

Interview with Dr. William Benton (Ben) Whisenhunt

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Interviewer: Philip Pogue

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Pogue: We're starting an interview on the Illinois Community College System. My name is Philip Pogue. It's May 14, 2013. We're on the College of DuPage campus in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, and we're going to be talking to Dr. Ben Whisenhunt about the community college and gain more information about how it began. So, Dr. Whisenhunt, welcome to the project, and could you give us some background about yourself, your high school, college, graduate and work experience?

Whisenhunt: Thank you for interviewing me about this. It's a very interesting project. I attended high school in Nebraska, actually. I finished high school in 1986 in Wayne, Nebraska. Then I attended Cornell College in Iowa, majoring in history and Russian language and graduating in 1990. Then I attended the



*Dr. Ben Whisenhunt
College of DuPage*

University of Nebraska in Omaha, receiving a master's degree in 1992 and then the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), receiving a Ph.D. in 1997. Most of my professional work has been here at College of DuPage. I was an adjunct here from 1992 to 1997, and I have been full-time since 1997.

Pogue: What kind of assignments have you had with the College of DuPage?

Whisenhunt: My primary assignment here has always been to teach history courses. When I was first hired full-time, I also taught a few classes in political science, but I've taught a wide range of history courses, from U. S. history to western civ [civilization], world history, and more recently, history of Russia, which is my specialty, as well as a history of terrorism and Native American history.

Pogue: What led to some of these newer courses?

Whisenhunt: There's a general interest among some of our students to have some more specialized courses. So my colleagues and I, a few years ago, began to develop, not only the courses I mentioned already, but also courses in their specialties, as well, such as a course on World War II, a course on the American Revolution, African-American history and so forth. It's just been a developing project over time.

Pogue: What led you to come to College of DuPage?

Whisenhunt: I was teaching here part-time, from 1992 to 1997, when I was working on my doctorate at UIC [University of Illinois, Chicago], and so there was a kind of nice convergence of circumstances, where I finished my degree, and there was a job open here. So I took the position as I finished my degree, which was very fortunate. Ever since then I've been teaching full-time here.

Pogue: What is the difference between an adjunct professor and a full-time?

Whisenhunt: A full-time professor not only teaches a full load of classes. In our case, we teach five classes each semester, is a required teaching load. An adjunct would teach fewer classes than that, a range from one to four, usually. Also, full-time faculty are responsible for curriculum development, advising students and serving on committees within the college, both sort of at the discipline level, at the history department level, going all the way up to faculty governance and college governance committees, as well. The other big difference, too, is the salary. There's a big difference between adjunct teaching and full-time teaching.

Pogue: What is the current geographical size of the college, its student population and the public school districts that are encompassed in it?

Whisenhunt: The best way to describe College of DuPage's district is, we refer to it as district 502. And 502 is basically DuPage County, with a little bit of Cook County and a little bit of Will County included. So all the school districts, the

Glenbards and all those school districts, Hinsdale, are all included in the College of DuPage district, as well as a small sliver of Cook County, where Lyons Township is, and also a little bit of Will County in south Naperville area.

The student population is now over 30,000. We have a large campus with eleven buildings. Many of these buildings are new, and if they're not new, they've been newly renovated. We've been doing a lot of updating to our campus in the past six or seven years, including new buildings such as a culinary arts building, as well as a homeland security education building, early childhood education center, a technology education center and so on. It's been quite a time of change for us in the past seven years, since 2006.

Pogue: What has caused that change that you talked about in the last six or seven years?

Whisenhunt: The College of DuPage opened its doors in 1967, and many of the original buildings were built over about a thirty year period of time, from the '60s to the '90s. So some of the earliest buildings were needing of updating, and some of the, basically, technological changes in the way we teach things, demanded that we add some new buildings. We have a lot more technical programs, such as nursing and other kinds of programs that demanded their own space.

So about eight years ago or so, the community approved a referendum for us to build new buildings, support the sale of bonds in order for us to build the new buildings here on campus. That started, like I said, the building itself started about 2006, and it is still going on today. It makes us a much more up-to-date and modern campus, when the buildings that were built in the '70s had sort of outlived their usefulness.

Pogue: How long is the building project going to continue?

Whisenhunt: I don't know. I thought it was supposed to end by now, but I believe it might go on. I believe there are a couple of more phases to finish, the renovation of our art center and the renovation of our P.E. building. Then we might be getting close to finished. It might be another year or two, I believe.

Pogue: You had a manuscript that was entitled *Learning is the Greatest Adventure – A History of the College of DuPage 1966 to 2004*. How were you selected to write that?

Whisenhunt: I actually volunteered to do it, strangely enough. The story's kind of an odd one. I was mowing my lawn one day, and I don't like mowing my lawn very much, and my mind was wandering. My wife and I both attended the same college, and that college was celebrating its sesquicentennial. They were trying to sell us books about the college, through mail and email.

So I thought that it would be kind of interesting to have a history of the college where I taught. Even though it wasn't 150 years old, there's still a lot of history here, about what had gone on in the past forty years. So I proposed it, and the vice president at the time allowed me to do it. So I did write that, yes.

Pogue: Going through the manuscript, we have a number of questions. The first one is, you talked about the importance of a Roy DeShane, who was the DuPage County superintendent. Why did you list him as being important?

Whisenhunt: When I was doing research on this, I came to discover that he was one of the prime sort of movers and shakers behind this idea of putting a community college in DuPage County and basically in this location. College of DuPage has its origin in Lyons Township. The Lyons Township Junior College had been founded back in 1929 and had basically occupied the third floor of the Lyons Township High School. It's an old building, still there, and they basically occupied the third floor. That junior college made a decision, the people of that area made a decision to merge as an emerging community college district here, 502. Roy DeShane was basically the person who was behind getting all of the high school superintendents in the district, and that junior college, to agree to join forces to create what is now College of DuPage.

The sad thing about Roy DeShane's life, though, is, he did all this work, and he worked very hard for it, and in the fall of 1967, the college opened, and I believe, about a week after the college opened, he died. So very few people on our campus know much about him, because he doesn't survive to see what he helped create, really, other than the first few days of its existence.

Pogue: You talked about Lyons Township having a junior college, back in the '20s, and you said it's in Cook County. Why did they end up going this direction?

Whisenhunt: I believe it was mostly because of Roy DeShane's efforts and because of the association with the local superintendents in DuPage County were associated with those superintendents for high schools in that part of Cook County. When that happened, it was by a vote of the people there, and when Lyons Township voted to consolidate with College of DuPage, they redrew the district line to include, now, what is LaGrange. So our district does include that part of Cook County, simply because that's where Lyons Township Junior College was.

When the college opened, in 1967, the corps of the faculty and administration actually came from Lyons Township, and about 700 of the original 2,100 students that opened this college were from Lyons Township, as well. So College of DuPage had a real advantage when it opened, because it had a faculty and a staff who already knew what to do in many ways. They

already had been doing this for many years, and they had a corps of students that they brought with them. When it opened in 1967, it had over 2,100 students, which is a very large opening for any college to have that many students all at once.

Pogue: And to give our listeners some geographical information, how far is LaGrange from here?

Whisenhunt: That's a good question. I believe it may be at least maybe ten or fifteen miles. It's a good distance from where we sit right now. It's right between Cook County and DuPage County; it's on the edge of the county line. But the district itself is basically, like I said, DuPage County.

Pogue: In 1965, the Junior College Act was passed. What role did it have for the history of the College of DuPage?

Whisenhunt: Well, it actually was key to College of DuPage being created. This county, at the time, did not have, obviously, a junior college. The nearest one was Lyons Township. To the south of us, there was one in Joliet. But for here in DuPage County, there was no junior college. So the Junior College Act of 1965 provided the apparatus that could help create such a community college, the financial support, the classifications, the tax system for how you would support such a college in this area. When that was passed, that was the spark that pushed DeShane and others to get College of DuPage up and running.

Pogue: And it got the number 502. What did that mean?

Whisenhunt: I don't know. Honestly, I don't know where the number came from. I know that all the school districts in Illinois have different numbers. Personally, I never found in my research any reasoning for that number.

Pogue: How did the college name and mascot come about?

Whisenhunt: Those are actually two different stories. The college name... On the eve of the college opening, or as they're formulating it—basically between 1965 and 1967—they didn't have a name for the college. They continued to refer to it as Community College District 502, which doesn't sound very interesting to most people.

So they actually had, in the public, a naming contest. They invited the public, people in the area, to send in what they believed would be good names for the college. There were some interesting ones. It was the '60s, so there were some unusual ones, in many ways. Some were names like New Hope College or Sunshine College, kind of an interesting entry, but a woman, actually in Wheaton, named Nancy Hillebrand, sent in the winning name, which, of course, was College of DuPage.

The mascot came right after that. When the college opened, for its first two years, from 1967-68 year and '68-'69 year, there was no permanent campus of College of DuPage. Where we sit today was land that they had purchased, but there were no buildings here; this was a farm, known as Lambert Farm. So what happened in the first two years is, you have students and faculty and staff and everybody basically taking classes and going to the library and going to the bookstore in eleven or twelve locations around the county. So the mascot name came from that, because everybody was on the run and on the road. A chaparral is a roadrunner, and that's where the name comes from, because the first two years there was no permanent campus.

In 1969, they began to hold the majority of classes on this campus, on the west side of the campus, where we had temporary buildings.

Pogue: How was the new college accepted by the community?

Whisenhunt: For most people, it was accepted very well. The enrollments were very high, and people saw it as a great opportunity for advancing their education. But there were people who were concerned about it. There were people who wrote into newspapers, who were worried about what bringing all these college students to a campus here in Glen Ellyn would do. There's even a newspaper article, a letter sent to newspapers, talking about how they're going to bring trouble and all ride their motorcycles and cause noise and cause all these problems and traffic hang-ups and these sorts of things. It seems at the time that was the minority. They didn't really prove to be that difficult for the community. In general, it was a very warm reception.

Pogue: Why was Glen Ellyn determined to be the site, and did it have opposition?

Whisenhunt: In the end of these discussions of where to put the college, there were two locations in the end. They were looking for someplace—as DeShane and the other superintendents had outlined—they wanted someplace that would be central in the district, someplace that would be centrally located, roughly in the county. So Glen Ellyn's had that opportunity.

There's another location that is south of here that is at the corner today of Naperville Road and Warrenville Road, where part of Lucent Technology is. That was land that was also available. Some people thought that would be a better location, because it was closer to more major roads. In the end, there wasn't enough land there for them to do what they wanted to do. Here in this spot, we have 273 acres. They didn't have enough land, they thought, at that site.

What they got here was one, big parcel that was basically being bought from one person, and this was a farmer named Lambert. This was a farm when they bought it. Even originally, in the first few years, there were still farm houses on this campus that they used for things like the bookstore or for

registration, these sorts of things. They did actually use the buildings. Those have all been torn down now. It mainly was a central location in the district, as well as being able to purchase one parcel of land from one person.

Pogue: You talked about earlier that, until these buildings were built, they went to libraries or other building locations throughout the college district. How difficult was that?

Whisenhunt: It was difficult. Actually, in the college's newspaper—which also started when the college started—one of the first major articles was about a car accident that one of the students had had going from one class to another. So for many students it was quite difficult. It took real organization and much more logistics, sort of planning, not only for the students, but also for faculty. They had to move from location to location.

But keep in mind, over forty years ago, DuPage County was far less populated than today and far less congested with traffic. To move from place to place was much easier to do than it is today. But it was kind of a juggling act for everybody to make sure they got their schedules worked out, from place to place.

Pogue: What are the major buildings that are here now, and how did they get their names?

Whisenhunt: The first permanent building built is the one we're sitting in right now, and it's known today as the Rodney K. Berg Instructional Center. It was finished in 1973. So when the college was founded in 1967, it opened at the multiple locations. In 1969, they put temporary buildings on the west side of campus. Some are still there today, strangely enough. But as they were going to school in those temporary buildings, they built the one we're sitting in. This building has had several names. It was first called Building A, and then it was called the Instructional Center for many, many years, and then, I believe in 2000 or so, it was renamed the Rodney K. Berg Instructional Center. Rodney K. Berg was the first president of College of DuPage, from 1967 to 1979.

Other buildings that followed it in this sort of progressive building of the campus, were the Student Resource Center in 1983, the Physical Education Building, also 1983, the now Art Center; it was built in 1986. It's now referred to as the McAninch Art Center. The Seaton Computing Center was built in the late 1980s, and that's named after the first chairman of the Board of Trustees, George Seaton. Since then, since the late '80s, we didn't have many buildings be built.

Now, in this next phase we've been involved with, we had many new buildings be built in the past seven years, some of them I already mentioned to you before, like the Homeland Security Education Building, the Culinary Arts Building, the Health and Science Center, the Technology Education Center,

all these are new buildings in the past seven years. Those four, in particular, are new in the past seven years.

Pogue: Were there any significant conflicts with the creation of the buildings and the design or a delay in construction?

Whisenhunt: In the early phase, in the early buildings, there was a lot of hand wringing about what buildings should be built, how much they should cost. One interesting story about the building we're sitting in is that... You and I are sitting here on the second floor. When this building opened in 1973, only the first two floors were finished. They had run out of money, so the third floor above us was not actually finished. It was an open shell with concrete floor and windows, but it had nothing finished inside of it. They ran out of money.

The story goes—I'm not sure how much of it is true or not—but the story goes, that about a year or so later, the governor at the time, Dan Walker, found some money to help the college complete the third floor of what's now called the Berg Instructional Center.

Other buildings have been somewhat... Over time, the building of the P.E. Building, the Art Center and the Student Center were natural progressions for the college. It was a natural thing to do to build these buildings. But the way to get the money in the 1970s and '80s was much more difficult for our presidents and our board of trustees to acquire the money to do this.

In the early 2000s, with this whole renovation sort of plan, going to the community and asking for a referendum to help us rebuild the campus and modernize it in many ways was less controversial. But now, in a difficult economic time, when the community sees all the building we're doing here for six and seven years, through one of the toughest economic times we've had in recent memory, there have been some questions about how much money we're spending on lots and lots of buildings and what those buildings are for. So, there is some controversy about that, yes.

Pogue: What was Alpha One?

Whisenhunt: When the college began, within the first year or two of the college, the college was divided into what they call the cluster system. This was in reaction to the college growing in size, quite rapidly. So the first year the College of DuPage had over 2,000 students, and by the later, probably the 1970s, it was well into 12-15,000 students here.

In reaction to that, many people here at the college thought it would be nice to create a small college atmosphere in the larger institution. So there were six colleges designed, and they were given Greek letter names, alpha and gamma and these were letters. They all had a kind of different focus. They all had their own dean and their own, actually, even, set of faculty to some

degree. It's actually based on a model that they used at Oxford University and Cambridge University in England, that you have a small cluster of students who would work with faculty closely together. It lasted for about a decade, from the late '60s to the late '70s.

Many of the courses that were offered in some of these colleges were very experimental and very unusual courses that you wouldn't normally find at a community college. The people who taught, back at that time, told me, when I was doing research for my project, that they really loved it. It was a much more inventive sort of time. They could be more creative with what classes they taught. But it sort of fizzled out by the later part of the 1970s. It was officially disbanded when we had a new president come, in 1979. That's Harold McAninch.

Pogue: How is the college divided now?

Whisenhunt: Since the late '70s, the college has now been basically divided into what we call divisions. These divisions will have many disciplines inside of them. So, starting in 2001, we once had four divisions. The four divisions in 2001 were Liberal Arts; Health, Social and Behavioral Sciences; Business and Technology, and Natural Applied Sciences. Today, we only have three. Today we have Business and Technology; we have Liberal Arts, and we have a division called Health Sciences. All of our disciplines now fall into those categories, so all faculty teach in one of those three areas.

Two other groups of our faculty, though, they're also faculty, but are librarians and counsellors. They're in their own separate areas, but as far as the teaching faculty, people who do regular teaching, are in these three large divisions. So I'm in Liberal Arts, for example; that's where history falls, and within that we have subdivisions. So, inside of Liberal Arts, for example, there is a Communication subdivision; there's a Humanities subdivision, and there's a Fine Arts subdivision. It's a very, very large division. I believe, right now, in that one division we have more than 100 full-time faculty and probably 500 part-time faculty, a very large structure.

Over time at the college, it's been smaller units sometimes. Back in '80s '90s, especially, they were much smaller units. But beginning around 2000 or so, we began to make these what we called, actually, for a while, mega-divisions, these big divisions with one dean and then some associate deans and so forth.

Pogue: As far as the honors program, you listed it began around 1983. Why did it develop, and does it still exist today?

Whisenhunt: It did develop in the early 1980s, and it was actually a faculty-sponsored idea. They wanted to do this for the better of our students, the high achieving students. At the time, as I understand it, it was controversial, because one of

the philosophies of a community college is to be more egalitarian, I suppose, than you find at other kinds of schools.

So, despite that kind of controversy at the time, it did take off, and it became, as I understand, one of the premier honors programs at a community college in the 1980s and '90s, into the early 2000s. About four years ago or so, there was a complete restructuring of it, and it nearly had a dramatic shift and drop in enrollment. Now it's being rebuilt again. So it does still exist. There are now several hundred students who take part in the honors program, but it was fundamentally changed about four years ago.

Pogue: So if you're one of those 200, what does that mean?

Whisenhunt: What it means is that you take classes that are designated as honors classes. These classes tend to be smaller, and the faculty who teach them will teach them in a different kind of way. It doesn't mean necessarily that those are harder, per se, but it means that they are more advanced in a certain way. So they have a higher... Certainly for a history class, for example, would be far more reading, far more writing than you find in a normal history class. It's more intense in that way.

We have an honors program, and if you complete the honors program with the required number of honors courses, you can have that designated on your transcript, as being an honors student. Certainly for those students who do that, it is very helpful when they transfer to four-year schools, to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Pogue: As far as the faculty and joining a union, first you indicated that there was no affiliation and then IEA. How did all that begin, and where would the faculty be found today?

Whisenhunt: From the beginning of the college in 1967, there was no faculty union here. There was no, I mean, being associated with an outside, larger union. There's always a faculty senate and faculty leadership. But, beginning in the 1980s, they did form a faculty association that was actually designed to be a bargaining unit to bargain a contract. Then, by the late 1980s, they voted to associate with a national union, and there was a debate about that, which national union to go with. So they took a vote, and it came out that it was the Illinois Education Association. So that's been that way since the later part of the 1980s.

Since then, over the past twenty-five years or so, the full-time college paid faculty have always been associated with, and still are, with the Illinois Education Association. The reason to do it, I believe, was that some faculty, back in the 1980s, believed that they were not getting, basically, fair compensation from the college. This was driven, to a great degree, by money at the time. That's what helped push them toward that.

Pogue: Why did the college switch to semesters from quarters?

Whisenhunt: When the college was founded, it was on the quarter system, and there was a kind of philosophy back at that time, some people thought, that a quarter system, which was about a ten or eleven week class session, suited students better, especially at a community college. It suited them well to have shorter terms and also to be able to take fewer classes at a time. So typically, in a quarter system, you would take maybe three classes, if you're a full-time student and have to juggle three classes in a ten or eleven week session.

Switching to semesters put us where students had to take maybe four or five classes over a sixteen week period. This decision was made in about 2004, and we made the switch in 2005 to semesters. It was primarily made by the president at the time, Sunil Chund, and the Board of Trustees. The faculty, in general, disagreed with going to semesters.

Pogue: At this time, could you give us an idea of when classes began this year and when the first semester ended and when the second semester began and when it ended.

Whisenhunt: Our first semester began in the fall of 2012, in late August, about August 22, I believe it was. We ended about December 15, so it's a sixteen week, traditional semester. And then we have a few weeks off at Christmas. This past semester began on January 10 or 11, and it ended last Friday, which would have been May 10. It's a traditional semester.

Well, part of the reason behind switching to semesters was complicated, because there were some people who believed students were being hurt by transferring some quarter credits to semester schools. That really wasn't the case; credits can transfer. It had to do with the kinds of courses they were taking. It's kind of a complicated thing, but in the end, it turned out that the reason to switch was not necessarily an educational reason. It was more, kind of administrative, in a way.

Pogue: What kind of parking and road problems existed for the college?

Whisenhunt: When I first started researching this history of the college, I read the college newspaper, which is called *The Courier*. Some of the first articles in there are about traffic and parking, parking and traffic. I found that sort of ironic, forty years later, that it's still about parking and traffic and traffic and parking.

When the college was first being built, there are pictures from back at that time that showed that most students were parking in dirt parking lots. That created a lot of irritation on the campus, because they were not paved, and when it would rain, they would get muddy.

There's a famous story, with the first president, that a young woman who had walked through one of these parking lots in the springtime, her boots

were all muddy; she came in, took off her boots, and threw them on his desk and told President Berg, at the time, that he owed her money for a pair of boots, that she had to walk through all this mud.

Now, forty-something years later, we still have that dilemma. Where do you park? Is there enough parking? Should you have to pay to park? Currently, we have free parking, and we have all surface lots. There was a debate here about building parking garages, which, I think, there may be still one in the works, perhaps, in the building project. But it is free to park here.

We do have some parking that you can pay for that are some closer spots. Otherwise, it is free to park, and they're all surface lots. They all are on the ground, not in parking garages at this time. But it's still a debate, because this building, for example, has lots and lots of classes in it, and so people sometimes complain they have to park far away in order to get here. But it is what it is.

Pogue: Has any of the outside road construction put a problem on transportation with students this year?

Whisenhunt: A little bit. Our construction projects, you mean?

Pogue: Yes.

Whisenhunt: A little bit. There are times when the construction projects shift, and then they shift, and they shift again. So sometimes, if you're here on a Friday, the road you came in on is open, and then sometimes it shifts over, and it's not open until Monday when you come back.

So there's been a little bit of that, not only in the roadways, but also sometimes in the building. For example, in this building, when they were renovating it, they had parts of it open, but then they'd re-shift your walkway through the building to renovate other parts of it. It always was kind of a mystery where you could go and how you could get to the campus.

Now, most of the buildings have been renovated, and most of the parking lots are finished. So there's less of that problem. Our renovation efforts now are isolated in a couple of areas, so it doesn't interfere with the flow of the campus like it did maybe two years ago.

Pogue: The issue of tuition, how has that changed since 1965, when the college began?

Whisenhunt: I believe, when it began in 1965, that we were on the quarter system. A typical class back at that time would be five quarter hours. I believe tuition back at that time was \$5.50 a quarter hour, which meant that you could take a college class for less than \$30. Today, our tuition is over \$130, so it's about \$425 now to take a three semester hour class.

This has been a constant point of debate here on campus between students and the college itself, between people here on the campus itself. I think it's a fairly normal... I don't think College of DuPage is out of line, necessarily, with national trends. College tuition has been increasing significantly, and in some cases, dramatically over the past forty years. I don't think the College of DuPage is... It seems like an extreme increase, but it's not. It is an extreme increase, but when you compare it to other schools, it's not out of line with what other schools are doing at that same time.

Pogue: What kind of aid is available for community college students, to help pay for that tuition?

Whisenhunt: We obviously have... Students can apply for federal financial aid, and there are Pell Grants and these sources of aid from the federal government. Here on campus, we have several dozen scholarships that people can apply for. Some of them are kind of unusual; they're very specified, for certain groups of people. Also, there are some scholarship programs through our honors program, as well. There are a variety of ways to get aid from the federal government, also from our scholarships that are housed in our foundation and through the honors program, as well.

Pogue: What impact did Kent State, the civil rights issue, the debates of the '70s, how did that impact the College of DuPage?

Whisenhunt: The College of DuPage is an interesting place on that issue, because the college opened in 1967. This, obviously, was a very tumultuous time in the United States, in the middle of the Vietnam War. DuPage County at that time was over 98 percent white, and so was College of DuPage. And DuPage County, historically, has been a fairly conservative county, a county that typically has voted for Republicans. What you found on this campus, in the first couple of years of existence, was that there were both pro- and anti-war rallies on the College of DuPage campus. You don't find that many pro-war demonstrations on college campuses in the 1960s, but here you did have that.

When the Kent State shootings took place, in May of 1970, now it seemed to send a kind of a shockwave through many college campuses across the United States, including College of DuPage. It was really the first time this new college had really a chance for these students to come together and sort of, I guess, worry and debate and think about the larger ramifications of the Vietnam War and the idea of civil rights.

So, not long after that shooting, there was a decision made to plant four trees for the students who were killed at the Kent State shooting. They planted these four trees and put a plaque at the corner of Fawell and Lambert Road, here on our campus. They stayed there for about forty years. They're no longer there.

Pogue: Were there any other major issues that have impacted student unrest or discussion?

Whisenhunt: There weren't a lot of those on this campus. Like many community colleges, our student population is transient, especially in a large suburban area, like we're in. Some of our students come here, take one class from us and then leave. Some people come here for retraining and take one class or two classes and aren't really engaged in the college life. We have a lot of adult students, students over eighteen to twenty-two years old who come here. Their lives are sort of mixed in with family and work and these other things. So the core of college students here on campus, who stay for two years or so, is not as large as the overall number sort of implied. So we don't have as much connection to the college in that sort of way.

But from that Kent State incident, through the next several decades, there didn't seem to be anything that was terribly controversial like that. There were some speakers here on campus, over time, who did bring large audiences and bring out a lot of people to go support them.

For instance, in the 1980s, in 1984, when Ronald Reagan was running for reelection, he did come here and had a campaign stop here. That was mostly heavily supported; there were some detractors. Then in 2000, candidate George W. Bush came to our campus and used part of our campus for a rally. So there were some big events like that, but they were not necessarily that terribly controversial.

Pogue: How did the student publications develop?

Whisenhunt: The very first one, and the one that's been the backbone of the college from the very first week that it opened, is known as *The Courier*. It's our student newspaper. It has been published, uninterrupted, since the first week of college, beginning in the fall of 1967. For my research, actually, in many ways, it's an interesting timeline of the college. The issues of the college are laid out there in many ways.

Not long after that, in the 1980s sometime, there was a publication begun called *The Prairie Light Review*. *The Prairie Light Review* is a literary journal, literary and art journal that we have. It's creative writing; it's poetry; it's short prose, photography, artwork, these sort of things. That's been going on for more than twenty years.

About ten years ago we started a journal called *Essai*, which is actually spelled E-s-s-a-i. It's an old spelling from the sixteenth century. It is about academic writing, rather than creative writing, more about research writing and that kind of stuff. That's been going on for about ten years. Then there are some smaller publications that have come and gone in that time, but those are three that have sort of maintained themselves for all these years.

Pogue: How about athletics?

Whisenhunt: College of DuPage has a very rich history in athletics. There's some interesting parts of this. When the college first opened, there were very few facilities. As I just mentioned to you, there was no campus, really, when it first opened. But we did have a football team. So in the first couple of years, we had football, and football was very popular. By the 1980s, football became a sport where the college was winning several national junior college championships.

The college's, though, first championship was actually in hockey, strangely enough, even though there was no hockey rink ever here. We've never had an ice hockey rink on this campus. But the first national championship in an athletic event was actually hockey.

Other sports were popular back in the beginning of the college. One was actually men's gymnastics, which was kind of unusual to have, in general, but to have in a community college. In more recent years, football has come back. We had football from the beginning of the college. It was disbanded for a few years in the late 90s or early 2000s, and now we have it back again.

Probably one of the most successful and kind of humorous—successful in the long term and humorous—parts of the college's history has to do with its swim team. The swim team was very successful in the 1970s into the early 80s. But if you look at the chronology of buildings on campus, we did not build a physical education building with a pool until 1983. Well, they were winning all kinds of, again, awards and meets well before there was actually a pool on campus. The students had to go other places to swim.

So the first ten to fifteen years, athletics did not have really proper facilities to do the things they needed to do. Since the building of the P.E. Building, it's been much more stable in that way.

Pogue: You talked earlier about the changing demographics. How significant has that been since the 1980s?

Whisenhunt: Since the 1980s, there has been a significant change in the demographics here at College of DuPage. I would say that, certainly from the beginning of the college in the 1960s, it was very much a white, male population at the College of DuPage. I say male, because I believe nearly 70 percent of our students in the 1960s were men. Of course, in the 1960s, people could get deferments from the military, so we had a high male population, which was not unusual, compared to other colleges around the United States at the time.

What we've seen change, dramatically, I think, since the 1980s, are several things. One, we have more and more lower-income students coming to College of DuPage. Second, we have more and more minorities coming to

College of DuPage. I believe now that our minority percentage, probably, at the college is around 20 percent, when at the beginning of the college, it was less than 1 percent.

We have a healthy population of adult students, people over twenty-five years old. Our average age, I believe, is somewhere around twenty-eight, so we have people who come here who are in their twenties and thirties and forties and fifties. My oldest student I've ever had was a person in their nineties, actually. So it's becoming much more diverse in that sort of way.

We've also had immigration changes in DuPage County, so there are even more people coming from outside the United States that now have significant populations in DuPage County. The two most notable on this campus are Hispanic students, who may be immigrants themselves or be descendants of immigrants, and also people from South Asia, Indians and people from Pakistan. Again, they may be immigrants themselves or children of immigrants. That population has increased significantly in the past, probably, twenty-five years, those two groups, as well.

Pogue: What are some of the unique programs found at the college?

Whisenhunt: There are lots of things that we have here, at the college, that are not only for traditional students, but also for community members. We have something that was known as the Business and Professional Institute. We have outreach programs dealing with philanthropy, through our library. We had at one point an older adult institute, which actually ran courses for people who were over fifty-five years old. So there's been a lot of unusual and distinctive programs that we've had, linking ourselves to the community to enhance that part of our mission of not only offering traditional college courses, but also offering the community something in return.

A couple of other things we have, is that you can have a membership, for example, to our P.E. Building—It's closed right now, because it's being renovated—but you can have a membership, almost like a health club, to our P.E. Building if you're a community member. All community members have the right to come and use our library. Also the Art Center is a great cultural center, in many ways, because there are student performances in there. There also are professional performances, as well, that are brought in from around the world.

So there are a lot of different features here that are for the college and also for the community, as well as, we have a radio station on campus that is a public radio station.

Pogue: What is the Early Childhood Center, and how did it get its name?

Whisenhunt: The Early Childhood Center was one of the first buildings built in this new phase of reconstruction of the campus. It's on the west side of the campus.

Louise Beem, who it is named for, was one of the early faculty members who worked in that area here at the college. That, actually, is an interesting program, because not only is it the academic side, where you have faculty teaching students how to take care of children and work in the early childhood environment and day cares and these sorts of things, but actually it is a day care center, itself.

If you're a student, or if you work here or if you're a community member, you can actually use that as your day care center. So it's a lot of hands-on training, a lot of hands-on work. You get to apply your ideas from the classroom right there immediately, in a real live center [that] we have on campus. I didn't with my children, but I know many people who work here, who took their children there, as day care, while they're working.

Pogue: How many presidents has the college had, and how has that either helped or hurt the college?

Whisenhunt: We're on our fifth one right now. The first one was Rodney K. Berg. He was here from the beginning until 1979. The second one was Harold McAninch, who was here from 1979 to 1994. The third one was Michael Murphy, from 1994 to 2003. And then Sunil Chund, from [2003 to '08].

The current president is Robert Breuder, since January 2009. And I think it's been good for an institution of this age. Most of these people have a fairly long tenure, and that helps them sort of move their vision forward and have time to complete it. So, I think that's been generally a positive thing for the college.

Pogue: What significant changes have taken place at the college since your own manuscript was written in 2006?

Whisenhunt: I would say probably there are several key things. One is, obviously, we've undertaken this massive new building project. So we had the money... We already had the money approved by 2006, but the physical changes on this campus are dramatic, in the past six or seven years. Buildings being renovated, new buildings being built are quite significant.

A second thing is, there is, obviously, as everyone knows, a financial crisis in the State of Illinois. And theoretically, when the community colleges were started, back in the 1960s, a theory was put out—I never found actually evidence that anyone agreed to this, exactly—but that the way they're going to fund community colleges was, it would be a third from tuition, a third from local property taxes and then a third from the State of Illinois. I've always heard that theory. I never could find a piece of paper that said everyone agreed on that. But currently, our contribution from the State of Illinois is less than ten percent. That's one of the great struggles we've had, especially past seven

or eight years, is that the State of Illinois budgetary percentage is dwindling for us.

The other, probably, dramatic change is that, starting in 2009, we had a new president come in, Robert Breuder, who has a vision that's all his own, about where he thinks the college should be going. It's a bit different than what it had been in the past, and it's been a bit controversial, here on the campus.

Pogue: When you talk about a vision and the role of the college, what are you talking about?

Whisenhunt: What I mean is, President Breuder came in very clearly in 2009, stating that he wanted to use a business model for the college. Higher education administration goes through different theories of how they should be running colleges. And his belief is that a college should run like a business. So he looks, primarily it seems, at, are things financially viable to make decisions about how to continue, whether to continue, what to keep, what to dispose of? That's been our driving force here for the past four years of so.

That creates difficulties with a lot of people who work here, not just faculty, but also other people as well, because usually at most colleges there's a balance between things that are financially viable and some that are not. In some areas, you can actually have almost a surplus of money coming in. In other areas, you have deficits. But those all balance out in the end, to achieve our mission. His more strictly—as he calls it, business model—has created controversy on how we spend our money, what we focus on, and what we emphasize here at the college.

Pogue: As we talked to other community colleges, they've hit many of the things that you've spoken on the financial side, that the state share is dropping with a greater reliance on assessed property values. Some of the rural districts are large, so they're trying to keep up with their property tax. The College of DuPage falls into the tax cap area. Is that correct? How has that impacted it?

Whisenhunt: You know, it is in a tax cap. That has been in play since the late 1970s, I believe it was. So our tax rate, the rate of taxation for it to support the College of DuPage, has not increased since that time. And that, generally speaking, wasn't a problem, because in the 1980s and the 1990s and the early 2000s, the overall property value in DuPage County continued to increase. So, as that property value increased, the amount of actual, real money we were getting also increased, with the value of the homes going up.

In the past five or six years, that's not been the case, necessarily. You have property values dropping, and so the actual amount of money that comes in has been at least stagnant, if not declining. I'm not sure I know exactly if

it's been declining, but I'm sure it has been stagnant over the past few years, which creates difficulties for us.

I think we're in a better position than a lot of other community colleges, because DuPage County is a very affluent county. So, even in bad times, it's not been as bad here as it has been, I believe, in other places. We have not seen as much of a financial crisis here as I think other schools have suffered.

Pogue: How is your own field of history changed in what it teaches, how it teaches the type of courses, since you became a faculty member here?

Whisenhunt: I would say the key thing that has changed dramatically in the past sixteen or twenty years I've been here, is the rapid use of technology with our students. Our students have phones and laptop computers and iPads and all that kind of stuff, and the interest in and the ability to do serious reading has declined significantly. It creates a real dilemma in a field like history, where the primary way to transmit the information and analyze the events is almost always in written form. So that's one of the great obstacles I personally have in teaching here with my students.

[It] is that we don't live in a culture of people who read a lot. So, when I ask them to read short things or long things, difficult things, it's a real challenge for most of the students. I assign that to, we live in a more technological age. I could be wrong about that. I just think, though, that the level and the ability to really do serious reading and analyzing what you're reading has really declined a lot in the past ten to fifteen years.

Pogue: What is your typical class size?

Whisenhunt: Our classes here in history, and for most areas of the college, are limited to no more than thirty-five students. It's not a bad size of class. It's big enough that people can kind of do their own thing, but it's small enough, too, that I can still have some pretty good discussions with the students. It's a nice size to have.

Pogue: Are many classes in history taught online?

Whisenhunt: We started to offer online courses about ten years ago, maybe, or so. I would say today that maybe 10 percent of our courses are offered online.

Pogue: What is the challenge about teaching an online course, compared with the typical classroom?

Whisenhunt: I would say... Well, I'm actually teaching my first online course this summer. What I hear from colleagues is that one of the great challenges of online courses is that, because it's online, it's on a computer, and it's not something that you have to go to class—there's no sort of in-class presence required—

that many students forget they're taking the classes. They don't do them in a very diligent way sometimes. So it's very easy for students not to engage in it, because it's simply not a pressing... They don't have to be in class at 9:00 on a Thursday. That creates a problem of actually completing the assignments and completing the work on time.

From my perspective, in teaching it, I worry about how much students get out of the courses sometimes, how much real analysis is going on sometimes in the classes. For me, teaching it, which I'm working on now, I worry about the technical problems that I'm going to have. (laughs) But, we'll see.

It's a growing trend in colleges and universities around the United States. So College of DuPage is right in there. History, as I said, only has about 10 percent of the courses, but some of the other areas have a lot more than that online.

Pogue: What has been the relationships with the four-year colleges found in the region?

Whisenhunt: In general, we have good relationships with them. We sort of identify with several schools that are right in our area. Our two biggest public universities that we transfer students to are NIU, Northern Illinois University, and UIC [University of Illinois-Chicago], in the city. We do have students who also go to places here in DuPage County, like Elmhurst College, Benedictine and North Central. Those are some of our big schools that we tend to have people transferring to. Our relationships there are pretty good.

In the past four or five years, we've established some new agreements with some of these schools, in specific programs. For example, we have a 3+1 Agreement with Benedictine University, in business, where students who want to major in business can start with us and do their first three years here on our campus and then transfer to Benedictine and finish their fourth year there for their bachelor's degree.

So we have some of these very specific College of DuPage and a single university relationship in one area. We have them in business; I believe there are a couple of nursing; there are a couple in criminal justice, as well, that take our courses directly from us to those other institutions. We usually call those 3+1 Agreements, three years here with us and then one year at the four-year school to finish up the degree.

Pogue: How about with the high schools?

Whisenhunt: Over the course of the history of the college, I think that the high schools relationship has been sort of up and down, in a way. Currently, it seems very strong. There seems to be a lot of outreach from the college to recruit students directly from the high schools to come here.

I think the college used to have a reputation for a while in the '70s and '80s that it was a college of last resort. But I think in many ways in the past, say twenty years or so, it has a much higher profile than that. It's a choice students are making for a variety of reasons, rather than, it's a place they just happen to go. It seems like a much more conscious choice for most of our students. They choose to come here for a reason, with a plan to take some courses here and then move on somewhere else. I think that's because the relationship with the college and the high schools is better.

Pogue: Do the students in this district have the opportunity for dual credits and also distant learning?

Whisenhunt: There are opportunities for dual credits here, in some fields, not all fields, but in some fields you can do that. Distance learning... We still have a center called the Center for Independent Learning that actually was kind of the ancestor of the online. It was where you basically ran independent courses. These courses might even be considered in a different context as well, sort of like correspondence courses of a different time.

Well, over time, our—alternative learning is what we call it—alternative formats have changed. Our primary alternative format now is online learning. But as far as distance learning, there was a time when we would set up like a television classroom, where somebody would be somewhere else and watch somebody in a classroom. We haven't done that as much, I don't believe, in recent times as we once did. Like I said, most of our emphasis has been on the online side, as a way to have distance learning.

Pogue: Now, you teach history, so is it common for you to have students that have earned college credits while in high school?

Whisenhunt: I have a few. I don't have that many of them, but I had some. I have some who've gotten AP credit, advance placement credit, from high school. I also have some students, though, who have bachelor's degrees already. It's very common for me to have a handful of students every semester who already have a bachelor's degree from somewhere else and are back in school for a variety of reasons.

I had a student just this last semester, in my Russian history class, who had a bachelor's degree. I don't remember what his degree was in, but he wanted to become a history teacher. So he was coming here to take some courses for his education program, I believe he was doing at North Central College. He was preparing for that by taking some courses here. That's not uncommon, at all, for me to have in my classes, people from a wide range of backgrounds, some people who don't actually finish high school, you know, and people who've been out of school for twenty years. It's a very diverse population, even in one room of thirty-five people, which is always fun and challenging at the same time.

Pogue: Our last question is, looking down the road, what are going to be the three biggest challenges over the next decade? In your work, with your manuscript, you have covered challenges, from parking and how the college set up into clusters and moved to divisions and the building construction and the tuition issues. What are the three that you think are going to be the biggest challenges for COD?

Whisenhunt: I would say the three things that will be the biggest challenges at the College of DuPage, going forward, would be... One, is the funding question. The funding question is difficult, because if the state does, in essence, sort of stop funding the college, then we have to find other sources. The two other sources, of course, are the taxpayers and tuition, and both of those are growing burdens on the people in DuPage County that are difficult. It's hard to charge students lots of tuition. It's also hard to tax people a lot for such an institution. So that's one of the most difficult things, I think, coming for us in the next decade or so.

A second thing is related to basically getting and keeping good faculty and staff here at the college, making sure that we get people who are good and who will stay here at the college. This is a kind of a complicated way I think about it, though, is one of the difficulties is, of course, is that you have a pension system in Illinois that is in difficulty, and for people who are in that pension system, people who work in public institutions, from faculty to staff, administrators and everybody else, that looming pension problem creates a difficulty.

So, for instance, right now we have a lot of full-time faculty retiring early, because they're worried about what the future holds down the road for the pension system. At the same time, someone like me, I worry, will it be there, or anything be there, when I get to that point? It makes people make decisions, like about leaving or moving other places. So there's a kind of an uneasiness for people who work in public institutions right now. That can create some difficulties for us over the next ten years, because we may see some unnatural number of departures, people leaving for these sorts of reasons.

I would say the third thing, as someone who teaches here, is something you already alluded to in one of your questions, and that is, over the next ten years, I worry, personally, about student engagement. How do I engage the students? How do I get them interested in history, in a culture that doesn't really embrace it in the way that, I guess, I think it should? But it's something that is difficult when students don't have much of a foundation, sometimes, in serious reading and analysis and writing. We're seeing more and more trends, difficulties with that, and that's something that will be a challenge for us going forward.

Pogue: Well, Ben, I want to thank you for giving us a history of the College of DuPage and your work with your manuscript over the history and your own teaching experiences here at the college that cover the '90s and two thousands. I appreciate you being a part of our community college project.

Whisenhunt: Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

(end of interview)