

Interview 4
Frank Garratt
Length: 01:15:24

Note

The archival original of this interview is in two parts. For ease of use by researchers, the two parts have been edited into one video file and subsequently one audio file and one transcript. This transcript has also been lightly edited by TCC Archivist A. Demeter to remedy name spelling, misheard/missing words, and other minor corrections, 2024.

Summary

In this interview Frank Garratt describes his time working on the faculty and as an administrator at TCC. He talks about teaching English when the school first opened, the progression of the college from being run by the Tacoma Public School District to run by the state, and his time as an administrator. Other subjects included in his interview are the race debates of the 1960s and the integration of African American students into the student population, students avoiding the draft, budget cuts in the 1980s, and the changes in the student body and social life on campus. At the end of the interview, he briefly speaks about the importance of community college, and what it is like for people with disabilities in the academic world.

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Interview (Part I)

FRANK GARRATT: It's Frank Garratt, last name is spelled G-A-R-R-A-T-T.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Alright, okay I have you... I'm just going to rundown what I have for you so far for a fact checking. Um, so born in Pittsburgh in 1931.

FRANK: In 1939.

INTERVIEWER: In 1939, okay.

FRANK: Wow.

INTERVIEWER: A B.A in English from the University of Illinois in 1963.

FRANK: Yep. Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Um, a master's in education from the University of Illinois, 1965.

FRANK: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Long time English faculty 1965 to 1978.

FRANK: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Retired at 2000? The year 2000?

FRANK: No, I retired in 1996. No, '98.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, '98. So you retired from TCC in '98?

00:01:11

FRANK: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, did you go work at another... at a different job or anything else? Have you...after TCC?

00:01:19

FRANK: No. But do you have my last year at TCC as what?

INTERVIEWER: Um, the notes said retired around 2000.

FRANK: Yeah okay, that's okay.

INTERVIEWER: [Laughs].

FRANK: Yeah, it was '98.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah you were pretty close.

FRANK: Yeah. Right, right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, president association of higher education at TCC at 1969?

FRANK: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Chairman of English and Communications division 1978 through '80?

FRANK: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Chairman of Humanities division 1980?

FRANK: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Executive Dean of Academics in Student Affairs 1984?

FRANK: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Was part of the faculty union, manager of the union office during the strike in 1973?

FRANK: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Great. That's why we do that [laughs]. Okay, so let's talk about your experience here at TCC. You can to the college early on, the college was started in 1965 and you joined in '68 it looks like.

00:02:29

FRANK: No I joined in '65.

INTERVIEWER: You joined in '65?

FRANK: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So... yes, I'm sorry, '65. Okay, so you joined right as the college was up and running, what was that like at the time?

00:02:43

FRANK: What was what like? Like the...

INTERVIEWER: What was the atmosphere, what was the culture, what was life like at the time in 1965 when everything was just getting started?

00:02:53

FRANK: Well, it was brand new. I mean the college hadn't really opened yet, it had no students, um... I got a letter from the college president, Thornton Ford, saying, when you get into town come up to the college and check it out, you know, before classes start. So there was a building where this building now sits and it was sort of an administration building as well as classrooms. And I came up, I drove right up to the door of the building, there was no grass, I mean it was still under construction,

the college that is. And I just drove up to the door of the building, got out of my car and went in, and went down a hall and I saw a man sitting at a desk. So I went in and said my name is Frank Garratt and he said "oh, okay," and he opened a drawer and started looking through the files and said, "I don't see your name here," and I thought, oh geez, I mean I came all the way out here [laughs] and I thought I had a job. And it turned out he was Bob Lathrop, who was the first Dean of Students, and he thought I was a student so he thought I was you know, coming to register or something. So anyway, that was my first experience at the college, I thought geez maybe I don't have a job here. The atmosphere early on was, and I'm sure others have said it, was pretty much like a family. We didn't, very few of the, most of the faculty members I should say had come from Tacoma Schools - I hadn't, and I think there were only about six or seven of us that weren't from Tacoma and didn't know each other. But one of the faculty members, Maury Summers***, who was in speech faculty, had a party for everybody and there weren't that many of us, I think thirty... low thirties... 31, 32, 33. And most of us got to know each other at that party, at least know names or something like that, I think that got us off to a great start. There were other parties that sort of cemented the deal, some of them infamous I guess, and so it... it was a grand adventure for a lot of us. I'd never had a full-time job before, just part-time stuff in the summertime when I was a kid. So, I'd never really taught other than student teaching when I got my degree in, my education degree, wouldn't get you very far in the door these days. I think that's true with a lot of the jobs, but you look back after you've been in it for 25 years or so, you could never, you would never be hired. Which isn't to say you couldn't do the job, but the

degree requirements have changed quite a bit. So you know the early, I think the spirit of the place was pretty much we'd do anything to get it going, and get it off the ground, and make it successful. So, there were no, classes were at all hours during the day. I think my first schedule, my classes were at 10 o'clock, 2 o'clock and a 5 o'clock. Maybe a 6 o'clock class, we didn't really worry about that very much. All faculty members had advisors, excuse me, advisees. And if the advising process got pretty full and they needed extra advisors, they'd call you up. You might be having dinner and say, "hey can you come up to the college and do some advising," and nobody thought twice about it, "well, sure yeah" and you'd go out for a couple of hours. I think, just do whatever it took. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: The entrepreneurial spirit that you're describing seems a lot to me like a start-up type of environment.

00:07:49

FRANK: Sure, yeah, very much.

INTERVIEWER: That's good. So let's talk about what it was like to start teaching back in that era. You know, you mentioned that you taught several different classes at various times during the day. What were students like, what were the classroom settings like, what was America then in '65 too?

00:08:18

FRANK: Well, in terms of the college... we didn't have, there were no occupational courses, so it was more like a junior college from the standpoint that the students were going to get an associate's degree or transfer. But there were no occupational classes then. We had Bates Technical, which is now Bates Technical College, but

Bates Vocational Technical Institute and Clover Park Technical Institute, so it, you know, I think there was in the minds of the legislators who created the college, or who helped to establish it legally, there was no need for at that time for occupational courses. So most of the students were interested in transferring or at least getting an associate's degree. It was literally open door; we had all kinds of students, and open door from the standpoint as to once you got in the door you could go anywhere you wanted. Now it's still open door but you can't, once you get in the main door there are other doors you have to demonstrate some affinity for what it is you say you're interested in, in order to get through those doors. The students were all over the place in terms of their preparation, their inclination, their interest in being here, and it was pretty challenging from that standpoint. We didn't have the, we had developmental education, I think it was called the General Studies program then and those students were what would be a part of the developmental program now, but they were not screened out of, in my recollection, they were not screened out of a lot of classes so yeah, we had some pretty interesting challenges [laughs]. We had some extremely bright students and then we had some students who were, I wouldn't say not bright, but they certainly were less able to succeed than the average student for a variety of reasons. Some of them... it's hard to say without probably getting into a little bit of trouble on that score, but some of them had developmental delays, some of them had probably psychological issues. There were some pretty [laughs] if you could talk to some of the early female instructors there were some pretty scary characters around here. I don't know if anybody felt completely threatened, and I don't want to get off the track with this kind of thing, but it was, I guess what I'm

trying to say is it was a very vast separation between some of the students you would have in your classroom. That said, lots of great classes, lots of great students, and interesting people, some of them gone on to become very successful and a number of those early students ended up in PhD programs around the country. I think that's probably about it.

INTERVIEWER: So, you taught English for a long time.

FRANK: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Why English?

00:12:14

FRANK: Well that's what I was interested in; I was an English major in my undergrad. Um, my major was in English. I sort of assumed I was going to teach high school and I was fortunate enough to be asked to join the faculty at TCC. So yeah...

INTERVIEWER: Well that's good. So what is it about English that sort of drew you to that subject when you were in college as a student yourself?

00:12:46

FRANK: Um, you know, I think I had an affinity for language, or at least I thought I did, let's put it that way, and I enjoyed language, I enjoyed reading, I liked literature, and you know that was probably it. I um, and I was interested in teaching. And I think that was true, pretty much true of a lot of the community college faculty members. They care about teaching a great deal.

INTERVIEWER: That's a good sound bite.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, um. So let's talk about TCC a little bit over the years. You were here for a good chunk of time. You've seen a lot happen with facilities, you've seen a lot happen culturally, but you know, if you can just sort of talk about the mission of community colleges and what TCC does for our community, and then, has that mission stayed the same? You know, I mean you mentioned earlier that we're, you know, open access so we, that anybody that wants to come here can come here. And that's been true since day one, I mean, so that hasn't changed, but you know the core mission of community colleges, I mean, has that held true over the years, do you think, in the midst of all this change?

00:14:20

FRANK: Yeah I think so. I mean, I think the spirit of community colleges is access. And I think it's always been that way. And even when the legislature would reduce the college's budget, or raise the number of students we were supposed to handle... Well I don't think it ever worked that way, I don't think they ever raised-- they would cut the budget, and we'd get a lot of for a variety of reasons, and in often times because of that you would get more students wanting to go to school. And the college would always take them, I mean I always had in the back of my mind why don't we just say no... no we can't take more students because every time you do that you are telling the legislature you can handle more, you can be more efficient. But um, that just, that question just doesn't get voiced because, or that concern doesn't get voiced, because the mission of the college is access. And so you take them, and you do the best you can. Um, I mean, I think the two biggest factors in the colleges early years were the Vietnam War and race relations. And there was quite a

history here of... the college needing to open itself to African Americans, primarily. And developing, or building I should say, a faculty, and developing a curriculum that was more accepting of... and more accepting of those students, those ideas, and more receptive to their concerns. And it was just a difficult time, you know, you basically have an all-white faculty, very earnest in its effort to be accepting, at the same time being asked to accept things that were just so foreign to them and to their experience. I mean, teachers are teachers, they, when they start in the classroom, they've got in the back of their mind their favorite teachers and how they taught. And what the faculty was being asked to do, what I was being asked to do, was just foreign to our experience, which tells you, you know, how much justification those students had [laughs]. I mean, really. But you know, it um...there's lots of stories about those years and "The Rock," and it was a tough time. I can remember teaching a class in, I think its now building 22, and the Black Student Union, was called the Obi Society, had their offices down there. And they had a big meeting down there in the afternoon, and they came out of the meeting upset, and I mean they were just angry, and they got themselves riled up. And who am I to say it wasn't justified? I wasn't at the meeting. But they came, they were pretty riled up, and they started going down the hall opening doors and slamming them as hard as they could, including classroom doors [laughs], with students in them, and it was pretty interesting, a lot of the students were frightened, upset. And, you know, there were other instances where... It was a difficult time, but it was a time we needed to go through. And it's well that those days are behind us.

INTERVIEWER: That's good.

GARRATT: But it doesn't mean we're where we should be.

INTERVIEWER: I agree. Do you want some water or anything?

FRANK: Um, sure that's fine. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely.

00:19:30

FRANK: The war was another, the Vietnam War, was another interesting period. We had a number of students at the college who were here to avoid being drafted, and many of them because they were just opposed to the war, you know, not because they were trying to avoid a duty to the country. I remember a student in my, I think it was in a lit class, and we got into these... He wasn't doing very well and so he came to my office to talk, and this conversation lasted about two days, as I recall maybe two, three hours at a time, I'm sure I'm exaggerating a little bit – he's still around, in fact he was an assistant superintendent in a local school district, and I still see his name in the paper, and I run into him a couple of times – but he said, his argument was—okay, I said, you are doing lousy, and you need to get to work. He said, "I don't want to do the work, I don't want to be here, but it's the only place I can be to avoid going to war." And I said, well, you got some choices here because if you don't do very well here you are going to end up getting drafted anyway, because you are going to flunk out of the school. So you can go to Canada, you can do this, you can do that, you know I'm trying to narrow down these choices so we can get somewhere, and he said, "well they're all lousy choices." And I said, well we don't get to pick the choices I mean, we get the choices and then we have to choose one of them. We can't decide, that well these aren't very good choices I'm going to move to

a new batch of choices. Anyway, it was a real interesting experience, I hope for him, it was very interesting and enlightening for me. But yeah, you had students that didn't want to be here, they were here because they didn't want to be someplace else. Worse than they didn't want to be here, more than they didn't want to be here. And, you know, lots of protests and those kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so when you came here originally was your first position a teacher?

00:22:29

FRANK: Mhmm.

INTERVIEWER: You were hired to be a teacher?

00:22:30

FRANK: Right, yep.

INTERVIEWER: Because I noticed on your resume you went from being a teacher to, looks like you were chairman of the English and Communications division.

FRANK: Mhmm.

INTERVIEWER: So that was, that was a progression in your responsibility then.

00:22:47

FRANK: Yeah, um...

INTERVIEWER: A progression in your career?

FRANK: Yeah for...Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So was that the first point you went from being, to being a manager?

FRANK: Right. Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so what was that like, switching from being a faculty member to being a manager?

00:23:08

FRANK: Well at first it wasn't that big of a switch. In that... you know, I have to say, I mean, I ended up my last seven years in administration, I was Vice President for the Academic and Student Affairs. So I was responsible for the faculty and the student services, and there were deans under, in each of those areas. I never started out to do that, never had any inclinations to do that, so the current English department chairman was ill and I was asked to fill in for him for the last part of the year, I think it was just spring quarter, I think I still kept all my classes. And then unfortunately he was not able to come back in the fall and so I was asked if I would do that for the current year. And that sort of, my career in administration in a nutshell, I was asked to do this, and then asked to do that. And I never had any intention to do that, but I taught for 13 years, and I knew I couldn't grade freshmen's compositions for 30, 35 years. I mean, I just knew, after 13 years of it, I knew I couldn't do it, and I loved doing that. And that's part of the problem if you really like teaching composition, because if you get a big block of time instead of grading 20 papers, you'll grade 10 papers and spend 25, 30 minutes on each one of them. Because it's just, you know, that's just kind of the way it works. So, I knew I couldn't keep... I knew I couldn't keep doing that, and so I thought, well, I was asked to take these administration positions by the college president, so I said okay, I'll do that, and then I eventually got to the point where, if you get into the vice president responsibility, you're pretty much saying goodbye to teaching for a while. It's a

gradual transition out of the classroom into administration, and it's a very different way of at looking at things. You begin to look at your colleagues as, okay who can do this, and who can do that, who has these strengths, who has those strengths. Which is a very different way [from], oh let's have a beer after class. You begin to look at, I began to – I shouldn't say you, I'm speaking of my experience, I can't speak for others in administration, but I would guess it's not dissimilar – but you begin looking at the college just very differently. When I taught, you know, if I was half a quarter ahead, I was way ahead, I mean I was usually two, three weeks ahead, I always had a syllabus that went to the end of the quarter, I usually kept pretty tight to that schedule. But you don't look at the college in terms of a year ahead, two years ahead, which is what happens when you start getting into administration, so it's a whole different mentality, and to say that you are going to commit to, I guess I'm repeating myself, you commit to um an upper level administrator... full, I should just say full-time administrator. You just, you just... that's just a different deal. But I loved teaching, and I knew I could go back to it, and so I thought this is a really interesting opportunity, and I was very glad I did it. I learned a lot of things being an administrator that you'd never learn as a teacher. And when I was finished, I did what I always thought I might be able to do, and that was to go back to teaching. When I was done with administration I just said, I'm going to go back to the classroom. And which it's what I did for seven years. So...

INTERVIEWER: That's neat.

FRANK: I think I taught 13 years, was in administration for 13 and went back to teaching for seven years.

INTERVIEWER: Now things come full circle, there's no question.

FRANK: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so let's talk more about... getting back to when the college started... I have some specific questions. So, if you can kind of get back to 1969, what occurred during the student debates on race in 1969? Do you remember?

00:29:00

FRANK: What occurred? When you say the student debates what are you referring to?

INTERVIEWER: The period of time, what you've seen or heard.

FRANK: The issues related to the race question?

INTERVIEWER: Right. You touched on it earlier.

00:29:21

FRANK: Well, I suppose I'll just launch into it and you can sort of guide me, because I'm not sure where, it can go in a variety of directions. We had a number of students on campus who were upset, angry and who didn't see themselves or their history reflected in the courses that were being taught and they had a faculty who didn't see a heck of a lot wrong with that, but, so that was the basis I think of the clash. And you know, we had a number of conferences where we were kind of... the point of the conferences was to, I think, educate the faculty to what the problem was. Maybe another way of putting it would be to educate the faculty to the fact that in a lot of cases the faculty was the problem [laughs]. I mean that's another way of, that's a different way of looking at it. I sure that was the way a lot of the students looked at it. Some of those conferences were pretty painful, I mean you are basically getting

yelled at by angry people, but you know, and there was quite a bit of resistance, which is understandable.

INTERVIEWER: How did that affect your student relationships? As a faculty member.

00:30:56

FRANK: Well you know I think... I don't remember having... any close connection with an African American student. I think some other faculty members probably did. So, you know, in other words, you get to the point where you are no longer student-teacher relationship as much as, you know you're just two people talking to each other about, I mean, I don't remember having any of those. Number one, there wasn't that many African American students at the college, so, not as high of a percentage as there have been in more recent years. A lot of it was antagonistic, I mean, there's just no other way to put it. I mean, I can remember, I'm sure a lot of people have talked about the rock. There was a big rock up by the old science building and... Actually it wasn't there, it was in a different place, and they moved it to that new location, it was in a more central location on the campus, pretty much, oh gosh, it's hard to explain where it was now because the buildings have all changed, you know I want to say it was in front of this building, but that building isn't there anymore. But the Black students would stand on top of the rock and make speeches, or people who were not students here would come down or come up, come up from Tacoma or come down from Seattle, and make speeches. And I remember a faculty member walking out of the cafeteria and being called out right there, the person up on the rock said there's that so and so and such and such, who

this and that and started ranting and raving and there were you know, mmm. Kinds of comments from some of the students and I was like-- you'd have to know this faculty member was, he hasn't been here for years and years and years and years, what a sweet gentle soul he was, who wouldn't intentionally harm anybody, and I don't think ever really did anything to deserve that sort of approbation, especially being publicly denounced and challenged. But, I mean you know, that was kind of rough. And of course I remember when things started to get out of hand, and somebody called the police and the Tacoma cop cars, there must have been at least three of them, drove up onto the campus, and the cops got out, and they were in riot gear. They had big sticks and masks over their helmets. And they pretty much coalesced the black students and the white students and the faculty against the police [laughs], it's like, "what are you doing here, this is not helping." But they were answering the call because things were getting kind of out of hand. Kind of in the same dynamic as two brothers fighting, and then somebody breaks in, you know, and then all of a sudden they're against the third-party intruder. Perfectly understandable, the police were just doing their job. It was tough, there were tough times where the drapes in, I think, one of the classrooms I taught in were set on fire. Sometimes the students, the protesting students, would yank fire extinguishers off the wall and turn them upside down, and in those days that's all you had to do to activate the chemicals in the extinguisher. So they would start spraying all over the place and spin them around. There was no real rough stuff, but um... We had, I remember in the old administration building, um I don't know if they were FBI, I don't know who they were, but they were some government-oriented individuals

who were filming the protests because they wanted these people, “these people” on film in case anything really got out of hand. It was, you know, tough times. It made you think, you know, which is basically what I use to tell my students. Why are these people slamming doors, what, you know, why are they doing that? I mean, these are some of the kids you went to school with, why are they angry? We need to think about that.

INTERVIEWER: No that’s good. So let’s talk about, let’s switch gears a little bit and talk about TCC and coming into the purview in the state of Washington.

FRANK: Oh, when it switched from being a part of Tacoma Public Schools to part of the...

INTERVIEWER: So can you talk about how it was formed, the college was formed initially under Tacoma Schools, and then how it broke off of Tacoma Schools and then became part of the state system?

00:36:46

FRANK: There are others that probably have those details in better order than I but, yeah, when the college was chartered, it was chartered as just as an institution part of Tacoma Public Schools just like Stadium High School or McIlvaigh Junior High. And all of the teachers were public school teachers. And when I was hired I was interviewed by representatives of the Tacoma Public Schools, one of them fell asleep during the interview, which didn’t instill a lot of confidence in me [laughs], but as it turned out it was on him and not on me. I held my own for a number of years, I don’t know where he ended up...

INTERVIEWER: [Laughs].

FRANK: Well he'll remain nameless.

INTERVIEWER: Oh that's funny.

FRANK: He's probably not the first person I put to sleep [both laugh]. But um...

INTERVIEWER: So it started out as Tacoma Public Schools?

00:38:04

FRANK: Yeah, it was just part of the school district, and then the college had an opportunity to become part of a state organization of community colleges, and that's what it did. And I don't think the college voted on that I think it was... I just can't remember, but there was clear opposition from the school district, that the college remain with the district. And the college, and I'm not sure if it was a legislative effort, um I just don't recall the college being you know, some colleges remained with their districts and some didn't, they all went, from my understanding is they all went at the same time. But there were people on campus that were, a lot of people on campus that favored breaking away from the school district and becoming separate, and that caused a lot of animosity, both with administration and Tacoma Public Schools, and then with colleagues in the school district. So I think that with some of the faculty members... Part of the, one of the key issues, I think, was that when the college was started, some of the better teachers from the local high schools came to TCC. And the district's opinion was if you break that away you just skimmed some of the cream off, faculty that we hired and trained, and now they're gone. And I think, that some of their colleagues who remained in the high schools were troubled by that. But... that's basically what I remember, there was some considerable resentment.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I could see that. So you talked about moving into administrative positions, how you were teaching for 13 years then you were an administrator for 13 years then you were back to a teacher for seven years.

FRANK: Mmhmm.

INTERVIEWER: And you talked about some of the differences between being an administrator and a teacher. How was that transition for you, I mean was it a fairly easy one to make, or was it from a mindset standpoint, was it a difficult one, or was it...?

00:41:02

FRANK: Um, I don't think so... I think the hardest part of being what, when I got to be Academic Vice President, I'm now responsible for the faculty. So these friends, many of them who, and others who were colleagues, I'm their boss, ostensibly. And so I you know, I have to behave in a way that is true to the administration [laughs] not true to maybe a friendship or two, and I can remember the college president coming in and telling me that one of the administrators who was under my responsibility was, needed to have his or her salary cut, and he wanted me to do that. So, and that was a huge comeuppance for me. And it wasn't a, I don't think it was a matter of principle from the stand point of, no it didn't need, you know, this decision didn't need to be made. This isn't a fair decision, I'm sure the individual involved would think it wasn't fair, but, it wasn't so much like this is not the right thing to do, it was just that this is a very hard thing to do. And if you are going to be an administrator you better figure out how to do it, and that was sort of the, my introduction to making difficult decisions. And I just pretty much decided that if

they were ethical, principled decisions, at least in my view, then there had to be a way to do it that was better than other ways to do it, and I would try to find that way. But it, yeah, that's the hardest part, and in terms of the switching from teaching to administration, it was so gradual, you know, that first spring when I was the so-called English department chair, I still had all my classes. I don't think my salary changed at all. And then when I did it I think full time the next year when the individual who had that position could not come back, I think I had released time one class, I can't recall. And so it was just gradual, until it became full time. So it, I got to the point where when President Opgaard – whom, I think, Rachel said is coming here after this – asked me if I, when Dave Habura, the then Academic Vice President, left, he asked me if I wanted to, I sort of took it on as an interim position. Dave was working on his doctorate, and when he wasn't here I would have that role, and he said, you want to do this, and I just thought, if I do this now this is a big step because... And you know, I just thought that I invested so much in being an administrator that if I say no I kind of wasted it, and go back to teaching and it's not necessarily an easy progression to make. I know I'm contradicting partly what I had said earlier but it's a lot of time commitment in a different orientation mentally. And so I thought, you know, I'll see what it's like. I always had that refuge to be able to always go back to teaching, and I got to tell you the last seven years I taught were, I think were the best.

INTERVIEWER: I was just going to ask you about that. Because going from an administrator, especially a vice president, and shedding all that responsibility and

then going back to being a faculty member, not that anything's wrong with that, it's just a major shift.

00:45:37

FRANK: It was hard from the standpoint that I think people would think, you know, maybe I got pushed out or something like that, or why would anybody do that, or you were so successful, that... I never understood this perception of administration where people would say, oh you're a vice president wow that's great, and I think no that's not great that's okay, but being a good teacher, that's great in a college. That's what's great at any school, is being a good teacher, there isn't anything better. And I never looked at them as promotions, I looked at them, well yeah, technically it's a promotion, but, I never really saw it that way. But yeah it was a difficult, it was a very difficult decision to make, to say you know, to go tell the president you have to go find someone else to do this. And you know, there's always, you got all your colleagues on the state level. You meet with those other vice president academics um every quarter, and um... So yeah, it was difficult, but I like, I just really needed to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Well I can tell that you're a teacher at heart, just by listening to you talk so it doesn't surprise me you wanted to end your career where you started. I mean, we talked earlier about how things come full circle, I mean isn't that true?

00:47:21

FRANK: Yeah. Ideally, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, go ahead.

SECOND INTERVIEWER: Just going back to your administrative career, were you here in the early '80s when the budget cuts were happening, were you an administrator during that time?

00:47:38

FRANK: Oh yeah. Yeah. In fact I have the tapes of those meetings where we sat around a table with the then Vice President, all of the, we were called the division heads then, Humanities, Math, Science, Allied Health, Social Science, Business. Yeah, we sat around the table working through those horrible cuts.

INTERVIEWER: So did you have a role in shaping the direction the college would move forward, as a result of those cuts, and what were your guiding principles in deciding you know what programs to protect, and you know, what we needed to get rid of at that time?

00:48:24

FRANK: You know, Rachel, I don't recall specifically, and I've never listened to those tapes [laughs]. Someday I'm going to do that, and some of those people aren't alive anymore. A lot of them aren't around here anymore, some of them still are. But, you know, there are a couple of dynamics that you always have to balance. One is tradition: what is your mission? What do you do? And so, if you take this, and you take that, and you take that, are you still a college? Can you still call yourself a college? On the other hand, there's the hard, cold steel, steely... perception of an administrator that says efficiency is king, and so we got this program that doesn't have enough students in this program in order to continue it. It's inefficient. And so you know, you have to balance those two things. There's just no easy answer. But,

you know, it's very difficult, it's real difficult. But we, I know the college has been through hell here in the last, you know, five years, making very difficult cuts, and we did a similar thing in the '80s. And I remember Dave Habura, my boss who was sort of a mentor, I mean I don't, he was not so much a mentor on his part, like "follow me son," but I just looked up to him so much. Still do, he was just a good man. But I remember Dave sitting there just a one point shaking his head you know, head in his hands shaking his head saying, I didn't take this job to dismantle a college, it's just not why I got into this profession. And yeah, it was tough. But you come through those things.

INTERVIEWER: You do. Okay, so let's talk about the student body a little bit, and social life around TCC. Do you think you got a sense of change in the student body and social life around TCC over the years?

00:51:10

FRANK: It's hard to answer. You know, when I decided to go back to teaching, um one of the faculty members made a point of telling me, that I was going to be shocked at how the students had changed, and how they are disrespectful, and how they'll use profanity in the classroom, and on and on and on and on. And I thought, you know I've been out of this for 13 years, I'm not quite so sure. And of course if you have that attitude towards students that's pretty much what you are going to get from most students. So I didn't think they changed much at all. And I don't, I guess I don't think students have changed that much. I mean, if you ask a lot of teachers, you know, have students have changed, or if you just ask the general public, I'm not sure if I want to make a distinction between the teachers and the

general public, but if you just ask people if students have changed they'll say, yeah, you know they're not this anymore, and they're not that anymore, and we used to this, and they used to be that, and I think it's just pointless discussion. I mean, students are students; they are there to learn, and if you want to embarrass them and tell them that-- I remember we had a part-time teacher, who used to say, "this is a big school now, and I don't have a spoon in my briefcase, people, and you're going to have to measure up." It's just such pointless, I mean it's sort of like chopping them down a little bit here before you get on and prove how brilliant you are. I think students are, if you don't respect them, if you don't respect the students you don't respect the process, and you don't have any business of being there. If you don't respect the students, if you don't treat them as if they want to learn, you are going to run into problems. And I'm sure socio-economically they have changed. Their behavior has changed, their dress has changed, I mean when we first started out all the faculty wore coats and ties. They were all mister this and doctor that. We referred to the students as miss or mister. It was much more formal, then, you know, after the 60s got done with us it was [laughs], all that stuff was out the window. So, you know, those kinds of things have changed, but I don't think the process changes, and you don't get anywhere telling a student what he or she doesn't know. It just doesn't work. It's counterproductive to why you're there, and so I, you know, if they say "well, you know they don't know who this person is, they never heard of this, they never heard of that, and they don't understand," tell them, you know. And if you can't take the time in the classroom, which probably is a fair assessment, if you can't take the time to do it, talk to them after class, have them

come in and say “let me tell you about this, let me tell you about that.” They’re up for it.

INTERVIEWER: So uh let’s talk more uh globally of the college, um what role has TCC played in the city of Tacoma?

00:55:14

FRANK: Well, it’s educated a hell of a lot of a huge percentage [laughs] of the people running around here these days. I, Pamela could tell you more about it than I can, but I think TCC’s educated half a million people in Pierce County. Some of those percentages, or some of those people obviously weren’t from Pierce County or even from the US of A. That’s a whole other aspect of the college if you go back through the quote foreign student... What... just, just the history of foreign students from the school, different ethnicities, different countries, were prominent at various times. But, you know, the college, I think, has been a driving force in educating an awful amount of people in Tacoma. Many of them who have stayed here have gone on to prominence in the city and in the county. And I think the college is, it went through a period of being sort of the weak sister, and it probably still suffers from some of that attitude in the local high schools. Certainly the students, if not faculty, or college counselors, thinking that, you know, why would you want to go to TCC when you can go to a real college? And, I mean you would hear back in those days, Mildred Street University, or TeeHeeHee, or Tacoma Communist College, if people thought we were a little too radical. But the college is just, you know, it’s blossomed, it’s sort of a cliché, but physically it’s much more prominent than it was in those days, and I think its physical prominence is matched by its contribution, which is

also much more prominent. Most of the students early on were interested in just transferring, and now we've got so much more to offer.

INTERVIEWER: So our student satisfaction survey last fall, students came back and said that 74% of them thought, or said TCC was their number one choice. So that's a pretty, we kind of turned the corner as an institution, I mean you just talked about you know, the nicknames for TCC back then you know, just sort of a second or third choice for students and you know, now we're, that's pretty significant to be considered a number one choice.

00:58:32

FRANK: Right. Well I think it just it mirrors the attitudes towards community colleges and probably towards TCC, that it is just you know, it is a viable alternative, and for many students it's the only alternative. Not only from a financial standpoint, it's the only alternative for further schooling. And a number of them catch fire, every faculty member, I'm sure, have stories of students who came here to take a class and ended up getting a degree, and going on to a four-year school, when they had no real - I wouldn't say intention - they had no conception that that's what might be available to them. And, you know, and those are great stories.

INTERVIEWER: So you mentioned earlier that access is kind of always been the foundation for community colleges. Would you say that's been the mission from day one, and that's kind of the mission that we have today?

00:59:48

FRANK: Mmhmm. That's, you know, the open door. Thankfully now, as I said, you know, once you get in that door you can't just go where you want. I mean, that's

really tough you, if you get any classroom, I don't care if it's second grade or graduate school, they get weeded out probably before too many of them get into graduate school, but if you have a vast difference between the least capable and most capable student, you have a huge problem. And the college now has a faculty, it really helps one's effectiveness as a teacher if you've got a fairly homogenous group of students relative to their capability, because then you can go, if you've got four or five students at one end and four or five at the other end and there's a significant, significant difference between those two ends, and it's a tough job. Pretty much have to do it outside of class, you can't do all of that in the classroom.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and then, let's see. How has TCC and Tacoma changed since you arrived? I'd imagine a lot [both laugh].

01:01:22

FRANK: Well, when I arrived I don't think there were more than two buildings completed. Um the old library was on, in a building on this location, because the library wasn't completed. Building... it was then I think Building 17, that was the first faculty building. it's now, I don't know what it is, it used to be Building 20, I don't know what it is, what is it now? You know, someone?

INTERVIEWER: I have no idea.

SECOND INTERVIEWER: I believe it's F2 now.

FRANK: Oh okay, F2. But that wasn't completed, so there was a portable attached to the back of that building and that's where the faculty, most of the faculty were, most of the faculty offices were. That wasn't accessible, so I was in, my office was in the

stacks back in the library. So once the building was completed I actually got to go in there and be down there with my colleagues [both laugh].

INTERVIEWER: That's great. So where do you think TCC should go in the future? I mean, you know, it's almost been 50 years now, and you know, in theory we're looking at the next 50 years right? So where should we go as a college?

01:03:04

FRANK: Well, you know, there are a lot more people capable of answering that than I... I'm not, I'm not going to totally duck the question, but I've been retired for 15 years or so. And, I think it'll continue pretty doing what it's doing, and that is providing outstanding occupational programs for the most part, and having a strong academic arm. I think if it, you know, and I'm a traditionalist, so I mean I still think that the academic part of the college is the heart of the college. I mean, it's just to me, the academic program and the library are essential to everything else, and occupational programs as long as they're not just training, strictly training programs, they've still got to take social science or history or humanities. They've got to have the skills of speech and writing, quantitative skills, those are the academic foundations of any education, and so, they'll always be those two interwoven aspects of the college, the occupational and the academic. And I don't look at them as separate, I mean they, I was alluding to was they overlap. They overlap quite a bit, and should. But you know, I don't know where the college is going to go, Bellevue's now, what, I think they're talking about being a four year school or maybe they made the jump, I have no idea what the outlook is for TCC, or frankly for what it should be. I'm just conversing enough with that topic to...

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that you...

FRANK: ...to have an informed of an opinion.

INTERVIEWER: You've talked a lot about access. I mean do you think access should be...

01:05:40

FRANK: Oh if you take that away then it's not a community college anymore. Yeah, you have to maintain that, I think, yeah. I mean, you start with... entrance exams or, you know, SAT scores or you know, typically what the four-year schools require, then it's not a community college anymore. And we get a, you know what, I'm sure the faculty members would tell you, they've had tons of students will come back and tell them the best classes they've had were at TCC, even though they went on and got advanced degrees at four-year schools. Admittedly, students don't come back and say the lousiest class I ever had was yours, or was at TCC, you don't hear those things. And I'm sure that's true for relatively a few students but, you know, the fact that the students who benefit from, you know, a good educational system in this country and succeed to the point to where they earn advanced degrees, get a BA and then go on a get an advanced degree or a BS...

END OF CLIP

PART 2

FRANK: ...get an advanced degree, and they come back and say some of the best courses they had, the best teachers they had when going to a community college... that's very significant, and then if you add to that the fact that some of those students had no idea they could ever do that or would ever do that, and that seed

was planted while they were at a community college, particularly this one, that speaks to why it's essential, in my mind, you keep that door open and that you also regulate, to a degree, where students can go once they get in there, because if you mess with that, you give the faculty an impossibly job. They can't do all those things in the time that they're allotted.

INTERVIEWER: Good, now I have one last question and it's up to you whether or not you want to answer. I want to talk about you being in a wheelchair and has that influenced your teaching at all or, has the, you know, you've had a very successful career... Do you have anything that you want to add about, you know, the importance of...

FRANK: Being physically handicapped?

INTERVIEWER: ...Well or encouraging people who have a handicap of some kind. Um, you know, that hey you know what you can do what you want to do, kind of thing. Because you've obviously proved that in your life and in your career.

01:37

FRANK: Yeah, it's a complicated question from this standpoint. I think a lot of what holds back people with disabilities is poverty. And so, you know, for somebody like me who had access to a good high school education and then access college, that is, the funds to go to college, to say you can do it... they could do it if they have the brains to do it - they don't have the means to do it. That's a... I mean, that's a difficult thing to separate, and I'll just say it again, for a lot of people with disabilities, their problem is not their disability, it's poverty. And if they were provided the opportunity, I think they, you know, they would take advantage of it. But yeah,

given the... A disability holds you back from... there's certain things you can't do, but one of them is not succeed, you can be successful. It's just you can't be successful, you know, you're not going to be a... you're not going to be a... well I won't even say it because as soon as I say it somebody will pop up and have already done it. There are these folks they call in my world the "super gimps," and these are people who accomplish everything, I mean, and other disabled people will look at them like they're beyond what anybody's expectations for a physically disabled person could be. But, yeah... I don't, I didn't, I mean teaching is very convenient for somebody, for me, physical disability because it doesn't get in the way at all. The college was actually, I'm not sure about this but, I mean I have two notions of how I got asked to join the faculty at TCC, one of which I won't talk about [laughs], but the other one is that the college I think was designed for people with disabilities, for wheelchairs. And it wasn't designed very *effectively* for people with wheelchairs [laughs]. It's much more access-friendly now than it was when it was built. But it's common that when people build things for individuals with disabilities that they look to the regulations and look at ADA but they don't talk to very many people with disabilities, you know, who are going to use those facilities, because they could learn a lot from [laughs] that. But the college is, you know, I mean a lot of those places were... I mean if you had good upper body strength you could get around okay, but they're all gone now, those really steep hills in the college, they're gone, there are ramps up, for example, from the parking lot outside of this building there are ramps up to the campus. There use to just be a steep hill you know, you could get up there if you have pretty good upper arm strength, but if you were a quadriplegic, you

couldn't do that. So yeah but... So I don't know I'm more, yeah, I just think that the... in terms of with students with disabilities, the... giving them the opportunity to go to, to get further education is really important because a lot of them are in a situation where they just don't have that... they don't have that inclination. And I was very fortunate to go to the University of Illinois which started... well I can't say started it... I think that at the time it was the most prominent university in the country to... for physically disabled students. It was largely a university back in the late fifties and early sixties before I even, well, even before then, in the *early* fifties... World War II vets, there was an individual on the campus that said we're going to make this university accessible to vets., so they can take advantage of the G.I Bill, those that were physically disabled. And yeah, that was a huge help for a lot of the physically disabled individuals.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else you would want to add or elaborate on that we didn't talk about?

07:16

FRANK: Well, nothing comes to mind I mean, obviously you get three or four of us in here we could talk all day about this stuff [laughs] and that wouldn't be a bad idea, I mean I know you have your plan and everything, but you get three or four people who have, with a pitcher of beer, we'll go over to the Cloverleaf like we use to do [laughs].

SECOND INTERVIEWER: [inaudible]

FRANK: Yeah, yeah, the faculty used to, there were days when we would go over to the Cloverleaf after class, maybe 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and leave around 10 at night. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Oh gosh [laughs]. that's fun.

FRANK: I remember um, coming to the hard realization that I couldn't stay out until 2 o'clock in the morning and still teach an 8 o'clock class [laughs] But um, I guess we all eventually grow up.

INTERVIEWER: Oh that's great. Well Frank thank you for your time. It's been a lot of fun.

FRANK: Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW