

## Edward Foster

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**Interview with Edward Foster**

**Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers  
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on October 28, 1994  
in the Office of Professor Clarke A. Chambers  
University of Minnesota Campus**

Edward Foster - EF  
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: The person I'm interviewing this morning is Edward Foster of the Economics Department, and then finally in the School of Management, who had many positions in the Graduate School, and then in the vice-president's office in Morrill Hall, and has in other ways been a very active citizen for a number of years. It is the 28th of October, the morning, and the interview is being conducted in my office at 833 Social Science.

With that out of the way, Ed say something about your early intellectual academic life, and how you got interested in economics, and how that brought you to Minnesota and so on.

EF: I started in college thinking—after I'd been in college for a couple years—that I was going to be an actuary in a life insurance company; and I worked there for a couple of summers, and found the technical work interesting and challenging, but decided that the route that all actuaries seemed to take was that as soon as they'd finished passing all of the technical examinations, they quickly ended up in management. I certainly didn't want to end in up in management, so I decided I'd come back to school, and go to graduate school where I could keep involved in technical things throughout my career. [laughter]

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EF: I was at what was then Claremont Men's College in California.

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CAC: Where was your undergraduate?

EF: I was at what was then Claremont Men's College in California.

CAC: Nice cluster.

EF: Now Claremont McKenna College.

CAC: That's part of that cluster of colleges there.

EF: Yes, Associated Colleges at Claremont.

CAC: You were then a California citizen?

EF: I was.

CAC: But we won't hold that too much against you.

EF: Thank you. I wasn't born there.

CAC: Then you came on to graduate school?

EF: Yes, I came to graduate school at MIT. There was one year in between because I decided fairly late to go to graduate school. It was very close to the end of my senior year, and in order to stay out of the army—it was the Korean War period—I took a year's work in mathematics in actuarial science in California after I'd graduated in a master's program, which I didn't complete. I studied there at Occidental College for a year, and worked in the actuarial department of a life insurance company, and came to graduate school in economics one year late relative to my classmates.

CAC: I suppose in a sense that begs the question though, Ed—I've been asking everyone—how did you get turned on? Was it a professor? Is there something in your gray matter that is excited by matters economic and statistical or where did these tendencies come from?

EF: I'd enjoyed mathematics in high school. Claremont Men's College didn't have majors but most of the students there at the time I was there were planning to go into business, and economics was a big part of the curriculum. I guess that I was turned on by a few professors, and economics seemed a natural thing to study.

CAC: When you found out you were good at it?

EF: Yes. I think I would have preferred being a mathematician, but I didn't think I was good enough at that to get a Ph.D., to do original work.

CAC: And economics at that time was not as—I'm making a statement that will be question—theoretical, and statistical, and complicated as it came to be even quickly within your career?

EF: That's right. I was considered on the mathematical fringe of economists at the time I graduated and I'm now woefully behind the skills of those who are considered mathematical economists today.

CAC: What would have been the history of econometrics, for example? Was it starting or in full swing?

EF: Full swing. In the United States, it really grew up with the Cole's Commission at the University of Chicago in the 1940s and they picked up and moved to Yale in I think it was the early 1950s. It was in full swing.

CAC: But it couldn't really take off until you have a computer and modeling and all that possibility?

EF: That's true. It took great dedication to work with large numbers of variables on the desk calculators that we were using in those days. I was using computers too, but there was an awful lot of work being done on 14-column Friedan desk calculators.

CAC: So that the real complications and extension of that has to be later . . . I mean if it starts in the forties?

EF: The mathematical modeling side, the mathematical economics side, doesn't really require much in the way of computers. It's a pencil and paper business.

CAC: I see.

EF: The statistical econometrics side, working with large data sets, does require computers and I don't know which comes first, the desire to work with very large data sets or the ability to work with them because of the large computers. They sort of move along with each other.

CAC: This possibility was not there even in your graduate career to a substantial degree?

EF: Oh, I was working with relatively large data sets on relatively large computers.

CAC: In the late fifties?

EF: Yes. A great big IBM—what were then the largest computers around at MIT—IBM 704. I can remember programming those things in machine language. It was a far cry from the languages that are available today for [unclear].

CAC: So, in away you were in on the ground floor of that?

EF: On the periphery of the ground floor . . . in an out building somewhere.

CAC: Your own speciality in your doctoral work . . . describe it briefly.

EF: If by specialty you mean the area where I did my thesis, it was business cycle theory which went out of fashion soon after I finished my graduate work, and then came back into fashion within the last decade or so. It's a very active area of research again now. That's what I was doing. I worked with Bob Solow who was my advisor until he went to Washington to work for Walter Heller as chief of staff for the Council of Economic Advisers. I then worked with another faculty member there, Albert Ando.

CAC: So you got your degree in . . .

EF: I got my degree in 1961 and came to Minnesota that September.

CAC: And the market was good for economists that early?

EF: Oh, yes.

CAC: The market for economists has always been better than for humanist or many other social scientists?

EF: Yes. I suppose because of the competing job possibilities. I shouldn't say always . . . it was once the case that only lawyers got jobs in Washington but economists started to get jobs in Washington in the 1950s and 1960s and that serves as a large alternative employment source, international agencies and federal government.

CAC: Agricultural economists have always been able to find [unclear] jobs?

EF: That's true. [laughter]

CAC: Back to the beginning of the century. The department you came into then in Minnesota in 1961 that Mr. Heller had just left . . .

EF: Right.

CAC: Say something about the department that you came into then. What was its quality? What was its nature? How was it governed? What assignments did you have?

EF: There was one major research project underway. It was called the Upper Midwest Economic Study. It was financed in part by the Ford Foundation, in part by local business firms, and Jim Henderson had been hired to direct that study. He went out and hired a lot of slave labor in the form of new assistant professors to do the work. George Perry and I came from MIT. We were classmates at MIT, and we came in the same year to work on that study; but George immediately got hired away by Walter to go and work for him in the Council of Economic Advisers. So I was half time employed by the Upper Midwest Economic Study, half time teaching, for the first two years I was here. I remember that Jim Henderson pointed out to

me what a favor he had done me in having me teach only four classes for my half time responsibility. It could have been five because the normal teaching load for an assistant professor at that point was three courses per quarter. [laughter]

CAC: I wrinkle my brow because that's surprises me.

EF: Yes.

CAC: The change came within that decade though?

EF: Oh, the change in the Economics Department came very soon. One of the early traumatic experiences for the department was that we had to reduce ourselves to having advanced graduate students teach a section of an intermediate theory course. It was the first time a graduate student had ever taught an upper division course in the department. He was someone who was within a year of completing his degree and has gone on to a distinguished career. The department was quite concerned about it but as with most addictions, it became easier and easier to tolerate. [laughter] One of the ways of competing for faculty was by reducing teaching loads and the teaching loads got reduced fairly quickly.

CAC: I think at that time within the Arts College, there must have been a median kind of expectation of 3-3-3 for the three quarters. I remember when in the late fifties we got a 3-3-2 in History, that was thought of as a great advance. But we did know that Economics was going faster.

EF: Out on the fringe, yes.

CAC: But it was market considerations, primarily, and the difficulty of attracting a larger staff? Economics must have made a decision not to become a big department?

EF: No, I don't think they made the decision not to become a big department. They were faced with budgetary stringencies that didn't allow it.

CAC: But this is the time of growth of all the sister departments, Ed.

EF: Well, I think that the Economics Department grew too, but not enough to be able to have our upper department courses taught by senior faculty, and keep teaching loads down to what was then I think was probably five courses per year. The model of having graduate students do most of the under graduate teaching started back then.

CAC: This was by governance decision? How was the department governed when you came here and then in through the sixties?

EF: The thing that I remember most vividly about it was that the department would reverse its decisions depending upon Leo Hurwicz who was at the meeting speaking up in favor of one point of view or not. [laughter] His strength of conviction and personality were such that he would sway the department. I can remember the department reversing itself. The department was always governed in a remarkably democratic way with respect to decisions on hiring and so on. Assistant professors always had as much voice as they chose to exercise in those things. In fact when I first got here, the Economics Department was part of the Business School, and there was a problem within the Business School of different perceptions of how things should be done: the Accounting Department and the Economics Department on sort of a purist academic side and the rest of the faculty on the other side. Our departmental constitution was changed to give half time instructors a half of a vote and that was then used in college-wide faculty meetings. That was then used to haul our advanced graduate students into the faculty meetings and add to the numbers for crucial votes. That fell by the wayside later on; so graduate instructors don't have votes as members of the faculty anymore.

CAC: And the chairman this early was?

EF: It was rotating. The year that I interviewed it was John Turnbull. Then the year that I arrived, in the fall of 1961, Oz Brownlee was chair.

CAC: John switched over to CLA [College of Liberal Arts] Administration rather quickly.

EF: Soon after that, yes.

CAC: Then Jim Simler comes in for his long tenure not long after that.

EF: Yes, John Buttrick was chair for awhile, and I think perhaps Brownlee in 1961 to 1963, and then maybe Buttrick from 1963 to 1965, and there might have been another chair in there for a little while before Simler but Simler started sometime in the sixties.

CAC: This might be a good time because you've raised the question of the location of the Department of Economics—it's a difficult story—but you say you were in the Business School when you came? Then at some point it comes back to CLA—I don't know whether back is the right word. [unclear] to CLA . . .

EF: Yes.

CAC: And then still later, some of the divisions within the department went to the new School of Management, and some stayed in Economics, and CLA. Is that a . . .

EF: When the department picked up and left the Business School in a divorce, it was after we'd already moved into what is now the Management and Economics Building on the West Bank. We moved into that building I think in the spring of 1963.

CAC: That makes sense.

EF: And I think that the divorce came perhaps as late as 1965 or 1966, I don't remember for sure.

CAC: The divorce and into CLA?

EF: Yes, the divorce from the Business School.

CAC: But then at some point, certain persons or specialities within that department . . . I mean like Jack Kareken, [unclear] is he not?

EF: No, but that wasn't a division of the department. That was the School of Management hiring Jack into a chair.

CAC: Oh, I see. But did he take with him other peoples into Finance and Banking?

EF: No.

CAC: They stayed in the Department of Economics?

EF: Yes.

CAC: I'm glad to get that clarified because, if I misunderstand, there are a lot of people who misunderstand.

EF: I was associate dean in the Business School at the time, and we were just looking for some opportunities to upgrade the intellectual caliber of departments in the Business School, and we had money for a Banking chair that David [Lilly] had gathered, and offered Jack that chair.

CAC: Were there many others who went in related fields from Economics here or was there the new hirings?

EF: No, the only other thing that was at all like that was that there was a retention case for Jim Jordan in the Economics Department; and the Economics Department didn't have a prayer of coming up with enough money to keep him, and arranged a 25 percent appointment in Accounting. His area of interest in economics is the economics of information, and he was amenable to becoming involved in the Accounting Department; so essentially what we did to provide his raise was give up a quarter of his services, and keep paying him the same amount of money. The Accounting Department added some on for their quarter. But that's the only departure from Economics that I can think of other than Kareken.

CAC: All right. Thank you.

EF: When I was in the School of Management as associate dean, I was there only in an administrative capacity. I kept my faculty appointment in Economics.

CAC: Later in our conversation, I'll come back to your international work, that is the Bogotá paper, etcetera—although that was earlier—but I really kind of want to reserve that for a moment. In 1975, if I read your CV accurately here, you become associate dean of the Graduate School?

EF: Yes.

CAC: This was your first major really academic administration beyond whatever offices you may have had in the Department of Economics?

EF: Yes. The background that led me to that job were that I was director of graduate studies in Economics, and therefore got involved in the Graduate School Governance, assistant, Policy and Review Council and Executive Committee.

CAC: That showed the kind of talents that kind of office cherishes.

EF: Yes . . . one suggestion is that if you return phone calls and answer your mail, you're a dead cinch to be offered an administrative job in the academy. [laughter]

CAC: Who was dean then?

EF: In the Graduate School?

CAC: Yes.

EF: Warren Ibele was coming in as dean. Ken Keller had been acting dean for a year; and we had been neighbors and had worked together in politics. He asked me to chair the Policy and Review Council the year before I became associate dean and I think that's what brought me to Warren's attention.

CAC: By politics, do you mean precinct politics?

EF: Yes. He was chair and I was vice-chair of the DFL party in our precinct.

CAC: Did you carry that on into the division over Vietnam?

EF: That was what drew me into active participation.

CAC: I see.

EF: It was the McCarthy Movement.

CAC: Ken, too?

EF: I don't remember whether Ken had been active before I had or not. I think maybe we both became active about the same time.

CAC: And in your own precinct that view prevailed . . . at least you had a plurality or majority?

EF: Yes.

CAC: That isn't the old second ward?

EF: No. Thirteenth ward. It's down around Lake Harriet and Minnehaha Creek.

CAC: That was a divisive event and, you know, I catch glimpses of it interviewing lots of people; but many of the people in the academy were out there, and sharply divided on this issue—perhaps more faculty on the side of opposing the war but certainly not entirely.

EF: No. I can remember that Hal Chase, for example, was a pretty staunch supporter of the administration.

CAC: So, you become associate dean of the Graduate School in 1975, and then my next logical question is . . . say a bit about how the business of that office . . . what portfolios you had and what policy issues were faced . . . what your relationship was with Warren Ibele?

EF: He and David Lilly were the best bosses I've ever had. They both shared one trait that's important in a boss which is to always back up any decision that you make, and chew you out privately if they disagree with it . . . [laughter] . . . but no second guessing and overruling; it really destroys the effectiveness someone in a second position in an administration. Warren understood that characteristic of a good dean. He'd been an associate dean in the Graduate School himself and, perhaps, that's how he learned the importance of it. We both joked about the French Civil Service in the Graduate School who knew that deans would come and deans would go but they would persist through it all, and they were not about to change their habits to suit the whims of new administrators coming in. We were trying fairly hard to simplify, reduce the bureaucratic level of the affairs of the Graduate School with little success—a little bit—but we really didn't achieve very much; but that was one of the continuing thrusts while I was there. Another important policy issue that I spent an inordinate amount of time on was getting students and faculty to accept the notion of registering for thesis credits, and the reason that that was significant was to give the university some credit for that kind of work in the eyes . . .

CAC: Get some tuition income?

EF: No. In the eyes of the legislature.

CAC: I see.

EF: It wasn't just tuition income. It was legislative support for that element of teaching.

CAC: I see. Because really the work was being done but not credited?

EF: Right.

CAC: Was the resistance from the graduate students?

EF: Oh, there was enormous resistance from the graduate students, yes. But we finally got the graduate students' support for a sort of a compromise proposal that then went from the Graduate School to . . . I guess it went to the academic vice-president, and was sent to the senate, and perhaps three years after I left the Graduate School, it was finally adopted. I invested a lot of energy in getting it approved by the Graduate School deliberative bodies, the Policy and Review Councils and the Graduate Students Association.

CAC: By that you mean, it's a lot of politicking? You have to meet and talk with lots of folks for a long time?

EF: Yes. Right. Overall for a half-time job, it was time consuming. I was teaching half-time.

CAC: I'm guessing that the Graduate Student Association had more influence within the Graduate School than the Student Intermediary Board, for example, did in the Arts College?

EF: I've never worked with the Student Intermediary Board so I don't have that standard for comparison but it had considerable influence in part because there . . .

[pause]

CAC: We're talking about Graduate School and the influence of graduate students.

EF: Yes. The influence was relatively high because there's graduate student representation on all of the Policy and Review Councils of the Graduate School.

CAC: As well as their own council?

EF: And on the Executive Committee of the Graduate School. Faculty members tend to listen with respect and concern to what the graduate students have to say in those forums.

CAC: Was there any party line on the part of the graduate students? Did they come from clusters of departments or programs to these councils?

EF: The Policy and Review Councils . . . Do you know how that's structured?

CAC: They have to come proportional from different programs?

EF: Yes.

CAC: But in the elected offices was there a tendency for some schools to be . . . graduate students to be more assertive in those schools than in others?

EF: I don't remember that to be the case.

CAC: Is there a big turnover?

EF: Yes.

CAC: So that the faculty always has that advantage of continuity?

EF: Yes.

CAC: These younger persons have to learn fast but they're bright.

EF: Yes. [laughter]

CAC: And they aren't bashful.

EF: Generally true. Quite respectful, remarkably respectful but not bashful.

CAC: Are there other things then about those three years in the Graduate School that you . . .

EF: Nothing that springs to mind. There was a continuing tension over the issue of what we would do on matters of research policy in the national level. Typically what would happen—and this relates to the current tensions about Graduate School dean versus research vice-president—is that some urgent policy issue would come to Morrill Hall at which the university was being called upon to make its voice heard in some important issue coming up in Washington; and it would sit there for two and a half weeks, and then come to the Graduate School. The Graduate School dean was then asked to handle it and we were left with two days. I think that part of the reason for creating a research vice-president was to clarify that line of communication with national policy issues and the problem is that once you've done that the jobs of the Graduate School seem to diminish in importance. It's difficult to strike a balance when you have those two jobs being done by the same person.

CAC: I'm guessing that Mr. Ibele had to take chief responsibility for liaison to foundations whether private or public?

EF: Yes. I don't think that he saw that as a major part of what he was about. I think it wasn't until Bob Holt came in as dean that there was major fund raising activity from the Graduate School.

CAC: It was that late?

EF: As far as I'm aware.

CAC: Is that because the money is coming in more easily in the various disciplines and programs, Engineering, Health Sciences, Economics, etcetera?

EF: I don't follow the question. Is it because of that that he was active in fund raising?

CAC: In the sixties and the seventies, as I listen to others and from my own experience, I suspect this was the case that the individuals in departments and programs were quite able to get money on their own initiative; and it didn't require very much from anybody else in the administration except to clear the paperwork so that the twenty copies were right, the overhead was right, etcetera.

EF: The only initiative that we took had to do with getting state funds, state funds for Graduate School, state funds for research support, and for tuition scholarships for graduate students.

CAC: But that would be without regard to specific projects?

EF: Right.

CAC: I hear two stories, Ed, one is that the increased availability of research funds from both private and public foundations—roughly 1960 to 1975 just to take that period—gave a green light, and energized many parts of the university that otherwise would have not had those opportunities. The other side that I hear from some is that that availability distorted internal priorities of what kind of research should be done. You've heard both of these yourself, I'm certain, and Morrill Hall, as well as in Johnston.

EF: Yes.

CAC: Do you have any response to that?

EF: One of my ongoing administrative responsibilities in the Graduate School was overseeing that research support function and, you know, there's the Research Advisory Committee that hands out these grants and I was the administrative . . .

CAC: These are from overhead funds?

EF: Yes. It's certainly clear that the arts, in particular, were desperately poor. Professors of studio art would be applying for \$400 for paper and paints, and they'd give an elaborate of the series of drawings that they wanted to make, and that sort of thing. There was certainly an imbalance overall between those fields that have access to outside money and those that don't. But within fields, I am not aware of that being an issue. I'm sure it could be but I just didn't see any examples of it that were dramatic.

CAC: Military contracts didn't come in through the Graduate School transom?

EF: No.

CAC: And that issue was not addressed by the Graduate School when you were there?

EF: No, not as a serious issue to be dealt with. It was something that people would mutter about sometimes but there wasn't anything that we did about it.

CAC: And later when you were in Morrill Hall, does that come to be an issue?

EF: I don't remember it being an issue, no.

CAC: It's said, you see, in the Health Sciences that there are favored diseases, and there's a distortion of basic research because of the availability of funding.

EF: I've heard the charge but I just didn't mention any. The Health Sciences have pretty much always been off on their own. The only issue of distortion that came to my mind with respect to that was the transfer of 0100 funds to the Health Sciences when federal research dollars got cut back abruptly.

CAC: That is an incident that has come up but not many people know anything about it. You were closer to it. Can you say something about that right now?

EF: I wasn't very close to it, as a matter of fact. I just saw that as a member of CLA.

CAC: I see. When did that happen?

EF: I believe that was in the early seventies . . . 1971 springs to mind but I have absolutely no confidence in that as a date.

CAC: We can trace the . . . anybody can look at records. What was your impression of that then? Your story is what?

EF: My story is that the Medical School in particular had a practice of hiring tenure track and tenured faculty members using research dollars to pay their university salary.

CAC: So-called soft monies?

EF: Yes. So when the research funds dropped, the university had to come up with money to honor those commitments; and there was a reallocation of funds from the rest of the university toward the Health Sciences. The Health Sciences are once again doing the same thing. The claim that I can remember hearing when I talked to dean of the Medical School about it once when I was in Morrill Hall was that oh, well, if disaster struck and all of our research funding went away, all we'd have to do is fire all our civil servants, and we'd be able to honor our commitments to the tenured faculty so there's not a problem . . . [laughter] . . . which sounds to me as though if disaster struck, the university would again end up transferring 0100 money.

CAC: Persons whom I've interviewed in the Health Sciences—not a large number so far—complain that their overhead which they generated . . . because they're the ones that get the money . . . it went across Washington Avenue to Morrill Hall, and Johnston Hall, and that they didn't get the fair syphoning back of the funds they created.

EF: That's certainly true.

CAC: Do you have any idea what proportions we're talking about there?

EF: I'm sure that at one time I have had an idea of that but it's not a number that sticks in my mind. They have another gripe too in that since their faculty are on eleven month appointments when they teach summer school, they don't get any of the salary money back; and the tuition money goes into the summer session, and gets distributed across Washington Avenue to the liberal arts, primarily. Same story.

CAC: That was the first time I had ever heard about . . . I mean everybody says, "Washington Avenue."

EF: Yes. [laughter]

CAC: You probably have heard it a great deal. That came as kind of a surprise that they would think of it as a great Grand Canyon. [laughter]

In 1978, having been the associate dean there, I assume it's Mr. Lilly that asks you back to be associate dean of the then still Business School?

EF: It was actually Henry Koffler.

CAC: Oh, okay.

EF: Henry Koffler was then the academic vice-president, and he persuaded David Lilly to take the job as dean of the Business School; and David told him that from the sense that he'd gotten of the deep divisions within the Business School, it wouldn't be politic for him to get an associate dean from within the school because he would offend at least half of the faculty no matter who he chose. So he wanted somebody who knew what buttons to push within the university to get things done who wasn't a member of the Business School, and who had some sort of association with that part of the university, and Henry fingered me.

CAC: I see. David Lilly must have interviewed you?

EF: Oh, yes, he interviewed me but I think he just accepted Henry's judgment because when he interviewed me he was not interviewing me as a job candidate. He was maybe in a few minutes getting some sense of the sort of person I am, but he was there to persuade me to take the job the first time that I talked to him.

CAC: And did it take a lot of persuasion?

EF: It didn't take a lot of persuasion because the job in the Graduate School had a lot of frustrations. There really is an enormous amount of bureaucracy. I didn't seem to be able to make much headway against it, and it was a thirty to forty hour a week half-time job; so the notion of moving over to try something else had its appeal. It didn't take me very long. I always have had the difficulty that when a new job is proposed to me as a possibility, I start thinking about what are the challenges of that job, and how would I approach them, and I talk myself into seeing them as interesting problems.

CAC: Well, you've not gone wrong on that. There are always interesting problems.

EF: That's right.

CAC: I'm wondering about the response of the several factions within the Business School . . . they get an outsider, a business man as dean, and they get someone from economics and the Arts College as an associate dean.

EF: Yes, I don't think that there was a very enthusiastic response from the Business School faculty. [laughter]

CAC: One of the tasks the two of you had really was to build and find some kind of consensus to bring these factions together, or just to ride them out?

EF: What Lilly mainly did was raise a lot of money fast, and bring in a lot of new faculty fast, and in the process managed to get rid of a few of the pieces of dead wood around the school.

CAC: How does one do that with persons with tenure?

EF: He didn't do it personally; but in a couple of cases he was fortunate enough to have department chairs who agreed on what the goals should be, and they did it.

CAC: That's an interesting comment, and I'm not an inquiring reporter; but how does one do that in a tenured system? Again, I hear persons in administration who have served in various capacities talking —David Lilly said that it was just impossible, the two cultures, I couldn't fire anybody.

EF: Yes. Right.

CAC: How does that happen?

EF: Well, I think that it can happen by good old fashioned rudeness in a couple of cases and offend people so deeply that they say, "I'm leaving."

CAC: And there are places for them to go? It's not like firing a professor of French nineteenth literature?

EF: That's true. There are a couple of people who left the Business School and stayed in the Twin Cities in non-academic positions.

CAC: Mr. Lilly and you sought out outside funds. This was of another level than ever the Business School had tried before?

EF: Yes, I think so.

CAC: He was able to do that because of his own business career and context?

EF: I think so.

CAC: How did that function? Can you say a bit more about that?

EF: There had been an advisory committee of business people; and at his first meeting with that group somebody asked a question that seemed to me to be a totally innocuous question, and David Lilly jumped on it and said, "Oh, are you suggesting that all of you should submit your resignations?" This gentleman said, "Well, yes, perhaps I am." [laughter] David got the resignations of the members of that committee . . .

CAC: Who represented outside businesses?

EF: Represented outside businesses, but not in his view the right outside businesses, or not necessary the right level of those businesses.

CAC: So this was . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

EF: . . . the business partnership which has essentially been represented by CEOs, presidents of the major companies in the area, and they get together both for political reasons and for reasons of social policy. But David did make the observation to me once that he was trying to come as close as he could to making his board of overseers be the business partnership without making it completely obvious that that's what he was doing. He wanted the most powerful members of the business community in the area to be the representatives of the Advisory Committee and then went to them looking for money.

CAC: He did this on his own or through the Minnesota Foundation?

EF: He hired a fund raiser through the Minnesota Foundation but it was a source of continuing friction with them because their views of the relationship between the Foundation and the colleges was quite different from his view. The person that he hired, David Merchant, was hired as a staff member of the Foundation but ultimately became an associate dean for External Affairs in the college. That was the first of the college-based fund raising people. CLA now has one, too, and the Foundation pays part of the salary. But Lilly started that process.

CAC: So he was able to increase substantially the funds and he put them into endowed chairs, named the chairs?

EF: Part of the reason for his success was that he argued strongly against endowments. He said, "The problem with endowed chairs is that the university can then forget about the interests that led you to give the money. What I'd rather have from you is commitments of recurring annual contributions, ten-year contributions." It was his successors as dean who managed to get most of those converted into endowed chairs eventually.

CAC: Which would make them more secure but would lessen the continuing interest of the business community in the school?

EF: Right.

CAC: And in all of this, what was your role as associate dean?

EF: Mostly the inside management role. I had to liaison with the department chairs, and administered the internal budget, and that sort of thing.

CAC: You were briefly acting dean of the School of Management, which had changed its name while you and Lilly and you were there from Business to Management?

EF: Yes.

CAC: Did that have any significance that lay persons don't see at once?

EF: Malcolm Moos, in a talk that was reported in the paper within weeks after that change in name, pointed out that administration came from a root meaning to serve, to minister, whereas management was something that you do horses. [laughter] I think that the image that Lilly was hoping for is that business administration conjures up images of green eyeshades, and celluloid sleeve covers, and routine processes of business, whereas management has to do with the big strategic questions, and moving, and shaking.

CAC: That would be a more popular view than Mr. Moos', or widely taken?

EF: I think so. Yes.

CAC: You went back to the Department of Economics for awhile—I mean, you've always been there. Then in 1986, you become associate vice-president for Academic Affairs and that was for what vice-president?

EF: That was Roger Benjamin.

CAC: Then you stayed through Benjamin and . . .

EF: A sequence of others. [laughter]

CAC: You weren't there when Ken Keller was a vice-president?

EF: That's right.

CAC: I guess I would ask then some of the same questions as I did about the deanship, that is, you had overall responsibility of kind of overseeing academic planning—but that's a pretty big phrase—what really was your assignment, and how did you relate to Benjamin, and what portfolios did you have, and what issues were up front at that time? Retrenchment is becoming more severe all that time, or retrenchment and reallocation. We're moving toward Commitment to Focus, don't have the name yet.

EF: Oh, yes, we did.

CAC: That early?

EF: Yes. Keller had responded to a challenge from Governor Perpich in . . . I would think it was late 1985 or very early in 1986.

CAC: December of 1985. You're right, yes.

EF: With that Commitment to Focus document and . . . Preceding that document there had been a series of task forces that had been working I think while Ken was academic vice-president, when David Lilly went over as financial vice-president. There were a series of task forces coming up with recommendations on undergraduate education, and graduate education, and relations with the business community, and research, all sorts of stuff. So Ken had all of those reports before him full of recommendations, and he could just essentially pick and choose from all those recommendations, and put together a document with his stamp on it but that had remarkable legitimacy with the faculty because it did grow out of all these task force reports.

CAC: But you yourself did not play a direct role in those various task force reports?

EF: No. I led a very small and obscure one having to do with information technology, information systems for the university.

CAC: But when you come in that's the agenda, when you come into the associate vice-presidency?

EF: Yes, it was to transform Commitment to Focus into operational plans, college by college. The mechanism that was used was this Advisory Committee that Chuck Campbell chaired.

CAC: Were you a member of that committee ex officio then?

EF: I was ex officio member, and I wrote up the instructions to the committee, and the instructions to the colleges on what they were supposed to do for their planning; so I came in to oversee that whole process of trying to put Commitment to Focus into operation.

CAC: That was the biggest darned job you'd ever face? Question.

EF: Yes, well, the transformation of the School of Management was on a smaller level. Yes, I suppose it was. It's certainly a lot more frustrating because it's not something that you do. You set up procedures and sort of stand back and look to see if those procedures lead to the outcomes you'd hoped. [laughter]

CAC: So you didn't advise substantively with the Campbell Committee but really you were more engaged in the process than in the substance?

EF: In theory, yes, although when you're sitting in those meetings unless you bite your tongue a lot—and I haven't ever done that—you get involved in the intellectual discussion, too.

CAC: I think that committee and its consequences were so important for the Keller Administration, at least. If you could say a bit more about by what process it came to those recommendations, and then how those recommendations were received by Roger Benjamin and by President Keller, it would help clarify for posterity very complex and very bitter issues.

EF: Yes. I think that the way the issue was formulated for that committee grows directly out of my experience in the Graduate School with the external reviews of graduate programs in which we were going through an active process then of having each of our graduate programs reviewed by an external committee. It's always the easiest thing for that external committee to do. They may make some gentle criticism of the department but there is nothing that couldn't be fixed by an infusion of funds. So in program after program, the recommendation from the external committee was that more money was needed, and that would take care of the problems. [laughter] I was very much concerned that a committee like the Campbell Committee—which was supposed to be reviewing the planning documents of the colleges looking for issues that sort of fell between the cracks in those documents, but also making recommendations about the college plans themselves—that the easy thing for that committee to do would be to say, "What we need is to have a big infusion of new money."

CAC: But that wasn't in the books? There was no new money to be had?

EF: I didn't think so and there were many other people who were looking at the prospects of getting new state money and saying, "It isn't going to be there. We're going to have a long dry period both with state and federal funds." So, yes, I didn't think it was going to be there. The committee was instructed to come forward with recommendations that would call for a balanced budget; if they were going to recommend increases in some places that they should recommend decreases elsewhere. The problem that the committee faced was that . . . I think this was a remarkable conclusion for them to come to. The committee included faculty that were primarily engaged in research and graduate education, with a heavy weighting from the professional schools, including Agriculture, and Biological Sciences, and so on. As individuals, they were not people who were in general deeply committed to undergraduate education on a personal level, but they came to the overall conclusion that the Arts and Science floor of the university was at serious risk, and undergraduate education was at serious risk. They had been badly treated over the years and that for the strength of the university those were the areas that needed more funds, and they needed a lot. Given that that was the conclusion that they came to and given that this instruction said, "You've got to balance the budget," it wasn't just a matter of tinkering with \$50,000 here and \$100,000 there. They said, "We need millions. The only way that we can do that is to cut off some of the periphery of the university, some of the things that aren't part of the core." They came up with this recommendation for closing Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry, in part with an eye on national supply and demand in those areas, and the availability of alternative places to get the education.

Roger Benjamin was delighted with those recommendations, with the overall recommendations. There were a lot of non-budgetary recommendations that were very good for the university, I

think. Roger Benjamin was delighted with the whole thing when I gave him a preview. When I went in to talk to Ken Keller about it, he paled and said, "You killed me." He immediately saw the political problem statewide that would come from proposing cutting down Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry.

CAC: They had constituents powerful in the legislature?

EF: Yes. The problem was that the schedule of the committee had slipped a bit, and the recommendations were formulated in a rush, and people left town.

CAC: It was late summer?

EF: Late spring. The representative on the committee from the College of Veterinary Medicine had already left when the committee finally said, "Well, there's nothing else for it but to recommend closing Veterinary Medicine." It wasn't possible to get the group back together to talk to the president about that issue. He appreciated everything except the budgetary part of their recommendations. There were a lot of recommendations from the committee that he thought gave him an opportunity to improve the university, using their recommendations as the starting point; and he didn't want to destroy the effectiveness of that part of the report by shooting down the whole report immediately. He thought that he could distance himself from it by saying that they'd have a very rapid administrative review of the budgetary recommendations, but he personally didn't support them. It just didn't work. He was tarred with those recommendations across the state.

CAC: To what degree were the regents involved at this point or earlier?

EF: They were not, at least not . . .

CAC: But they did respond to the Campbell report?

EF: Oh, yes, they did.

CAC: But they were largely unaware of this process? They knew it was going on . . .

EF: Oh, they knew that it was going on.

CAC: It came as a surprise to them as well?

EF: Right and it was leaked to the press. It might have been that Keller managed to reach regents so that they didn't read it first in the newspaper, but it was leaked to the press.

CAC: By whom?

EF: Well, there was an administrative meeting that was taking place at some retreat on the very day that . . .

CAC: I see these as being some vice-presidents from [unclear]?

EF: Yes, right. I have always assumed that it was the dean of the Dental School that had learned about the recommendation and leaked it, or perhaps the Health Science vice-president, but I don't know that. But anyway, it got leaked by somebody who was opposed to the recommendation.

CAC: Sure.

EF: Keller really didn't have a chance to perform the balancing act that he had hoped to perform in which he disavowed the financial recommendations and supported the rest.

CAC: In your judgments was this a major or the major event or development that made it impossible for Keller to continue?

EF: I don't know whether it's that or whether it was just a matter of personality, a brash New York Jew that a lot of legislators didn't like. I really don't know. But it certainly is true that he didn't understand the kind of response in the state to high-spending on repairs at Eastcliff, and on his own office.

CAC: Part of that—I'm looking at the memorandum that you provided in advance—also had to do with the reserves. Now I know that was what Dave Lilly did as vice-president for Finance but as associate vice-president you saw all these things operating?

EF: I think that David had swept out the various accounts and got those reserves accumulated before I got to Morrill Hall.

CAC: But you know that story. I mean, you are an economist.

EF: Yes.

CAC: I've heard parts of this story and being of slow wit . . . as posterity . . . what is your understanding of it? The more we clarify it the better I think future historians can figure it out.

EF: My understanding of it is that . . . I've momentarily forgotten his name, the name of the financial vice-president that sort of ran the university for a good long time . . .

CAC: Middlebrook.

EF: Middlebrook, yes. Thank you. [My understanding of that is] that Middlebrook kept accounts very close to his vest, and that he would have both the president and the academic vice-president coming to him essentially in supplication when they wanted to do something, and would come in and ask him if money could be found to do it. He would pull out this little sheet and at least on some occasions, maybe most of the time I don't know, would say, "Well, yes, I think I think we can find funds to do that." [laughter]

CAC: Folks at Crookston knew enough to go to Middlebrook right away in those days to find special monies for special research and experiment.

EF: Yes. The way he did that was simply in a large and arcane accounting system, you create a lot of accounts and you can just put funds away.

CAC: I don't understand that. How are the funds generated and how do you save them and carry them over from one year to another?

EF: Well, you carry them over from one year to another because the legislature doesn't take it back.

CAC: These are unexpended legislative appropriations, primarily?

EF: Yes. Primarily but it could also be overhead funds.

CAC: So it still remains a great mystery?

EF: No, I don't think that the mechanism that's used is a great mystery. You just identify this fund as being for a certain purpose but it doesn't have to be something that you plan to actually spend. It's just identified as going to be used for that purpose and then you can transfer it to some other place when you need it.

CAC: I should think there would be persons who expected to receive those funds who would be alert?

EF: Not necessarily. No. There were a lot of little pots of money just tucked away for a rainy day. A later Finance vice-president who went from here to the University of Michigan as financial vice-president, preceded Lilly—I can't remember his name—came back as a consultant to the governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on the finances of the University of Minnesota, the one that was chaired by Jim . . . the retired Honeywell president whose name I will think of eventually . . .

CAC: Binger?

EF: No, it wasn't Binger. Binger is 3M. This is Honeywell. This former financial vice-president who went to Michigan came back as advisor to that Blue Ribbon Committee, and shook his head and said that he thought that Lilly was absolutely crazy to put money out there where it could be seen. He never had any money at the University of Michigan that was left over, and available, and identifiable. He would never have central reserves. Of course, he had at least as much money as Lilly did but not in a form that could be identified from outside. Lilly thought that the appropriate thing to do was to centralized these funds and make them an object for deliberate decision by the president and regents on how to spend it. We've got these goals for the university and we've got this pot of money that can be devoted to working toward those goals.

CAC: Presumably many legislators were surprised that this money had been saved from their appropriations, right?

EF: Yes. Not only from appropriations but also from very fortunate investment decisions that were made.

CAC: Ah!

EF: There was a bundle of money. Those reserves grew very rapidly in the early eighties.

CAC: Until the fall of 1987?

EF: Yes. They grew very rapidly because of good investment decisions. What do you want me to talk about . . . about the accumulation of the . . . ?

CAC: The response to it. Were the regents fully aware of this?

EF: They were aware of it in that they were told about it. They were aware of it in that the income from central reserves was a matter of regular financial reporting to them. It was part of the meeting that they all dozed through while somebody goes over the numbers. They were not interested in it, and nobody was alert to either the political volatility or the amount of money that was being generated and was at central administration's discretion.

CAC: One could imagine that regents by the process of their election were quite sensitive to the political situation and should have been alert.

EF: Right. They were aware that that was the source of funds that was being used for remodeling of Eastcliff. I was not present at the meeting . . . I just heard it from Ken Keller that there was a meeting at which he asked about spending this money on Eastcliff and the extent that they wanted to be involved in it and the answer was, "Well, you know, you just go ahead and take care it. Let's not talk about it too much." Later those same people who had agreed that that

was the right approach expressed great indignation when they learned of these expenditures, and said that they hadn't been informed, and they hadn't authorized it.

CAC: So there are a series things here. You speak of the sad affair of Eastcliff, and that relates to the centralization and use of reserve funds, and that in turn involves the relationship of different vice-presidents with the president and with the regents?

EF: Yes.

CAC: It's a pretty complicated affair.

EF: It is. The fact that the reserves grew so rapidly meant that there was an important policy decision to be made about the extent to which the decisions on how to spend the reserves and the income from the reserves should be taken to the regents for action. When it was small amounts of money, it wasn't an issue. At some point in becoming a large amount of money, it probably should have become an issue, and it didn't. The administration just went on making these decisions without explicitly taking them to the regents.

CAC: In that light, can you say something more—I know these are very complex and many of these questions I'm asking, you were not directly privy but one assumes that there's conversations in the administrative staff in Morrill Hall—regarding the role of the regents in these years? When was it that they came to be selected by the senators and the legislators from a given district? Was that after these events or was that before?

EF: No. I don't remember any time when they weren't selected that way.

CAC: So that's had a longer history?

EF: I think so.

CAC: I'll have to check that out with other persons then. Now what influence does that have, in your judgment as you watched all these things, on the way in which particular regents or the regents as a whole perform their mission, their obligation?

EF: What influence does what have on the way they perform?

CAC: They're selected in a certain way, and have been for some time, and it makes them more political than presumably might be in an ideal world, so that the individual members have constituencies outside the university?

EF: Yes. Right. I don't know whether it's the selection by legislative district, or by groups of legislative districts, that matters so much—I guess congressional districts, isn't it?

CAC: Yes.

EF: The issue that the Alumni Association focused on—when they got approval for this screening committee to screen candidates for the regents and make recommendations to the legislature—was the fact that in the former process the candidate's understanding of higher education and their concern for the overall health of the higher education system wasn't much of a consideration, that the political factors were the only factors that were considered. They wanted to have and succeeded in getting I think at least a voluntary version of a system of screening of judicial candidates by lawyer's groups so that you can get some assurance of basic competence and knowledgeability among those that are being considered for the positions. When I first went to Morrill Hall, I did see directly some examples that I thought were absolutely shocking in behavior of individual regents in pursuing their own agendas, not necessarily political agendas either, personal agendas.

CAC: Are there some for instances that you could share?

EF: Well, seeing this waver in front of me about this going into the archives and being public, I can't think of any at the moment. [laughter]

CAC: So we could make the generalization that it wouldn't surprise anyone that some of the regents have their own personal as well as constituency agendas?

EF: Yes.

CAC: That complicated the role of any president?

EF: It led to enormous complications for both the academic vice-president and the president even in some cases in making personnel appointments, having to satisfy the interests of individual regents about who those appointments should be.

CAC: We know what is public that a certain number of the regents were never terribly happy with Mr. Keller from the beginning?

EF: Although they had all voted to support him and the Commitment to Focus, apparently in some cases it was reluctant votes.

CAC: You have noted here something that no one else whom I've interviewed has talked about, that is, the attempt to show that the academic vice-president was truly the provost, and there came a time that Business Affairs had to report to the provost and academic vice-president for Academic Affairs?

EF: Yes.

CAC: Say something about that.

EF: The issue was primarily created by University Minnesota-Duluth, and it was particularly pressed by Larry Ianni but it had come up before that—Larry Ianni a chancellor there. The issue was the Central Administration wearing two hats: as administrators for the Twin Cities campus as well as for the system. It led, in Duluth's view in particular, to unfair allocations of funds, funds that weren't being allocated objectively based on objective considerations about the needs of various programs, but because the administrators here also looked upon the Twin Cities programs as being the most important and central. So there was a change in the administrative structure that led to the most bizarre organization chart in which central administrators were each defined to have a Twin Cities campus role and also a Central Administration role, and distinguishing the actions that were being taken in their capacity as central administrators and their capacity as administrators for the Twin Cities campus. David Lilly I think was instrumental in the argument that the academic vice-president should also be the provost of the Twin Cities campus and all of the functions on this campus should report to him, whereas the financial vice-president is system-wide responsibility. However, reporting to the financial vice-president are all of these businesses on the Twin Cities campus: the laundry, the parking services, the car rental, the book stores, the food services, all of that stuff. We run quite a large set of businesses here on this campus. But those are for the campus, they're not for the system. He said, "Well, you know, if it's the provost of the Twin Cities campus that should be in charge of these things, all of these business units should report to the provost office, not to the financial vice-president."

CAC: That carried?

EF: Yes, it carried.

CAC: That throws an awful burden on the poor Academic Affairs office?

EF: Yes. They reported to the Academic Affairs vice-president through me because I was the . . .

CAC: That's why you are so sensitive to this. [laughter]

EF: I was the budget guide. It was while all those business units reported to me that the big flap over what is now called Maintenance . . .

CAC: And Physical Plant?

EF: What used to be called Physical Plant. I've forgotten what the new name is but the big flap over Physical Plant which had a black director who was not popular with the white labor unions or with most of the members of the Board of Regents.

CAC: Partly because of the union situation?

EF: Yes. Yes, but I think also just as an individual. He was an abrasive character, drove a big Cadillac with a license plate that said, "Top Gun." [laughter] David Lilly had installed him as director of Physical Plant and the academic vice-president inherited that situation at a time when Physical Plant was under investigation by the legislative auditor and so we had all that stuff going through our office. Roger Benjamin was vice-president at the time and it continued while Mary Clark was in the office and when Len Kuhi came in, I persuaded him to give up those responsibilities and return it to the financial vice-president. [laughter] That finally happened. It stayed in the office for probably a couple of years. There was the Physical Plant and also all of these business services reporting through two different administrators, and they had titles of vice-provost.

CAC: I guess that raises a question then that I should ask you. Just in a general way with specific illustrations can you say something about the culture and the anthropological sense of Morrill Hall, how it functions on a day to day basis? Who talks to whom? It's that informal functioning that written records never, never provide a hint about.

EF: The senior vice-presidents and the president are extremely busy all the time and booked up; so just to keep the place functioning, it really falls to the next level of officials on down, assistant to the president, associate vice-presidents, to keep the place functioning, to make judgments about when something has to be referred to the president, and then you run over and talk to the assistant to the president—which is now the associate to the president, Mike Bognanno now. It used to be Kathy O'Brien. So there's an awful lot of running around by second in commands trying to make sure that communication takes place, and from my point of view the system can work effectively when you have bosses as I described David Lilly and Warren Ibele to be. If you have a clear understanding of where you can make judgments, and take authority, and make decisions when you have to, and be backed up on them, then things can go pretty smoothly. When they kind of grind to a halt is when the second in command don't have any sense of where their authority stops and then everything gets referred up . . .

CAC: To very busy persons?

EF: Yes, and you end up with a sort of gridlock. We had a succession of academic vice-presidents at least that didn't have a feel for . . .

CAC: You come in with Roger Benjamin . . .

EF: Yes.

CAC: And there was Shirley Clark?

EF: Yes, I said Mary. Excuse me.

CAC: Yes, that's why I'm clearing . . . Shirley Clark.

EF: And then Len Kuhi and then Jim Infante.

CAC: You were there for all four?

EF: Yes.

CAC: These were four in five years?

EF: Yes. Right.

CAC: In many cases these were persons who knew the university system but had never been in Morrill Hall. They had to be taught, learn on the job?

EF: Yes. Right.

CAC: And part of your responsibility as kind of chief of staff—although that wasn't your title—was to educate some of these folks, socialize them, right?

EF: Bob Kvavik and I sort of shared responsibilities with Roger and with Shirley. He became sort of chief of staff with Len Kuhi and with Infante, I would say.

CAC: And presumably still is?

EF: Yes.

CAC: What difference does the person make in style of management as affairs go circling around in Morrill Hall?

EF: It makes a great difference. There are some people who make decisions quickly and clearly. There are other . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: . . . personal styles of managing. You were saying that Shirley Clark made methodical but not delayed . . .

EF: Very slow and frequently delayed but always very careful, and deliberate, and she did make the decisions that . . .

CAC: She was the first woman ever at that level.

EF: That's true, yes.

CAC: Do you think that made her more cautious?

EF: It may have, although I don't know. I was just remembering the fact that in meetings, she would always sit and take voluminous notes, page after page, handwritten notes in meetings, something that I would never dream of doing. I don't know whether it was concern about being a woman in that position that led to that. But she did make decisions and not all of the other people in that job did.

CAC: Can you say much more about that or . . .

EF: No, I guess not.

CAC: We're talking about the culture of Morrill Hall. One person who was not as close to the center as you, but was there quite awhile, said that no one in Morrill Hall has any time to think, that the pressure of the daily calendar is just overwhelming.

EF: I think that that's generally true particularly for the vice-presidents and the president, and Mike Bognanno said that one of his objectives was try to manage the president's calendar so that he would have time to think; and it will be interesting to see if he can succeed.

CAC: You had a long tenure there, how can that be accomplished? I mean there's so many constituents that the president and the vice-president have to address, internal and external, regential and legislative, and public, and deans, and vice-presidents. How do you do that?

EF: I think that you have to do it by delegating authority and that very few people in Morrill Hall have been willing to do. David did.

CAC: Again, you're using the model of Ibele and Lilly?

EF: Yes.

CAC: If that were followed faithfully and intelligently, it would give a few hours a day to think about the issues—might?

EF: I believe so but it's an untested proposition. Although, I think it's true that David Lilly as financial vice-president never had any trouble getting time to think about things. He was a superb delegator. As the delegatee for several years, I'm aware of that. [laughter]

CAC: And also monitored? He knew . . . ?

EF: Yes.

CAC: I've talked with persons who have been chairs of important departments, and nothing more than that, and even at that level, they report, you see, that their calendar is frequently taken away from them by things over which they have no control. They're called by a dean to do something in three days or there are, more recently, lawsuits or threats of lawsuits that consume time. Were you in a position to look at litigation as an administrative problem for the management of the whole university?

EF: Not really. I saw some of it but it's an issue that each academic vice-president had to decide for themselves. In making decisions not to give tenure or to promote, an academic vice-president is thereby committing himself or herself to the possibility of spending a lot of time in trial. I must say, one of the things that I admired in each of the people that I worked for over there was their willingness to ignore the potential personal cost of negative decisions.

CAC: The other great generator, of course, was the Health Sciences the last ten years. Did you have any perspective on that in the work you were doing in Morrill Hall?

EF: On the . . .

CAC: Not on the specific, but in general the management problems, the autonomy of the Health Sciences must create very serious problems both legal and managerial for Morrill Hall.

EF: Yes. I was aware of ALG as an issue, not as an issue of ethics and violation of federal regulations, but as an issue of a huge money generator that was completely outside of the purview of the Central Administration of the university.

CAC: No way you could control those funds?

EF: There was no way that any president or academic vice-president while I was there was willing to address that issue.

CAC: Why?

EF: I assume that it was because it would be just too difficult an issue and that it would be too costly to address.

CAC: Too costly in personal time invested and in consequences?

EF: Well, also politically. Those folks are well connected. There's a lot of support for them.

CAC: When you were in Morrill Hall there were two vice-presidents really representing functioning divisions, Health Sciences and Agriculture and Forestry, etcetera? The other vice-presidents were really line officers in a sense, right?

EF: Yes.

CAC: Could you throw light on that as it relates to larger issues that Morrill Hall has to address?

EF: My understanding is that the Health Sciences vice-president came certainly in response to political pressure from the Health Sciences community but it came at a time when there was an enormous building boom going on in the Health Sciences. I've heard a claim—and I can't remember who made it but I believe it was a former president of the university . . . whoever it was that first appointed that Health Science vice-president and I don't remember whether that would have been Moos or would have been Magrath—that the intention was that that position would go away when all the construction business was over. Of course, having the Health Sciences represented led to the counter pressure to have Agriculture represented and I doubt that you can ever put that back in a box now. But I don't have any particular light to shed on it.

CAC: I'm pausing to think if there are other aspects about the general question of the culture, as I call it, that we could address but I think we've touched on lots of things.

This leads us to at least two more items. One is what you have noted as the legislative pressure that brought the so-called Minnesota curriculum to law students' easy transfer. You're the first person to say anything about that so say something.

EF: Oh, all right. I was spending some time over at the legislature in . . . well, I suppose, all the time that I was in Morrill Hall . . . and there would often be someone from Academic Affairs just to listen to important hearings before the higher ed committees in the house and the senate, and sometimes testifying. It was in the house that this issue of inefficiency in transferring came up. It comes from individual constituents who are frustrated. I know that there was one case of a student from the Crookston campus whose physics course wouldn't be accepted in the Twin Cities, and quite appropriately so because the physics that's taught in Crookston—which was then really an agricultural school—was applied physics, and it had little relation to a standard physics course at a university level. But there were also cases of students from Morris whose courses in the Morris campus weren't accepted on the Twin Cities campus, and frequently issues of students trying to transfer from one state university to another, or from a community college to a state university, or to the University of Minnesota. The process for deciding whether or not the liberal education requirements had been satisfied is an extremely decentralized, and cumbersome, and inefficient one. It was quite inconsistent with the goals of Commitment to Focus that it should be that way. Commitment to Focus says, "We're going to hold down our undergraduate numbers, and we're going to do that mostly by letting students go to community colleges until they are ready to transfer into upper division and come here." Well, that's never happened, and I think it's still not happening, but if you're going to try to promote that sort of goal, you really do need to have a mechanism for relatively painless transfer, and clarity about which courses will satisfy the requirements of the university. But it was under threat of direct action by the legislature that the higher ed systems got prodded to do something about this, you

know, either you fix it or by god! we'll fix it for you. That message was given very clearly, "We want you to come back next fall with answers." That did focus the minds of the higher ed people a little on the problem, both the Higher Education Coordinating Board and all of the systems. In these legislative hearings, by the way, frequently the chancellor of the community college system, the chancellor of the state university system, the president of the university, and often union leaders from the faculties, would be sitting there because they were interested in protecting faculty issues. So most of the players got the message pretty clearly that you've got to go and fix it. I was a liaison to a higher education coordinating group from the university and we got together representatives of all the systems and went off to . . . it wasn't Rutgers but it was one of those resorts up there near Brainerd, in the middle of the summer, and sat there for a week, and sort of cobbled together an approach that we would take . . . representatives from faculty associations and from administration of all three public systems. All four. I think the technical colleges were represented, too. That's still going to be a continuing source of friction because the university does not accept most technical college . . . in fact maybe they don't accept any technical college credits for the university.

CAC: But some of the problems were eased to some degree?

EF: They were eased enormously in that the systems did come up with both a plan and a time line that would define a Minnesota curriculum, a liberal education curriculum—it's now in place.

CAC: Not fully implemented?

EF: No, but pretty close, I think. With this there's not an issue of bringing your individual course transcript to the University of Minnesota and having courses approved course by course; but if you've got a stamp on your transcript that you've satisfied the Minnesota liberal education requirements, you're done—at least the lower division requirements. The university has been going toward . . .

CAC: Then if the individual student is caught by a course somewhere else that doesn't prepare him for upper division work that's his problem or her problem?

EF: Yes.

CAC: It's awfully difficult as a questioner not to ask leading questions, particularly after I've talked so many others. You're number forty-one or forty-two, so I'm getting a feel not universally from all of them but from many of them, the faculty. There's a sense that . . . well, it was not a golden age, although quite a few people have used that term . . . the late fifties to the mid-late seventies . . . eighteen years there, plus or minus, it varies . . . kind of a golden age . . .

EF: Money rolling in.

CAC: Well, that's part of the story, yes, and high morale, and lively students, and good graduate students. Anthropology, for example, gets monies to support graduate students at a very high level, higher than other departments so Anthropology has a sense that those eight years were—which indeed they were—great. I get also a sense of declension, decline, and again, it's undated but it's related to the retrenchments that come more severely beginning in the early mid-seventies and becoming more severe as we go along. The processes of retrenchment and reallocation are subversive of established ways. Now that you're back in Economics and have seen this from Morrill Hall, from the graduate office school, and from Economics as a line professor, you should bring some kind of a sense of what all that means. See, I'll share with you, I have certain skepticism because I myself have been through it that when you retire there's a kind of nostalgia that one's own good years were the good years of the university, and then you step back and, you know, look at it in other ways. There's also a tendency of older persons to, at point of near separation, to be anxious to about the direction things are taking, etcetera. That's a long question, but it's really meant to have you talk about quality as you've seen it in other departments and other programs, because you have university wide experience but also in Economics specifically.

EF: There are two important aspects to quality: one is quality as we define it inside and the other is quality as perceived by the people that we're serving. The current attempts at reform in the university are intended to improve quality as perceived by the people that we're serving. I have always thought that that was an extremely important aspect of a university being able to achieve its own goals. You can achieve your internal goals only if you're performing a function that society perceives as being valuable and therefore is willing to support. You only do that if you're doing a good job of what counts to them. I have some optimism that slowly and painfully we might learn to do a better job of what counts to those we serve.

CAC: You say those we serve. You mean students, undergraduate, and graduate, but also the community?

EF: Community, yes. The tax payers . . . although those we serve also includes the people who put up funds for research and so on. One aspect of that golden age was perhaps an increase in arrogance and a feeling that we don't have to be responsive to the outside community. That has never been university wide. The St. Paul campus has a very different culture from the Minneapolis, and from CLA in particular, and some parts of IT have a very different culture from CLA in that regard.

[pause]

EF: . . . David Berg on your list?

CAC: Yes.

EF: I don't know whether what I just said is responsive to the issue that you were talking about, but I do think that for a public university to be successful, it has to manage this problem of not

making service to undergraduate students, and their parents, and the community, versus research and graduate education a zero sum game. A lot of faculty members see it as my god! if we put more energy into this then that means we've got to do less of something else—which is certainly true. There's only twenty-four hours in every person's day, but I think that success has to be based on making your activities work toward both goals simultaneously.

CAC: You're suggesting then in some areas of the Arts College that that synthesis was broken in some degree?

EF: It certainly was.

CAC: Illustrate if you can.

EF: Well, I don't think that in general we treat undergraduate students with a great deal of respect. This may be sort of like voters' response to congress. They're a bunch of rascals except that my own congressman is fine and should stay in office. I know that there are a lot of individual faculty members who treat undergraduate students with respect, and compassion, and all of that stuff, but institutionally, we haven't managed to do that. Students don't come out of the university feeling good about it. They don't support it financially or politically very much.

CAC: Well, the legislature doesn't look to the university as once it did as the major institution in the state to achieve these goals.

EF: That's right. Right. My optimistic view is that if we can manage to succeed to some extent in the current reform efforts, there is a chance that we'll be able to also return to some of our former glory in the issues that most of the faculty care more about, the research and graduate education. That might be blind optimism, but we're certainly not going to achieve those just by saying loudly to the public that those are important goals, because to the public they're not important goals. It's only by creating synergistic relationships between what they care about and what we care about that we're going to get anywhere.

CAC: Let me share with you then a related question, very closely related, that I've heard from many faculty . . . they once citing the empirical evidence, then to some degree can rejoice in it, or feel appalled by it. It's something they see beginning in the sixties, and accelerating in the seventies, and then coming home in the eighties and nineties, of the increasing specialization of teaching, and knowledge, and seminars, and sub-specializations, in every field which is characteristic of the intellectual world. The world has become more complex. Very few people are general historians. That's my home. That there was in that intense specialization and sub-specialization a consequent loss of collegiality, of a sense of a shared enterprise, and that may be the same issue that you just talked about now. It's put in slightly different . . .

EF: I don't think it's the same issue but . . .

CAC: Has some of the same consequences?

EF: Yes.

CAC: It elevates the research agenda and makes careers more important along the research line?

EF: Yes, right. I think the History Department, from my understanding, is one of the few in the university that's figured out a way to deal with that by creating these agglomerations of interests like the Center for Early Modern History and that sort of thing.

CAC: That was a response to that, right.

EF: I think that was pretty clever.

CAC: It engages our graduate students and a lot of undergraduates as well.

EF: And in Economics, I haven't seen that. We have in general people who are engaged in applied research, are interested in lots of different things, and they keep their hand in in several different areas, and they jump from one to another. In fact, one of the problems that I think our graduate students have in going out into the market is that they're not clearly identified as specialists who are ready to come into this job in economic development say. They don't immerse themselves in the literature of economic development and go out being solidly specialized in that. The courses that we teach don't do that for them. So I don't think that it's true in our department but I've certainly picked up that tendency in a lot of areas. What is true I think is that there has been increasing separation among departments and there is not as much collegiality across departments as there once was. There was a time when people would go to the Campus Club and sit down, and some few people still do that but not very many, and they're mostly getting gray hair. [laughter] I don't have any general observations about what we should do about that.

CAC: I gather that—I don't want to put words in your mouth—you think there's been a slippage of quality in the Economics Department?

EF: Yes, some. I understand that the National Research Council is about to come out with its regular, every twelve year or so, survey and I would expect that we won't be as high up as we were.

CAC: You've been high up for a long time.

EF: Yes. I don't think we will be as high and I think that that's in large part an issue of numbers. There just aren't very many of us. There are fewer now than there were ten years ago.

CAC: Does that mean there's been attrition of positions when they fall vacancy for one reason or another?

EF: Oh, yes. We're about twenty-three, twenty-two, now and we were twenty-nine, thirty.

CAC: Comparable departments in the Big Ten would be forty or fifty?

EF: Yes, that's true across the college.

CAC: It is true and it's just such a recurring fact. How can the mission as you're describing it, and I share it, be realized without the resources, the faculty in hand, the personnel to accomplish this?

EF: It makes it more challenging. Right.

CAC: It makes it profoundly difficult when one looks at the universities we choose to compare ourselves with, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio State, Illinois, etcetera, and in almost every instance they have more favorable—quotation marks—ratios.

EF: I'm not sure that it's all a matter of ratios though.

CAC: Say more.

EF: Just that I think that paying attention to the bureaucratic details of the way students are treated, and of making sure that they're treated with respect, and that they're not asked to jump through unreasonable bureaucratic hoops in order to accomplish their goals has a lot to do with their day to day contentment, with their lot in life, and large classes and classes taught by teaching assistants are not going to make them think that they're getting a bad education. Our teaching assistants, our graduate students, do as good a job as our faculty do in the classroom according to student evaluations. We've got some great teachers.

CAC: I'm clever enough after having done this forty times now that I have a feeling we're kind of running out. Right?

EF: Yes.

CAC: When I get that intuition, then I say one last question. Is there anything else you want to [unclear]? [laughter] Do you have other things that are really pressing that you would like to comment on?

EF: No, none that come to mind.

CAC: In that case, it's my privilege as always, to say, thank you very much for what you've done and for sharing it.

EF: My pleasure.

CAC: Thank you. I think it's been a very interesting and rewarding couple of hours.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[End of Interview]

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