleagues; so, there was a lot of experimental model development going on during that period. We tend to work a little bit more systematically with respect to our Land-Grant responsibilities than I think we did then. I think we work a little smarter but the templates were clearly the same then as they are now.

CAC: And there was a cadre of administrative officers and teachers in the Twin Cities metropolitan area who were accustomed to this kind of relationship with the college?

RB: Oh, yes. In fact, the partnerships were probably stronger in the late 1960s and early 1970s than they are today. We're very actively, in this college, rebuilding many of those partnerships. It was a time when faculty members and school and human service providers worked pretty closely together and you still see that today. It's very much a part of the tradition and the culture of this college.

CAC: Would that be true in colleges of education elsewhere who had active and aggressive programs in special education?

RB: I think largely true . . . less true in most places than I think was the case here.

CAC: If that's the case, then how do we explain a Minnesota spirit, or a Minnesota style? It's one of emphasis of degree, not of kind?

RB: I think it had a lot to do with some of the early leaders here: Maynard Reynolds, Bruce Balow, Frank Wood. Many of these people brought a spirit and a sense of commitment. I introduced Maynard for a colloquium last week. He's been retired now seven or eight years. Maynard hired all of us. He was the chair of the department from 1957 until . . . would it be 1972? . . . during that stretch . . . or maybe a little later than that.

CAC: Maybe a little bit later.

RB: Yes, I think it was closer to 1974. Then, the Department of Special Education was merged into a division, sort of a mega-department. We went from twenty some departments under Jack Merwin to seven broad configurations. Maynard chaired what was called the Psycho-Educational Studies Department which included School Psychology, Counseling Psychology, and Special Education. In the *U.S. News* reports of graduate study, those three fields are ranked in the top three nationally here at the university. I think two of the three, that is School Psychology and Special Education, while we receive rankings of third in the nation, I think they're probably closer to one. I think we had strong leadership. It was Maynard's philosophy that you go out and find good people and you let them go. I think he did that well.

CAC: Was there an influence at all of any aggressive deans or vice-presidents who would get aboard and [unclear] facilitating?

RB: I think so. He enjoyed very strong support from all the deans that I know I served under, first starting with Bob Keller. I didn't know Bob Keller well. I knew him some. Jack Merwin was a strong supporter. Jack, an applied psychologist, measurement evaluation, had spent some time on national study panels that were dealing with issues in special education and disability services; so, he had a strong commitment. Bill Gardner. It's interesting . . . Bill never talked

with anyone in the college community. I don't think anyone really knows that he has a son with a disability; so, he had a deep-seated commitment. He never wore it on his sleeve, never talked about it. Under his leadership, I think, those programs in Educational Psychology really grew and developed—as they did in the Institute of Child Development.

CAC: It requires—you use the word strong support—more than strong support. It requires really reaching out, and running interference, and doing all kind of things; so explain a bit more what you mean by strong support.

RB: When I assumed my responsibilities in the fall of 1991 . . .

CAC: As dean?

RB: . . . as dean, the college had undergone retrenchments in its base state budget fifteen of the preceding nineteen years. Of course in the last five, we had taken the deepest cuts in our history. During that period of time, many programs in the college were strengthened, during periods of economic adversity; so, I think in that kind of circumstance you have to be willing to spot quality and support it financially. You have to be willing to tap people to be leaders at critical times and I think all of these deans did that. You have to have a sense—even though I think they all shared this sense unevenly . . . I know all of them personally and Keller less well . . . during this time it was mostly Merwin and Gardner as deans—for the need for this college to evolve into this integration of the science of human development with the study and implementation of education. And while they understood it, I think unevenly, they were willing to let strong personalities make the case . . . like [Willard] Bill Hartup, and Andy Collins, and Harold Stevenson in the institute were very strong and forceful leaders—as Rich Weinberg is today. They were willing to listen to good arguments . . . arguments that often sort of ran somewhat counter to the culture in the political pressures of the moment.

CAC: Say something about that.

RB: I think the dominant culture in a college like this would favor investment in traditional K-12 disciplines and direct connection to schools more that it would favor investing in places like the Institute of Child Development, Special Education School, Psychology, Applied Psychology and yet, during this period of time, those remained as strong centers of investment, long term investment, when it would have been much easier to go in a different direction. I think in many respects, I have a good sense of how these things fit together; that is, how science and the study of human development really is going to make a difference in the long term when it comes to improving human performance, education and learning, and human welfare. We've been able to, in the last four years, articulate that I think more coherently by changing the college mission, by developing a strategic plan that maps the philosophy, the goals, and the direction of the college to what we see are changes in that external environment that universities like ours need to address. But the foundations of all of this go back over several decades and, I think, are captured

very much beyond pedagogy. Even the title . . . Bob Beck sort of had an instinctive feel that this college was qualitative different than many other colleges. The problem is we never publicly celebrated it in a way that would allow us to get a much keener sense of direction around these issues. I think that's what we've tried to do in the last four years during a period of some economic adversity.

CAC: I want to come back to the more recent period later. Historians think chronologically, and I kind of like to get the earlier under my belt first, and go back to the late 1960s, and 1970s, and early 1980s. We're talking about internal coalitions that are built, and cultivated, and strengthened. Were there superintendents, or principals, or school systems in the community with whom . . . ? You said there were demonstration programs. What kind of initiative or reception was there out there?

RB: I think very good, especially with the Minneapolis schools over the years.

CAC: This would be credited again to leadership or what?

RB: Yes, for example, when John Davis was superintendent. Incidentally, we're giving John Davis a Distinguished Achievement Award this year at our graduation of college. You know, he, after leaving, went to Macalester and was a distinguished president there; and then salvaged the Children's Theatre, and he's moved on to solve other kinds of problems since then, including a short stint at the Minneapolis Public Schools again.

CAC: At the moment, he's committed himself to developing a land trust to save the valley of the Kinnickinnic.

RB: Is that right? I'll have to talk to him about that.

CAC: My son got him aboard. He's very versatile.

RB: Yes, he is. I'm hoping we can bring him in as a senior fellow.

CAC: Say something about his leadership.

RB: He was a superintendent that valued, I think, strong connections with this university. He valued the connection of knowledge and research to the improvement of educational practice. You may recall in the early 1970s, Judge Larson put the Minneapolis schools under court order for desegregation? The person who chaired the Minneapolis School Desegregation Committee was a professor in Special Education, and at that time assistant dean, Frank Wilderson who became the vice-president.

CAC: Ah ha.

RB: Frank now directs the Special Education Department—to show you how things come full circle—and is doing a great job at it. So, he reached into the university to find someone to chair what was probably the biggest challenge he faced as a superintendent. So, we had a lot of joint ventures with the Minneapolis schools and a good many with the St. Paul schools. The St. Paul schools tended to be more formally and more bureaucratically organized, I think. It was easier to do business at the local school level in Minneapolis.

CAC: Any of the suburban systems?

RB: Yes, a strong relationships with Bloomington, some with St. Louis Park, Robbinsdale, mostly near suburban districts, the inner ring districts. But there's always been, I think, an openness on the part of the metropolitan area school districts to collaboration with the university and it goes back many, many years. This college has had a number of faculty joint appointments with the school district, some of whom have held tenure in this college. For example, it's not uncommon in some of our programs to jointly fund clinical supervision positions so that people work part time on a school reform agenda and part time on the training, and education, and supervision of our graduate students. So, there have been these kinds of joint ventures, including the integration of economic resources, that I don't think you'd find in a lot of other parts of the country.

CAC: I'm skipping through your CV trying to find your reference to so many professors and so many . . . not associate professors . . . but associate staff. Is that what you mean by associate staff?

RB: Do you mean joint appointments with schools? I don't know if you'd find it in there. You will find an early paper or two.

CAC: The counseling, student, personnel, psychology, psychological, foundations, etcetera . . . forty-seven faculty, seventeen *associate* faculty. I didn't know what associate faculty meant.

RB: Some of those are internal to the university, for example, people out of Student Affairs and Central Administration.

CAC: I see.

RB: Like Don Zander. Do you remember Don?

CAC: Oh, yes. In other places, we'd call that an adjunct appointment?

RB: Yes.

CAC: You're talking about adjunct appointments?

RB: Those would be adjunct appointments but we also had similar associate appointments with people in high profile administrative leadership positions in schools as well.

CAC: And sixteen academic staff. I didn't know what that meant.

RB: What year is that? It depends . . . they changed a lot of the wording.

CAC: It adds up to an enormous staff, some of whom are regular academic appointments.

RB: Those would be mostly people on what we now call academic professional appointments.

CAC: Okay.

RB: They might be mostly in charge of clinical practice, supervision, internships, things of that sort. Some of them were in charge of demonstration research projects, joint ventures with schools and other agencies on soft funding. A lot of them are on soft funding.

CAC: Some of these associate appointments were from the public school system themselves?

RB: Yes. That's been a strong tradition here for years, and years, and years.

CAC: This is the model of, I guess, clinical appointments to the Medical School?

RB: Yes, exactly parallel.

CAC: But not many other schools would have that kind of an arrangement?

RB: Not as extensively.

CAC: There aren't many lay historians.

RB: No. I've committed us as a college to even deepening our relationships in that way. For example, the president has declared something called the K-12 Initiative that I manage on his behalf, but it's mainly an outreach agenda with respect to the urban schools in the seven county area. I recently hired an African-American woman to be the chief liaison from this office to the biggest urban schools and to really work closely with those people. She has a Ph.D. from the college. She's a retired school administrator in Minneapolis. That is a very atypical academic appointment . . .

CAC: Yes.

RB: . . . but if we're really going to build an urban school agenda, we've got to have some differentiated staffing around here, namely some community leaders as well as academic leaders;

and those community leaders need to sort of bring the academic community together with the issues of policy and practice in ways that we haven't done in the past.

CAC: I suppose the only other major example would be—well, of course, Ag-Extension—the Humphrey Institute?

RB: The Humphrey Institute would be another good example; although, their senior fellows, policy fellows, tend to be more connected to state and national policy, some of them to local policy as well. Whereas, our people are in actual service settings. I think, probably, in some ways the medical analogy fits us better.

CAC: This has a bearing also on the way . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: . . . to the community as well as to other agencies within the university structure itself. I want you to explore or talk just a little bit about the nature of research that comes out of those arrangements.

RB: I think the research traditions and research practices of this college vary quite dramatically across academic units but those units that are strongly connected to the world of policy and practice—however you might want to define that—tend to run their research more in partnership with agencies and would tend, if you were to look at the resumes of those faculty members, to have more multiple authorships. First of all, it's more of a tradition in education and the behavioral sciences than I think is true of the social sciences.

CAC: The humanities would be at the far end of that continuum?

RB: That's right. My wife's uncle is—I don't know if you know Gene Hagstrom—an English professor. He got an honorary doctorate from CLA [College of Liberal Arts] a few years ago. He would be an example of single authored books throughout his career. You could find that here but even someone like Bob Beck who is more out of that tradition than many others . . . if you look at his resume, you would find some joint authorships with colleagues. In fact, some of his finest applied work, outside of his central focus on the history and philosophy of education, came toward the end of his life when he joined with people in vocational and technical education to redesign the high school of the future to not only accommodate an academic emphasis but also a connection to the world of work. Bob was ideal as a partner in this process because he could transcend the study of education, the philosophy of education, the practice of education, include architects in the model; and so, it was a very broadly interdisciplinary effort that he worked on for two or three years before he died. It's been carried on now and has become one of the hottest, not only national but international, activities of this college.

CAC: Who carried on that?

RB: George Copa was the director of the project, and Bratbaugh had the good sense to bring Bob in and integrate him into this effort, and now George is directing it.

CAC: For persons who are listening to this, whether five years from now or twenty . . .

RB: There is one other thing I wanted to say about the scholarship of this college. You know the usual rankings of colleges are only slightly more sophisticated than beauty contests . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RB: . . . maybe not even that sophisticated. Recently, some researchers at the University of Illinois have done a major productivity study where they actually looked at serious measures of productivity: sponsored funds, scholarly citations, endowment funds, reputational indices, and so forth. This college was ranked fifth nationally in that particular ranking. The *U.S. News* ranking had us lower because we couldn't get our GRE [Graduate Record Exam] scores out of the Graduate School on time and they went to press and ranked us 115th.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: Later, we had them re-run the data and we were in the top ten. They ranked us on selectivity at 115th and so that drove everything down.

CAC: Right. Sure.

RB: That won't happen again. That's what we call "one trial learning" around here. We will keep our own numbers from now on. The other thing I guess I would say is, this is a college with a very strong influence and tradition in the behavioral sciences . . . a very, very strong connection to psychology.

CAC: But this would be true in many schools of education around the country?

RB: Yes, but here more so than most.

CAC: Okay.

RB: At Minnesota, behavioral science has been referred to as the "dust bowl of empiricism." That characterizes the culture of this college. It's a culture that's beginning to change. We're beginning to recruit and hire more people that come more out of a social science tradition, fields of sociology, anthropology, and related areas. The traditions of scholarship are beginning to change and broaden somewhat so that we see much more historical analysis, qualitative research. But it's still very much an environment that is dominated by this empirical emphasis much like

you would find . . . You'll find a lot of the research techniques are not too dissimilar from what you would . . . I talked to Phil Shively over lunch yesterday and he was telling me about his work on the study of elections going back over several decades and some of the multi-varied statistical methodologies he and his colleagues have applied to teasing out elections that were held in Germany during the 1930s and so forth. A lot of those same kind of statistical procedures and methodologies would be used and applied here . . . a kind of econometric approaches you'll see even in my resume. I've worked with economists on cost benefit analyses of social programs and so forth.

CAC: Well, I'm glad that a provost, newly established, can still talk about earnest matters.

RB: Yes, he seems to have a keen interest. In fact, he's on his way to Notre Dame as a part of the National . . . what's it called . . . the National Election Study? He's been involved in that for years. I think that's an important part of that kind of intellectual history and tradition. I think that tradition developed more substantially in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s. Prior to that time, I think, you would say most of the scholars in the college probably came more out of a social science tradition. I think that would be a fair characterization. Bill Gardner would be a better judge of that, I suspect.

CAC: Bill Gardner was an historian. . . .

RB: Yes.

CAC: . . . which is one of the reasons I knew him better than any of the other deans.

RB: Sure. He's still working on those issues. He's now in the United Arab Emirates.

CAC: Ah!

RB: He called me Saturday. He's on an international consulting project there and he goes to Turkey next year on a leave of absence. He's gotten very interested in international . . .

CAC: I want to talk about the international outreach later but what I'd like to come back to now that we're talking about research and how it's structured . . . could you for the spoken record select some important piece of research? Who generates the question? How do you put together a team? How do you select persons? What part of their time is involved? What is the responsibility of the PI, the principal investigator? How does that proceed?

RB: I think there are multiple traditions in the college. I'll use a couple of examples. David and Roger Johnson are very well-known researchers in this college and have strong international reputations. David is a social psychologist. His research has dealt with conflict resolution. His brother Roger is a science educator. They've done a lot to create the theory base for cooperative education and have applied those theories and research studies in a wide range of settings,

including the lessening of conflict in military situations, as well as the teaching of mathematics in the Institute of Technology [IT]. In that particular case, the research, the science, the application, grew out of a very strong theory base with very, very strong theoretical underpinnings in social psychology.

CAC: But by two persons who shared a great deal?

RB: Right, and have created considerable energy and impact through their work. Then, you'll find some projects like Byron Egeland and some people who have really worked on longitudinal research studies, to study from a theory and an empirical perspective the antecedents of child abuse and neglect, from very early infancy up and through childhood; and then have taken that more theory based work and worked with practitioners in the mental health field to design and undertake parent education and other types of therapeutic programs and, again, research those. In the one case, the research grows out of theory but it reaches a point where, much as it does in the basic sciences, you get into the world of application. As James Conant said, "The purpose of research is to lower the level of trial and error in everyday life" and that's basically what this is about is to get beyond trial and error.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: Then you run projects more of the kind that I've been involved in. I've been what you might call an inventor in some ways because I've designed, and tested, and standardized measurement instruments that are used. One thread of my work has been to do policy research over a period of time. That grows very much out of the field, out of the evolving culture. It isn't created in the academy and taken out and applied. It's work that continually grows and evolves out of the normal changes that occur in our society, and in local schools, or in local government policy; so, there's a whole line of research that deals with the impact of public policies and deinstitutionalization. There are a lot of national census studies done. There are intervention studies in that area. These are studies that grow more out of the world of practice than they do out of the inventions of the academy. I think you'll find all of those traditions in this college in one way or another. You find a strong strain of research which is problem-centered, field-centered, policy-centered . . .

CAC: When field-centered, often draws on persons who are outside the confines of the university itself?

RB: Partnerships with people outside of the academy many times.

CAC: Their names would appear on these . . . ?

RB: Some . . . yes . . . or you put together research teams. For example, in doing the early Medicaid research, we were interested in trying to better understand the evolving cost profiles of community-based mental health and disability service agencies and what was likely to happen

to the Medicaid reimbursement and budget structures over some period of time. I cut a deal with the center for research in the health sciences, economic research . . . I can't remember what it was called . . . Health Policy Research. I brought in Jay Greenberg, who was the economist and is now out east, and actually put together an interdisciplinary team of social science, behavioral science, and economists, people who really were doing this kind of work to do the necessary modeling we needed to do for the Health Care Financing Administration. So, you see, that grew right out of the immediate needs of the Health Care Financing Administration and a lot of what you . . . if you read in the Sunday paper . . . talking about the Medicaid expenditure problems and so forth and the growth in those areas, the research has been started and been conducted over nearly twenty years right down the street.

CAC: By down the street, you mean colloquially . . .

RB: Pattee Hall.

CAC: And to the uninitiated listening to this, what does that mean . . . Pattee Hall?

RB: That's a center that has a research center called the Institute on Community Integration there but basically some of these studies were done . . . I actually started this research program in 1976. Charles Lakin, who is now the director of this, has testified more before Congress than probably any administrator in the University of Minnesota because he has really important information that policy makers need at the moment to understand what's going on with respect to federal expenditures, and the direction of federal policy, and the impact of federal policy. I use that as an example.

CAC: That's a good example.

RB: Yes. The same thing could be said about a lot of the research in vocational and technical education where there has been a very, very strong partnership with the government over a twenty, twenty-five year period and a joint sharing of not only financial resources but also intellectual resources in shaping that agenda. So, the research agenda grows out of this sort of collaboration and partnership much like John Borchert, I think, developed with CURA [Center for Urban and Regional Affairs]. CURA is a wonderful model. When I was in the State Planning Agency, Borchert was in the State Planning Agency working with my colleagues in the Environmental Quality Council as much as I was in the office it seemed. I would run into him all the time. That's this strong connection of the tools of science and often the theories and the knowledge base of science with practical problems and this sort of creative interplay between the two.

CAC: You use the term at almost the beginning of our conversation . . . entrepreneurial. That's what really these folks were up to when you were even a graduate student.

RB: Sure.

CAC: It's that quality particularly in research projects like this that involve different disciplines but also community agencies?

RB: Yes. It's more entrepreneurial in the sense that it's a search to connect, an effort to connect, the benefits of science to the needs of society.

CAC: Oh, sure.

RB: Often, those are accompanied by public investment strategies but not always.

CAC: To what degree do national policies—as evidenced in the old Office of Education or other funding foundations, whether the Ford Foundation or public foundations, national government, state government—to what degree do the agendas they set act as attractive magnets for schools of education or scholars to apply to do work where the priority is set there?

RB: I think probably not much more in colleges of education than they do in, let's say, at least in the sciences in the university. If you do an analysis of the $280 million of sponsored funding we get on an annual basis . . .

CAC: In your college?

RB: No, in the university. Our college total is about $12 million, which is fairly high for a college of this type. If you do an analysis, you'll find that that money predominantly is associated with a very small number of people . . . no matter whether you're talking about the Institute of Technology, the Health Sciences, or here. Tony Potami is a person you ought to talk to to get a good sense of this.

CAC: He's on my list.

RB: I think Tony told me that something like right around 5 percent of the faculty in this university generate most of that money. That's a phenomenal statistic. He has it. I'm quite sure it's under 10 percent. You'd have to say that those national policies exert some influence because the grant swingers of this place—to use a colloquialism [laughter]—they do track that pretty carefully and they do connect their work to those trends. The other thing that can be said is that these people are often influence leaders. I don't know if you've had a chance to read some of the articles in *Atlantic* and other places on policies in health research? In the cholesterol articles—the one I'm thinking of—this has been a center of intellectual leadership on cholesterol research here.

CAC: I interviewed one of those chaps last week, Dr. Frantz.

RB: The interesting thing though is to ask the question, To what extent was their work influenced by national policies or to what extent did they influence the development of those policies? I think there's a reciprocal relationship here and you'll find that several people in this college have their fingerprints on the intellectual documents that lead to the priorities.

CAC: These same folks served on the National Advisory Council.

RB: Right. You might think of this as incestuous, and if you're not careful it can be, but I think for the most part it's open, it's public . . . peer reviewed systems. I think where we've run into trouble in national science policy it's been because we've had too close a relationship sometimes between prominent researchers and the development of funding priorities. The connection has been a little too close. I don't think that's been the biggest problem. I think the bigger problem in recent years has been the tendency to move away from scholarly peer reviewed systems toward political allocation decisions.

CAC: Say something about that to make it more explicit.

RB: My sense is that a good social scientist who studies the evolution and maturation of organizations would be better able to address this but my feeling is as organizations mature and grow so that the agenda increasingly becomes at least shared with the need for survival, people think about political allocation decisions as opposed to ones that may be based on merit. For example, I would guess if you studied the early days of the National Endowment, you would find that they were funding projects more on the basis of peer review and merit. Today, they would fund a little bit more on geographic distribution and some other considerations.

CAC: You say National Endowment . . . you mean for the Humanities [NEH]?

RB: Yes, right. I think you'd find that to be particularly true in fields like education. The stronger the link between the research funding program and applied practice, the more those local influences creep into the decision making process. Let's just take the field of disabilities study right now. More and more the peer review panels have to have a parent of a child with disabilities, a person with disabilities, and it has to be balanced with respect to diversity . . . These are all important social issues and social agendas but they often don't match up with the technical requirements that are involved in evaluating the merits of a project proposal. I think when you politicize these review processes, whether you're trying to put a chicken in every pot, a geographic pot, or whether you're trying to . . .

CAC: Or ideological pot [unclear]?

RB: Yes. I think all of these things have been real problems with the advancement of at least applied science in this country. I don't know where it's all going to go. I think the most serious problem is the movement toward block funding strategies, strategies that seem to be disconnected at the moment with any sense of mission or purpose—except the purpose of block funding and

reducing the budgets. I think long term this could be . . . I don't think it would hurt us that much because we're so strongly connected to communities that I think we would reinvent the way we were and still come out—and in some ways even stronger.

CAC: But you've seen operate the last ten, twelve years, when those really become serious—I think it's serious right now—the decline in total resources available for the kind of research that you do here, whether it's through the sciences, NSF [National Science Foundation], or NIH or NEH, and so on. As you've observed that in your own fields—I use the plural because you are catholic . . . you do lots of different things—how does that work its way out? The resources are declining internally because the university doesn't have the resources. The resources for external funding are slipping very fast. When I talk with scientists and health folks, they are really scared.

RB: Yes.

CAC: Yes.

RB: It's a real problem for us, too.

CAC: In your fields, what do you see as the consequences of that the last ten, twelve years . . . accelerated the last three or four?

RB: It's been a serious problem. To some extent, we've survived. I'll give you an interesting statistic. In 1985, this college had $5 million annually in sponsored funding. Last year, it was $11.7 million. So, during a period of nearly ten years when the funding situation was increasingly difficult for us, we doubled our resources. So, part of what happened here is we organized to work smarter. For example, we're moving into the use of technology to spot funding sources in the private sector as well as the public sector. We're developing much more aggressive strategies to build partnerships with state and local government and public and private agencies. In fact, one of our research centers has a task force looking at the implications of block funding for research development and technical assistance activities. I believe society will always need to create better ways to do things; so, part of what we need to do is to figure out how to work more resourcefully and generate our research agenda within this constantly evolving market place of ideas and public policy changes. Now, that's sort of one issue. I think we can solve part of the problem that way.

The second part of this is, I think the faculty of the future will look somewhat different than the faculty of the past. This is and always has been a heavily state funded college with a very, very substantial number of tenured people as a proportion of the total number of people working in the college. We will move more toward a medical school model with more differentiated staffing. We have very modest teacher preparation programs here. I think they account for 16 to 17 percent of our . . .

CAC: You want to come to that soon?

RB: Yes. In 1905, that accounted for 90 percent of our enrollment.

CAC: Sure.

RB: It's a small part of that today. It may be that to really train people for those roles in practice, to be really reflective and effective practitioners, the research scholars aren't the best people to be in the direct training roles. They should be a part of the educational programs of students but when it comes to the actual didactics that are strongly connected to practice or field practice, or clinical practice, we may need skilled clinical practitioners in those roles. So, we may need more partnerships with schools . . .

CAC: More elbow room for adjunct appointments?

RB: Yes. Adjunct appointments.

CAC: By contract for two or three years or whatever?

RB: Right. So, we're going to be experimenting much more with those kinds of models. That's going to require some substantial redirection in our own thinking. In some cases, a faculty member may be working with a half dozen adjunct faculty as a part of maintaining and operating a program and be enriched by that kind of collaboration, as well as provide something back to the practitioners that are part of this program. I don't know exactly how that's going to play out but I think we have to experiment with some different models. It is worrisome to see at least in the last year or two—it's been worrisome throughout this period—to see the ebbs and flows of funding . . . but it's particularly worrisome to see what's going on right now. I think our national political leaders in particular let public policy get really out of control. One of the influential books I've read recently is [E.J.] Dionne's book on *Why Americans Hate Politics*.

CAC: Yes.

RB: It's very powerful in the analysis of politics in the last thirty, forty years. "In 1990," he said, "we're in a state of gridlock. Now, we're starting to understand. It's finally hit the papers." We've really driven this country right to the edge of the cliff with extraordinary deficit financing in the last few years and the transfer of wealth mainly from younger people to people with means and in some cases older people in our society. I think we're headed for some serious inter-generation conflicts over these issues, and some serious disintegration of national consensus, and some approaches to financing our public systems that are going to be knee jerk crisis oriented rather than thoughtful over the long term. That's the most worrisome part of this.

CAC: It leaves the infrastructure of all things neglected for quite awhile.

RB: That's right. It's not just at the national level. Our attention, since we get $280 million, let's say, annually in sponsored funding, is always oriented at the outside business community or the federal government, the main source of this funding. But you see the same thing in our state legislature. When I came here in the late 1960s—and you know this better than I do—we had bi-partisan government here. It was hard sometimes, when it came time to make a decision, to tell the Democrats from the Republicans.

CAC: You had a system in which a few leaders carried authority, which they do not now.

RB: That's right . . . and were willing to exercise it.

CAC: Oh, yes. They weren't bashful at all.

RB: Yes. You see the same kind of gridlock now at the state level and the same kind of passing the buck. I think that's the most worrisome thing for universities.

CAC: It really reflects kind of cultural fragmentation, doesn't it?

RB: Yes . . . disintegration of public consensus on many of these issues.

CAC: Or any civic sense.

RB: Yes. So, I think that's the most worrisome part of this change we've seen in the last few years. I don't know what it means for universities. I think our major research universities are headed for some real challenges in the next few years.

CAC: Your college made an adjustment of—I don't know the exact dates; it is a process and not a moment—I won't say surrendering but giving a lower priority to teacher training—you mentioned that just a moment ago—and toward all these other graduate study research applied fields. How was that brought about? Where did the initiative come from? How was it implemented? A lot of people, presumably, had a vested interest in a traditional way?

RB: Sure. Absolutely.

CAC: That's always the case and that's not to fault anyone. That's the way it's done. Say something about that story.

RB: Bill Gardner spearheaded the conversion of our teacher education programs to a post baccalaureate model.

CAC: This would have been what years approximately?

RB: Starting about 1986, 1987 . . . mostly in that period.

CAC: Yet, Bill was a person deeply committed to the teacher training part as a social studies person?

RB: Yes, very, very deeply. In fact, he was the president of the National Association on Teacher Education, and so forth. We had always been an experimental college in teacher education. We had always had post baccalaureate models here. We were one of the first universities to develop an alternative career track for people who were coming out of other fields, business, sciences, and so forth, who wanted to enter the world of teaching. The conversion, while dramatic, was made in light of these longstanding exemplars that had been around here for nearly twenty years. I can remember them starting in the early 1970s. The problem with the way we went about this . . . I believe very much in the post baccalaureate model of teacher preparation. The theme that I like the best, or the principle that I like the best, and can celebrate the easiest is the building of professional education on a strong foundation in the arts and sciences. It builds very substantially on the liberal arts tradition, which I think is terribly important to people if they're going to be good, creative, and resourceful teachers. A lot of the other stuff that people talk about—you know the educational jargon that they use to describe this movement—I think is sort of secondary in importance. What we did here—and I've since had to reverse somewhat—is we moved to a strictly post-bac[calaureate] model which disconnected us very substantially from the undergraduate communities of this campus. We have now moved back a little bit.

CAC: Where did the original move come from, to go back historically? Where did the pressures come from for cutting out the . . .

RB: Undergraduate education?

CAC: Yes.

RB: I think it grew mostly out of the school reform agenda of the 1980s, the feeling that if we were going to *fix* education and fix the practice of education, we had to really reform the preparation of teachers. We had to deepen their roots in the liberal arts. We had to strengthen their clinical practice, that is, to give them more field based experiences. Another principle of the model is that teachers in training ought to be in experimental schools where faculty and local educators are engaged collectively in the process of reforming and improving schools.

CAC: But those principles would indicate a traditional way of undergraduate teaching, training, but changing the substance and the style—but still keeping it?

RB: Yes. This was very much a house divided.

CAC: But that was one way a college could have gone?

RB: Yes. There was no reason to go to the post baccalaureate model if you were trying to change the way in which teachers learn and were prepared for the profession of teaching; so, you could use those same arguments to argue very strongly for an undergraduate approach to teacher preparation.

CAC: Yes.

RB: My feeling is that the persuasive arguments rest on the side of deepening the intellectual roots of their intellectual foundations of their study and practice. Now, our programs are very much increasingly integrated so that students can enter as juniors but they have to finish up after they finish their baccalaureate degree. We have not retreated from the liberal arts foundation for our programs and I don't think we will. It's much more cost effective for our students now.

CAC: Morrill Hall played what role in directing this or encouraging it?

RB: Very little. This is kind of an interesting study of institutional politics.

CAC: That's what I'm getting at.

RB: Bill Gardner—he'd be the best person to talk to but I know this because I spent hours with him on this issue—went to Central Administration and said, "We want to reform our teacher education programs. This is the direction we want to take." So, the movement to the post baccalaureate model was completed under my tenure. In some cases, I had to take faculty groups that were resisting the movement and push them a little harder. When the academic priorities' cuts were announced, the university used the argument that the college was going to cut its undergraduate teacher preparation programs and that's why they were . . .

CAC: To save money?

RB: To save money and that's why they were leveling nearly $2 million of cuts over five years on this college.

CAC: That's a pretty good disincentive, isn't it?

RB: Yes. I call that the "no good deed goes unpunished" approach to strategic planning.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: The double jeopardy approach. Really, this isn't a money saving initiative. At best, it's revenue neutral. I can't find anywhere where this movement has saved us a dime.

CAC: Because you had tuition coming in from the students.

RB: That's right. In fact, undergraduate approaches would be far more cost effective than what we're doing now, I think. I think at best, it's revenue neutral.

CAC: It wasn't perceived that way in Central Administration?

RB: I think it was used after the fact as sort of an explanation for cuts. I've never understood it. I consider President Hasselmo a friend and I respect him very much but I've never thought his thinking and reasoning, and why the college was cut, in any way measured up or was consistent with what happened, with the evolution of events here because this whole initiative was <u>ours</u>. It wasn't an invitation to cut our budget. It was an effort to reform our practices.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: So, I use, from time to time, inflammatory language like "no good deed goes unpunished." Clearly, the teacher education agenda of this college is still a very important agenda and I would define this broadly as a development agenda. There's initial preparation of teachers and we are now in the state a small player but a player very much in the mold of experimenting with new models and researching the models we have; so, it's very much an experimental and research agenda that we have here. It's one that is strongly integrated with our graduate agenda. We have created a Council on Teacher Education, which is across the entire college. It has policy and governance authority. It has its own directorate that comes out of the faculty. That was a creation of Bill Gardner and Dale Lange. I actually implemented it but the ideas came in the last days of Bill's tenure as dean. We have really changed the culture around teacher education. We are driving it much more with the idea of reforming schools and reforming practice and researching what we do; so, I think when it comes to new models in the state, we're sort of the bell cot, we're leading those.

CAC: How do you select your undergraduate students, a very small cadre of folks?

RB: Usually each of the areas of licensure, like foreign language instruction, might have a cohort of thirty students. Elementary has close to one hundred students.

CAC: But you must have to select these <u>far</u> more carefully than would have been the case with a more open enrollment?

RB: Yes, we do.

CAC: How do you do that? What criteria come into play here? Are you looking for some quality of imagination and how that can be measured, or commitment, or what?

RB: Some of it's done through interviews and the normal approaches.

CAC: You do interview your undergraduates admissions?

RB: Well, the people that come through the undergraduate—or post baccalaureate route. They now are joined. Obviously, looking at test scores and grades are part of it. There's a national exam much like there is for law school admission.

CAC: Are you creaming the . . . ?

RB: I think there's much more of that. There's not an open admissions policy until the licensure programs.

CAC: How do the state university campuses perceive that?

RB: I don't think they're concerned about us in that sense. I think they're more concerned with the fact that the state of Minnesota and some prominent people in the legislature have picked up these same themes and have argued that they ought to be a part of state policy; so, they are a little worried about being pushed into these changes too quickly. There is, for example, a movement to withhold the license of a teacher until they finish an apprentice year or two after they get their initial license, much like you have a residency in medicine. I think that would, frankly, be good. We'd take more seriously the initial induction process in teaching, which I think is a process that is abysmal at the moment.

CAC: Just to back up a moment, what role did the state university campuses—there are six of them? . . .

RB: Six or seven.

CAC: . . . play in the shift of emphasis here away from undergraduate training? Didn't they pick it up? Don't they assume that it's their job and their going to do it?

RB: Yes, they're doing the undergraduate role.

CAC: I mean, was this part of the dynamics of the Gardner . . . ?

RB: Partly. I think that was more the thinking of Central Administration that we would by doing this uniquely set ourselves apart from what is probably the predominant emphasis in the state universities. I think their teacher education programs are among their—in terms of enrollment—strongest programs in each of the campuses.

CAC: This is consistent with Commitment to Focus, isn't it?

RB: Right.

CAC: That we focus on what we can do best here and if other institutions around the state are doing a reasonably good job, then they should do it.

RB: That's right.

CAC: Am I misstating that?

RB: No, no. I think that's clearly consistent with what we tried to do.

CAC: Are they, in fact, doing the job well?

RB: I think it's mixed. I think if you'd do an analysis . . . if you were to interview people who hire teachers, I think you would find consensus that we recruit and prepare the best, and the brightest, and the most effective teachers in the state. We tend to focus proportionately more on fields of practice where we have a unique advantage through the interdisciplinary resources and depth of the university . . . areas like foreign language instruction, mathematics and science, special education, early childhood education . . . areas like that.

CAC: One assumes that some of the campuses in greater Minnesota are doing, from the point of view of this college, a better job of training teachers than others.

RB: Do you mean here?

CAC: No, I mean that some of these campuses must be doing, by your criteria, a better job of teacher training . . .

RB: Than some of the others?

CAC: Yes.

RB: I think that's true. St. Cloud would be stronger than many of the other. They have a bigger College of Education faculty than we do. They have a very large faculty.

CAC: What role does the flagship college play in teacher training in greater Minnesota then? What influence do you have on the teacher training?

RB: Not a lot in greater Minnesota except in this sense. We have strong continuing professional development programs for people who are already in practice. We run magnate programs through the Rochester Center, through Morris. We have collaborative programs with Duluth. We're starting some things with Crookston. So, we do reach with distance education and other technology . . . For example the Rochester Center gave a report to the university board of regents. I didn't know they were going to give this report and I was sitting there to get our name changed . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RB: . . . and they talked about the number of degrees granted through the Rochester Center and I think 196 of them in the last four or five years have come through this college. We were the predominant college, well in excess of IT or any other academic unit in that center. So, one of the things we have tried to do is to put proportionately more of our emphasis on graduate education, continuing professional development of leadership personnel, whether they're teachers, administrators, college and university people, policy makers. That's why 80 percent of our enrollment is mainly focused in those areas of responsibility; and they're areas with much stronger integration of research, theory, and practice. I think, when you think about the principles of Commitment to Focus, we are clearly positioned very strongly along the lines of trying to do what is really unique or uniquely suited to the University of Minnesota.

CAC: Has there ever been a statewide informal gathering of persons engaged in the same process, that is, teacher training?

RB: Yes. There is a very, very strong state organization. The former associate dean and Bill Gardner were very active in organizing and giving leadership to this group. It's called the Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, or something like that. Dale was the recent outgoing president; so, the last president came from here. I think every three or four years the president comes from the University of Minnesota. It includes privates like St. Olaf and Augsburg, St. Thomas, and others; the state universities; the University of Minnesota system, UM-D [University of Minnesota - Duluth] and this campus. They are increasingly a powerful voice in the state legislature and with the board of teaching.

CAC: And the Higher Education Coordinating Board, do they play any role in these kinds of shifts?

RB: Some. The State Board of Teaching, which is independent of the Higher Ed Coordinating Board, is the stronger player in this area. I think the legislature and the State Department of Education and . . .

[knock at the door and brief interruption in interview]

CAC: How much time do you have? It's 3:29.

RB: Just a couple of minutes. Do you have some questions yet? We probably ought to try to get to them.

CAC: I've pretty well gone through my agenda.

RB: Have you? Good.

CAC: More importantly is your agenda. Are there things that you really think we should continue with and share?

RB: Yes. I think that what has happened here in the last four years is analogous to the substantial restructuring you see in sector agencies. I think there are some real lessons for higher education in what has happened here in the last four or five years. One is I think we are into a massive restructuring of our academic programs and curriculum toward more integrated, interdisciplinary approaches. We're moving more and more toward the college taking responsibility for its programs as opposed to each and every one of its fiefdoms, academic centers. That's been healthy. So, we've got people, when it comes to some of the foundation areas of education areas, people in the applied units are making contributions and people from the foundation units are also making contributions back to the applied areas. We're also experimenting with new models of delivering education, distance education as a case in point. For example, we have a very exciting program to train middle and senior managers of the two-year . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: I'm picking up this morning a conversation we began about three weeks ago with Dean Robert Bruininks of the College of Education. It is the June 7 and we are picking up the conversation in his office. I think, Bob, that what we were interested in getting a line on are the pressures of the last seven, eight years that have created a condition of retrenchment, particularly severe for the College of Education. For any college, the problem of maintaining basic missions with fewer resources is a persisting dilemma but your college certainly faced it in more severe ways than others. Now, you know what the pattern was, and you have some figures here; and with that general invitation, I'll just invite you to comment on it with as many anecdotal details as you can provide.

RB: Okay, very good, Clarke. When I assumed my responsibilities as dean in the fall of 1991, our college had undergone budgetary retrenchments in its state budgets for fifteen of the preceding nineteen years; so, cutting the base budget of the college was nearly an annual event, except for four of those nineteen years. I then inherited something called the Academic Priorities Plan of the university which was a continuation, I think, of the Commitment to Focus planning first initiated under President Keller. In that particular plan, the university made obviously a very courageous decision to cut a campus, Waseca, and in the process also rebudget approximately $58 million in cuts and reallocations. I believe our college was the unit targeted for the largest cut to an academic unit.

CAC: The largest percentage?

RB: Yes . . . on the Twin Cities campus. That original reduction—I have a chart here that I'm going to share with you and you can take with you— . . .

CAC: Thank you.

RB: . . . called Central Retrenchment in this figure is the Academic Priorities Plan and the proposed reductions to the College of Education and—now—Human Development. Since we last met, I think we changed our name through action of the board of regents.

CAC: Oh, I see. It was on its way. It was on your door three weeks ago.

RB: Yes. Over this five-year period, from the 1991-1992 academic year through the 1995-1996, we were scheduled to cut nearly $1.9 million.

CAC: Okay.

RB: Now, that would have been challenging enough particularly in light of the budgetary history of the college.

CAC: This was out of a budget of what approximate size?

RB: About $14.5 million.

CAC: Okay.

RB: Now, in many ways the college is a microcosm and an interesting case study of what I think will happen to collegiate units all over this campus and will happen, and is happening, to colleges and universities nation-wide. I think through this we can maybe raise some broader discussions. What happened after the five-year Academic Priorities cut . . . and this may suggest that five-year planning is probably not the most prudent way to plan in any kind of social institution or I would say it's been equally inadvisable to use five-year planning models for nations.

CAC: I hope we didn't borrow from the Soviets.

RB: I think we did. [laughter] The most vivid examples of five-year planning were those of the Soviet Union and China.

CAC: It started in the 1920s.

RB: Yes. And they have failed miserably because in today's world with such rapid transformations in our economic structure and in social conditions, five-year plans are, I think, doomed to fail. That gets us off on a different tangent. In the very next year, 1992-1993, we decided to give ourselves a salary increase here at the university with no funding from the state legislature. I believe that was a 5 or 6 percent increase on average; so, we had to cannibalize our budget to the tune, in this college, of $783,000. So, in the 1992-1993 academic year, to put that in perspective, we had to cut nearly $1 million in a single year, more than half of which went into salaries. You can say, "Well, the money stayed in your base budget," but if you are

in a position where you have to reallocate that money to other purposes, it will probably take ten or fifteen years to recover enough of it to really make a difference. I view that—and most other deans . . . I think all of the other deans would—as a cut in your base or at least a loss in your purchasing power.

CAC: Sure.

RB: The following year, a budgetary shortfall took another $400,000 and so the cut was $750,000 and every year since then, we've not only had the Academic Priorities cut but we've had a situation of sort of double jeopardy where the state shortfalls have caused additional pain. What you hear when you talk to most other colleges, like the College of Liberal Arts and so forth, is they're beginning to feel this pinch, too, in a very big way because, while they didn't have the academic priorities cut and instead were the beneficiaries of reallocation, the benefits of reallocation have essentially been neutralized because of these additional budgetary reductions. To a considerable degree, some of the other colleges of the university are just beginning to address issues that I think we addressed in the fall of 1991-1992, which is How do you preserve programs, strengthen them or at least maintain them, in a period of near fiscal exigency, clearly, where you're losing large amounts of money? The problem you have in a university is you lose large amounts of money, as we have, in a very compressed period of time and about sixty-five cents of every dollar is off budget. It's tied to the tenure track faculty.

CAC: I see. Off budget, that is, not available?

RB: It's very much like the dilemma of trying to balance the federal budget when you take interest payments, defense, and social security and put it off budget.

CAC: Yes, right, right. So, that's about two-thirds?

RB: Yes. That is probably a normative rate for academic colleges throughout the university. That's been the real challenge. We did several things, and I'd like to think that we approached our work very creatively, and I think we made a lot of the right judgment calls but even with the very best of judgment calls, this has been an extraordinarily stressful and difficult period not only for me personally but for every member of this college community. We determined that we were not going to sit back and take these changes in our circumstances as victims. We were going to try to turn adversity into some opportunity and make some tough decisions here and also in the process at least maintain, if not strengthen, our programs in the long haul. So, we didn't say, we were just going to cut. We said, we were going to commit ourselves to not only reducing, consolidating programs and saving money, and in some cases eliminating programs outright; but we were also going to aggressively pursue an agenda that would put this college in a position to more creatively confront the future. We've been trying to do these things simultaneously; that is, to try to change and transform the college as we deal with this downsizing and this tremendous budget problem at the same time. That is unique in higher education because usually when we start new things, we invest new money and so the model is additive. This was strictly

a reallocation model and the reallocation of most importance was the reallocation of human capital, human energy because we didn't have a lot of new money to put into anything.

CAC: Some others have noted that we have taken—when you make a statement like that and I don't fault it because I believe it myself—as a norm roughly 1950 to 1975, 1978 and that may not be a norm in the long run of the history of higher education?

RB: No, it's not. No, it's not. That was a period of just extraordinary growth and development. In the case of this college, the college of the late 1950s and maybe even very early 1960s—I'm just going to use faculty complement as an indicator of the college budget—the faculty complement was I believe roughly 100 to 110, somewhere around 100. It ballooned, it grew to 196, 197, and even at that level, we were a relatively small professional college for a Big Ten institution. Georgia, I learned the other day, had a faculty and still has a faculty of 350 and our responsibilities and our productivity—I would argue—are considerably higher than Georgia's. Then, what happened when I took over in 1991, the faculty complement had shrunk to approximately 155 to 158, somewhere in that range depending on how you count.

CAC: Two-thirds of it tenured?

RB: Yes, at least two-thirds of it tenured. We are a very mature tenured faculty now. As we start the 1995-1996 academic year, the faculty complement will be roughly 133; so, we've had a net reduction of twenty-three full time equivalent positions, something like that, in the last four years, partly because I imposed a four-year position freeze to start dealing seriously with this academic restructering.

CAC: How much of that could you recapture from early retirements, resignations?

RB: All of the money from early retirements and resignations has gone into budget cutting.

CAC: So, you've not replaced positions?

RB: Only this fall. After taking about twenty-three to twenty-five positions out of here, we started three searches. One of those searches will be funded by minority matching money from Central Administration; so, it will be phased in over a three-year period. We raised the money for a second position outside of the normal state budget. The third position, we are reallocating from internal resources. This has been an incredible change in the faculty complement. It will be 15 to 20 percent in about a five- to six-year period when finish this process.

CAC: This means that the college is losing esteemed colleagues?

RB: Yes.

CAC: I mean, I put it in personal terms.

RB: Some of the retirements and resignations—I must be honest with you—probably five to seven, were people who were on long term leaves or in some ways were I don't think really pulling on the institution's oar as much as they should have and I was very aggressive as a dean. I personally got involved in a lot of negotiations and renegotiations and every single one of the bluffs I called turned in the favor of the college, which is remarkable. If I could translate that to the Powerball, I probably wouldn't be here this morning.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: I had a person that was a good person but he had a seven-year leave absence and I said, "Either come back or resign."

CAC: But you were using his money for soft purposes undoubtedly?

RB: Sure, and that to a department chair makes sense because I get to keep his money, right?

CAC: It's the only way . . .

RB: So, the department chair looked the other way and I said, "Yes, but this is no way to restructure in the long term the academic priorities of the college; so, we're not going keep doing this." There were about three or four of those that I called in.

CAC: As a chair even in the 1970s, I used to pray that we'd get lots of sabbaticals, and Fulbrights, and other fellowships so we could have enough to finance our TAs [teaching assistants].

RB: That's true.

CAC: Soft money has always been generated that way.

RB: Yes, and I think that's healthy. That's sort of normal rotation. I think when you sort of get out beyond that, when you get three- to five-year leaves of absence without pay, you really lose the ability to redirect your academic priorities and energy; and if you allowed that to go to excess, you would get the piling up of money maybe in areas of less importance to your long term future. You begin to lose some budgetary control.

CAC: You've got an important narrative line and I hate to interrupt it but I'm going to, to raise the associated question of how one carries a faculty along with this kind of heroic cutting, which raises the question of internal governance. What does the College of Education have? Are there advisory committees elected? Whom do you consult? How does that whole process work?

RB: I have a Faculty Consultative Committee which is elected from the college senate. It has worked reasonably well.

CAC: Is it representative of the ranks and divisions?

RB: Yes, mostly . . . mostly; although, because it's elected at large, you can get a piling up of some departments. We're now addressing that. I think we're going to go to a different governance model because the governance model has not worked real well.

CAC: How large is this consultative group?

RB: It's about six members.

CAC: You meet with them regularly and discuss this whole range of issues?

RB: Yes. The other thing I did to get representation across the units is I created a special ad hoc task force called the Academic Strategic Planning Work Group, and I picked outstanding faculty leaders from every department, and asked them to meet with me regularly; so, I created some useful redundancy in the governance system.

CAC: Ah! That's a good term. How large is that group then?

RB: That has eight to nine members.

CAC: You consult regularly with fifteen faculty in two different groups?

RB: Yes.

CAC: And the agenda, I would guess, would be pretty much the same for the two groups?

RB: Yes, then the Administrative Council includes all the department chairs, the academic deans, and all the college center directors.

CAC: That's a third group?

RB: That's a third group. There's a lot of overlapping consultation. In an environment like this, in a period of such intense change, you just have to have a lot of that. I used some other . . .

CAC: Excuse me. Did this form of consultation accelerate and increase because of the crisis?

RB: Oh, yes. Yes, without question.

CAC: So, this was not in place fifteen years ago in quite the elaborate fashion?

RB: I'm kind of a student of strategic planning and change in organizations and I can probably fill up more than one tape talking about my mistakes; so, I'll just try to highlight some of the strategies and what I think the good calls were.

CAC: Good.

RB: Every time you do something like this, you make mistakes, too. I had to spend a tremendous amount of time not only directing the college strategic planning agenda but also taking care of an awful lot of what I called external relations; so, I had to spend a lot of time outside working on positioning . . .

CAC: Do you mean with other colleges and Central Administration or do you mean in the community?

RB: In the community mostly but also at the same time working a lot with Central Administration because my sense—and I know this is correct—is that part of the cut we got in Academic Priorities I don't think was the least bit justified on the basis of—everybody feels that way but I feel very, very much that way—our productivity and standing in the field. I think it had a lot more to do with the fact that people didn't know who we are and what we do. Getting that message across has taken an awful lot of time and attention and it's paid off. I think the college is stronger for it and I think the university is stronger for spending some time in that area.

CAC: You've had allies in this?

RB: Some, yes, but . . .

CAC: Do you call on some colleagues to talk to superintendents or principals?

RB: Oh, yes. A lot of people worked inside. One of the things we did . . . we were in a crisis situation and I knew a month before I took office. I met with [Ettore] Infante and Bill Gardner, who was the outgoing dean, and I was told the situation was going to get worse. You didn't have to be a rocket scientist to know that some of these other cuts were going to come.

CAC: Sure.

RB: The first thing I did was immediately declare a position freeze that I kept in place for four years. I did it for two reasons. One was budgetary, we didn't have the money. Secondly, my feeling was that we had to dramatically change the way in which we thought about this academic environment and how it was going to build and grow in the future. If I had kept the hiring of faculty and the replacement of faculty in place in traditional ways, the focus of the academic community would have been to discuss position priorities and replacing the last colleague who left. I had to interrupt that. I had to send us all essentially to Hazelton for awhile . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RB: . . . so we could get over this obsession, which is an obsession which you'll find in every academic corner of this university. As colleagues, we will sit down to talk about replacing the last person that left at great length and much more extensively than we will about where we need to go . . . you know, as a History Department or a Psychology Department. I felt it was very important to break that chain psychologically and to get people thinking in different ways. That was the first thing we did.

The second thing was I started a whole new set of communications strategies. I started quarterly letters to the faculty which laid everything out, told them what our circumstances were, were usually upbeat in tone, changed the four-year information newsletters so that there was always a column, and the column would feature the context and change of the college; but also I'd have other people who are leaders of change activities in the college be featured in the editorial section so people would say, "Hey wait a minute. There are things happening around here and I'd better get with it." So, we tried to create this sort of atmosphere and environment so the whole communication strategy was thought about in a very strategic way, not only internally but also externally. If you look at the publications back then and the publications now, you'll see a vast difference. Every letter I sent to the faculty and the staff of the college, I sent to the emeriti faculty and staff of the college and I met with them at least once a year over lunch.

CAC: Is this a significantly large group now?

RB: It's a fairly large group. I think we probably have forty people show up but I do it usually at two different times so we can have a reasonable discussion.

CAC: One can guess, there is a good deal of distinction in that group?

RB: Yes. Those people are still strong leaders. I bring the emeriti faculty back to help make decisions on professorships that we award on a rotating basis and awards of various kinds; so, I try to keep a connection with them. That's meant a lot to people. The faculty who have retired now feel a little bit more connected to the place.

CAC: I'm sure you know, because you did it, that there's a large feeling of abandonment. I'll tell you what happened to me. I retired and I got wiped out of the computer. I went back to teach one course by contract. They couldn't find me. I had to do all the paper work from the beginning, social security, everything. I was just wiped out. I thought what a wonderful symbol that is.

RB: Yes, right. [laughter]

CAC: I was just wiped out! [laughter]

RB: Yes, I think we do that kind of thoughtlessly. I'm now trying, as much as possible, to get some of our retired faculty back on contract because they have so much to offer.

CAC: Wonderful.

RB: Frank Wood, who is retiring, is a wonderful professor. He's a winner of the Teaching Award . . . loves to teach.

CAC: You bet. I know Frank.

RB: He doesn't want to teach here because he thinks, as Frank would, that it might interfere with the new person we're bringing in to replace him but he'll teach the course in Rochester. [laughter] He's going to do that next year.

CAC: Again, that has to be done with soft money?

RB: Yes, but we use the open items from sabbaticals and from buying people out of grants and contracts or unassigned instruction. It's very cost effective. We probably have a half dozen to a dozen retired faculty teaching, advising, and doing other short term assignments here; and I'd like to see that increase over the next few years.

CAC: I tried to spur Central Administration to this kind of model, not knowing that you were doing it, two summers ago and . . . nothing.

RB: Yes. Our investment in this area is pretty modest but I think we should even do more. We should do much, much more. I can fill in just a couple of other things that might be helpful.

CAC: Good.

RB: As a kind of a student of strategic planning, I believe good planning grows out of basically three or four things. One is, a real clear sense of your mission; so, we rewrote our mission statement with a select blue ribbon committee that also did a lot of consultation with the community as well as within the college. Every department participated in reshaping that mission statement once it was drafted. It was shrunk from something like twelve pages to a paragraph. It sort of said, "This is the kind of college we are." Secondly, I pulled the leadership team of the Consultative Committee and the administrators into a two-day retreat—or maybe it was a one-day retreat—and we articulated what we thought the conditions of higher education would be for the future, our operating context, our operating assumptions; and we articulated and revised a set of twelve or so planning assumptions, and principles, and goals. Those planning assumptions and principles which state very clearly the context of the college now and in the future and the assumptions we think we need to make to be a strong, vital, professional college haven't changed hardly a note in the past five years. They've been the driving force. They were derived by consensus, and they set up the planning process, and they've been driving the planning process

ever since. Every time I go to central and defend the budget and present the strategic plan of the college, those planning principles are up there first. I say, "You can't understand our plan unless you understand how we got there and this is how we got there basically."

CAC: How many people when that's carried to Central Administration do you have to convince? What is your audience over there?

RB: We're now going to organized planning and budgeting meetings much like they have in state government. In fact, they're pretty much identical to the process they use in state government. Usually, there will be a dozen people around the table, financial analysts, people like Infante, [Robert] Kvavik, [Robert] Erickson.

CAC: How often does the president himself get involved at that level?

RB: Not too much at that level.

CAC: Probably should not.

RB: Yes. I don't think that's probably an appropriate level.

CAC: There are so many associate and assistant vice-presidents that selectively they . . .

RB: They participate pretty heavily along with support staff. You present your plan every year and your budget every year . . . your budget plan and your strategic plan usually every year now. At least we've had two iterations of that kind of cycle.

CAC: I'm curious how long a session or sessions do you have?

RB: They are about two hours in length.

CAC: You have to have it well structured to do that in two hours.

RB: Our written materials are well structured. They are getting better in central at formatting this process and organizing it. I think it's getting better with every iteration. Bob Kvavik has played a strong role in the last year and a half. I think it's getting much better. We're going to clearly and acutely feel the loss of Bob Erickson in my view because he was a really strong and forceful voice for administrative reform and administrative efficiency. I think that's going to be terribly important to us.

CAC: He just got worn out on the job?

RB: Yes, I think he found it somewhat discouraging, too, because this place does not move quickly enough to deal with some of the issues. To deal with this kind of a budget situation, you

have to have an underlying reform agenda going along to cut costs and to reorganize resources and that's terribly frustrating. Our systems, our administrative support systems—and you need strong administrative support systems in a $1.5 billion annual operation—are archaic and if they don't change quickly, it won't matter how distinguished the faculty are or how good they are in the classroom or in the laboratory. It just won't matter. Things will start to implode here.

CAC: Persons from the outside express that kind of impatience. I spoke with David Lilly, and he was in the corporate world, and he had a hard time managing it from week to week, not being able to really make decisions and move.

RB: Yes. We have to figure out in those areas where quick and thoughtful decision making is required. We have to figure out a way to do that within the benefits of the consultative models we have. It's our strength but it's also our tremendous weakness in a time when we have to move so quickly in response to external forces.

CAC: As you speak, I'm thinking of the Faculty Consultative Committee, which is not really informed enough or focused enough to play that kind of role, is it?

RB: Yes. One of my friends talks about a condition which is "majoring in the minors" and I think too often, whether it's the regents or the Faculty Consultative Committee, we tend to be focusing at the wrong level of detail. We need to be thinking about big issues, broad directions . . .

CAC: But unless one is in control of a budget for some time, it's very difficult to come in as a professor to the Faculty Consultative Committee and understand the budget.

RB: You can't. I pulled a meeting together of the college community to inform them of this latest round of budget reductions and what I thought we needed to do. One of the people said, "You know, you live with this twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week . . . you know the budget. There isn't any way that I can possibly understand what's going on here. So, we just have to trust you." I said, "That's right. And if you feel you can't, you need to trust somebody else." That's the way it ought to work.

CAC: Yes.

RB: That relinquishing of control and focusing your energies on what really matters is part of what we need to do much more of around here.

CAC: It wouldn't surprise you if one were to do an analysis of words that crop up frequently in these interviews, the word trust and it's opposite, lack of trust, have been recurring themes of central importance in everything, the budget process but everything else as well.

RB: Yes. We need some better predictability, too. You get more trust in an environment when the principles are clear, that is, the operating principles are clear and they don't change from day to day. You have some kind of sense of history. There's a wonderful book [*Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*] out now that I haven't finished yet by [James C.] Collins and [Jerry I.] Porras. They are professors of management at Stanford University and what they've done is analyzed in great detail the companies in the United States whose annual earnings are fifteen times the average of *Standard and Poor's* companies over, let's say, sixty to one hundred years. Usually, you would say that companies in that kind of category probably have strong leaders but what they have found is, yes, they do have strong visionary leaders but they tend to promote more from within. They tend to survive bad leaders and the conclusion is, they tend to create a sense of culture, shared culture. That's based an awful lot on trust and some agreed upon principles that people can understand and articulate to one another.

CAC: I'm glad you have time to read.

RB: Not much. What I do is I start fifteen books at a time and never finish any of them. [laughter]

CAC: Excuse me, just a personal . . . Does it take you a long way from special ed, which was your [unclear].

RB: Oh, yes.

CAC: You can't keep up with the literature there?

RB: No, not at all.

CAC: It's an entirely new set of literature that you have to be sensitive to?

RB: Yes. One of the biggest difficulties for me—I was always more broadly engaged in the literature than just the focus of my own particular disciplinary field—one of the big problems you have in jobs like this is you simply do not have time to do normal academic things and I found in the first couple years, I had to go through kind of a mourning process . . .

CAC: Ah!

RB: . . . because I so deeply appreciated the faculty role and I still do. My goal is—I'm going to tell Frank Sorauf this—to emulate Frank Sorauf because Frank was a dean for awhile and he returned to be an esteemed member of the faculty. I don't hold any illusions that I can duplicate what he has done with his career but I sure would like to sort of follow in those footsteps because I'd like to end my career the way I started it. It is very, very difficult. I have <u>no</u> control over my schedule. Coming to grips with that, and accepting it, and internalizing it is for some people, for me, it was kind of difficult. I just had to say that I would put my interests on hold

for awhile, do the very best I can. Then, when I finish some reasonable tour of responsibility, take some time, and retool, and take a good sabbatical, and go back and sort of reclaim my heritage, I guess.

CAC: I hear the word, that you use, grief. I think that's a wonderful [unclear] process.

RB: It really affected me.

CAC: You're the first person to use it but I've heard the idea but to put in those terms makes me see it more clearly.

RB: Yes.

CAC: An enormous loss for those who are committed to our field, and our colleagues, and programs, and teaching.

RB: And you tend to pick, in this environment, people who are relatively successful in those areas to serve in administration and so I think they feel it even more so. I haven't really talked much to my colleagues about this but I think it's an issue that . . .

CAC: It's very revealing.

RB: It was tough for me. The other thing I should say about our process—I guess I would like to make about three or four general concluding points about all of this budget and planning effort—is we started a planning process that involved strategic planning using a common template and a common set of assumptions; so, we had a core set of assumptions and a new mission statement. We had a set of goals that were going to drive our planning process and then every single academic unit and center that got state rations in one way or another went through this process. They did semi-annual revisions. I met with faculty groups. I met with the chairs. I sent detailed comments back, many of which got me in trouble with my colleagues but they learned that even if I put something on paper, and I came back and they challenged me, and my idea wasn't any good, we'd change and we'd go on—I think they did . . . at least most of them did. A couple of them where we made some pretty hard calls don't feel that the process is quite as open. The point of it is, it was a learning culture. We went through iteration after iteration after iteration over a three-year period. So, the college plan was driven by this kind of grass-roots integration of ideas from each and every unit, all of them working with a common set of assumptions and all of them working with sort of a reasonably common set of processes and ways of organizing their thoughts and ideas. That would have been a good thing to do but it would have led to a fairly conservative or at least a moderately conservative outcome; so, the other thing we did is we instituted probably—I'd have to count—twenty-five to thirty task forces over a three, four year period.

CAC: Good grief.

RB: They were all ad hoc. They were all focused on particular issues. Some of them are still operating, like teachers . . .

CAC: With a short calendar?

RB: Yes. They all had sort of six to nine month calendars. They all started with a statement of the problem, a set of questions that I wanted them to address that I often developed in consultation with the people on the committee. So, they started with a statement of work and then very early in the process, I met with them for two hours and we'd debate and discuss that statement of work. One of the task forces dealt with the future of the Adult Education Graduate Program in the college and it led to the transferring of Adult Education from one department to another and the merger and integration of Adult Education with something called Training and Development. So, we cut a program and we ended up with a stronger program. A task force of sort of stakeholders drove that process in interaction with me. We picked some targets so some of the targets had to do with the growth and development of future programs, the nurturing of new things. Some of them had to do with the downsizing, consolidation, and integration of things. The priorities came some from me but they also came out of this consultation process and they built very strongly on the history of past committees . . . for example, the Adult Education initiative which has turned out to be very successful. We will probably reduce our cost in those programs by 20 percent and increase our productivity by another 20 percent in this period of time and I think correspondingly improve the quality overall. That particular recommendation came out of a task force that preceded me in this office and that task force had recommended that if we got any future budget cuts that we just completely eliminate the program. I looked at it. They had a good student profile in a world of the future, which is the world of knowledge workers. Are we going to get out of the business of setting up learning systems and learning programs for lifelong learning in adults? It seemed to me that we were starting to make some decisions here very hastily that were not in our long term interests. Those are sort of quick case examples.

The task force reports are probably a foot and a half deep. We drew the main recommendations from those task forces into our strategic plan and strategic processes as well. I'd say that about three-quarters of them worked very, very well. Then, when they finished their report, I'd always send them back a response and we'd meet, and discuss, and argue about that; so, there's always this sort of feed back loop kind of thing. It was exhausting but it also created a fair amount of energy. I've got people in this college that say this planning process had very little consultation but it had about 300 active participants when I added it up one day but a lot of them were focused in these more targeted ways. That's very much a business entrepreneurial model of planning which is built around teams, fast moving lateral teams, horizontal teams, which is very much a part of the business and planning literature that is being used to drive the restructuring of private sector enterprises; and I think works to great advantage around here, too. If you look

at some of the central initiatives, when they've been targeted and focused, they usually come up with results on a much more timely basis.

CAC: Every section you get into provokes a whole series of questions on my part—one here and I think you were even implicitly moving toward it. Where on earth did you devise this complicated process? It isn't widely available within the academy here?

RB: No. Over a lot of years and trying planning in a lot of different environments. I first tried my ideas in state government, to restructure a state government office, and then I tried some of these ideas in building research centers. I think the experience of building, and organizing, and operating research and outreach centers where you have to always be responsive and you have to move quickly to stay competitive . . . You can't sort of just say, "I'll do it tomorrow."

CAC: There's a surrounding literature to inform this process?

RB: Oh, yes. There's a very, very rich and extensive literature, much of it used in the Humphrey Institute, and the Carlson School of Management, and Industrial Relations, places like that. I learned . . .

CAC: So, consciously you borrow, listen from those examples?

RB: Sure. In fact, when I started this process, I met with John Bryson over in the Humphrey Institute who is very good at strategic planning and internationally known for his work in that area. I talked through some of the ideas with John and he gave me things to read. Part of it is, I've always been drawn to these kinds of things; so, part of it is sort of instinctive I think.

CAC: The other part is your practical experience in doing the process. Then, you learn from that.

RB: Yes, and I can talk as long or longer about past experiences where I came up short. I can remember that I had a group one time of 200 people from across the state, stakeholders, and we put on a two-day training conference. I hired a guy from Honeywell to come in and be the facilitator. He got the algorithm messed up on the ranking system that we used—we didn't have micro-computers in those days to run meetings as we do now—so we're sitting up there integrating this stuff from all these small groups of 200 people and participants, and the ranking system was wrong, and the numbers were coming out wrong. [laughter] You're sitting there trying to keep this meeting going and the flow of the discussion going.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: It was a mess. You learn some things along the way.

CAC: Let me ask you a related question, having in mind listeners to this or readers of a transcript. All these things are well documented within your office? There are print records, typed records?

RB: Yes.

CAC: They are saved?

RB: The college strategic plan stops at the broad strategic direction level. It doesn't get down to the action strategies and the action plan—and it shouldn't basically; there's back up for everyone of the broad directions. We have, a sub set of documents that lay out the more concrete strategies.

CAC: So, a [unclear] scholar could trace through the documents the process that you've been describing; although, I imagine your description would accelerate that process.

RB: If you just had a copy of the strategic plan—I think it would be useful for you to just glance at it—it would be detailed enough so it would cover a lot of it.

CAC: You're describing a process of . . . I can't count the number of committees you had . . . three formal ones within the college itself and then you had these task forces. They operate every year. That's a lot of paper.

RB: That is a lot of paper.

CAC: I'm thinking of the Ed historian trying to understand the process that you're describing, you see, from the records that historians normally consult, the primary print records.

RB: I can't tell you how well, Clarke, this is going to come out yet because a lot of it you make up as you go along and a lot of it is fragile. It depends on maintaining consensus. My fear, my greatest fear, is that if we put this institution under too much stress . . . For example, I think there's a lot of tendency in the regents to say we're not moving fast enough, we're not moving fast enough, with very little appreciation for what it takes, for example, to reorganize adult education so that the people who reorganize it feel good about it, feel that it's <u>their</u> program.

CAC: As we say, have ownership of it.

RB: They have ownership and then they pass and infuse that enthusiasm to their students, into our core business of teaching, research, and service. That kind of change where you can't sort of fire people, sell off divisions, and buy new ones to get the bottom line to where you want it, as private sector business can do, is not well understood. I think we have to take the best of what we can get from the private sector but we also have to make it work in our own culture.

I think the president is acutely aware of that. I've heard him talk about it. More and more, I've heard him say things like that recently.

CAC: You know, Bob, in the realm of social welfare agencies, I came to be interested in a very small . . . I never published out of it . . . a concern of what priorities . . . when you have multiple constituencies, How do directors of really big agencies with diverse missions . . . How do they invest their time? What came out of it was almost an agreed perception that the first thing you had to do was educate your board of directors.

RB: Yes.

CAC: Or in this case the regents.

RB: Absolutely.

CAC: That's the first thing that is essential and that's where you invest your time.

RB: Yes, and you get them to invest in you. In a non-profit organization, one of the things you look . . .

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Tape 2, Side 2]

CAC: We're on the largest issue of strategic planning. Have you had a chance to work through what you think is important?

RB: One final thing. [Peter] Drucker calls this the age of social transformation. I think he's largely right. We're dealing with realities in higher education that are no longer sort of mildly incremental. We're dealing with some very, very dramatic changes. My sense of what we've been about in the last few years is what the university will be about in the next decade or two; and that is, we've been about and will continue to invest in very substantial restructuring of our academic priorities. In that process, we have to reduce our overhead costs. We have to get clear about what it is we're trying to do and, finally, we have to deliver that, and do it with the utmost attention to quality, whether we're teaching students, or we're doing our research, or disseminating it in ways that will allow people to adapt to their own circumstances. We've got to do all of those things at once in a climate in which resources are declining. We all have grown up in a period where we try new things and we develop new ideas with incremental financing. That is a change that I don't think has yet sunk in in the university community. I still talk to faculty and faculty will say, "There's no reward for doing that. We have to change the reward structure first." I say, "No, you've got it backwards. If we wait to change the reward structure, there won't be any structure left. We've got to get about the business of deciding

what's important to do and the rewards will take of themselves." They won't all be in the next life, believe me. [laughter]

CAC: Faculty are trained to be skeptical on that, sir.

RB: I know it. I know they are.

CAC: [laughter]

RB: That is probably the biggest challenge that I think we have here and we still have it here in this college.

CAC: What do you do to get rewarded?

RB: I think in these times . . . For example, we had 2.5 or 2.6 percent, or something like that, in salaries after two freezes in four years. I find it excruciating to deal with these issues because I'm trying to help, for example, young scholars, the stars of the future . . .

CAC: Absolutely.

RB: . . . and they're just getting killed, Clarke, just killed. The three people we will hire this year are going to come in over people who are as good.

CAC: [unclear] salary?

RB: Yes, and already promoted. So, they've already demonstrated and met the institutional standards. Now, the people we're bringing in are worth what we're going to pay them.

CAC: But that does mean a distortion of the internal budget and that [unclear] right away.

RB: So, you have to go to work on it. One of the things we're trying to do is—and we're not doing it well—we're really trying very hard not to cut the core support structure, the structure that supports the work of the people who are here. We're trying to make economies, trying to improve efficiency through using technology better but in this process, I did not cut a nickel from student support. We cut some money out of civil service support but at the same time we did alter reform agenda to do the jobs much more efficiently and much more productively. I think that's largely working. I made a commitment that we were not going to, in this process, end up with a budget with more overhead and less invested in the core business of the college, that is, teaching, research, and service. That's one thing we've tried to do. We haven't cut supplies and we haven't cut graduate students. I haven't cut things like faculty travel, like international matching grants and things like that. All of what Michael Connor, a friend of mine, calls the "low hanging apples," the ones that are easy to get at, we haven't cut those because those have to do with morale. If you do international research and there's no way to fund any of that . . .

CAC: [laughter] No way to travel, right?

RB: . . . that really causes a serious decline in the morale. One of the things we're trying to do is to invest in the work of people; so, if they're doing new things, we try to support them better. With new programs we've started, we build sort of a community of overseers, or governance structure, around those; and then, there's a budget tied to those so that the people feel they are kind of empowered to make decisions and move ahead. So, there's been some attempt to try decentralize this decision making. We've taken major responsibilities that associate deans used to do and put them in charge of faculty as directors or coordinators with even some administrative stipend and a little summer work; so, we sort of flatten the administration and increase the participation of people.

CAC: Ohhh.

RB: It's a very tough thing. I think you have to make it a conscious decision to work on rewards in ways that sort of transcend the normal salary process because many of my colleagues tell me they recognize that their friends and neighbors are not getting great salary increases in the private economy . . .

CAC: Right, they're getting downsized too.

RB: Yes . . . but they don't want the quality of life to shrink and erode; so, one of the things I think we have to do is keep working on this quality of life issue because I would rather at this stage in my career give up a little bit on the salary side if I could keep the quality of life here, the kind of support that I need to do my work. If the library is terrible, I don't think I gain very much, even though you can take some short term budget savings out of the library. We've tried to keep investing in technology, technology support, the kinds of quality of living factors that are important to people; and we've made even some tough decisions, I think, to keep our money invested in that way—but it's still too little.

CAC: You drive me to a global question, as many of my conversations have. Let me put it as an historian . . . probably in all human history, there's no society as affluent with as many resources as this one. In our lifetime, 1945 to the mid 1970s, there's a doubling of real standards of living and that's leveled off.

RB: Yes. Now, it's starting a little bit the other way for most people.

CAC: The Cold War is over, we say, we assure each other. We had kind of hoped for a Vietnam bonus when that was over and the drain of being a world power would decrease. And yet every institution that we know, not only higher education but K-12, the church, corporations, government, they're all faced with this downsizing and this notion we don't have the resources. But if the country doesn't make the resources in education and technology, then the prospects are even worse?

RB: Yes.

CAC: That's a global question. I haven't any idea how to respond to that. We shouldn't be in this situation.

RB: No.

CAC: So, what is your sense of the global—I don't mean earth-wide—I mean the wider issue?

RB: I think about this one a lot because I'm particularly focused on learning and development and the future of children and youth.

CAC: Ohhh.

RB: I'm frankly quite alarmed by a lot of the trends I see. We have always been a culture that could come together in the face of crisis and figure out a way to sort of build a common agenda. That common liberal consensus, I don't mean in terms of liberal/conservative, but in the sort of libertarian consensus that drove a lot of the agenda you talked about is fraying a great deal. I'm really impressed by a lot of the arguments that Dionne put in his book *Why Americans Hate Politics*. We are just polarizing this discussion, debate. People that are pushing more for a centrist kind of a civil discourse on these issue are kind of few and far between.

CAC: There's a lack of civility?

RB: Yes. And a lack of respect for the importance of civility in these conversations. My sense is that we'll never see the same growth rates we had before. We'll see much more competition, economic competition with other countries throughout the world and the only way out of this; that is, to maintain a really solid standard of living in the United States and to ensure that our kids have a decent chance, is to probably do two or three things at once. One is to restore much more of a civil discourse that I think we started to lose in the late 1960s and early 1970s. We need to have some reasoned discussions as a community around many of these issues that are related to shaping the future. Secondly, there's no way out of this in this university, in this community, in this state, or in this country except by embracing a concept of shared sacrifice and shared investment. If we keep trying to solve the federal budget problem, for example, by pitting one interest group against the other, we are never going to get there. But if we figure out a way to frame the issue in ways that people can understand and accept . . . I really believe fundamentally that people in this country will listen, and learn, and accept good solid arguments, will make shared sacrifices. I'm really optimistic they're willing to do that.

CAC: Recent political history wouldn't justify your optimism in any large degree?

RB: No. I think the problem is our leaders don't frame it that way. If I frame it one issue at a time . . . if I come to you and say, "To solve this budget problem, we've got to cut Social

Security and Medicare. We're going to get rid of children's lunch programs." All I do, is I sort of pick off one constituency at a time—whether it's public radio . . . it doesn't matter—instead of dealing with the whole thing, as I think the Concord Coalition is really trying to do, and a few other groups. I think that's a really big part of it. We do the same thing here in this culture. We pick winners and losers. We create winners and losers often with the flimsiest of information and the most limited forms of debate and discussion. You can't build that sense of shared culture, that sense of shared sacrifice, and that sense of shared commitment to an investment agenda, it seems to me, unless you can appeal to those higher instincts. You're never going to get everyone. It seems to me that if we can't figure out a way to do that, relatively soon, I think we're going to see a very predictable decline in the standard of living in this country.

CAC: And an increase in tension between all these fragmented groups.

RB: I think the World Bank is right. If you take a look at the top 20 percent and the bottom 20 percent of an income distribution, that tells you a lot about the social investment strategy of a country.

CAC: We've gone the contrary way the last [unclear] years. It's really relatively recently.

RB: Yes.

CAC: But it's the same period in which institutions like higher education are in crisis. They are overlapping eras.

RB: I think that's becoming very clear. There's much more of an egocentric view about . . . things are good, if they're good for me. Somehow, we have to restore that sense of community responsibility around these issues. I talked to St. Paul Rotary about this; they only gave me about fifteen minutes the other day. I said, "We just have to create a shared commitment to the long term future of our children and youth. You can't build a just and a sane society, one that's going to be economically productive or socially just, unless you invest in kids and you invest in your own learning and development." We have the greatest university system in the world. There's no question about that. That is one of our . . .

CAC: One that was great and accessible, which was part of its greatness.

RB: Right. That's an interesting point. Jim Rainer at Honeywell hosted a dinner last week with some people from the British Ministry of Education who were here to study American higher education and K-12. This one person from the British Embassy in Washington said to me, "How is it . . . in England we have Cambridge and Oxford . . . I can tell you St. Andrews and I can tell you the ones that are really the premier institutions and you can do that in this country but how is it that the U.S. had such a strong higher education system compared to other countries of the world? We have testing systems to get the most elite people into all these institutions." I said, "Because this is a country of second and third chances." If you do a decision matrix and

if you say, "We're going to try to screen out the best and the brightest at eighth grade, or thirteen, fourteen years old . . . " In this country, you don't do that as much and so you can come back at twenty, twenty-five. [Francis] Pug Lund could get a degree from the college at eighty recently, not too many years ago. [laughter] This is a nation of multiple opportunities where people can come back and try something again. If kids drop out of school, they can get GEDs [General Education Development] and go to alternative schools.

CAC: I chaired the graduate program of a woman in her seventies who got her degree, published her book, and died.

RB: Pug Lund died within a year after we gave him that degree. He was a famous football player at the university. He dropped out because of the Depression. I don't know what we're going to do about this investment strategy but we're never going to be able to keep universities strong unless we can get that concept of shared sacrifice throughout the budgets at the state, local, and federal level.

CAC: It is a problem of the culture and of society and our university is in that context?

RB: Yes.

CAC: It is a reciprocal relationship but it can't be solved by the University of Minnesota all by its lonesome?

RB: No, no.

CAC: I feel so poignant about Mr. Hasselmo, whom I've known for so many years and he would share many of the things that we're talking about now. The frustrations of changing a culture and having to cut corners within that what is given to you, must be extraordinarily painful.

RB: And no time to think about it even, no time. I hammered him pretty damned hard when I got this. I'd sort of reached the limit of doing this year after year. When I got this additional $200 . . . I'd just had it! and I hammered him! and I hammered [C. Eugene] Gene Allen. [laughter] Hasselmo called me back and he said, "I know you're really hurting right now . . ." He did his usual Nils thing to make you feel better. [laughter] I said, before I hung up, "Nils, who do you talk to? I got to talk to you because I'm frustrated."

CAC: [laughter]

RB: "Do you go home and talk to Pat or do you have anyone else you can talk to?" Because he needs the same thing, you know. He obviously can't talk to the regents. That's pretty tense.

CAC: This is an extraordinary set of observations and narrative analyses. I thank you very much.

RB: It's been fun to do this.

CAC: I think it will be very helpful to whomever down the line is really interested in piecing this story together the last twenty, thirty years in higher education.

RB: Thank you.

CAC: I thank you!

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by:
Hermes Transcribing and Research Service
12617 Fairgreen Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124
(612) 953-0730