

Transcript – Hannelore Banks Rodriguez, Class of 1987

Narrator: Hannelore Banks Rodriguez

Interviewer: Mary Vascellaro

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Track 1

Hannelore Rodriguez-Farrar: [0:00:00] Okay. So, it's working. I mean, you can see that it's –

Mary Vascellaro: Oh, yeah. Okay.

HRF: And the microphone's pretty sensitive, so this will be fine. Okay. Now, we're going to st–

(break in audio)

HRF: Okay.

MV: What's today's date? Oh, the 20th.

HRF: Go ahead. It's on.

MV: Hello. Today is January 20, 2017. This is Mary Vascellaro, Class of '74, and I'm at my home in San Francisco interviewing Hannelore Rodriguez-Farrar, Class of '87, AM, Class of '90, and PhD, Class of '09. And Hanna, I'd love you to tell me a little bit to start about your family and childhood.

HRF: Okay. So, both of my parents are from the Philippines. I was born in '64, so my parents came in like, '63 and '62. The story of them [0:01:00] coming to the United States is kind of funny. My Dad came here to do a PhD in ag. engineering at University of North Dakota in

Fargo, which is how I ended up getting born in Fargo. But my Mom came here first to do a med tech degree in Minnesota, Minneapolis. And when she arrived, she got off the plane and she happened to be on the plane with the Vikings, the Minnesota Vikings. And so, she was like, “Oh my god. Americans are all so huge.” Right? She was kind of flipped out about, “Here I am in the United States, moving from the equator to Minnesota where there’s all this snow, surrounded by football players.” So that’s her kind of entry into the United States.

My Dad came to the United States with five dollars in his pocket that my Mom had sent him. And that’s literally what he came here with. And then I don’t really know the st– they knew each other in the Philippines and that kind of stuff, but I always thought those were kind of fun stories of how they ended up here. They ended up in Fargo. They got married. And my Dad was in his PhD program, [0:02:00] and his goal was to try to do a PhD. It was something that he aspired to. But I was born. So, part of that whole doing a PhD thing was also a fulfillment of my Dad’s dream of something that he never got to finish when he came here. And ag. engineering, like what are you going to do with ag. engineering? I think the thought was the Philippines is mostly agricultural. Maybe they’d go back or whatever, but I was born, and then they moved to Philadelphia. So, I wasn’t in Fargo for that long, but it’s always been this kind of running gag, because until the movie, Fargo, came out, most people asked – People actually asked, when I said I was born in Fargo, they actually asked me what country that was in. And then the movie came out. Then it was like, “What were you doing in Fargo?” Like it’s this other-worldly thing.

So, grew up in Philadelphia, West Philly, went to Catholic grade school, that kind of stuff. My parents sent my sister and I to the Philippines one summer. I was twelve, just to [0:03:00] visit for the first time, meet relatives, all this other stuff. And when I came back from the Philippines they had moved us from West Philly to the suburbs. And I was like, “Wait.” You just sit there. Like, I have no friends. I don’t know this place. It was completely new, and different, and weird, and kind of wealthy in a way that I was not accustomed to. I mean, we lived in West Philly. We lived a couple of blocks from the MOVE compound that got bombed by the police department. I mean, that was not that far from my house. I was, you know, a free lunch kid, right? And then we end up in this suburb where, you know, in a single-family home, at this high school with all these people with money and clothes that I was just not accustomed to. So, middle school was weird and hard, and I was used to being in a school that was very diverse. And now I was like one of two Asian families, and five African-American families. After

spending three months in the Philippines? So, it was [0:04:00] jarring. There was something about that that was distressing.

And, of course, so I go to middle school, right, and being from the inner city, they automatically assume, “Oh, she must be stupid,” or something. They put me in all – and it was homogeneous grouping then, so everyone was kind of the same level. They put me in the lowest level of everything – English, math, all of it. And I just sat there doing the work, kind of like, “Okay. This is really easy. Fine.” Not saying anything, just doing the work, and all of a sudden, they realized, “Okay. You know, maybe she’s in the wrong sections.” They moved me to the top section, at which point I’ve now missed three months, and so I was doing really well, because it was easy. Then they moved me to a section where it’s like, okay, now I’m failing completely in everything because I missed all this stuff.

So, middle school was jarring. It wasn’t fun. It was very alienating and all that stuff. I mean, I had this weird name, and Filipino, what’s Filipino? And everything else. [0:05:00] And then there’s high school, and high school’s high school. I think I was a little bit more social and seasoned. I became a cheerleader. I was an athlete. And so, once you get into those things you’re better off, right? And then, you know, off to Brown. So that was basically it. That’s probably more of my childhood than you needed to know.

MV: No, that’s great.

HRF: But you’re making me reflect on it.

MV: How did you come to look at Brown and decide on Brown?

HRF: I probably ended at Brown for all the wrong reasons. You’re a senior in high school. I was at this public school that basically sent everyone to Bucknell and Lehigh. You know, kind of half decent schools, but mostly in Pennsylvania. And I was like, “No, no, no. I’m going to go to the Ivy Leagues. I want to check this all out.” I wasn’t the top of my class, but I wasn’t stupid by any stretch of the imagination, so I just did this New England tour with this friend of mine and looked at a bunch of schools. And I actually knew a couple of people at Yale, because they had graduated [0:06:00] before me, and I visited Yale, and was like, “Oh, this is...” I didn’t really

like Yale. I mean, the classic was – I was staying with a former classmate and checking out Yale, and the night that I was there, there was an attack of a woman in the parking lot behind the building. And so, it's like, "Okay. Yeah. Yale's not high on the list," right? And did the Harvard thing, but I found Harvard to be just really confusing. I really thought Dartmouth was beautiful, but too remote, right? I didn't look at Princeton. At the time, I was really interested in Penn, because I was from West Philly. I thought Penn would be the place and everything else. And they had actually started to recruit me for track because I was a runner. So, it came down to Penn and Brown, and I literally just said – I went to Brown, visited, thought it was – I really loved the feel. It was like a gut feeling. I remember Jim Miller – You know Jim, right?

MV: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

HRF: Saying, "Ultimately what it comes down to is an 18-year-old standing on the green going, 'I can see this is [0:07:00] home for me.'" And that's basically what happened, even though I think at the time I thought for sure I was going to go to Penn. I wanted to go to Penn since I was in second grade. Like that was the thing. And then when it came down to putting the card in the mail, I was like, "I'm going to go to Brown." So, I went there for all the wrong reasons. I mean, I didn't know any better. I mean, you're 18 or 17.

MV: Did you know anyone at Brown?

HRF: Not really. No. There was a classmate from high school who was there, but I didn't know her, really. So for all intents and purposes, no. But funnily enough, three of us from my high school ended up going to Brown, which was the most that they'd ever sent there. And so, there was a kind of like cohort that we all went together. So, there was something about that that was kind of comforting. Even though I knew a ton of people who were going to Penn. I mean, I had friends who were going to all the schools that I'd applied to and everything else, but I just ended up at Brown.

MV: And you mentioned that you were a runner. Did you intend to do track at Brown?

HRF: I did. I did. I intended to do [0:08:00] track and I ran for like the first year that I was Brown. But I was not that great a runner. And I was just not that good at that. And being an athlete in college is no joke. It is a lot of work. And being married to a coach, I really get that. Part of me really wanted to just because of the camaraderie of the team and everything else, but it's the time commitment, you know? And so, it didn't really work out.

MV: So, when you got to Brown, where did you live and how did you make friends? Was it through classes, through activities?

HRF: So, I lived in Littlefield, second floor, the room that's on Brook Street. And back then there was a fire escape on there. They've taken that down, but we used to be able to hang out on the fire escape and talk to people on Brook Street, which I just loved. That was always – is it Brook Street? Yeah. Brook. No, not Brook. Brown. [0:09:00] Is it Brown Street? So, if this is Littlefield –

MV: Right.

HRF: Right? And then here's the John Hay.

MV: Yeah.

HRF: Or the John Hay's here. What's this street? And then the dorms are on this side.

MV: I'm confused now. I'm really bad at maps.

HRF: Okay. But anyway. You know where I'm talking about.

MV: I know the street, but just not the name.

HRF: Yeah. So, you walk out and you're into the Ratty. So how did I make friends? I had three people who –

MV: It's Brown. Brown Street.

HRF: Is it Brown Street? Yeah, I think it's Brown. Sorry. Yeah.

MV: Anyway.

HRF: So, I had two friends from high school, so you automatically end up meeting all their friends, right? So that made it really easy just to get to know people. And they lived in Pembroke, and I lived in Littlefield. And so it was always you go to the Blue Room or what is it? The Gate. And so, you just end up doing that kind of thing. So mostly I met people through that as opposed to classes. It wasn't really through classes. And that [0:10:00] worked out great. It was kind of fun.

MV: It's funny. So, the Brown-Pembroke thing, by the time you were there, was pretty much just a location.

HRF: It was a location thing. Yeah. But for me, Pembroke was like the cool place to be because I knew a lot of people there, and I loved the fact that it was close to the Athletic Center. And to get there you got to walk through Thayer Street and things like that. And so, while Littlefield is in the heart of campus, I always saw Pembroke as where the cool kids were, where the fun happened, that kind of stuff. And when I applied to Brown and stuff like that, I didn't really know the Brown-Pembroke connection thing, but when I got there and learned about it being a women's campus and everything? The first sweatshirt I got was a Pembroke sweatshirt.

MV: Huh.

HRF: And I wore that dag thing till there were holes in it. And people are like, "Why are you walking around in a Pembroke sweatshirt?" I was like, "Because Pembroke is the women's college. It's not just a place for women, you know, that part of campus." But that to me was really important, history that I never really [0:11:00] picked up on till I got there. And I never

thought of myself as like big and tall, that kind of stuff, but there was something about that that was really important to me when I was an undergrad – that Pembroke existed, that it was more than a college, that it was about women at Brown. Like women at Brown was a thing. And I thought that was just kind of cool, and I loved that about our history. And then I subsequently found out about the Seven Sisters and everything else, but there was something about Pembroke and Brown that's different than Barnard and Columbia, and Radcliffe and Harvard. So, while I wasn't a Pembroke, I've always thought that all women were, no matter what you graduated.

MV: That's interesting.

HRF: I mean, that was just how I kind of took it on, which is part of when I, you know, way, way back I started doing volunteer work with the Pembroke Center because I thought that was important to hold on to this –

MV: Right. You recruited me for the Pembroke Center.

HRF: Yeah. Exactly. And I remember that. I was like, “Why isn't anyone talking to Jerome's [0:12:00] wife? And I remember saying that. And then they said, “Oh.”

MV: Oh, yeah.

HRF: Yeah, yeah. Exactly. So that was my social life at Brown, kind of.

MV: Awesome. And do you still have close friends from your undergraduate days?

HRF: I know a ton of people from my undergraduate days, but I'm mostly friends with people from graduate school and my former students. And there's a reason for that actually, and here's the story that I said that you don't know.

MV: Yeah.

HRF: Okay. So here I was at Brown, loving my life, and a year and a half into Brown, my parents went bankrupt. So, I had to leave Brown. So, my sister was a senior in high school and my other sister was a first year at Drexel. And my senior year in high school and my first year at Brown were just like the greatest times for me, and I didn't want to deny my sisters those kinds of experiences. So, my parents went bankrupt. There was nothing they could do. I couldn't go to Brown anymore. We had to sell our house. We moved into a building that we owned in West Philly, and [0:13:00] what I really didn't want to happen to my sisters, that they somehow missed out on those experiences at that time in their life.

So, I went home because I had to, but I got a bevy of whacky jobs to funnel money to my sister so that she could go on senior trips, and my other sister could have fun her freshman year, and go to parties and things like that. And while it was a really difficult time in the family – I mean, these are not fun things – it was a great time for our family to kind of bond and get together and stuff like that. So here I was, back in Philadelphia, really lamenting, like, “Okay, now what?” I've left this place that was so special and kind of was now seemingly beyond reach. Like I didn't think I'd ever go back to Brown.

MV: But did you have a leave of absence?

HRF: Yeah. I took a leave of absence with the hopes, but it didn't look – I mean, I didn't think there was any way to get back there. And this is before they [0:14:00] had real financial – Financial aid was very different then.

MV: Really?

HRF: Yeah. And so back then, financial– If you owned something, like you owned a house, they assume, “Well, you own a house. Then you should be able to pay for college.” And it's kind of like, “No. That's an asset that doesn't equal cash.” So, it was complicated. My parents owned property in West Philly, because they were basically landlords. And so that's what we moved into is one of the houses that we owned. So, we didn't have, like, you know, what are you going to do? You going to sell the house or put me through college? I mean, that's basically what they were saying you had to do. But then, out of the blue, my Mom says to me, “You're going back to

Brown.” It was January 1st, for the beginning of the next semester. And I didn’t know how or why it happened. So, I went back, and it wasn’t until graduation – and this is what you’ll love. I got to go back because my Mom won the lottery.

MV: Oh, my god.

HRF: And it wasn’t a ton of money. It wasn’t like a million dollars, anything like that. You know, 10, [0:15:00] 25 thousand dollars, but it was enough to get stable enough, to get certain things paid off that they could take out other loans, and everything else, to get me to go back to Brown. And so, when I graduated and I found that story out, it really kind of solidified – My goal at that point was to be in higher ed., right, because there was something about it. Didn’t really know what it was, but I really loved the context and everything else. And then hearing that solidified the notion of, “You know what? Going to college should not be based on getting a lottery ticket. And if that’s the case, then I need to do whatever I can to, whatever that is, to try to help that not be the case.”

MV: Wow.

HRF: So, at that point, it was like, “I want to be in higher ed. because this is what I want to do.” And that the work I do is going to either move an institution or move – you know, and at that point I didn’t know what that looked like. You’re graduating from college. All you really know is faculty, and deans, and chairs.

MV: Right.

HRF: And you don’t really understand the kind of machine that’s behind it. Like I [0:16:00] didn’t. I mean, yes, I did work at the Annual Fund and that kind of thing, and that’s a different story. So, at that point I was like, “Well, I guess I just have to get a PhD in order to be in higher ed.” And I loved art history and I was really just completely enamored of studying it and everything else. So, I was like, “Then this is what I’m going to do. I got to get a PhD, get a terminal degree, and that’s how I’m going to be able to make my mark in higher ed. And then

we'll decide on how you make a difference.” When I went to Harvard is when I started to see where the pieces were that I wanted to move. So, do you want to be, state policy? Do you want to move state policy? Do you want to move federal policy? Do you want to move an institution? Do you want to work with students specifically? What line do you want to work on? And at Harvard, I decided it was the institutional front that was meaningful to me, but also what I thought I could be good at. So, if I can move an institution, then I would help the students [0:17:00] of that institution move forward. So that was my kind of thing.

But the lottery ticket thing was what really solidified wanting to be in higher ed. And it's one of those crazy stories that people don't believe, and yet it's completely feasible that that's the case right now. You know? So, the notion of higher ed. not just being accessible and affordable, but also just education being of quality across the board. And from Pre-K to 36, or whatever case, wherever you want to finish. So that's kind of what drove me to do what I do.

MV: Wow.

HRF: That's my story. That's the kind of – Yeah.

MV: Wow. So, the way into leadership in the university, your feeling was you get an academic degree as high as you can, and then you go into a department and –

HRF: Exactly.

MV: – So how did that differ for you? Your Harvard program was the PhD program.

HRF: Yeah. A doctoral program in higher ed. So, here's what happened. I ended up figuring this out. I want to be in higher ed. I think, “Okay. You need to have a PhD in order to be in higher ed. Fine.” I'm doing art history. And art history's great. It's like going along. But I'm at Brown doing a PhD program, so I thought this was a great opportunity to figure out what is this thing called higher ed? In my mind, everyone had PhDs and they were just faculty, and it just kind of worked out that way. So, when I was a graduate student, I started doing all kinds of crazy stuff that I probably should have done when I was an undergrad, but didn't really know to do this.

And I had worked at the Annual Fund and in Alumni Relations, just as a student worker. So, I kind of had a sense of what that was about, and that's a kind of really – Working in those offices was like one of the best things I ever did at Brown. I will forever remember my first day working at the Annual Fund and stuffing gift receipts. And [0:19:00] you're just like, "Okay. It's a mindless job, stuffing gift receipts." And that moment I stopped and I started looking at the gift receipts, and I see these names and the class year, and five dollars, ten dollars, fifteen hundred dollars, and the amounts of money. And that's when it started to dawn on me, this notion of, "I'm here because of them." And so that was the whole giving back to Brown thing that started happening.

So, when I was a graduate student, what I started to do was just learn about other departments. I ended up on committees around sexual harassment, and racial harassment committees. I started doing search committees, like they needed a graduate student to be on the search committee, I did that. I was on the JCB Board for a while, which is kind of this whacky thing around that. And I just started learning about administration in a way that just had never occurred to me, the machine that's behind what it takes to take a kid from 18 to 21, high school to college degree, and walking across whatever department they [0:20:00] get when they get their degree. So, graduate school had this kind of intellectual art history component at the same time that I started learning all this stuff about the administration side.

MV: And who was president then? Was it Vartan?

HRF: So yes. When I was an undergrad it was Swearer, who I loved. I loved Howard Swearer. And then there was Vartan Gregorian, who was this larger-than-life guy, right?

MV: Right.

HRF: And because I did a whole bunch of stuff with advancement, at that point I just started to meet him more often. So that was kind of fun. But the thing about the administration thing is I also got tapped by Becky More, who's a Brown PhD in history. IGA, right? I'm walking down in the front of the dairy aisle. I think I'm a second-year graduate student, and she says to me, "What are you doing next year? Do you have a TA-ship? What are you doing?" I was like, "Well, you

know, I'm still trying to figure out what I want to do." And she's like, "You should work for the Sheridan Center." And I was like, "What's the Sheridan Center?" She's like, "For teaching and learning. [0:21:00] You'd be good at this thing." And I think at that point I had gotten a teaching award, so she knew who I was from that.

And so that got me into an administrative office, an administrative position that was academically related, and yet had a whole bunch of other components around it, around training graduate students to be teachers, training junior faculty about how to teach. And it was nascent at that point. I mean, we literally were in like a closet in the Grad Center. It was nothing compared to now. I think they have a floor in the SciLi. So that got me really tapped into what it means to be part of an administration, and the kind of work that they do, and the kind of breadth of everything that happens in an institution, from compliance, to facilities, to – You know, because we were in this closet. So, it's like, so how do you get a different office? It's seemingly small, and yet you've pulled a thread and all of a [0:22:00] sudden you're looking at a whole other part of the university. And so, while this was going on with art history, I was doing all this stuff with administration. And it was great, but they were never connected. And so, the challenge at a certain point was, "Do you continue down this road of art history?" And at one point I did this crazy thing of working at URI in South Kingston, URI in Providence, and Rhode Island College as an adjunct. And I taught four different classes in one semester.

MV: Oh, my god.

HRF: In three different campuses, but I did it on purpose. I did it on purpose because I knew – At this point I was studying higher ed. I was thinking about it and this is well before we had the adjuncts problem, right? So, like this is the future of higher ed. If I do a PhD, I'm probably going to get stuck doing this, so I want to know what it's like now before I commit. So, I took the semester and did this. And I was like, "Okay. This is crazy." I mean, I loved my students. There are parts of it that I think – And I loved teaching. I [0:23:00] really enjoyed that, but I just thought, "This is not the way..." Like the impact on students is very different, right?

And at the same time, at this point, Eric and I had been dating for a while and he's hard-core coaching. And I'm watching him make such an impact on his players because he had so much time with them. It was more than just the twenty hours a week during the season. It was

twenty hours a week during the season for four years, and off-season. And that's when I really started to see, as a faculty member, you have fourteen weeks with this one student. And it's great, and some of them are wonderful, and you connect with them afterwards, but a lot of times it's kind of like it's done and you don't know what impact you – you don't know how you've reached them or anything.

And so, I started to see teaching as not exactly how I wanted to make an impact. I liked it but only in a small kind of sense. I know I'm going on and on about this.

MV: No, no. This is [0:24:00] great.

HRF: So, after that, that's why I started to think maybe finishing a PhD in art history, being an art history faculty member isn't really what I want to do. And I actually was a finalist for two tenure track positions at a certain point at Oberlin – no, not Oberlin. I wish it was Oberlin. St. Olaf, which is across the street.

MV: Oh, yeah. Right.

HRF: St. Olaf, and at Rhode Island College. And you'll love this St. Olaf story. So, I'm at St. Olaf. Have you been there?

MV: No.

HRF: It's a pretty campus, but it's very – It's not very diverse. And so, this incredibly earnest young man is giving me this tour, and the chimes go off at five of noon, and everyone starts opening the buildings and going to basically a church. And I go, "Where's everyone going?" He's like, "Chapel." And I go, "So what do the Muslim students and the Jewish students do?" And he looked at me like, "Who are they?" And that's when I thought to myself, "I don't know if this is really the right place for me." But I just thought that was funny. But anyway, so here I am, walking down the path of [0:25:00] potentially becoming an art history professor, and thinking to myself, "I don't know if this is the right thing." Meanwhile, back at the ranch, I'm at the Sheridan Center, and Becky More, who at this point has seen me kind of grow up and

everything else, says to me, “Girl, great that you love art history, but you actually probably have some skills that would be better served being in administration or doing something else.”

And so, she’s now making me think about doing Yale SOM, and maybe, you know, I’m talking at this point – She puts me in touch with Dick [Chate?] who is at Harvard Graduate School of Education, and does all this work in governance. And our paths collide years later, but this is the first time I meet him, and he’s like, “I don’t know if this is really what you’re going to do” and everything else. And so then at the end of 2000 – No. It was 1999 I happened to info interview – I started doing info interviews around what’s the next thing I want to do. In fact, I talked to Jerome about consulting, because a whole bunch of people said, “You should think about consulting.” So, I was like, “I don’t even know what that is. What does that [0:26:00] mean?” So, I sat down with Jerome, and I don’t even remember what we talked about. I’m sure he has these memories of me being a complete ditz. (laughs)

MV: I doubt that. I doubt that.

HRF: But it was a fun conversation and at one point I actually interviewed with Monitor.

MV: Ah, yeah.

HRF: Right? So, I ended up with an info interview with a faculty member at HBS, and I’m talking to her partially about doing an MBA program, or what do I need to do? And she’s like, “Okay. You know what? Here’s your problem. You’re an academic, but you need a transitional. You need to transition. And I’ve got the perfect job for you.” So, this is how I end up at HBS. Literally.

MV: Oh.

HRF: And she studied banking. So, I say to her, “Okay. The only thing I know about banks is I pay them to hold my money. Maybe this disqualifies me.” Right? And she said, “No, because what I do know you know how to do is I know you know how to research, you know how to get information, you know how to synthesize it, you know how to write. And that’s way more

important. I can teach you content. Content is easy. [0:27:00] The skills part is hard.” So, I go, “Okay.” Started this job at HBS as an RA and it was one of probably the best thing I ever did, was doing this job. And part of it was her field was service industries – banking, airlines. And it never occurred to me at the time the connection between education being basically a service industry. So, I just happened upon this, learn a ton about airlines, and cruise ships, and banking, but my wheels start turning and thinking like, “Wait. This is very similar to – not similar, but there’s something about this that’s kind of education-y. So, in the throes of being at HB–

And at this point I take a leave of absence from doing my PhD program in art history, because I’m now thinking, “Like, okay. This is not going to work.” So, take a leave of absence. I’m at HBS and then there’s that three-year story, where HBS, they’re like, “After three years you need to be moving a rock from a different [0:28:00] place. Is your job going to expand at all?” And as an RA it kind of doesn’t. You write case studies. You learn a ton. I mean, I love the notion of going to Oracle and meeting Larry Ellison and talking to him about–

MV: I saw that in some of your publications.

HRF: Right? Talking to him about Oracle or talking to people at – And some of the stuff didn’t pan out into case studies, but we went JP Morgan and talked to them about – they were doing Six Sigma and there was all kind of fascinating stuff.

MV: You learned a lot.

HRF: I learned a lot. And the thing is, right before I took that job I used to read The Economist. I didn’t understand anything and I just thought it was fascinating. It was like this fascinating world. And then working at HBS, it was like, “Oh, I get this.” And at that point I was like, “I now understand why banking is interesting.” So, it was a great job. It just kind of fed my I-love-to-learn kind of soul that’s in me. But in the throes of it, it was like, “Okay. What am I going to really do?” If you want to be in higher ed., [0:29:00] which at that point I knew. It really became clear to me that it was higher ed. is what I wanted to do. So, then the question is, “Okay. So, what do you need to do that?” Like I’ve put this PhD and art history thing kind of to the side, don’t think I’m going to pick it back up, whatever. Then I start walking down the path of should

I do an MBA? Should I go to law school? And I'm talking to the faculty members I worked for at HBS, and they're like, "You've seen behind the curtain. You're not doing an MBA." Right? That's not going to happen.

So, I think about law school. And at that point I was like, "Well, let me go take a class over at the Ed School. And I take this class and within three weeks, they're like, "Why are you not applying to our program?" One of the faculty members, who ended up becoming my advisor, Bridget Terry Long, says to me after class, "Why are you not asking me for a letter of recommendation?" And I said, "Because I don't have an education background. And I don't know –" She's like, "You're fine. This is where you need to be." And so that's how I ended up at GSE. So, they [0:30:00] really – Not only did they encourage me, but I just started seeing things as really converging in a way. So, I knew I had certain skills around research and everything else, from all this stuff I did at art history. Everything I did at HBS really made me start thinking about service industries and what that looks like, and how education fits into or it doesn't fit into it. So that by the time I applied to GSE, my essay was really around not only is this the right time, but this is the right place, and everything has been leading me to be here. I mean, I really felt that way.

MV: So, what year was this and where were you in your personal life? Were you and Eric married at this point?

HRF: Yes, we were mar– were we married? Yes. Yeah. So, this was 2004. And yes, we were married. And at this point, Eric was making furniture.

MV: Cool.

HRF: Right? He was a custom furniture maker for a while, and he's got this whole artistic bent in him.

MV: Wow.

HRF: Which is kind of fun, except –

MV: I didn't know that.

HRF: [0:31:00] – he can't run a business. Like he's just not good at – he needs to make things and have someone else run a business for him. So, the funny story for Eric, so it's 2004. It's spring, like March. I get in. I'm super-excited. I'm trying to figure out how to do this. We go visit our friends and we're driving back from upstate New York, so in the Hudson River Valley, and he gets a call from Harvard Water Polo Program, and they're looking for a water polo coach. And there's a long, torrid story about Eric and Brown Water Polo that has to do with Dave Roach and Ted [Omid?]. You don't want to even get into that fight. (laughter) So at this point, Eric's like, "Harvard Water Polo's calling me." He pulls over, we stop, and he makes an appointment, and then two weeks later he's now coaching Harvard water polo. And I'm starting Harvard Graduate School.

MV: Wow.

HRF: Yeah. So now we're commuting from Providence to Cambridge on a regular basis, but it worked out. It was great. It worked out really, really well. And GSE [0:32:00] was the perfect place for me. And I still had a whole bunch of stuff going on with Brown, because at that point I was – So, it was 2004. I was starting to be on the Board of Trustees. Remember, I was President Elect and then President of the Alumni Association. So, I was doing a ton of stuff at Brown. And the thing about all my volunteer work at Brown is it made me really learn about not just Brown, but it kind of opened the door of me thinking about higher education at large, just thinking about all of it. Like where does Brown fit in? Yeah, fine. We can sit around and talk about Brown versus Yale, Harvard, Princeton, the rest of the hype, but it's different when you start talking about Brown versus over four thousand institutions of higher ed. and all the students that get served there. I had now taught at URI, and Rhode Island College, and had really different kinds of students, lots of different experiences there. I did a bunch of consulting around teaching and technology.

MV: Hmm.

HRF: Because I, you know, [0:33:00] this is like the random stuff I did when I was a graduate student because I had an opportunity, because I knew Providence and Brown, that I didn't have to worry about learning a new city and all that. So, I thought about what does technology mean for higher ed. going forward? There's a rise of asynchronous learning. And so, I just started dabbling in it all.

And the funny thing is, during that time, my advisor was like, "You are wasting your time. Like what are you doing all this stuff?" Meanwhile, back at the ranch, fast forward to 2013 or even when I was working for Ruth, and turns out all those random things I did gave me knowledge around a bet— you name it. And it's funny, because there were times when I'd show up at something and — I mean, here, when I was working for Ruth and something would come into my office and I'd be like, "Oh. Yeah. Well, obviously, it's this." And they'd be like, "Where did you learn that?" And I was like, "I don't even remember where I did." You know, I said [0:34:00] yes more often than no, pretty much until I went to Harvard. It was always, "Yes, I'll do that. Yes, I'll do that." Because I wanted to learn. And then, being at Harvard, the funny thing was that I got inundated with too many requests. Like, "How about being on this?" Or, "How about doing this part?" And then I started to learn to say no, which funnily enough made me more popular with people. Now you really want her.

So, while I did all kinds of crazy things at Brown as a graduate student, I didn't do them as an undergrad. It has served me really well now that I'm in higher ed. So yeah. I don't even know the beginning question that you asked, but that's how I ended up —

MV: I wanted to ground us on the year and your personal life.

HRF: Yeah. So that was 2004. Yeah. So that's when I started at GSE. Let me finish the GSE, how I ended up finishing at Brown, because at this point I'm on leave of absence from Brown. I had written a dissertation. So, let's get this out there. My [0:35:00] dissertation was done. So, there were three committee members — Tim Harris, Jeffrey Muller who was my Chair, and Diane Kriz. And I always had a kind of tortured relationship with Jeffrey Muller.

MV: Don't know the name.

HRF: Yeah. And I'm not going to get into what happened per se, but let's just say that it was tortured and I had finished the dissertation, but I didn't get it over the line of getting everyone's approvals and that kind of stuff.

MV: And this was art history.

HRF: Art history. Yeah. So, I'm at GSE. I figured the art history thing is done, taking classes, and I do one class on interviewing, qualitative methods. And my project was ABDs because I was like, "I'm an ABD, all but dissertation. Let's talk a bunch about the ABDs." So, it's kind of like navel gazing on some level. So, I interviewed six ABDs from across the – One guy was Ron Vanden Dorpel.

MV: [0:36:00] Oh my gosh.

HRF: Right? So, he was an ABD in history. And he'd given up his doctorate at this point like decades ago. Decades, right? And why he stopped was he ended up becoming Chief of Staff for the President at Bryant.

MV: Oh.

HRF: And getting this really great opportunity to do that. And it was fun talking to him about it because for him it was like, "Oh god. Bringing all this stuff back." And then another person had just recently become ABD. And the thing that was fascinating across all of them, even though for some it was really recent, for others like Ron it was decades old, they all had a sense of loss and missing that really started to resonate with me. Like, "Okay. I don't really want to be the person twenty years looking back going if I would have, should have, could have just finished this damn thing."

And so, I knew I had a dissertation that was done. And I went to Diane Kriz and said, "Would you take a look at this? Tell me what it needs to get this [0:37:00] done." And she gave me some feedback. And then I made an appointment with Jeffrey Muller. And unbeknownst to

him, I had in my bag the draft of the whole dissertation. And this is like I haven't talked to him in years. So, I come to his office and he's like, "What have you been doing?" I was like, "Well, I was at Harvard Business School for a while. And now I'm at, you know –" And at that point I was still kind of at Harvard Business School because I overlapped for a little bit when I started my doctoral program. So, I didn't really tell him I was in another doctorate program. Not entirely. So, taking classes at GSE, and I said, "I want to get this thing done." And he's like, "Well, I'm happy to work with you and let's get this finished." I was like, "Okay. Great." And I gave it to him, and he's like, "I wasn't expecting that." And so that's how it kind of happened. And I want to say that was in 2007. Yeah, it was in 2007. And I had aspirations of being done in 2008. And through a series of things it didn't happen. Tim Harris was on leave. He was on [0:38:00] sabbatical in London, and Jeffrey wouldn't let another faculty member come in, Cathy Zerner, who was totally happy to be my third reader. And so, there was all this drama and everything else, but I ended up finishing in '09.

So, the thing is, at GSE, they didn't know I was finishing. And then at Brown, they didn't really entire– like some people knew I was in this doctorate program at Harvard, but they were like, "Whatever. She's been in doctorate programs before. It's not like –"

MV: Yes, you have.

HRF: Yeah, right? So, it's not like we've seen her finish. So, when I finished at Brown, everyone at GSE was like, "Wait. What? When did you – When did this happen?" And what they didn't realize is I had a completed dissertation. And then I remember when I finished at Brown, at that point I was on the Board, and people were like, "You did what? You're graduating?" I was like, "Yeah. I finished my doctorate," and it was just like this was a big deal for me. So, it's May. I graduate, have a fun time. And I want to say it [0:39:00] was – Yeah. It was a couple of weeks later I get this random email from Ruth. Have you gotten emails from Ruth before?

MV: No.

HRF: She's all about – they're tweets. They're very short. She doesn't do really long emails. And the funny thing is, so I get this random email from Ruth.

MV: She was President?

HRF: Yes. This is 2009. So, I'd finished my doctorate at Brown. I want to say it was June 2009. Right. And now I was at Harvard and I was really getting geared up for doing the next thing that I needed, you know, my doctorate there. I was really getting excited about that. So, I get this random email from Ruth basically, "Congratulations. What are you doing next? Or what are you doing now?" And that email came about a day after Drew Faust's emails were hacked.

MV: Oh.

HRF: And there were these crazy emails coming out from – supposedly from [0:40:00] Drew to all the students. And they weren't terrible or whatever, but they were just weird. Like why is she asking these cra – and so they realized she got hacked, and someone was just sending this thing. And so, I get this email from Ruth, and I'm like, "Oh, she's been hacked," because I just got one from Drew. Like why is she emailing me? So, I forward it to my friend, Brian Casey. Do you know Brian Casey?

MV: Mm-mmm.

HRF: So, Brian Casey used to be at Brown. He was the Deputy Provost for a while, and then he was at Harvard as a Dean, and then he became President of DePauw. And now he's President of Colgate. So, he's a really good friend of mine. So, I forward it to him, and he says, "You haven't been hacked. You need to reply." Basically, something like that. And then somewhere along the line he's like, "Don't take a meeting unless you're willing to say yes." And I was like, "What are you talking about?" And I just assumed that – I knew that Marisa was no longer Assistant to the President, the position had been empty, and that she probably assumed I knew people to [0:41:00] talk to about it. You know? Because I was like, "Oh, this is just a networking thing. No big deal. I'm on the Board. She doesn't know me from anything." So, I think.

So, she's like, "Oh, I'd like to talk to you. Come to the house. Please don't tell anyone. Keep this confidential." And I'm like, "Okay. What is that?" It's just this huge mystery.

MV: It's weird. Yeah.

HRF: It was just this huge mystery. So, I sit down. We're having tea, and she's like, "I want you to consider being Assistant to the President. Go talk to Brenda Allen. And then all of a sudden, it's just like happening.

MV: Wow.

HRF: I mean, it was this crazy whirlwind week and it's literally before she leaves for Texas. You know she used to leave in July. And she's literally like, "Okay. I need to know in three days."

MV: So, she was how many years into her presidency?

HRF: So, she started in 2001. So, it's eight years in.

MV: Oh, wow.

HRF: Yeah. Because remember, 9/11 happened just a couple of weeks after she started, a couple of months after.

MV: All right.

HRF: Yeah. So, I finished in 2009. I meet with Ruth in June. I meet with Brenda Allen, who's [0:42:00] telling me about what this role is, which I'm like, "I don't know what it is." Whatever. But what I did know was that it was an incredible opportunity to work closely with an incredible president who's been there now for a while. Like it's different if you're dealing with a president who's new versus someone who knows what she wants, knows what she's doing, has ridden this rodeo. And how could you say no to that kind of opportunity? But I knew that doing that would probably derail this other doctorate program I'm in, right? Like, oh god. Here I am getting

derailed and yet again in a doctorate program. But it was the best thing I ever did. And it continues the line of like I've never applied for a job. I mean, this is my great conundrum.

MV: That's crazy.

HRF: Yeah, no. Even all the crazy stuff that I did at Harvard, all the stuff that I've done with the Center for Education Policy Research and all that stuff, it was Tom Kane calling me up saying, "I've heard about you. Come talk to me." And then I'd talk to him. "Okay, this is what you need to do." And so, I ended up, you know, you said Jerome [0:43:00] is like the fixer. Well, at GSE they called me Michael Clayton because I'd be coming in like, "Oh yeah. I've got this. I'll fix this. I know what you need." So yeah. So, Ruth calls me up. I end up taking the job and just being kind of – It was a whirlwind three years. And the way I described my time with Ruth, especially in the beginning, was every day was like a graduate seminar and you're constantly being cold-called. (laughter)

MV: Oh, wow.

HRF: But in a great way. You know what I mean? In a just like – so much learning. And she's hard. She's hard. I mean, anyone, I'm sure Jerome has said this, she is not easy, but I loved that. I was a consummate student of higher education and so there were times when I'd get to talk to her about like something in the news, right? Some random thing that you see inside higher ed. or whatever, and just being able to say, "So, what do you think of that?" [0:44:00] and getting a little [balmaux?] about what you want is to be in the news, but when you're in too much, then you have another problem or it highlights some other managerial issues or whatever. And so, she had these kind of – And she knows so many people in higher ed., right? So, she knew the back story of everything. And she'd be like, "Oh, it's not what you think it is." And so really, yeah, she just taught me a ton. It's a lonely – she was in that President's house alone. She didn't have a partner. Her one son was in Australia.

MV: I remember.

HRF: And being around someone who – and ultimately, she’s an incredibly shy person as you well know.

MV: Yes. I do know that.

HRF: And most people don’t recognize that because she knows how to turn it off and on so well, but you also, when you’re close to her, you see how exhausting it is to be on. I mean, just utterly exhausting. And [0:45:00] that’s what it was like all the time for her. And I think it was also just because she’s black. She’s in an Ivy League. She’s a woman. And I think it’s probably true for Drew. It definitely is for Amy. It doesn’t matter. That threshold of being a woman president is still not normal. I mean, it just isn’t.

MV: She, despite the shyness and all of that, she was such a popular president with the students.

HRF: Students. Yeah.

MV: Can you say just a little bit about that? Did she derive energy from the kids? They loved her so much.

HRF: And that’s actually what pushed her. So, she did these great office hours. And I actually had to organize them and I had to do all the follow-up with the students and everything else. And it could be, you know, she’s coming on a Red Eye. She’s been in the office and working since 6:00 a.m. It’s 4:00 o’clock and you’ve got fifteen students all there complaining about something, right? [0:46:00] Because that’s ninety percent of it. They’re either complaining about something or they want something from her. And that’s fine. She loved it. I mean, it was if she had been starving and all of a sudden, she ate as soon as the student sat down. And the thing that’s kind of funny is that she was so popular with the students, but it wasn’t like she was on campus all the time.

MV: I know.

HRF: The students had a sense that she was there all the time and she wasn't. They also had a sense that, at any given moment, she'd be able to take care of something for them. But it wasn't that way. She was travelling a ton. She was not on campus.

MV: With the campaign, right?

HRF: There was a campaign. There was (inaudible). It's just the nature of that job, and if she wasn't on campus she was meeting with people maybe near campus. So, it wasn't like Howard Swearer who used to walk across campus because he walked to work, right? But she was super-popular partially, I think, because when she was on campus she was so present to the students. [0:47:00] And all it took was a couple of them saying, "I met with the President," and then their five friends. And then she would do these small things that just got her a lot of mileage. So, there were these students – I can't even remember; I have to look all this stuff up – who invited her over for dinner. And they came to her office hours and they had a little invitation, and there were like three of them, and they were all housemates. And they had four other roommates, and they came with an invitation. "We'd like to invite you for dinner." And then she pulled out her calendar. And so, they're, "Okay. We're doing it that day," or whatever. And it was months in advance. So, imagine. For those four women at that point, it's months of talking about "we're having the president over for dinner and how cool is that?" And then after Ruth comes for dinner, it's like months of, "It was so amazing having her over for dinner." (laughs)

And so, it was the small things for just the few students that did a ton. And then it was the kind of big things she did with a lot of students. So, one year I said to her, "Come on. We got to go to Spring Weekend. We're going to [0:48:00] go to the festival thing." She's like, "No." I'm like, "Yeah. Yeah. I'll go with you. It won't be so bad. It's beautiful weather. Just kind of walk through." And she did and they were drunk, and it was like craziness, right? But they were so thrilled when she went to one of those – You know, they had all these like game kind of things, and she would watch them and just make a comment on how they were doing or something like that.

And then there was this funny time when we were walking through and all these other students come up, and so she's asking, "What year are you in?" "No, we go to Harvard." She's like, "What are you doing here?" It's like, "Because it's the best party in New England and

you're the greatest president." And so, they had all these other kids there. And so, there was things like that endeared her to the students. The other thing is that she was like a mom to a lot of them. She had this kind of motherly way with the students that touched them and kind of had a halo effect.

MV: Hmm. [0:49:00] Interesting.

HRF: Which was, like they – They'd come to her office to cry. They'd see her on the green and cry about things. And she had stories of her own experience that really touched a lot of them.

MV: Right.

HRF: And I think that's what did it for the students, to hear the stories around this class that she took that was one of the most important classes. And she talks about this all the time, of this woman in there who is South African in the throes of apartheid and everything else. And the class was going on and on about how evil it is and everything else. And this white woman from South Africa would just sit there and kind of take it in, just kind of okay, whatever. But Ruth said that she learned the most, out of everyone one in that class, from her, mostly because it was a different perspective, just opening her eyes to another way of [0:50:00] seeing, being empathetic. And I think that that's one of the things that she gave to the students was her immense empathy around anything that was troubling them, from, "I feel like a fake," or "I'm a (inaudible) student and I'm decades out, and I've never done this before," or a vet who was back and said, "My friends have died and I'm a veteran, and I don't fit here." But her saying like, "No. You have to." Or the wrestling program that looks like it's getting cut and then hearing their stories of why is this important, and really walking in their shoes in a way that, not that all students don't get that, but I think that they hadn't expected it from their president. So that was kind of how she – That's what I saw in terms of how she related to students.

MV: It seems to me, and I could be wrong, that it was a fairly quiet time on campus activism [0:51:00] wise. There was the Sudan divestiture going on.

HRF: Yeah, right. That's when I was on the Board. Yeah. So that was before.

MV: That was before. So, what do you think the biggest issue, the most challenging issue was while you were –

HRF: While I was there? So, when I was there, my office was taken over a couple of times. One was – What is it? Socially responsible investing. So, they wanted – It was the fossil fuel thing.

MV: Okay.

HRF: So, divesting from fossil fuel, but it was just beginning, and so the big pieces of it were later. Who were the other – There were a couple of times my office was taken over. But it wasn't – The key thing when I was, like I knew what the students wanted to have happened, like just generally. So, I can't remember them off the top of my head, but I'll give you one example. The students were not protesting, but they wanted to get rid of bottled water [0:52:00] on campus. And the thing about the students is they don't know governance. It's not –

MV: Right.

HRF: I mean, they don't. And why would they? And I think that when you get protests on campus it's partially because they don't know how to work through a system, and no one's actually guiding them through it. So, they get frustrated when administration sends them to somebody else, instead of actually teaches them about how to work the system.

And so, when I was there, I taught the students how to work the system. And so, I met with them, like I'd met with Beyond the Bottle kids on a Saturday morning. And I said, "Okay. So, this is how this works. This is what shared governance is, and why it's important, and part of the reason why institutions of higher ed. have longevity." And I think that ninety percent of the problem for students is a kind of lack of respect for their intellectual ability to understand how bureaucracy works. And once you honor them by teaching them, [0:53:00] they'll be fine. And so, the Beyond the Bottle thing actually turned into this wonderful, empowering organization and movement for the students because they now knew how to get to the end, how to actually have it

be productive for the whole campus, and engaging not just their own students, but administrators in different offices, and seeing how these things relate, that it's not simply they get sold in the cafeteria or whatever, or at the Ratty or whatever. But that it relates to how you use facilities, and what's the income stream on the auxiliary serv— whatever, all of these other things. I mean, it wasn't going to turn into a protest by any stretch of the imagination, but whenever my office got taken over, it was, "Okay. Fine. Let's —" First of all, they don't expect me to — I'll forever remember that. There're are [0:54:00] 50 students standing outside in front of my office and they don't want to come in. And I'm like, "Well, come on in. I'm willing to talk to you." And they're like, "Why?" And I was like, "Because you have something you want and standing outside of my office is not going to get you to where you want to be, but you also don't know how to get to what you want. So, let me talk to you about how to get there."

And I think their leaders were like, "Oh, okay." They weren't expecting that. And I think that part of the challenge now, especially I think what's going to happen in the coming months, is administration's — and this is true in higher ed. generally. It's more than just respecting student voice. And it's more than just letting them have a voice. It's actually showing them how to use it in a way to get what they want, and in getting what they want, understanding the ramifications of what that thing is. It's not as simple as, "We're going to get X." It's like, "Well, there are ancillary things that happen, downstream effects that you are not thinking about that may change what you actually want." [0:55:00] And so how do we as administrators, and how do we as educators really get them there instead, and have them teach each other?

So, the whole thing around my whole CD '16, College Debate '16 thing was our theory of change was that students are smart. They know what they want. They have an opinion about things, and they probably are not completely informed by their opinion, but they'll listen to each other if you give them the opportunity to do that. And so, about a peer-to-peer effect. And that is what social media is, right? It's about a peer-to-peer effect as opposed to Campus Compact, or American Democracy Project, whatever. That theory of change is that it's through faculty and administration who will teach the students. And we had a completely different kind of way of thinking about it.

So, my approach to the protestors, whatever they may be at Brown, was to really get them to understand the process of getting to [0:56:00] what they want, and then having them

engage in really thinking about is what they want really going to get them what they think they are getting, or to know the full understanding of what that is.

MV: Cool.

HRF: Yeah. It was fun. Working for Ruth was an amazing three years. Amazing. Hard. As I said to her when we had my goodbye lunch or whatever, I was like, “These were like dog years. Every year was like seven years.” (laughs)

MV: And did you travel with her? Were you sort of –

HRF: Sometimes. I didn’t travel with her at times.

MV: Because you were kind of taking care of the office.

HRF: Yeah. So sometimes, but not all the time. Not all the time.

MV: Why don’t you talk about what you’re doing now and how that transition has been.

HRF: How that happened. Yeah, so Ruth resigns, right? It’s June 2012 and well, actually it’s the spring. So, let me back up. So, it’s fall 2011. The summer of 2011, that’s when I started [0:57:00] thinking, “Okay, I’m coming up on my three years. My three years. I need to move the rock from a different place. It’s now happening, and so the summer of 2011, I actually started info interviewing. I started talking to people. So, I met with Jim Miller. I met with both Jims separately. I just started talking with people, and then Jim Miller put me in touch with Shelly Storbeck of Storbeck/Pimentel which is a search firm. And so, I just started talking to people. Like, “What should I think about? How should I consider what I do next? And how would I position myself?” Just trying to start thinking about what could be next.

So, then it’s fall 2011, and Ruth announces and I’m like, “See? I knew it.” Right? I knew it. I’ve been putting myself in a perfect position. So funnily enough, soon after she announces, I get a call from a search firm to be the Chief of Staff to the Provost at Johns Hopkins.

MV: Oh.

HRF: And it was this insane interview process. Oh, my god, Mary. [0:58:00] I was like, “You have got to be kidding me.” So, they flew me down there for two full days. It was like 7:00 a.m. – started breakfast at 7:00 a.m. till 9:00 o’clock. Like two days. I’m like, “Okay. Whatever.” Then they flew me down again and the first one was, it had a tour, and they had whatever. The second time they flew me down, they literally put me in a room and just brought people in –

MV: Wow.

HRF: –for a full day. And I was just like, “Bathroom? Can I –” And it was crazy. And I was just like, “What is going on with this search?” This search seemed nuts to me. And I had multiple meetings with the provost. You’ll love this story, because in the end it’s – And I didn’t get it. And he’s like, “We’ve decided to go with a national search.” I’m like, “Okay. Whatever.” Months later, turns out he is now, he gets assigned, there’s announcement and it’s Lloyd – Do you know Lloyd Minor? He’s the Dean of Stanford Medical School.

MV: Oh.

HRF: So, in the throes of interviewing with [0:59:00] me, he was clearly interviewing at Stanford.

MV: Oh.

HRF: And I didn’t know that. I mean, how would I know that? And I think it was in January that he said that we’re going to a national search, and then in March found out that he was the Stanford Dean. And that’s when it dawned on me, “You know what? This has nothing to do with you. Nothing ever has anything to do with you. Stop thinking that this is –”

MV: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HRF: Right? So, I'd gone through that whole process and I was like, "Okay, whatever." But I was still in the market. And then a search firm calls me out of the blue to be Chief of Staff to Lee Pelton at Emerson. And he used to be the president at Willamette. And then at the same time, another search firm calls me for the current job at Dominican. So, I'm interviewing and it's now the spring of 2012, interviewing at Dominican, and Emerson, and going back and forth, and whatever. I knew that those schools were kind of what I – I wanted to be in a small, private liberal arts. It was definitely in the wheelhouse, working for presidents. So now it all comes down to [1:00:00] can you work with this person or not? And what are the challenges either of these institutions have, and what is the capacity that I bring to the president in this role at Emerson versus at Dominican?

So, in the end, I was one of two left at Emerson and he went with someone else who I ended up meeting later, and I can't remember her name, Lisa something or other, which didn't work out, which has led to him every once in a while calling me, saying, "Hey." And I'm like, "Okay. It's not going to happen." And then I meet with Mary at Dominican, and that's how I ended up at Dominican. Again, I never applied for any jobs, so it's always been – and when I first met with Ruth that's the first thing she said to me, because I said to her, "You know, I've never gotten a job I've applied for." And she's like, "I wished you'd told me that first." And she just laughed. And she said, "You'll never apply for another job."

MV: It's all about –

HRF: It's all about your reputation and who knows you and that kind of stuff. So, I ended up at Dominican and part of me – and [1:01:00] the first thing everyone at Brown was like, "What is this Dominican, no-name school? What are you doing going there?" And there were people at Brown who were saying, "Why don't you come over to my shop, or this shop, or whatever?" I was like, "I don't –" It's time for a change. I knew that I wanted to be at a smaller institution where I could have a bigger impact, because Brown is a – I mean, Brown's not Harvard, but Brown's big enough that in order to really move the needle in an area, you either need to be ahead of that or it just takes too much. But in a place like Dominican, it's small enough that I could move the needle in a bunch of different areas.

The other thing I thought was really interesting about Dominican is that California is such a different context, so public-school based, the CSU, the UC system. Private liberal arts institutions in California are like, you know, weird. So how do they survive versus in New England where it's all about the privates and the public? So, it's an opposite kind of thing. So, I thought that was a really [1:02:00] interesting context. And all my people at Brown were like, "You're stepping down. This is a huge step down." It was never going to be a step down if only because I knew I'd be able to really move an institution in a way that I couldn't – I could give \$250 million dollars to Brown and it wouldn't move Brown. I mean, literally it wouldn't.

So that was the beauty of going to Dominican. Okay, so I get to Dominican and you know, I have a lot of great experience, most of which I didn't realize I had because I'd gotten it along the way and everything else. And certain things just happened to pop up around, you know, oh, technology. It was like, "Oh yeah. I used to do teaching in technology. I know about this stuff." And they're like, "Really? Where'd you pick that up?" It's like, "Well –" And then all of a sudden, IT's now reporting to me. And within three months of being at Dominican – So I start as Senior Assistant to the President, basically Chief of Staff, no one reporting to me. Within three months I have IT, IR reporting to me.

MV: Oh, wow.

HRF: Then two months after that, I [1:03:00] get Athletics and Student Life.

MV: Oh god.

HRF: And so, my job there changed so fast and every couple of months something else would kind of come my way, mostly because I knew something about it. Like athletics, I mean, I – So, I was a student athlete kind of for a year, but my husband was a D1 coach. Like, I know about that. I used to raise money for athletics. I know how to do that thing, you know, I've done the whole advancement piece. So, there were lots of different pieces, and when you're in a small institution everyone has to do everything on some level. So that's what's been great about it, was the ability to just do – to really impact techno– I mean, like I got to oversee the transformation of

our IT department. Hey, like I don't have any technology – I mean, I have some, but not really.
(laughs)

MV: It's like you're fearless in taking it on.

HRF: And took it on. I mean, what the hell? Why not? All I got to do is learn, right? And I know people. I know enough people and enough expertise outside of me to know when I don't know something and say, "Hey, you know, [1:04:00] Chris, I met you six months ago. Can you talk me through what we're trying to do here?" or whatever. So that's what's been great about Dominican.

I've always seen my role as working for the President as not about me, but how do I make sure the President is best served and increases their capacity to do what they want to do, as well as take off their plate the stuff that they, number one, don't want to do or can't do, that's just not in their wheelhouse of doing? And I still see that as my role, whatever it is now. I mean, I'm kind of still Chief of Staff, but I've taken over government relations, public affairs, marketing.

MV: You have a different title now.

HRF: Yeah. I'm Vice-President of Public Affairs and University Relations, but it's going to shift a little bit again because it's clear that we need someone as a coordinating kind of – She doesn't have a Chief of Staff, which is what I've been – She needs a Chief of Staff. So, I'm going to take that back on. [1:05:00] And it's stuff that I was doing anyway. So, I've always taken care of all the community relations, because I knew how to do that from being at Brown. So, dealing with the neighbors, I mean, it was like, oh.

MV: The Providence community? Oh boy.

HRF: Did that. I got this. And when I started at Dominican, we had a contentious relationship with the neighbors that had been from years ago with the former president, and a building of a field. And so, you know, it took months, but now the relationship is really good. Mostly it's

because of communication and understanding there. All that stuff. It's not rocket science, but you got to be thoughtful and empathetic. You got to be empathetic. So, all of the stuff I've done at Dominican on some level has been a target of opportunity, as something that I saw a need that needed to get fixed that we just needed to do. Fine. I'll take it on. Like the neighbor problem? This is not working. I'm going to just take this on and fix it.

The college debate thing. So how did this [1:06:00] all happen? So, this is like a big thing. So, we had applied to be a site for the Presidential Debates, right? And before Mary became President, the former president had applied for the 2012 debates. And so, the Commission was familiar with us already, but when Mary became president, the then current Commissioner, Janet Brown, said, "No, no, no. You do not want to take this on two months into your presidency. This is crazy." And so, we pulled out without – We had to save face.

MV: I hadn't realized that.

HRF: Yeah. And so, we were familiar with the Commission. So now we're in our next round of this next Presidential Debate. And at that point – Mary has a PhD in Political Science.

MV: Oh.

HRF: So, she's, you know, this is kind of her wheelhouse, right? So, we stayed in touch with Janet and we started doing stuff with them around international debates and things like that, but it wasn't – It was what it was. And so now it's the next round and we decide to apply again. But it's clear [1:07:00] from the visits and stuff our site is too small. Our gym isn't big enough. It would probably be a serious challenge neighborhood-wise just because of where we're embedded. It's too much of a neighborhood.

But the Commission also knew that we were being very thoughtful about if we were to do a debate, this wasn't about the event. This was about our students and a larger opportunity to think about our institution and what we're doing with our students, and that kind of stuff. So, one of the things that we've been working on since I got there was creating this thing called The Dominican Experience, which you know, the Brown Experience, whatever. Anyway. There are various components of it. They're basically four big buckets, but one of the big buckets is around

doing a kind of university-wide theme enterprise or topic for a year, and incorporating all parts of the campus community on it, right?

MV: Cool.

HRF: So, it could be water, for example. We're just going to study water for a year. And [1:08:00] it'll be about drought. We'll do sci— I mean, all these different pieces, but to have everyone study it at the same time. And so, we had applied for a Mellon grant to have our first one be democracy and equity. And so, we'd applied for this before we had, you know, kind of thinking about the Presidential Debate, but we're going to do this theme no matter what. The nuns' background and us, the whole social justice piece, equity is something that's kind of engrained in us, and all that. So, to take this on was like, "Okay." Regardless of what happens with the debate, we knew we wanted to spend a year thinking about what does it mean to be in a democracy? How does that feed into equity? What are our roles in both of those things? And we just started planning it and changing curriculum in order to be a part of it, had like a hundred faculty members talk about shifting their curriculum, doing events, and that kind of stuff. Okay, fine.

So, the Commission now is doing their thing and we had a bunch of meetings with other organizations, thinking about what is it that we're going to [1:09:00] do? And then the Commission said, "Well, we're not giving you the debate, but we want you to do something with us. We have a problem with college students engaging in the debates, watching them on TV, and we have a problem with social media because we don't know how to do it. You're a college. You work with college students. You take it on." (laughs) And at first it was like, "Well, why us?" but at the same time, they weren't going to tap anybody else, like out of the blue. So, it's October 2015, and we say yes, and we don't know what it looks like. No one's telling us anything. It's like, "You're now a voter education partner for the Commission on Presidential Debates. Come up with something."

So, it lands in my office, and it's going to be mine, and it is literally just me —

MV: Wow.

HRF: – until April. And so, I have these pictures of my office with big post-its. You know the big white post-its? And people would come in my office. I'm like, "So this is what I think. What do you think?" And they would say, "Honey, you need a puppy." I'm like, "What do you mean I need a [1:10:00] puppy?" And they're like, "You know, puppy, viral puppies. You know, videos. You need a puppy." And I'm like, "I love that idea." So, I'd put it on a pink post-it, "I need a puppy." So, we'd come up with this and we were just thinking about it, and it was – We wanted it to be social media focused. We wanted it to be student focused. We thought about the upcoming conventions and we're like, "Well, the students need a convention." And so that's how we started thinking about a convention, and then if we need a convention then we need delegates. And then we talked to a whole bunch of higher ed. partners, American Democracy Project, Campus Compact, Democracy Commitment, a whole bunch of people. We have 11 partners who all loved the idea, but they were like, "We're not going to do that." Like, "Knock yourselves out. Happy to be your partner. Tell us what you need from us in whatever small, small way."

The good news about the partners is it got us some legitimacy, given what we were doing. And they put it out on their networks. So, Campus Compact would send it to all the schools in whatever their [1:11:00] network. Are you interested in being a College Debate 2016 delegate? And so, apply here. So, they were helpful in that piece of it, but they didn't do any of the progra– and like, it was all me. It was crazy.

MV: (inaudible)

HRF: Yeah. So that's how it kind of got hatched in terms of this notion of we want delegates from – originally in my – I wish I could have done this, I wanted like three to four students wherever we stayed, one from a private, a public, and a community college, and potentially a graduate student from every state. But we had like no time. It's April. So, we got what we got, but we were doing this really big push. Okay, so we can't get four students per state but let's get every state, and let's get DC. And then they were like, "Well, what about Puerto Rico?" I'm like, "No. Can't afford Puerto Rico." So, it's like too crazy. That's how it came into being into this.

And the thing is, no one had done anything like this. I had talked to a whole bunch of people and they're like, "This is crazy." There's this one non-profit that supposedly [1:12:00] tried it and they got this big thing with the National Press Club a couple of years ago, and they

fizzled out, because they didn't know to work in higher ed. And I think the difference was the fact that we were a higher ed. institution with someone who knows how these institutions work, and knows how presidents and offices work, and we just did it. And the thing about Dominican is it's small. You can be innovative in a small place in ways that you can't if you were at Brown or Harvard or whatever. Where, if I was at Brown, the Taubman Center would take it over, or the Watson Center would take it over.

MV: Right.

HRF: And then it would turn into something completely different, where it would be about the faculty. It wouldn't be about the student voice. The student piece of it was my big thing. And so that's how we kind of thought it up and did it, and really made it theirs. And so, we brought them in in June, and really focused on civic discourse, and civil conversations, and having – Talk to someone who's on the opposite side of an issue, because it's not about the fact that they're on the other side of the issue. It's about the [1:13:00] issue, and really hammering home the notion that it doesn't matter who gets elected. Immigration is still an issue.

MV: Right.

HRF: It doesn't matter who gets elected. Healthcare is still an issue, right? And you can be fighting for things, but you still have to work out the problem. So that was I think what had a lot of the students be so generous to each other. We had students wearing the Make America Great hat, and they were like, "Okay. Your candidate's your candidate, but what we're here to talk about is the fact that both of us align on the problem of whatever."

MV: The issue.

HRF: And that was really empowering for the students, I think. And that's why I keep bringing up the Generation Citizen, that in order to stay staunchly non-partisan we need to be focused on the issues that matter. And the fact that Generation Citizen's kids work on really local stuff that

they see happening in their neighborhood is exactly why it works. And it's that [1:14:00] engagement of their voice that will empower them going forward. So that was the focus of it all.

So, we did this great convention and all this stuff. Social media happens over the summer, blah blah blah. We bring them back in September for the convention. So, we had a convening in June and a convention in September. And the goal was, "Okay, now we had –" Throughout the summer it was crazy because I got into a car accident and all this other stuff, right? But were in talks with CNN for weeks. And CNN wanted – You know, they were a pain in my ass but they wanted to do – They were talking about televising our convention or our town – They wanted to do the Town Hall, but they were focused on getting the candidates. And we were like, "We're not focused on getting the candidates, because that's a different lift." Like fine. If we can get the candidates, great. If we can't get the candidates we can't be focused on the candidates. But they sucked a lot of energy from us [1:15:00] from doing all that. It was what it was, but it means a whole other job just managing that – So, they came up with this idea of like, "Let's pick a red state school and we'll do two Town Halls with half the delegates in one state, and half the delegates in a –" And I'm like, "Oh my god. The logistics of that." Right? Like, you got to be kidding me. But we walked down that path a little bit. It was crazy. Anyway, in the end it didn't work out, whatever, but what we knew we had to do is that we knew that we were charged with coming up with something for the Presidential Debates. And so what are the questions that we can ask the candidates?

We're sitting there hoping this is going to work. Right? Like, oh, my god. We got to get them to come up with questions. So, I had Facebook data on what were the top 10 issues that 18- to 25-year-olds were talking about on Facebook. And so, the first night we did kind of a caucus. We had these big icons and I said, "Okay. There are ten issues up here, [1:16:00] but we can only pick five. Stand next to the one that you want to not –" We didn't do it opp – we went what is the –

MV: To not.

HRF: Yeah. Let's do it opposite. What is the least important thing to you? And we worked our way down. And it was hilarious because they were like, "No, it's not fair." And they were screaming and it was like, "We can't just get rid of these." I was like, "Welcome to how

democracy works. This is what it's— It's messy.” And so, at first they were like, “No, all of this has to work.” And then they started figuring it out, and it was this really – I wish we had videotaped it, but just to see them kind of screaming for, “No, no, no. Well, we can combine these and make this this.”

MV: What size group was this?

HRF: It's like, a hundred and fifty kids. (laughs)

MV: Oh, my god.

HRF: And we went from ten to five, right? And it was like two hours of, “How do we get there? How do we get there?” And so, we started with go to the icon of what you don't think should be an issue, and then we worked down to five. And then it was, “Go to the icon that is the most important thing to [1:17:00] you.” And then we had them there. And then, in the small groups, it was, “For each of you, you need to say why this is important to you, and you need to make it personal.” Not two percent of X, Y, and Z happens to do this, and that's why this is important. That's not personal. Personal is I graduated from Brown because my parents won the lottery. That's why education is important to me. And I told them that story and they were like, “Oh my god. Who's this crazy woman?” But it was amazing because it made these things really real for them. And it also made – And making it personal is exactly how Brexit happened, right?

MV: Yeah.

HRF: And I think that's exactly how we're where we are now. It's the statistics are meaningless unless you are one of the statistics. So, talk about what it means to be that stat, the one in whatever. And then they had to vote on, okay, so of everyone's [1:18:00] story, which are the top three who will get to present the question at the Town Hall? Okay, fine. So that was the first night.

Then the next day comes the hard part. Okay, you need to come up with a question for the moderators, like however we do this. We had five outdoor classrooms for the five issues, and

we had three sessions. So, they had breakouts. So, the first breakout group was, “Now you’re in the immigration classroom. What are the issues about immigration that matter to you?” And they’re putting it up there, and they’re doing DACA, and Dream Act, and the wall, and all this other stuff.

And then they moved to a different issue. And it’s like I go from immigration to education. Okay. You’ve seen what they’re saying, your cohort. Now, what are the questions you have from this? And then they came up with some questions. Then you go to a different issue and then it all is moving around. And so, there was something about that that was really – It was incredibly cool, because you didn’t know how it was going to work.

MV: It was visceral.

HRF: It was visceral, yeah. It was visceral and it was also like a complete crap shoot. Like this [1:19:00] could be – (laughter) I mean, literally. And we’re just putting it on that. And we had a faculty person and – two faculty people per classroom, and their job was not to teach. Their job was to facilitate, and hear what they had to say, and help them hone, and all this other stuff, and then to go into the final session where they had all the questions, and then they’d try to start honing it down to three questions that mattered, something like that. So, the first session was the brainstorming. The second part was like a bunch of questions. Then the third part was get it to about five, five to six questions. And then they would go to lunch, and they came back, and then everyone votes for the top three questions for each session, for each section or icon or whatever, idea, issue. And those are the questions that they would present at the Town Hall.

And so, there was something about it that was, it was really about their voice in ways that they probably never – I mean, I kind of want it to be that [1:20:00] way, but I didn’t entirely think it would – I didn’t know if it was going to work. And it really happened. And the questions they came up with were, I mean, they were infinitely better than the questions asked, but that bar is so damn low, so it’s not really saying a lot. But it was an amazing process. It was amazing. I mean, I look back on that and think to myself – First of all, it feels like it was decades ago at this point. We feel like so much has happened.

MV: So much.

HRF: But so much has happened with the students that did it. I really saw them grow.

MV: That was my next question.

HRF: Right. So, one student, she's at a community college. She's a non-traditional student, and she did this because she's like, "Oh, I'm interested in these things." And now she's in the higher ed. commission in Colorado. She's like, "This got me engaged." Another woman, you could see on her social media she was a big Bernie fan, right? And she would post things that were all about Bernie, all about Bernie, and then she was posting about the issue, and then she was learning about them and saying, "Well –" And you could see the kind of comments that would happen in there, like, "Well, why do you think that?" And [1:21:00] so they actually did engage their friends in ways that you see on some social media, but when you talk to them, you knew that they were doing it offline, in their own way.

I had all of our students do reflections, and so I have all of their reflections. And most of our students weren't poli-sci majors. Like the classic story of this one student who's an OT major, and her sister's the poli-sci major. So, in her family, it's like the sister knows all this, right? So, Noreen gets back after doing the June convening and she's starting to ask questions of her parents and her sister, and her parents are like, "Who are you and when did you learn this?" And so, for her, it was like, "I knew I cared about these things, but I didn't know that I would know enough to not only care, but be able to actually engage other people about it in a thoughtful way," that she never thought. And then a father came up to me at family weekend and said, "What did you do to my son?" And I was like, "Who?" [1:22:00] He was like, "Well, Maurice is my son and he signed up to be a delegate. And I don't know what this program did, but he's not the kid that came home in May, that came back in June, and is now not only knows about the world, but is asking questions in ways that he never did before." And so, the stories of – And it's a bunch of them. I mean, it's not like I've got two or three.

I've done a series of presentations about CD '16 that I've had different student panelists at all of them. And I give them a kind of like, "Talk to me," and I do it kind of like, "I'm going to ask you a question and you talk about it." So, I don't necessarily know what they're going to say.

And just to hear what they say about, “Well, I talked to my parents. I’ve asked that question of my parents and their position on things that they never thought I knew anything about.”

MV: Wow.

HRF: “That they didn’t think I cared about these things, and I’ve actually gotten them to think more deeply about, you know, whatever.” And just to hear all of them say something, it’s been moving. [1:23:00] I mean, really moving.

MV: Wow. This is amazing. Now, I’m thinking immediately of Generation Citizen and how we should be using your experience –

HRF: But you are. I mean, I think you are. We are.

MV: Well, in terms of your sitting on the Board, et cetera.

HRF: Oh. (laughs)

MV: But are you thinking about writing something about this?

HRF: Yeah. You know, yes and no. I mean, I’ve written the articles about what we’ve done and everything else. I haven’t spent enough time reflecting on it to do anything. Funnily enough, I have been thinking about it. I was talking to a colleague of mine and wanting to interview, like do in depth interviews with a bunch of the delegates. Not just our students, but sit down across the country with the woman who’s now in the Colorado higher ed., and this other non-traditional student who, you know, she’s a mom with three kids, and she’s working, and she became a delegate. And I was like, “Why are you doing this on top of everything else?” And she says, “Well, I wanted to try something different,” and what it meant for her. And she organized all kinds of stuff [1:24:00] on her campus because of it, beyond just voter education things. But she organized issues booths and things like that.

So, I'm thinking about it because I think – especially post-inauguration. I think they would probably have a different way of thinking about their experience and what they got out of it. So, I haven't walked down that path, mostly because I've had other stuff to do, but I do – I love – I really do like doing research. I really miss it on some level. I'm doing this cra– you'd appreciate this, though, because it's kind of related. I'm part of a crazy Uruguay project –

MV: Oh, my goodness.

HRF: – because I know nothing about Uruguay. So, there's this student who is from Uruguay and she did her honor's thesis at Dominican on women in legislature at Uruguay. And she's like, "Why are there so few women running for office?" And that was her basic question. And she interviewed [1:25:00] 25 senators, the First Lady, all these people that people are like, "How'd you get these interviews?" She just knew enough people to do it. But she doesn't know how to do coding or anything like that, so her advisor and I took the interviews and we've coded them, and we're delivering a paper next month on it. But I've been thinking about women in legislature. And in light of the election, it was something that was constantly on my mind.

So, I'm part of this crazy project on Uruguay, and funnily enough, I ended up doing the kind of quantitative piece, looking at if the outcome variable is the percent of women in legislature, what are the things that affect that? So, our theory was that human development index – which is a UN composite of a bunch of different variables – what's the impact of that on women in legislature? And I did this quick progression analysis, and basically as HDI goes up, women in legislature should go up. I mean, you would expect that. The question is that it hasn't happened in Uruguay. [1:26:00] And you're not going to get that in the numbers, but you will get that from talking to people about it.

And essentially what we've found is it's cultural, which is also not surprising. But what is it that's cultural? Is it because it's mostly Catholic? It's like, no, it's not that. It turns out – I mean, not that this is going to come as a surprise (laughs) – it's about sexism. It's about, you know, I mean, really? Like none of this is that new per se, but to hear the voices of male senators, and women senators, talking about why certain women can make it or not make it, or what are the challenges, or what are the obstacles and barriers to that, it's been kind of a fun project.

But I love doing research and thinking like that. It's just that I don't want to do that full-time. I love being administrator, but that just takes a lot of time. So, to do all of those things is just, you know, it's hard and yet that's exactly what I want to do.

MV: Have you ever thought about politics for yourself?

HRF: Oh god. Funnily [1:27:00] enough, so here I am at Dominican. I'm the first six months in. They Mayor of San Rafael calls me, emails or me, or I don't – and I have breakfast with him. And he's like, "We need to get you involved." And I'm like, "Okay, whatever." So, I end up on the San Rafael Public Library Board, which is perfect because I love libraries. It's this great building that was given to them by Carnegie, all this other stuff.

MV: Oh.

HRF: Totally cool. The timing of the meetings were difficult, whatever. And I was on it for a couple of months and then the Mayor calls me up, and someone who's running for supervisor, he's like, "I want you to take over his position." And I was like, "Okay, Gary, I've been here barely a year," at this point, I think. Maybe a year and a couple of months. I'm like, "You don't know me. I mean, really. You don't. We've had a couple of breakfasts. I've been on the Board of the – Like this is crazy." And he was hilarious. He's like, "Hanna, I know you enough. I've been around enough people to know when I meet them whether they've got what it takes, da da da."

[1:28:00] So I actually toyed with the idea of joining the City Council, right?

MV: Wow.

HRF: But here's what did it for me. So, I'm meeting with Mary Beth, who's on – Mary Beth, I can't remember, Mary Beth whatever her last name is – Bushee. And I meet with all the city councilors, whatever they're called. And her first question to me is, "How do you feel about unions?" And I was like, "Okay. I can't be a public figure." That was the first thing, because listen. Unions have their place. I mean, I get it. But it's more complicated than, "How do you feel about unions?"

MV: Right.

HRF: (laughs) You know what I mean?

MV: So, complicated.

HRF: You can't just like –

MV: Right.

HRF: And yet, when you're a public figure and you say X about unions, that's all everyone knows and it's in the public record in a newspaper. And if I aspire to being a college president, all it takes is a Google search and she said X about unions, and the adjuncts want to unionize. So, you know what I mean? And so, I did the math in my head. I'm like, "Not doing this." [1:29:00]

MV: The third rail. You hit the third rail.

HRF: I hit the third rail. Thank god. It was early. It was early. The other thing, too, though, was that I've always been in private institutions for a reason. I think that public institutions and all that other stuff, Sunshine laws and just makes things complicated in ways that it's just not what I'm interested in, so no, I'm uninterested in politics.

MV: All right.

HRF: (laughs)

MV: Just looking for School Board candidates.

HRF: (laughing) Oh, right. But that's a little bit different. I wrote this case study on Colorado and one of the big crimes in Colorado is the fact that the higher ed. board in Colorado is a political position, and people who get on that board either know nothing about higher ed. or

don't care about higher ed., because it's all about being the stepping stone to the next thing. And so, the things that happen in higher ed. in Colorado generally is, you know, part of the function of the fact that you've got the governance [1:30:00] of it run by people who actually don't care about it.

MV: Interesting.

HRF: And so, the school board thing is important because I think that – I mean, come on. We were just talking about (inaudible). Here's the thing about education. Everyone thinks that because they went to school they know how to do it. (laughs) Right?

MV: Oh, yeah.

HRF: Right? I went to school. I know what a good teacher looks like. It's like, "Okay. You get in front of the classroom and do that." And it's just way more complicated than that.

MV: So, complicated.

HRF: And it's a lot harder than people give it any credit. I mean, from teaching a classroom to running a school, it's all hard. And the one thing I learned at GSE that I think was important was this notion of recognizing where you want to make the difference and owning it, and being respectful of where other people want to make a difference. So, my thing was in institution of higher ed., but I'm sitting next to someone who's like, "I want to make a difference in that classroom of third-graders." And being like, "Okay. That is so [1:31:00] alien to me, but good for you, because we need people who want to make a difference there as much as we need a person who wants to make a difference in state policy." And one of the great things about GSE is the fact that there were so many people who wanted to make a difference in all different parts, and that we respected the fact that that's where we wanted to do that, as opposed to being competitive about it, or being kind of like, "That's not where you're going to have the most impact," or any of that stuff. But really being, "I couldn't do that, and I respect you for doing that because I don't have that skillset."

And that's what I loved about GSE. That's one of the things that kind of makes me want to get re-involved with it in a way, just because you get to meet these people who are making impacts in education in all these different ways. And every single part of it is important, which is part of the reason why I have so much respect for Ann Matheson and her respect for how all the organizations want to do that. And yet, it's more than just respect for them, but also [1:32:00] getting them to respect each other, which is the harder part, and give up a little bit of what they're doing in order for collective action, which is what she's trying to do. So that's basically it.

MV: Wow. I just want to say that we are sitting here on inauguration day.

HRF: The sun is out now.

MV: The sun is out now for a short time and, yeah. Hanna and I both agreed that this would be a more rewarding way to –

HRF: (laughs)

MV: –spend our mornings.

HRF: Exactly.

MV: And I'm just so Hanna, it's been so great getting to know you.

HRF: I know I've talked your ear off.

MV: It's wonderful, and I think this will have great value for the archives.

HRF: We'll see. I don't know. We'll see. I hope so.

MV: It definitely will. Thank you so much.

HRF: Yeah, no. Thank you. This has been fun. I'm a little parched from talking so much. I don't talk about—

MV: Are you going to make it back for the 125th in May?

HRF: It's funny, for GC — [1:33:00] So GC, our board meeting is the week —

MV: Before.

HRF: —before our reunion and it's my 30th. So, my thought is to go back for the 125 and not my reunion, because I don't want to go back for both.

MV: Oh, it's hard. I have to be there for both, but —

HRF: Do you really?

MV: Yeah. Yeah.

HRF: I don't know what to do. I don't want to be there for both. (laughs)

MV: Yeah.

HRF: So, like, once is enough.

MV: I know. I know.

HRF: So, I'm contemplating the 125. And it's my birthday weekend, so it could be—

MV: Well, if so, you should definitely be one of our panelists. So, let us know as soon as you know.

HRF: Well, you know what? If I can help, then I will make it happen. If it's more than enough–

MV: I'm only honorary committee this year, but I'd love to – I mean, this would be really interesting.

HRF: You tell me. Yeah. So, if they say there's a place for me, great. If not, then it's – I will make it happen if it helps, great, doing it.

MV: Awesome.

HRF: Okay?

MV: All right.

HRF: I'll turn this off now?

MV: Thank you.

HRF: No. Thank you. Oh, my god. This was fun and–

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