Interview with Dr. Norman Burdick

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Interviewer: Philip Pogue

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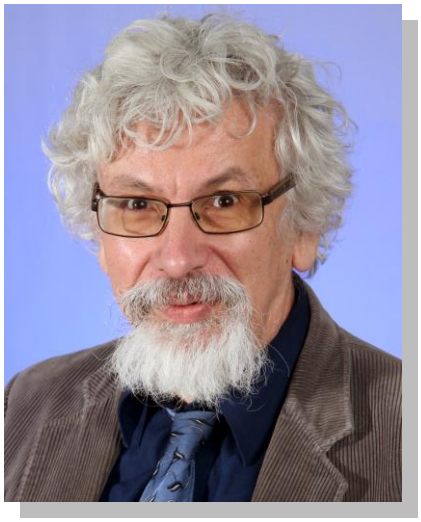
Pogue: This is Phil Pogue. We're doing this interview as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library project on the history and development of community colleges. It's September 24, 2013. I'm on the campus of Carl Sandburg Community College in Galesburg, Illinois. I'm talking with Dr. Norm Burdick about his experiences here at Carl Sandburg. Dr. Burdick, I want to thank you for being a participant in our project. To begin with, could you give us some family background and your educational experiences?



Dr. Norman Burdick

Burdick: I grew up in a small town in Wisconsin. My father was a doctor. I went to Carleton College to get my undergraduate degree. I got a master's and Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. I was in the military two years. I arrived here in 1980 with my wife Faith, hired to teach speech and English

Pogue: Why did you go to Carleton?

Burdick: It was a very good academic school.

Pogue: As far as your interests, why Carl Sandburg?

Burdick: Well, this was when all the guys were returning from the [Vietnam] war. There weren't many jobs, and they hired me.

Pogue: What had you known about community colleges, since you weren't from Illinois?

Burdick: Absolutely nothing.

Pogue: What were you expecting then?

Burdick: It was very easy for me, because I wasn't expecting anything. I loved what I found, and it's all been good since then.

Pogue: Were you planning to be a teacher when you went to Carleton?

Burdick: Well, yes, in fact, I got my teaching certification for the public schools and did the student teaching, but my graduation gift was an M-16, and I went into the Army for two years after that.

Pogue: What were the differences between Carl Sandburg and your student teaching?

Burdick: I was more authoritative. The kids were very upfront, which I liked. By my kids, I mean anybody between the age of sixteen and eighty. I just enjoyed it. I didn't so much compare them with my public speaking students as with the students at the University of Wisconsin. I found these students to be more upfront, which was fine. They could tell me they didn't want to learn something, and then I'd change their minds or force them to, depending on the circumstances.

Pogue: So you've been with the college since 1980?

Burdick: I have.

Pogue: What positions and duties have you had there?

Burdick: Oh, let's see. I've been chairman of every committee. No, there are two I haven't. I've been on faculty council. I was, for a brief time when they couldn't get anybody else, coordinator of English college developmental education. I've had a lot of union positions. I've edited a North Central Report, done various things.

Pogue: What is a North Central Report?

Burdick: The North Central Association accredits college. Every few years—and it's changed since I've been here—you have to file a report. They send a visitor's team, and they certify that you are still doing what you should be doing. They can impose conditions, do various other things. But for a small college like ours, it's a lot of work to get such a report ready. Recently, they've upped the

number of years that you can get on a single visit to ten years, and we got that last time.

Pogue: What was the campus like at the time you arrived in Galesburg?

Burdick: They had the main buildings already. I thought the campus was beautiful. It was already by the lake, and the main buildings were open, so I missed the earliest period in the Butler buildings [pre-engineered buildings] and downtown.

Pogue: What subjects were you teaching?

Burdick: English and speech, including composition, British literature, the odd poetry, interpersonal communication, public speaking, and once a group discussion class. Occasionally… I think I did a reading and study skills at one point.

Pogue: Of all those courses that you listed, which do you enjoy the most?

Burdick: I enjoy the most British literature. I do the most good in comp [composition] I, which is the toughest course I teach. It's also the one where I make the most difference.

Pogue: What is comp I?

Burdick: The basic freshman writing course.

Pogue: And what happens during the semester that the students have you for that?

Burdick: (laughs) Well, they write thirteen papers. They write six pages of journal every two weeks. And they generally have a good time. Hopefully they learn what a sentence is, how to write one more or less correctly, and they pick up some critical thinking along the way. They learn to read somewhat better as well, although that I don't have as much time to spend on as the others.

Pogue: Do you see a great variance in the writing skills of students that you have in the class?

Burdick: Absolutely. It is limited because they have a test that they take when they come in. If their writing skills are really incredibly poor, they go to a fundamentals course. We've gotten better at making sure they end up in the right place.

Pogue: How have students' writing skills varied during your tenure here at Sandburg?

Burdick: That stretches thirty-four years, and I can sum it up very succinctly. They've gotten worse.

Pogue: Is there a reason for that?

Burdick: The culture. Nobody reads anymore. Most of the deterioration in students' abilities just comes from the fact that they don't read as much. Reading is the foundation—even though I teach writing, I will say that—and they just don't do as much of it, most of them.

Pogue: Has how you teach composition changed over the thirty-four years?

Burdick: Of course it has, in many ways, technologically and otherwise. But the basic approach is the same. I think they need to write a lot, and I need to respond to everything they write.

Pogue: If I am a student in your class, how often am I writing?

Burdick: (laughs) I figure, if you do exactly what I assign and no more, you will write, including the journal, which I read and all the papers, you will write about sixty-seven pages.

Pogue: Sixty-seven pages. How do you grade those?

Burdick: Journals I don't grade. I mark grammar, and I do other things. Sometimes they're responding to assignments I've given them, and sometimes I tell them to write about anything. The composition assignments I will grade, return to them. Then I've marked all their grammar errors, and they have to return the paper with those corrected. Sometimes it takes them a couple of times to do it, but they eventually get it done.

Pogue: Do other departments also incorporate writing as part of their requirements?

Burdick: It varies by the department and the instructor, pretty much by the instructor.

Pogue: Sandburg itself does not have a requirement?

Burdick: No, but a lot of instructors do require writing.

Pogue: How has the English department changed over the thirty-four years?

Burdick: Other than the changing personnel, you mean?

Pogue: Right.

Burdick: It's a little smaller now than it has been at times in the past, due to economic constraints, as far as our full-timers are concerned. We have a higher percentage doing part-time. Another thing that has changed is we do a lot of dual credit in which either high school teachers with master's degrees teach our comp I or part-timers go there, to the high school, to teach comp I. That was certainly a major change.

A few years ago, a needed change occurred, the fundamentals writing moved from its own area with the other fundamentals classes and became part of the English department.

Pogue: How many are now in the department?

Burdick: Full-time? I don't want to leave anybody out. There's one down at Carthage, five of us.

Pogue: Do you have relationships with the high schools as English faculty member?

Burdick: We do, oddly enough, with our exit exam. We require everybody to take an exit exam, but it's all our comp I students. It's not like it is some places, where you take it at the end of your time. We can't do that because too many students leave us after a year or don't stay the regular amount of time. So, everyone in a comp I section, at the twelfth week, takes an exit exam. In the past, they've been given a reading, and they've got two hours to write about it.

When we grade it, we all meet. All the high school people come, and we meet around the table. We spend an enlightening and entertaining seven or eight hours grading exit exams.

Pogue: How does that help coordination with the high schools?

Burdick: Well, they certainly know what we expect. We're all there looking at the essays and talking it over. The standards that we expect, we talk it over, over the table. It's clear, from the forms we use and everything else, what we're looking for. We understand their problems, and we get to know them on a personal basis.

Pogue: Have any courses been dropped that used to be part of the English department but are no longer taught?

Burdick: Yeah, one. There was a sort of transitional course, which was not quite fundamentals, but was not quite transferable either. We stopped using it because it would work for some of our technical, or vo-tech people. But then they change their minds and want to get a transfer degree. The course wouldn't work for transfer degree. It left too many people in a bind, so we ditched it.

Pogue: Do you have any contacts with the four-year institutions that your students go to?

Burdick: Sure. We've had part-timers from those institutions. I think at this point I don't have quite as many as I used to. I used to go to conferences, Illinois

Articulation Initiative, and I'd meet some of them there.[1] They know us pretty well. At one point, we sent a student to Knox [College], and the student didn't write the best entry exam. So the woman in charge of those things called us and asked who his teachers were. I was one of them and a woman named Patricia Harrison, now dead, was the other She [the caller] said, "Oh. Well, then he'll probably be alright, then." So yeah, we get to know some of them. Now, probably that was one of our better contacts, and it was some years ago.

Pogue: When you first arrived at Sandburg, in the 1980s, what were some of the big issues of the day?

Burdick: Same as it's always been, money. Community colleges of our size always have trouble with funding. That was even before the State started defaulting.

Pogue: How did Sandburg deal with that?

Burdick: Different approaches over the years, constricting, expanding, trying to be as careful as they could. The approach has changed. I'll have something to say… I hope you ask me about union later, because I was in charge of the first two strikes. I'll have something to say about Don Crist [past president of Galesburg College] at that point as well.

Pogue: In what ways have the classrooms you've been teaching in evolved to either helped or hinder your teaching?

Burdick: Technology, obviously, the importation of all sorts of equipment that's available to you. However, at the same time, classrooms set up mostly for computer screens are very different than classrooms set up for teachers who like to move people around and put them physically in groups and stuff. Occasionally I'll be in a classroom with long, rigid desks you can't separate apart, and when I want to put students into a group, it's frustrating. I try to move out of those. I like chairs that you can move around and form in small circles of four and five.

Pogue: What is the typical class load for a faculty member?

Burdick: Five classes. **Now** they meet twice a week for an hour and fifteen minutes each time. I think that's pretty typical across the state, the five classes, that is.

Pogue: Has that changed?

Burdick: We started out on the quarter system. We used to have three semesters or terms. They were ten and a half weeks each, and we had four classes. It was a **big deal** when we changed from the quarters to the semesters.

[1] The Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) is a statewide transfer agreement, which is transferable among more than 100 participating colleges and universities in Illinois. (https://itransfer.org/aboutiai/)

Pogue: When you say big deal, what did that mean?

Burdick: There was some conflict. I'll get into that when we get there. On the whole, it's been good for English teachers, because I like to grade things and get them back the day after I get them. Under the quarter system, that was often the next day. Under the semester system, I have a day or two to process.

Pogue: What kind of contacts do you have with any of the extension buildings?

Burdick: I've been down there. We have a full-time English teacher at Carthage, and she comes up here sometimes. I have been down there, not as often. When we have our meetings, we have video conference hookups, so she participates in the department meetings. Also, it's set up so she can participate in the faculty assemblies.

Pogue: What have been some of the challenges that Sandburg has faced because of its geography, being kind of outside Galesburg?

Burdick: Yeah. We have parts of, I think, ten counties. We're a very wide district, which means many of our students have to come a long way if they're going to come here, which, of course, has cut into us. The other thing is, of course, when land valuation goes down, we're in a fix, because we're a large area, smaller population. I think you'll get that more from administrators.

Pogue: Do most of your students come from Galesburg, or are they from all over?

Burdick: No, they do come from all over. I obviously get fewer from the corners of the district. As someone will no doubt mention, we have now the Villas, which is a housing development, not officially run by the college, but encouraged by it. They come on campus. I have students who live there, and they kind of come from anywhere in the district.

Pogue: How has that impacted student enrollment?

Burdick: That's hard for me to tell. You'd have to ask somebody else that. I think it's helped, but I can't prove it. I don't have any statistics.

Pogue: You talked about the role of the community college in the local area. How has your department impacted the community as a whole?

Burdick: We make it so people can do their jobs. Name me a job that doesn't require communication skills. (laughs) Policemen have to write reports. I was once at a conference, years ago, put on by other departments, not English departments. I remember one of the speakers was a sociology professor, and the sociology professor said, "My graduates are getting fired because they can't write reports that sound intelligent."

We're a feeder program, but we do something that all of the other programs expect us to do. We try to enable their graduates to think on their feet, to be able to put it into writing. I also teach in speech, so I've taught public speaking as well.

Pogue: What has changed over the course of time with your articulation agreements with four-year institutions, and how is English at Sandburg connected to Illinois State [University] or Western [Illinois University] or the University of Illinois?

Burdick: As I said, I was on the Illinois Articulation Initiative, one of their panels, for a while. I would say that's iffy. Basically, what used to happen was, as they had some of our graduates, they became more confident with us. The major change is that, with some schools, we've managed to articulate that if someone had a two-year degree, it was accepted as the first two years.

But there were always, with some schools, reservations, courses that had to be added, something like that. We've made progress with that, but as you can understand, no four-year university is going to say, "We'll automatically accept you for two years, and we don't care which courses you've had, as long as you've had a degree from them."

What we've been cleverer at is working out what courses we have to have to make it work. The amount of coordination we have depends on the school. We have quite good relationships with Western because we send most of our graduates there, and that's all been worked out. Some other places, perhaps not as well. But again, I'm an English teacher, and you'd probably ask a counselor for this.

Pogue: Do you use the same material as Western would for their first and second years, or is that entirely different?

Burdick: I think Western, last time I knew, for what we would call comp II, required three or four different, smaller papers in the student's area of experience. We require a literary term paper. There are variations like that, but Western has found ours acceptable.

With English teachers and getting them all to do the same thing, it's sort of like trying to herd cats; it often doesn't work out very well. Western has a bit more formality of structure, as to what its teachers are expected to do. We have a course description, which outlines certain basic guidelines that we will stick within. They have that course description, and they've regarded it as satisfactory.

Pogue: You observed that students aren't necessarily reading as much. What are your requirements in that area of literature now?

Burdick: In the area of literature. Well, they all have to take the comp II course, during which they will all read literary stories, and they'll read a novel and write a term paper on it. The novel varies. Some teachers have them all do one. I have a list of different novels. I have a student this time around doing *Moby Dick*. I have another one doing *The Big Sleep*. So, the novels that they read will vary.

As far as literature specifically, we have the distribution requirements. They can take a literary course, American lit, which a lot of them take, or they can take other humanities requirements. But this is only for the first two years, obviously. If they're going to go somewhere and major in English, they're either told or figure out that they better take some literature courses.

Pogue: What else is taught besides British?

Burdick: We teach British; we teach American; we teach women in literature. This time around, there's going to be, I think, a combination course taught by an English teacher and political science teacher on the sixties, combining the literature and the politics.

Pogue: Dr. Burdick, you talked about your role in a union position. Would you give us a little more information on that and how working relations with the union and Sandburg have been?

Burdick: Much worse than they are now. I came to the college in 1980, and in 1983 there was a lot of dissatisfaction with the contract. The union, I think mistakenly, decided to work to rule; relations deteriorated.[2] There was a new president, and in the meantime, we'd been converting to the semester system. The faculty decided they wanted to look at it more, so on the new president's first day in faculty assembly, they voted to do that, upsetting him quite a bit. From there, things went from bad to worse. I had just gotten tenure, and I failed to notice when everyone else stepped back, which is how I ended up as chief negotiator.

Two things happened. One, there was a push at the time in the state and nationally to get rid of kinds of things that we were very fond of here, that is a faculty senate. It was called the Faculty Assembly, where all the faculty met together. Its powers were always just advisory, but the laws at the time were such that people were taking potshots at such organizations that had both a faculty senate and the union. The [college] president abolished the Faculty Assembly. Many of the people who had put it together, with backgrounds at Knox and other places, were upset by this.

[2] Work-to-rule is an industrial action in which employees do no more than the minimum required by the rules of their contract and precisely follow all safety or other regulations, which may cause a slowdown or decrease in productivity. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work-to-rule)

Added to that, I read a book our president had written that talked about the key to the future being enlarging class sizes. So, we put into our contract that we wanted class sizes to stay the same. The other team, across the table, said, "Would you please withdraw that? That has never been a problem before, and it won't now." We withdrew it, and within two weeks the class sizes went up.

When you get an atmosphere like that, you can expect a strike. That's what happened. I don't think they really believed we'd do it, which means they didn't understand how attached the older faculty were to this Faculty Assembly. We did, and it lasted for three days. Then we came back with an intact Faculty Assembly and the classes going down again.

Pogue: How many employees did the strike impact?

Burdick: At the time, it was only a faculty union, so the full-time faculty went out, and the staff reported to work. At the time, that must have been about fifty or sixty of us. They considered and called people to consider opening the college. Most of our part-timers wouldn't come in, and too many of the jobs were irreplaceable. They never managed to open the college.

Pogue: Were those three days then added?

Burdick: They were made up, later.

Pogue: What happened after the strike ended?

Burdick: Everybody just went back to work. There was no retaliation of any kind. That was taken up. There were hard feelings between the president and some of the faculty. I didn't particularly have them. But we went on for another six years, seven years, and then we had another strike.

This one, instead of being president, chief negotiator and faculty spokesperson—I was only president in the first one because I'd been vice president, and the president went on a sabbatical—I was just chief negotiator and faculty spokesperson. It was quite simply about money, but it was about more than that. Just before then, the board and the faculty and everybody had been cooperating mightily to try to pass a referendum. It lost. It passed in Knox County and, strangely enough, I believe in Warren County, but failed elsewhere.

At that point, a decision was to be made. I grew up in Milton, Wisconsin, where a college had gone bankrupt. In financial circumstances, you take one of two directions: you try to get out of it by contracting and cutting things back, or by building and expanding. I did not want them to cut everything, including salaries. I was encouraged to make them pay the kind of salary that would allow them to consider expanding instead of contracting. I actually believe that the president of the college, Don Crist, kind of agreed

with me—although, of course, he would never have said so—because his policy in taking over the college at that point—which he did almost during the strike—was to begin to try to get out of our troubles by expanding.

That strike lasted, I think, two weeks. As I remember, it was kind of cold, because it happened… We waited until after the referendum, which put it sometime in November. We had burning barrels, as I remember. It lasted two weeks, and our salaries went up, and we settled. That was the second strike. The third one, I can't say as much about because I wasn't in a leadership position at that time. It also was essentially about money.

Pogue: And since 1993. everything else—

Burdick: No strikes since then. Interest-based bargaining came in about that time, introduced by Tom Schmidt [past president of Galesburg College]. That has worked fairly well, and I would say relationships between the union and the administration and board have improved since that period.

Pogue: Can you tell us what interest-based bargaining is?

Burdick: Sure. It's a setup where, instead of each side coming in with positions and negotiating towards the middle—and possibly exaggerating those initial positions to affect the middle—you sit around the table; one issue is produced, and you talk over different solutions to it and hopefully arrive somewhere.

Pogue: What would be an example of that?

Burdick: This last time we wanted… I'll take something really simple; we thought staff and maintenance and security needed more of a uniform allowance. Well, we brought our people in and talked about it. They [the administration] did their point-of-view. We asked questions, and eventually we came up with a solution, which I believe was something like an allowance of an extra jacket or coat for when people worked outside, a very simple issue. But that's how it works. When we finished that, we went on to something else.

Pogue: Were both parties eager to try something different, after having three strikes in less than ten years?

Burdick: I think it's fair to say that they were.

Pogue: What is the situation with the unionization of Carl Sandburg today?

Burdick: That happened some years ago. It was when we went wall-to-wall, and the staff entered the union.[3] As I just indicated when I talked about the issue, it's

[3] A "wall-to-wall" union means that anyone who receives a paycheck from the college as a worker is eligible to join the union, from groundskeepers, student workers, graduate teaching assistants to full professors. (https://www.workers.org/2019/04/25/historic-wall-to-wall-education-worker-union-forms/)

complicated negotiations because we have to deal with all sorts of staff issues that before we didn't. I think it has benefitted the staff, and I think it's worked very successfully.

Pogue: What union does the faculty at Carl Sandburg belong to?

Burdick: The Illinois Education Association.

Pogue: Why was it chosen?

Burdick: That was before my time. In fact, you could have asked Darrell Clevidence that.[4] He was around at the time it was founded, and I think he was one of our chief negotiators back then. That was in the late sixties, and I didn't get here until eighty. I think it was just because… Maybe the biggest factor was that all the surrounding school districts were mostly Illinois Education Association. It is important at times for us to cooperate with them, both in terms of union, but also in terms of gaining students and making relationships. If I were asked to bet, I would bet that was the major factor.

Pogue: Sandburg has had six presidents. How many have you worked with?

Burdick: Five.

Pogue: How important is a community college president to the institution?

Burdick: Obviously very important, and they've each made their own contributions.

Pogue: What have been some of those contributions?

Burdick: Well, Dr. [Bill] Anderson, I was only here for three years [while he was president]. I can honestly say I can't say too much about him, because I was too new to understand what was going on at that level. He set a very scholarly tone for the place, which people in the social sciences and humanities particularly appreciated, math/science, too. He was an historian. He's written books about the Civil War.

The next president was Jack Fuller. He had some difficulties here. He's the president who was involved in the first strike. But I'm grateful to him

[4] Darrell Clevidence joined the faculty of Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois in 1969 when the college was just being launched, and taught math and science there for many years. He also served as a Division Chair and for five years he worked as the athletic department chair. Darrell retired from Carl Sandburg in 2010. (https://www2.illinois.gov/alplm/library/collections/oralhistory/EducationisKey/communitycolleges/Pages/ClevidenceDarrell.aspx)

for one thing; he nominated me for a Fulbright Teaching Exchange and did a lot to make sure I left the country for a year.[5] I was extremely grateful for that.

Pogue: What is a Fulbright?

Burdick: There's the Fulbright Scholarship, where you win an award and you go and teach somewhere. That's not what I had. A Fulbright Teaching Exchange, I went and taught for a year at South Cheshire College in Crewe [England], and a man named Barry Jonsberg came here and taught at Carl Sandburg for a year. We exchanged cars and houses, and generally I had a wonderful time.

Pogue: How was that experience different from Sandburg?

Burdick: In every way conceivable. The English, for example, don't have grade point averages. The grades are determined more by exam than by what the classroom instructor decides. If you want to bring a class to heel, you don't use anger, you use sarcasm. The library was full of the texts we were studying and exam prep, but very little background at that time. I could go on and on. It was an amazing experience. There's nothing like being able to contrast education as it works in two different places.

Pogue: And what did Barry Jonsberg think about Sandburg?

Burdick: I think that his emphasis was mostly on enjoying being in the United States. I got to talk with him before he came here—we spent three days together—but I didn't really get a formal session with him afterwards. O course, when you come to think about it, most of my friendships were actually with the people who were in England, as most of his were the people with whom he spent a year here in the United States. I still write to some of those people, by the way.

Pogue: Going back to the presidents.

Burdick: I stopped at two, didn't I? Don Crist was a builder, and he was a man of some talents. He actually took classical guitar lessons while he was president. I really liked Don. He made the decision that the college was going to grow its way out of its difficulties. We were lucky to have him, as in many ways we were Tom Schmidt as well.

Tom's particular genius was finance. He figured out some ways to put us on a better financial footing, which he did. You'll have to ask somebody else more about that, but the bond issues and other things like that were part of his plan.

[5] The Fulbright Classroom Teacher Exchange Program offered educators the opportunity to exchange teaching positions with a teacher from another country for one semester or academic year. By living and working abroad, Fulbright Teachers improved their understanding and appreciation of another culture and education system. (https://www.iie.org/Programs/Fulbright-Classroom-Teacher-Exchange-Program)

That leaves us with… Let's see, I got through Tom; that must bring us to Lori Sundberg, who you'll be interviewing fairly soon. I like Lori immensely, and she's an incredibly intelligent woman. When she first came here I think she was institutional researcher. We worked together on a North Central Report, which I was more or less shepherding through. That would have been for 2000. She was the most help of anyone, brilliant person, excellent writer.

She has guided us, along with Julie Gibb, who's the associate dean, not associate dean—excuse me, I wrong her—vice president of instruction, who taught in our department for twenty years or so before that. They have guided us through the difficulties of a declining student ability level and declining funding. They've done it very well. I really have no axe to grind in saying that because I'm retiring in May, so I don't care. (laughs)

Pogue: What does the vice president of instruction do?

Burdick: She will make decisions about what classes run and don't. She'll plan academic programs and other things like that. She'll deal with the day-to-day activities of conflicts between… Well, not so much conflicts, but she'll deal with any contract problems in her area and try to prevent them from occurring. She'll occasionally do a reorganization, like the highly positive one that brought the teaching of developmental English, that I mentioned before, into the main English department, which has been a vast improvement of things around here. Her duties include just about everything, I think.

Pogue: How do people in your department get professional training?

Burdick: Two different ways, three different ways, actually. They can take classes for credit through the contract. It will, by increment, increase where they are on the salary schedule. This does not apply to me. I had a Ph.D. when I came here, so I can't move across that grid any.

There's the Faculty Development Committee, which will fund conferences and other things that you want to do. For a while, you could take computer courses for a long period in the college's history, to upgrade your online skills. Those are just some of the things you can do.

We have a faculty growth and assessment process, where you plan out a program to both evaluate yourself and increase your skills. Mine typically had, when I did them, typically had people visiting my classroom and me visiting theirs and also viewing films of myself teaching and other things.

Now we have a mentoring program, which has three divisions. I'm mentoring a new faculty member until she gets tenure, what an easy job, what a brilliant faculty member. We have a program where some adjuncts are being mentored, some by full-time, some by other adjuncts. We have a mutual mentoring program, where tenured faculty agree to mentor each other to

upgrade their skills. All of that is what we're doing now. The mentoring is relatively new.

Pogue: When did all of these changes in professional training start to take place?

Burdick: From the beginning, in 1980 when I was there, we had the Faculty Development Committee, with money for conferences and trips and other things like that. That would have been before 1980.

I believe I got my first PC [Personal Computer], which ran on DOS [Disc Operating System]. I was given no training. I was given a book called *PC for Idiots*, which was appropriate. After that, in the nineties, we began to be more sophisticated with computers, and there began to be training programs. You could learn to do different stuff.

As somebody surely has told you by now, we've accelerated to the point where last year we were the top community college in terms of technological advancement in some category in the U.S. It's on the website. Ask Lori about that; she'll be happy to tell you.

Gradually all that changed. We started the official mentoring program last academic year. We've worked up to it, so it's relatively new.

Pogue: As a mentor, what do you do?

Burdick: The first thing I did was sit down with her and talk about the institutional culture and personality. I made sure, if she had any issues, she knew everything about the mailboxes and all the mundane stuff.

I treated it as mutual, because I figured I could learn from her, and I did. We looked at each other's syllabi and talked about that. We looked at first day activities. We've looked at tests. We've looked at each other's assignments, and every semester we visit each other's classrooms and talk about what we see. What I've seen I'm not going to tell you, because I have to sign a confidentiality statement saying I won't talk about any specifics.

Pogue: What other programs exist for faculty to help the students here at Sandburg?

Burdick: We have the tutoring program. We have something recent called Starfish where, if a student is absent or doing poor work or doing even good work, you can sort of, on an automated system, send an email to the student, which also goes to the other instructors. Of course, we have a tutoring center, and students go there. It's recently expanded into online tutoring, as well as face-to-face tutoring. And ever since I've been here, I've just plain pulled students into my office for extra sessions.

Pogue: How have these extra programs helped students here?

Burdick: They've helped a lot. The Starfish one just started this year. It's only been going for about five weeks, so I don't know. It seems to be working well, and people like it.

The tutoring center has improved considerably recently, and students are very helped by that. I still find that, for me, pulling a student into my office is really effective, because I'll go over points of grammar with them or other things; I'll review tests with them and so on. It's a matter of how much time I have to devote to that, but it seems to work pretty well.

Pogue: The college has many certificated types of programs, such as mortuary science, radiology, dental hygiene. Does your department deal with those individuals as well?

Burdick: Yes, we have them in various classes. It depends on which program as to which classes we have. Typically, we have them in comp I. We also have them frequently in interpersonal communications, which I just got finished teaching.

Pogue: Is any of the instruction that you do tied to their specific career?

Burdick: We have contextualized learning. We have had classes, again, in the fundamentals area, where it was tied to healthcare. Now, we don't have enough mortuary science students or anything, who are coming to class at the same time, that we can devote a whole class to that. However, we do do some contextualized learning classes.

Pogue: How difficult was it for the college to adjust to this technology revolution?

Burdick: We had a director of technology here named Sam Sudhakar. He was right on top of things. We have adjusted, I think, better than most people. As I say, last year we won this award, and we won awards before. We moved in fairly early. Sometimes it's been difficult. We did distance learning, and there were often problems with distance learning, cameras at remote sites. We pretty much had to do that, because I've told… You know about our district and how widespread it is. That was an effort to bring it closer together. I'd say we've adapted to that fairly well. The major problem, of course, has always been financing it. But there are enough grants out there, and Tom Schmidt was good enough with money during a crucial period of it, that we managed.

Pogue: How difficult is it as an instructor to deal with technology, with issues like research papers and plagiarism and everything else?

Burdick: Plagiarism has always been a problem. I'm in a position to deal with it a little better because I'm an English teacher. I assign a lot of work, so by the time I've seen a student's fifth paper, if it reads more like it was done by a forty-year-old graduate assistant somewhere, it probably was, and I know.

It's nice to have sites like turnitin.com to submit a paper to and find it. I've found them on the internet. I mean, I've just Google searched some of them; they're so obvious. And my wife's a research librarian, a reference librarian, which has also helped. Yeah, there are two attitudes you can take towards internet plagiarism. You can ignore it and lead a happy life, or you can deal with it and actually educate.

Pogue: What role does the instructional center play for your department?

Burdick: Instructional center?

Pogue: Maybe I should be using the old terms of library or media center.

Burdick: There you go. For a while it was called the resource center. Now it's the library again. It plays a vital role, especially for an English teacher. I have tours up there. Sometimes Sandy Wallace, the reference librarian, comes and gives tours. She gave a lecture or a presentation in one of my classrooms recently, something that technology has enabled.

One of the things we want our students to do is to be able to do research in all formats. I'm teaching a comp II course now, and they have to have a certain number of references from online and a certain number from print. I want them to know what—believe it or not, many students don't know when they come here—what a call number is. I want them to be able to do that, so it's essential.

Sandy has always been very helpful. She recently gave a tour to my students on how to find sources that would tell you about connections between a literary author's life and his works.

Pogue: When you think about your own experiences here at Carl Sandburg, what are some of the more memorable ones? You've talked about the issue of the strikes.

Burdick: Well, there are the floods. I was here for both of them, the one in eighty-two and the one recently. Those were certainly memorable (laughs), in an unpleasant way.

Pogue: How did they directly impact your teaching?

Burdick: In the first flood, I wasn't expecting it, so I lost a lot of material that was on the floor (laughs). The second flood didn't very much affect my teaching. They moved in, cleaned it up, and dealt with it fairly quickly. I didn't lose as much because, believe it or not, I can learn from experience, so I didn't have as much on the ground level. Some people lost their computers, but not very many. That, of course would be an issue.

Pogue: Did the floods impact a day's operation? Did you have to cancel school?

Burdick: I didn't the second time because it was in the summer, and I don't teach summer classes. So no, it didn't affect me at all. Some, a few I believe, we were fortunate enough that it was in the pre-session, and there weren't actually very many of those classes. I'd say that part of it was minimal.

Pogue: You've talked about the floods. Is there anything else that you think of as you—

Burdick: Just the people and the students I've worked with. I can remember two instructors, in particular, now both, three, now all dead—a speech teacher named Ruth Torrance, who was here when I first came; Patricia Harrison, who taught English here for many years; Jim McCurry, who died just a few years ago now, a poet and teacher—and the students that come back and see me and say things, individual incidents with students. I remember one where I was going over a student with grammar. She had deficiencies in that area, and she really picked it up really fast. I told her so, and she looked like I'd given her the best present ever. I have a feeling that has to do with self-esteem.

There are many, many things like that that I'm going to remember, because that's what I've been doing here. I've been affecting individual people. Anything else is…window dressing.

Pogue: What contact do you have with the theater and fine arts group?

Burdick: They're all in our division. This is a small college, so I see them once a month. There is a music full-timer; there is a theater full-timer, and there is an art full-timer. I work with all of them; I go to the plays; I go to the exhibits; I go to the musicals when I can. And I've given extra credit for people going to the plays and doing certain things. Yeah, they're part of our division, and it's a division of eight or nine people, so we know each other well.

Pogue: Has the structure of the divisions changed from 1980?

Burdick: Yes, it has. In 1980, we had a business division. We had that for a long time. Now we have a social science division, and we have a tech kind of division. In addition, we have a separate department of nursing. We didn't have that before. Those were all under other things.

The other thing that's changed is we used to call them division chairs. Now we call them either deans or associate deans. The associate deans are faculty members with release time.[6] The deans are full-time administrators. Most of ours are associate deans.

Pogue: What's the duty of an associate dean?

[6] Faculty release time is defined as when a faculty person who is given time off from teaching and other responsibilities to focus on research funded by a grant. (https://www.yourdictionary.com/faculty-release-time)

Burdick: (laughs) Oversee the schedule, listen to student complaints, deal with anything and everything that comes up. It's not a job I ever wanted. Patricia Harrison, when asked to interview for the position, said, and I quote, "I would rather die and go to hell than be a division chair." (laughs) The same is pretty much true of an associate dean.

My present associate dean is Carol Peterson. She taught with me, and we even shared an office before her elevation. I sometimes go into her office and thank her for her service, and she threatens to throw things at me.

Pogue: Does the associate dean still teach classes?

Burdick: Yes.

Pogue: And how much of a reduced load is that?

Burdick: I think it depends on the dean and the number of people working for him or her and stuff. I think in Carol's case it may be three classes. It would be about three-fifths of her teaching load, and it's not enough. The one thing I will say about the job, whatever it's called, is that it has gotten much more intense over the years, much more energy draining and everything else. They budget, and they do other things.

Pogue: What seems to cause all of that?

Burdick: A number of things. One of them is that, at this institution, one of the ways we try to keep current and to keep from having to RIF [reduction in force] anyone is we take on more duties. That's been especially true with associate deans.

The other is just also when we add things, especially when we add part-timers, or we add programs. That swells the dean's duties. They have an instructional team meeting, where they meet together and make decisions on various things. Oh, they go to a lot of meetings.

Pogue: Are all of the part-timers called adjuncts, or is there a—

Burdick: No, they're all adjuncts. I try to remember to use the word whenever possible.

Pogue: What would be a couple of the things that you're most proud of here at the college?

Burdick: Just the attitude we take towards teaching. It's not a way you get your paycheck; it's what you do to make things happen in people's lives. That attitude, I think, permeates the part of the institution I know best, certainly my own area and many other people here. I'm proud of that.

I'm actually proud of our exit exam, in which we actually refuse to look… We're like the child that says, "but the emperor has no clothes." We

get our students in a room; we give them two hours; we tell them to write without any resources, and then we look at what they did.

Pogue: Is that just for every student in the transfer program?

Burdick: No, it's for every student in comp I, transfer program or not, which includes a lot that aren't transfer programs. We wanted to know how that class was doing, because that's a foundational class. So we tied the exam to that class.

Pogue: Give me an example of what they might write on.

Burdick: We give them a choice of two articles. One that I can think of was on giving respect to waitresses. Another was on the topic of assisted suicide. They choose one of those. They write a thesis sentence and an outline. They write an essay, and they're responsible for proofreading the essay.

We evaluate it on two vectors, one, grammar and mechanics and the other, content. We question whether they understood the essay and how much, if they actually used it in their writing or they just steered to the topic. We evaluate their use of detail, their ability to organize. On the mechanics side, we look for very specific things, like run-ons, comma splices and fragments, agreement, commas, and so forth.

Pogue: How much does this influence their grade for the class?

Burdick: It doesn't.

Pogue: So, it's just a—

Burdick: No, it's not. If they can't pass it, they can't go on to comp II.

Pogue: So, they have a grade in comp I; they take the exit—

Burdick: Exam, and if they don't pass that exit exam, then they can't stay in comp II. Most of them are enrolled by that time, but they have to leave.

Pogue: Is there any cross-disciplinary work between your department and others?

Burdick: Oh, quite a bit. Like I mentioned before, my mentee, Lara Roeme in the social science department, is doing a joined course with Kylie Stalides, who is our newest English faculty member, covering the developmental area. I have done a course, long ago, with a faculty member from math/science and a faculty member from social science. We're in the same hall. We consult on all sorts of things. Yeah, we cooperate.

Pogue: How do you feel Carl Sandburg College now is considered, here in the community?

Burdick: You mean the reaction to the college?

Pogue: Right.

Burdick: It's always been mixed. When I started out, there was a lot of Carl Sandbox attitude. Now it depends on who you talk to. I'd say we've made definite progress. We have large numbers of people… A few years ago, the person teaching British literature in Galesburg High School learned British literature from me at Sandburg. I have had principals as former students. I have had teachers at the high schools as former students. I have PhDs who are former students. And I'm just one teacher.

Over time, we've had an impact, and people know it. We have more respect than we did years ago. But, of course, there are some people who are always going to love the stereotype. I've had nurses that I've had who have been former students. I have a police captain who's a former student. We have, I think, progressed in the community's esteem.

But somebody always like to feel better, and I think such people often think, Well, you aren't really educating people, anyway. They shouldn't be educated. They're welcome to their views and their lives, as long as I don't have to share them.

Pogue: Do you have much contact with the local newspapers and radio outlets that serve this district, and were any of these former students?

Burdick: I have had former students. The most contact I had was during the strikes, and that was a different matter. I learned that, when you're talking to the press, you should act as if you're speaking directly, without intermediary, to the 10,000 people you know best, as of course, you should also do when you're talking to a machine, like yours, which I'm keeping in mind as I go. Yeah, there are media people here who are [former students], and I think the media has had a very favorable attitude towards Sandburg. They work well with us, and we work well with them.

Pogue: My final question goes back to when you were a student at Carleton. Could you ever imagine that you were going to be working at a community college?

Burdick: No, I couldn't, and that just shows how limited people's imaginations are. I'm really glad that I got the chance. It's really what I want to do. What I actually think is that the students I deal with here at Sandburg, I make a bigger difference in their lives than a teacher would be who was working at the University of Wisconsin. This is where I want to be. This is what I'm good at. I think, in the classroom, I've done a lot for students, both in terms of education and in many other ways. I'm happy it worked out this way.

Pogue: Dr. Burdick, I want to thank you very much for sharing your experiences here at Carl Sandburg, over a course of roughly thirty plus years and your

involvement with the teaching of composition and also with the whole structure of the governance here at Sandburg.

Burdick: Well, thank you. I've enjoyed this, and it's good to sit and reminisce, which I'll be doing more of after I retire.

Pogue: Good luck with that.

Burdick: Thank you.

(end of transcript)