

**INTERVIEW  
WITH  
DAVE WEBER  
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Sloan Oral History Series**

D: Dave Weber  
B: Bob McKersie  
G: George Roth

G: What brought you here, why MIT, and what it was like when you came here. So you have a unique perspective to share, coming as a “customer”?

D: Certainly back in the TQM days, it was, but not everybody agreed with that point. I think it is a good launch point.

As we were talking earlier, I was with the brake division of GM, it was called Delco Moraine at the time, but eventually rolled up into what you would think of as Delphi. I knew I wanted to go back to business school, even while I was in undergrad engineering. I had gotten guidance and suggestions along the way about where I might want to apply. Back at that time, I applied to just three schools: Stanford, Kellogg, and MIT. I was fortunate enough to get admitted to all three places. But there was no question – all of my mentors, people I looked up to and respected – had all come through the Sloan Fellows (SF) program. One or two folks that I knew had done the Stanford Sloan program, but basically everybody had come here. In fact, one of the most senior ones, after he found out that I had been admitted here, gave me a really dog-eared copy of “How To Get Around MIT” (HowToGAMIT), something they used to produce every year. I don’t know if they updated it every year, or if we give it to entering classes, but he was pretty proud of that. And it was literally the sort of “passing of the torch”, because at that point his copy had to be 8 or 10 years old, at least. Of course I went through it voraciously to figure out what this place was like, and what Kendall Square was like, and the Cambridge community. Because unlike nowadays, when we advise our applicants to go and visit all the schools they are applying to, the only school I actually visited in person was Kellogg because I was nearby in the Midwest. I didn’t go to Stanford – that might have been a tipping point, San Francisco is a pretty nice place! But I never looked back.

It was such a fantastic experience as a student, fitting into that network of alumni, broadly construed as well as the people I really looked up to, really respected at GM, specifically

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within my division. But even broadly, as I looked around the corporation and looked at the alumni rolls of the SF program, and even graduates from the Masters program, because that was a period of time when GM was sponsoring a fair number of people at the top business schools.

B:           What year was that?

D:           I came in the summer of 1982. I had an interesting experience, though. I was in the Accelerated Masters Program (AMP), the one-year program. We walked in that first day and John Van Maanen and a number of other folks were going to do our orientation and spend time with us. Abe Siegel was the dean. The first thing he did in the morning of the first day here, was come in and says, "Welcome. You guys are the last class of the AMP," and the room just exploded. People were like "What?!! You can't do this! Our stock is going to go down! This is terrible!!" And we had to work that into the orientation of what it meant to be the last class in that program. I think it had a very positive outcome, and people felt proud, in certain ways, to be part of that "last ride on the M train." But yes, it was definitely a memorable experience, because it was right, literally, within the first hour we were on campus.

G:           I guess it was good to hear the news and be direct about it. Do you remember why it was the last year of the program?

B:           Well, I do.

D:           Bob can tell you his story. I'll tell you my story, and my impression at the time.

              This was a time when, as we were talking a little earlier, the MOT Program had just started up, so we actually did our summer curriculum that year, there were 44 of us in the AMP, and either 6 or 7 in the MOT class. This would have been the second MOT class. They took their summer curriculum with us because they weren't a size that was economical. But I think people could see the vision of growth in that program.

              I also think there was a sense, maybe, that the Leaders program, which didn't happen until some years later, but just a few years later might be another thing that would happen during the summer. At the end of the day, the sense I had was, it was really tough to get great faculty to teach in the summer. I think the lot size of 40 to 44 people in this AMP probably

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wasn't an efficient lot size for the School and for the faculty utilization. And we definitely had a wide age spread in the class, and I'm guessing maybe there were some challenges there regarding filling the class with a really good target audience. I was actually one of the youngest in the class. We had people who were well into their 40s at that point, so it was quite a spectrum around the class. It made for pretty interesting conversations. I'd worked for a few years at GM at that point, but some of these folks looked like SFs who had 20 or more years of experience. So that was my take. Bob, you probably have a much different sense of what the real decisions were.

B: We had a different orientation then. We have a dean now who says our wide portfolio programs are an advantage. You mentioned LFM, we had the Senior Executive program still then, we had pretty much all the programs then that we have today. I think Abe was saying that we had so many directions to deploy faculty, where could we begin to shrink? And for the reason that you just mentioned, the AMP was a good candidate to just come back to a regular Masters program.

Here you are, it's the early '80s. What happened when you got your degree?

D: When I got my degree, this was June 1983.

G: You went June to June?

D: Yes. It was really tight. We can talk about that, the challenges of getting Bob Merton of 15.415 Finance Theory in about 6 weeks. We'd sometimes see Bob three periods a day, 4.5 days a week. Imagine the pace that the course was going. Just incredible. It was definitely the drink from the firehose sort of thing. We did 8 or 9 courses in the summer. It's modeled after the SF and the very early days of the MOT program. This School is used to delivering that intensity over the summer, but I think it was pretty incredible.

We were still doing theses at that time, and this becomes relevant. I did a thesis on "Make Versus Buy Analysis," or vertical integration theory applied to actual data that we gathered from my division at GM. It turned out to be a pretty good jumping off point for a guy who is not on our faculty any more, Gordon Walker. He ended up publishing a number of papers based on the work, so we actually stayed in touch after I graduated and went back to GM, and I

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got a little more data. Some of our papers made it into ASQ and some of the better journals. The faculty here have quoted them, and that's kind of a cool thing. Gordon did the heavy lifting to turn it into a reasonable refereed paper, but it was based on my thesis data and conclusions. That was kind of cool, and it kept us in touch. He came out to Ohio and visited our division, and met some of the people who had provided data and things like that.

I had stayed in touch with Jeff Barks and Dean Siegel a bit along the way. I have to say, the year spent here in Cambridge was one of the best times of my life personally. My wife and my marriage, we just loved the vibrancy of the place.

G: She came out with you?

D: Yes. We had a house and a sailboat to sell down in Virginia. She stayed behind – this was the summer of 1982 – and I drove up here with one of our cars and a card table. I didn't even have a bed. I slept on the floor, and we rented a brand new townhouse just over here next to what is now One Kendall Square, which isn't what we think of as Kendall Square, but now it's where the theater and all that has developed. We were right across the street in a brand new townhouse, sleeping on the floor. It was a fun time, but then she sold the boat and the house and moved up here. She worked at Harvard for the year while I was here. It was funny, because she always said she worked under BF Skinner – she was in the Psychology Department, and I think he was a couple floors above her in that tall building that Psych is in at Harvard. But it was a fun experience for her, along the way.

B: James Hall.

D: That's right. Even though it was tremendous hard work academically, the social aspects of the School – Consumption Functions and social gatherings – and being so close, faculty actually came over to our house. Back at the time I thought this was remarkable. As I came to find out when I came back professionally, Sloan is an incredibly collegial place. But to think that faculty would have come to some parties we had in our house where the whole class came over and stuff, that was pretty cool. It was just one of those things that we said, “We don't know what the next few years are going to hold, but that was really cool.”

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I graduated in 1983. I went back to GM. Things were moving very quickly there. Had some factory roles. Was in the midst of French classes because they thought our next assignment would be a plant that we had over in France on the Swiss border. But I came to the realization that making parts for cars wasn't where my passion was for the rest of my life. We were doing a bit of soul-searching – and this is really ironic – we were driving back to Wisconsin and stopped and bought a *Boston Globe* at a newsstand, a *Sunday Globe*. And it had an ad in it (it was the only ad they ever ran) for a position to come back here. I called up Jeff Barks, a guy I'd stayed a little bit in touch with, and I said "What's this about? Do you think I'd actually be a candidate?"

He said, "You'd be a great candidate." They flew us out there for interviews with Abe and Jeff and I talked to a couple other people, and the rest is history. Now, 28 years later, lots of different roles and things, but...

B: So that would have been 1986.

D: Yes, Spring of 1986. My wife was pregnant at that time with our only daughter. I can go quickly through the personal stuff, but it was sort of unique. She's pregnant, she had a good job with Meade Data Central, this is Lexis/Nexus, and they're growing leaps and bounds. She was able at least to get transferred to a field office out here at Nexus/Lexis. And this was a great area because of lots of law firms, but they were also expanding into universities and other stuff, because this was pre-Web. Nexus was a pretty hot thing at that point in time. We were able to work out the logistics.

We got out here. We had bought a townhouse over near Radcliffe and Porter Square, brand new construction. There were a few pockets of property being developed around Cambridge, and to make the long story a little shorter, they didn't get a zoning clearance in enough time, so we were living on our sailboat in Boston Harbor. My mother-in-law came out here, my dad came out here, and we had a 100-pound Golden Retriever. My wife is two weeks overdue, and we're still living on the boat. We had no furniture in the house or anything. She went into labor and that was that, we had our daughter and brought her home. I put her crib together while my wife and daughter were in the hospital. We slept on the floor on pillows, and my daughter had a bed. It got a little better after that, but....

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G: And this was on the boat?

D: No, this was finally back in the house by that point. We were able to rattle the builders enough to say, “Look, this is happening, and we need to move things along with City Hall,” so we were able to get in as we came back from the hospital. But we were on the boat literally until we went to the hospital.

I started in August as Associate Director to Jeff Barks of the Masters Program, and Director of Student Services. And to bring it back to Sloan history, this was at a time when both Esther Merrill and Miriam Sherbourne were moving into their twilight years, and as they retired, these two women had over 100 years at Sloan, or at least at MIT. I think both of them spent the majority of their time here at Sloan. But two incredible women who held this place together, by all accounts, in so many ways.

One of the things I remember about those early years, both as a student but then even when I came back in 1986, 3 years later, was how familial kind of place it was, and the physical infrastructure at that point was pretty simple and pretty contained, too. It was probably shortly thereafter that we started to grow and sprawl more, but at that point E52 and E53 were really home base in terms of offices, and E51 – this was all pre-Tang Center, of course, so when I say E51, it’s the front half, the river side of E51 – was kind of home base.

It was literally home base for us when I was a student here, because my wife would come over because the air conditioning worked so well, and we didn’t have air conditioning in that townhouse. In really hot times in summer, she’d come over and I’d be working well into the night with teammates on different projects, and she used to come over and hang out. It was a sort of “home away from home.”

But yes, Miriam and Esther really were such a face to the students in the various programs – Esther with the undergrads in the latter portion of time that I knew her, and Miriam with the Masters program, and a lot of the other infrastructure sort of things that are now moved into a lot of different offices: Student Life, Educational Services, the Program offices themselves. That was all Miriam back in the day, and Harriett Barnett played a major role in both the admissions and student services function, especially around the Accelerated program in those years. She and Arnie actually were quite fond of that program, he loved teaching in it, and she loved being the “mother hen” to those 45 or 50 students.

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And then when I came back professionally, our daughters ended up being the same age, so we ended up doing things socially with them along the way, which was neat.

B: Just to stay with your timeline, because there will be a lot of other bigger questions we will ask, what follows next in your journey, your various incarnations here at MIT? After taking on Jeff and Student Services, how long did that go before you picked up....?

D: The ladies were 1986, '87, '88 timeframe. About that time, a lot of new things started, other things scaled up. That's when our international trips for the Masters program started, so the first of the Japan/Korea trips. I had never traveled internationally in any big way, either professionally or personally. I started traveling both for Admissions and for an outreach/recruiting standpoint. And as the international field trips started up as study tours back in those days, the students did a huge amount of work in preparation for those early trips. I mentioned Japan/Korea, but early trips to Eastern Europe when that was opening up, the students did a LOT of work, not just preparing the trip logistics, but actually studying and putting together background briefings, and things like that. I would say for the Executive programs' travels, we did a lot of that work. For the Masters programs, the students really took them on and did a huge amount of the heavy lifting. That was new.

We had moved into the early days of the Student Senate, the GMS moved from just doing Consumption Functions, to being kind of the forerunner of what we now think of as the Student Senate. I think that formalized in the early 1990s as well.

Along about maybe 1991, I became Director of the Masters Program, and we were doing a lot of work looking at the core curriculum as well as the extracurricular activities. This was also a time when we ramped up from probably a couple dozen clubs to probably 50 student organizations, and conferences started to happen, so providing support and infrastructure for those activities.

Our admissions numbers started to climb, to the point where just reading applications was a big deal. You may remember the transitions when faculty still used to read a fair amount of the applications, and be involved in the decision process. So we managed through that and eventually got more faculty input around guidelines and policies, rather than having faculty actually read apps. I think a lot of people realized, the faculty as well, that reading 10 of these and then trying to calibrate and make decisions when you've got thousands is a little

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challenging, and that you actually have to read a pretty good number before you start to get a baseline in mind. There were lots of other reasons, too, it was probably wasn't a great use of faculty time at the end of the day, although you don't want to have the faculty disconnected from the process in any way. Obviously, they had a huge stake there.

The other things, as we got into the early 1990s, that was the time when we started doing the planning for the Tang Center, because at that point we were really feeling the need for space. The Schell Room, as we knew it, had been reconfigured a number of different times for things. It used to have soft furniture, and was useful for seminars and guest speakers. Small-scale, but had the nice space, had the little catering kitchen on the side of it. But we had just run out of places for students to study, for group work to happen, and for the Career Development office. At that point in time, they were still on the first floor here. It was literally two admin staff and one support staff at that point for the CEO. And like all the offices, we've grown, scaled up, and professionalized. But most of our offices at that point, on the administrator side, were very small groups of people wearing a lot of different hats.

Doing the planning for the Tang Center was interesting because we got to work with people like **Bob Simhob**, who had been here for many decades, and had helped develop a much longer-term vision for Kendall Square, for the MIT campus, and for the east end of the campus. Of course, this was long before we were able to do this building, but even being able to expand the way we did for the Tang Center was huge.

At that point, during those early years of my time, the size of the Masters program doubled then, and it will have doubled again through the late 1990s. This was the transition from Lester's deanship to Glen Urban. You were spending time in the Dean's office during parts of that for sure, right?

B: Yes. I think that was another thought in eliminating the advanced Masters program. We were going to grow the regular Master's program instead.

D: We were doing a lot more in cohorts at that point. I remember in maybe 1992, 1991 timeframe, 1991 probably – where the students got very involved in the orientation process for the first time. And again, that pendulum has swung back and forth a bit, but we still have very heavy involvement now, I would say. The second year students are really driven more by the



program Office of Student Life. But that was the first time that we really had heavy involvement of the second-year students in preparing the incoming orientation.

We had the summer workshops for international students, which came about during that time. Joanne Yates did a lot around the communications skills. That also brought in the different tutorials around economics and accounting, to really help people fill gaps before they got into the formal curriculums. So there was a fair amount of work in that area.

Then, through the orientation process, as our size got bigger, so did the importance of cohort building within that. We were never going to have the section approach that Harvard and some of the larger programs have, where everything revolved around your cohort. We definitely took the cohort seriously, wove them into the orientation process and into the scheduling process for at least the fall portion of the curriculum.

Eventually, we had a number of different core curriculum studies over the time I've been here, but those are pretty serious efforts to look at both the curricular and extracurricular activities. The Career Development Office workshops and things, where we were getting feedback from our alums and recruiters about what our students needed in order to flourish better in the job markets. It was a time of growth in a lot of those different areas as well.

B: That's great. It really helps understand how things were.

D: I think another step – and this one definitely lived on almost exactly as we set it up back then – but around 1994-95, there was a variety of things going on. This was when we had gathered a lot of data and feedback, and this was going to be the approval of the MBA as a formal Masters degree, as opposed to the Master of Science, and at that point would make the thesis an option rather than a requirement. This was a challenging time. There was a lot of internal work, a lot of stakeholder fact-finding and opinion gathering and input gathering from alumni and other constituents. A lot of work with the administration of MIT to get that through the process. But eventually it did come about. Up to that point, our team was spending a lot of time helping students on shaping their thesis topics, finding them advisors, etc. So we were doing all kinds of tutorials and training sessions on how to write a thesis in a reasonable amount of time and still take as many courses as people wanted to do. In a first approximation, there was a percentage of people who had fantastic thesis experience; a small percentage that had an absolutely miserable experience; and a large cluster of people in the middle for whom the thesis

was a requirement. It probably brought them closer to a particular faculty member, a couple of faculty members, than almost any other experience. But it wasn't necessarily the highlight of their two years here. So I think there was a real effort, right up to the point where we made the thesis optional and formally got the MBA approved, where we were trying to change that ratio and make sure people were having as good an experience as they could have in the thesis process.

We had these structured thesis projects where faculty would take on large numbers of students. Again, working around the edges with that, both from a logistics standpoint but also a lot of time spent with students trying to shape a topic that would help them professionally as well as academically. There were advisors that were particularly skilled at helping people do that so it became a more positive experience. I remember that being challenging for us, but one that I think a lot of people felt was worth spending the time on.

Moving forward into that era, 1994-95, that had to be pretty early in Glen's time as dean, we moved to a setup where we were doing a lot around TQM and Shoji Shibo was doing things, Gabe Bitran was doing things with the different staff groups and some of the faculty leaders around quality of services. We developed one aspect of that into forming an Educational Services Unit. I was the first, the founding director of that group. We literally went in and pulled staff from the different program staffs. Alan was still running ExecEd and Sloan Fellows, so some people came from that group. Some people came from ILP on the Master's program, and we had some other folks who had been doing the scheduling, the registrar functions that we did locally, and then did a lot of the interaction with the Institute around everything from financial aid and the Bursar's Office, to Registrar, to policy stuff.

We created that first Educational Services, and they did the internal publications; eventually implemented the bidding system. That unit actually looks now almost like it did 20 years ago. They have taken on a few more new functions, and the technology has certainly changed and made a lot more possible. But in many ways, they do many of the same functions, they just do them differently in most cases with a lot of technology applied.

That notion of shared services, and keeping things within the program that were specific to the programs, and pulling out what you could pull out to try to do more efficiently and where it made more sense to do that across the schools, is a philosophy that has stuck and probably characterizes the organization today as you look at different parts, where we're doing admissions and Rod Garcia's team for many of the different programs. The Student Life office

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has now taken on basically that function across the degree programs. Educational Services still exists as I described. That was a transformative time, I would say, along with the growth that we talked about earlier, happening. That might have been the catalyst for doing that, which was that kind of growth.

G: Did you influence the rest of MIT with that model? Or did you learn from the rest of MIT?

D: It's interesting. It's a good question, and it fits right into the next step in the timeframe.

I would say there were people at MIT who were already heading in that direction, because this was the time when we were just in the early phases of what we called "re-engineering." It was Michael Hammer's work with Chuck Vest, the Corporation and others. A fair number of the departments/labs/centers, DLCs, which is a term we don't use much over here, but they use it a lot in other parts of MIT. Other entities, especially a lot of the smaller labs were looking at a shared-services model, where they would get HR and financial support and other kinds of infrastructure, administrative support, shared across a bunch of small labs. The larger ones had the volume there to warrant having their own dedicated headcount in a lot of these areas. But a lot of the smaller labs had a harder time justifying it.

This was a challenging time for MIT, back in the downturn of the early 1990s, so this was one of a number of efforts to really "steady the ship" financially, but also look at our processes. Again, this was TQM and that kind of thing alive and well as looking at cost efficiencies.

To your question, I actually got asked to come over to MIT for a two-year special assignment around reorganizing student services, and that's when we conceived and built the combined Student Services Center in Building 11, which still exists today. That has reshaped a little bit in terms of what things are under that umbrella, but the physical aspects of that office are still very much there as a face-to-face student services operation. That was the time when the Web was coming along, so we were just starting to move a lot of the registrar and other functions to the Web. But there was still a lot of walk-in business at that point. That was Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid, Academic advising, and all of the student support functions at the Institute level.

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I spent 2 years over there. **Hillary DeVau**n came over there as well and took a very strong role in that project. She had been running the undergrad program here and doing some of the other infrastructure tasks.

B: How did you view that two-year assignment?

D: Yes, that was a real turning point for me in a lot of different ways, because even back then we always felt that Sloan was a more integral part of our own institution, our university, our Institute than most—or any—of our peer business schools were to their universities. I believed that, but I really didn't know what the rest of MIT was like as deeply as I do now, based SO much on that experience. It wasn't just physically being located down there. Because we were re-engineering, it was kind of a “skunkworks” thing, so I had 6-7 physical offices in that two-year period. We were being moved around wherever there was swing space available. A lot of renovation was happening.

But it was really the people I met at that point. The re-engineering effort was highly visible, so at that point I knew all the senior leadership at MIT. And up to that point, I wouldn't have known any of them. But interactions with Chuck Vest, and Bill Dixon and Jim Bruce, I had dual reporting. Jim was running the Institute's technology, he was VP of Information Technology, and Bill Dixon was Senior Vice President and basically had all of the administrative functions – what Israel Ruiz's job is now.

It was a fantastic time; really challenging work. A lot of what we were doing was around organizational change. Some of it people felt was all cost-cutting and jobs being eliminated, so it was challenging work, but definitely a transformative experience for me, and one that I really cherish in terms of the friends and colleagues I made at that time which has then paid dividends over the almost 20 years since that time.

B: It was just for 2 years? How was it framed for you, when you had to make a decision to accept or not?

D: They had a going-away party for Hillary and me. There was not a clear path back. They pretty much said, “You would have a job here if you decided to come back, but we realize that other things may happen along the way, too.” It was kind of a transfer down there. But it was

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soft-funded at that point. It wasn't like these were jobs that were going to continue in that stage. Yes, it turned out to be a two-year assignment, but at that point, as the project started to tail down, we had build the Student Services Center, things were up and running.

I was definitely interested in coming back to Sloan. And at that point, there was a transition in the MOT program, so this was the summer of 1998. I remember it well, because it's the only three-week vacation I ever had in 28 years here! We were sailing the coast of Maine, and decided to stay for another week. Larry Bacow, he chancellor at that time. He's a big sailor too, and had given us some of the haunts along the way that we were seeing. He was calling me on the phone because they were wooing some faculty members for other parts of MIT, and he was trying to figure out if there would be a match for the spouse here at Sloan. I remember that summer very well. But I came back from that cruise and took over the MOT program.

That was another great stint that I enjoyed a lot. The relationship you have with people in those smaller programs – the one-year programs, the “cradle-to-grave” aspect of everything from admissions to the intensity of the interaction during the year. We did three field trips during the year in that program, and I started a Silicon Valley field trip that lives today in the combined SF/MOT program, which I feel great about. We did a New York field trip, which the SF had always done. We added in a Silicon Valley one, where they had always gone to Washington. Then we usually did a 3-4 country international trip. So you really got to know people's spouses and partners. Their kids often came with them. People were at a very different stage than all those years that I spent with the Masters program. It was another really key developmental step in my own career, spending time with that program and that cadre of people.

It was also the thing that moved me toward External Relations, because in addition to setting up all these trips, unlike the trips I mentioned earlier with the Masters students doing all the work, for the Executive programs the students do prepare the briefings, but we set up the trips basically. We had to get the speakers, the host companies, do all the logistics. The costs were part of the tuition, so we were managing the budget. For a 50-person trip, those budgets were probably \$350-400,000. Not a trivial part of the experience.

Then, also, we had our version of the seminar on leadership on a weekly basis throughout the academic year; two semesters of speakers. I was bringing in CEOs every week, and having to line up those schedules. I found that really rewarding to have that connection to the business world and business leaders. That's what led me to toward External Relations 6 years

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later. 1998-2004. That's when Dick Schmalensee, Dean at the time, and Don Lessard, Deputy Dean, asked me to build out a corporate team in the growing Office of External Relations.

At point, we had started to build in the alumni function. Here I have to backtrack on my timeline a little bit. The first half-time Alumni Director happened during my career here, which is kind of amazing when you look at our peers that have been doing resource development and alumni relations for centuries. We really, in terms of the dedicated people doing alumni relations and development, that all happened only in the last couple decades, which is pretty incredible growth. Our office is about 40 people now. Nat Mays seconded some dedicated time to Sloan, and then eventually Cindy Hill became half-time Alumni Director. Paula Cronin did a little stint, and eventually we started to grow Alumni into 2-3 people. Now we've got all the different functions built out. Still not anywhere close to what some of our larger peers have in that regard, but certainly it's a professional staff. But it was really that corporate face and set of activities while I was running the MOT program that took me in this direction. I was thankful to Dick and Don, and Marie Ryder was running ExecEd where MOT and SF sat at that point, for thinking this would be a good move. It turned out to be an important one because now I've been here, this will be my 10th year in that office. It's the longest I've been in a particular office. But I've had a bunch of roles even within this 10-year period.

But it was such an advantage to move into External Relations and have the knowledge of our programs AND our graduates across the Masters program, MOT, and SFs too, because we worked with a lot of SFs alumni even from the program office side. When we combined the programs, even more so. I moved into this office with a pretty good platform from which to build.

G: I was thinking, yes, you certainly have a very solid foundation both in your experiences with students and working with programs, to then really being able to speak to people.

B: This has been great sharing, Dave. For both your two-year stint in Student Affairs, and MOT, which had a leg into Engineering, one of the questions we always ask ourselves is: How does Sloan fit in to the larger Institute? You were down in the other part. And you were interacting with people who would have had a view about Sloan. Do you want to say anything

about how they saw Sloan? It's been a journey for us. And we've had different approaches. Different deans have wanted to have a different strategy vis-à-vis the Institute.

D: There are a bunch of different questions embedded in that, actually. From an administrative standpoint, yes, the rest of the Institute would look down here and say, "Oh, it's just Sloan. They always do things differently." Or "They always have their own..." We really were, even back in those days in the mid-1980s, when I came back here and we started to ramp up our growth in those early years of growth, we were the only place on campus that had our own real admissions function, our own real Career Development Office. We hadn't really gotten into development of alumni relations yet, but for sure admissions and CDO, and a lot of those registrarial functions that I mentioned earlier. So I felt like we were sort of an annoyance to many of the central offices, even though I think at times they looked over here for best practice or efficiencies and things that we had demonstrated success.

There was an interesting tension there, especially when I went into this special assignment, knowing that we had actually built out some of these functions; we did a lot of work with our peer schools so we really understood our competition. We also had very collaborative relationships with those folks. So we were pretty big on best practices and trying to move things in that direction.

But yes, from the central perspective looking over here, it was always, "Oh, that's Sloan, of course they do things differently." I know architecture is a professional discipline, but I think people always felt Sloan was the only real professional school at MIT compared to med schools and law schools. Again, I don't mean disrespect to Architecture, but in terms of those Big Three – business schools, med schools, and law schools – and how they do everything from admissions to their alumni and fund-raising things, the only basis of comparison compared to our larger neighbors up the river that had 11 schools at that time, and the Kennedy School besides a business school and a med school and law school. They had many different alternatives on that flavor, and we really just had Sloan.

That's the administrative side, financial arrangements, we could talk volumes about those aspects. But I think maybe more importantly, in terms of the curricular/academic collaboration and our relationship to the Institute, I am more than over-the-top optimist and have strong feelings that our positioning within MIT is SO important to our future as well as our past. If you've seen or heard Dave Schmittlein's 100th anniversary presentation....

G: I went to the Boston version of it.

D: Yes, well the theatrics of it, the substance and content and history of that, the legacy aspects of that are so important to who we are now and who we will be in the days and years ahead. I feel really strongly that this is one of our most important competitive weapons.

I do think you are absolutely right, Bob. Our relationships with the central campus and at times probably with Engineering, has swung back and forth. I feel they are very strong right now. I think there have been periods of time when probably we felt like a service department, like basically we were here to teach the management equivalent of teaching calc and physics for the engineers, or something. I don't at all feel like that now. I think Dave has been effective in articulating our relationship with the Institute from that standpoint, of our role in the innovation process, and the ecosystem around here and on a global basis.

I also think other deans had strong visions for that too, but they sometimes had other challenges in actually implementing. If we wanted to get into the whole branding issues around that positioning and some efforts to go completely to the MIT School of Management and drop Sloan – I remember some of those discussions along the way and the alumni feedback. But there is nobody I can think of now that would want to drop the MIT thing. That would be the kiss of death. The MIT brand IS the strongest one. I've traveled all around the world for Sloan, and I can definitely say that, at least anecdotally, it's the MIT brand....

G: It's interesting, because we've heard of others, and I think we have our own views on this – that the curriculum has gone much more toward generic business school than what might make MIT Sloan unique in its connection with MIT Engineering.

D: Maybe that's another slice on this whole question. I haven't really addressed that one as much. Definitely, yes, there are people who would come at that from all different sides. I think one of the challenges for us on this positioning is that balance between maybe being SO distinctive that stakeholders we care about just don't even see us in the same consideration set, versus a pressure to be too close to the middle and everybody coming together. I think that's an ongoing discussion, a balance question, or moving the needle in one direction or another. But I



think being an integral part of MIT and being proud of that, and then delivering on that in a best way – that’s the balance question, the ongoing challenge that deans and faculty leaders will continue to on the one hand struggle with, but I also think it’s a pretty good position to be struggling with. I do believe – and again, this is the optimist – that a lot of things are coming toward where we are in terms of positioning. It’s a little presumptuous to say the world is coming to us, but I think in some ways it really is. I feel confident that we will be well positioned going forward.

B: Fast forwarding in time, in External Relations, you’ve picked up some more responsibilities, haven’t you? More of what Alan used to do?

D: A little of that. I’ve had three major roles in almost ten years that I’ve been there. When I first came, it was just a corporate-facing role, and I built a small team of people who were doing primarily corporate outreach, corporate relations type of work.

We re-launched the speaker series that Dick really wanted to have. We had lost, for quite a few years, having a Distinguished Speaker series of any sort, with any continuity. He really wanted something like that, and the students wanted it, so we launched what we know as the Dean’s Innovative Leaders Series in late 2004. That has stood the test of time very well, so we have 8 to 10 speakers a year for that now. The Autodesk speaker was our last one in that series. So we were doing primarily corporate work.

Then we grew a little more, and had some other organizational transitions, and then reshaped our front-line fundraising so I had a corporate and international team that actually did corporate work all over the world, domestic and international. We did the majority of the international individual fundraising as well.

Now, just last summer, I was promoted to Senior Director for Strategic Initiatives, which is our set of campaign themes. The MIT campaign continues to be in the quiet phase, and we may be in that phase for at least another year or so. But in many ways, Sloan is actually ahead of the rest of the Institute in identifying our priorities and major giving opportunities around sustainability, healthcare, the digital economy, Center for Finance and Policy, Action and Learning, the Trust Center for Entrepreneurship – those are basically our half-dozen thematic priorities. Then career development professorships, and fellowships, I would say are the functional cross-cutting priorities. And just finishing E52 renovation, although we’ve already

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made arrangements for the financial aspects of that. We have donors who interested, so we are still fundraising for that even though our portion of the building is paid for.

Now I'm working more closely with MIT central resource development. Eric Grimsom has moved into a new role, from being a chancellor to now a Chancellor for Academic Advancement. In some ways, he's steering the Institute's big themes around many of these big areas. You've seen the recent announcements about the environmental initiative. Fiona Murray and Vlad Bulovic being announced as faculty heads for the Innovation Initiative last October. There will be a healthcare announcement at some point here, figuring out the challenges there.

B: Oh! I hope so. That's good. They have a great group within the School.

D: Absolutely, huge. A lot of people don't realize... So we've been doing a lot of work in those areas with our faculty, shaping. In some cases, we're building pretty strong initiatives and just transforming into some new faces, or scaling up. In other cases, it's kind of a greenfield approach, and I would say healthcare is like that in the sense that we have well over 25 faculty doing research projects, but we don't have a healthcare center or any infrastructure per se. We've got a few folks who are starting to help shape that. But that one is still a startup.

Sustainability, the Trust Center, obviously we're building on some past efforts there and over longer periods of time, but still scaling up in important ways.

I'm pretty excited about that. I'm traveling a little bit less internationally than I was before. Asia still a fair amount. I was doing a lot of that in Asia, as well as Europe, prior to this role. But enjoying it every day.

B: It's a great journey you've had. As you look back, what do you really feel excited about, or really good about, that you've.... Maybe it's a whole series of things....?

D: Well, I could probably do a short list, at least. Without giving it real thought, and I'm sure I'll be forgetting something really major. But if I had to get down to one thing...

B: It doesn't have to be one thing. Two or three things would be fine.

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D: Even with the growth that we've had in the two-year Masters program, but also we've created and launched a number of other programs and taken many of them up to 120 students or so. So now, as we talked about earlier, we really do have a portfolio of programs that seems to be expanding, whereas even Dave Schmittlein says most of the deans before him were trying to consolidate.

I still feel that the role of community here is incredibly strong. I have visited all of our major peers, many of them numerous times. They are good places too, but I really feel that the importance of the collaborative community; of faculty, staff, and students in some cases – we did that around TQM. I have seen that in the early years of sustainability. You see that in thinking about our physical infrastructure and gathering input. So the role of community and what we all do to make this a place that everyone wants to work or study in, I think is important. I could think about specific elements of that along the way, but just the fact that it is important, and deans have cared about it and have empowered people in various roles to do what they can do maintain it and continue to prove that, I think is really important.

We've talked in a number of these cases around curricular changes or other things I mentioned. Having a Silicon Valley trip that lives around. Or the work around the thesis, even though now it's become optional for most of our programs, not all of them. Helping students – it sounds too much like the Army – but to be all that they can be, both through curricular and extracurricular activities.

Certainly on the program side (and I've had a variety of program roles), that was certainly in the top two or three things that we really cared about, that both the formal curriculum, but then the extracurricular activities. But now with External Relations, especially on the corporate side, a lot of our work was working with this now huge portfolio of student organizations, and huge portfolio of student study tours, and tracks.

G: And action learning/

D: Yes, thank you! We were much more formally involved in helping source those projects, both project sites within companies as well as non-for-profits too.

And then, of course, the resource development to support those things. That continues to be rewarding as well.

That notion of being able to think about what students need to achieve their goals, and when we think about SFs, and now the Executive MBA program – that can be a very different set of experiences when you're 20 or 25 years into your career. It's an exciting place to be in that regard.

We didn't talk as much about the development of Kendall Square, and that could be another whole thread here. When I came in 1982, Legal had just opened, but the bus terminal was still there. F&T Diner had closed but the building was still there. Kendall Square was nothing like what it is now. Most of the MIT side is pretty similar, at least the buildings are still standing, although many of them were probably renovated. But the commercial side, and that whole ecosystem.... With the MOT position, I was very focused on innovation and entrepreneurship and working with Ken Morse at the time, and now Bill Oulette and others at the Trust Center – that's been exceedingly rewarding to support not only what happens inside of MIT, but also outside.

I was one of the founding members of the whole Kendal Square organization. MIT has played a very heavy role in that. But as I think about the densest innovation cluster on the planet and what that will mean for the future, that is something I'll look back at with a lot of pride.

B: George, do you have something?

G: No, I don't have anything else. You've covered the question I was thinking about.

B: I have one other question that goes back to what you said about Esther Merrill and Miriam Sherburne, when we were small. And now you've gotten much larger. Having faculty feel somehow connected and interacting with the growing staff. You mentioned we don't read applications any more. Is there a way that the staff says, "Hey, somehow we have to keep the faculty connected," because we have a lot of work to do and you could do it, and the faculty are working right here. It's kind of a stovepipe departmentalization.

D: We've definitely gotten bigger, but you are getting at one aspect of what I was trying to address earlier. I still feel, and it's tougher as we get bigger, but on a project-by-project basis, or program-by-program basis, I think the relationship between faculty and staff here is still

far better than what I perceive in a lot of our peer schools. Again, that may probably be the optimist in me, but we have incredible support from faculty within External Relations. But we don't cross paths with everybody either. There is probably a go-to set of people that we've developed working relationships with.

In my day job right now, around the strategic initiatives, I'm back working a lot more with faculty than I was for a period of time after getting out of 18 years on the program side, and moving into this external role. But now I'm back working with faculty every day on these new initiatives. I know within the programs, especially the faculty that teach in the corporate, some of them are pretty close to the people that are running the programs.

But I think your question is getting at something bigger than that, like how do we really try to help that happen more systematically? We have the big holiday events and things, where there is a warm feeling there and you're meeting people's families. I feel like I can't keep up with all the new faculty that are coming. I have guys that I've worked with forever, long, long relationships, but you have to make an effort to go meet new people. My day job has allowed me to do some of that, and to collaborate with people who either weren't here when I was on the program side, or I just didn't have a chance to work with as closely. Now, thanks to this assignment, I'm able to work much more closely with folks. I wouldn't have known Kate Kellogg and her work in healthcare until we started working more closely on this, or some of the others who are doing great work in that area.

But it was a very different feeling, being here in 1982, 1983, and the dean's office on the fourth floor, and those two round tables were the social hangout. We'd push them aside and roll out a keg of beer in 1982 for a Consumption Function on a Thursday afternoon. By the time I came back in 1986, those had moved down to the Sloan lobby, but that ended after a period of years and a few visit from the fire department and police department, too.

That sense of smallness, that's definitely gone. But I don't think smallness has to completely equate community. So how we continue to work at that sense of community. I know Catherine Gammon and the Student Life folks, they spend a lot of time thinking about that, at least on behalf of the whole student population and the faculty. I think your question was a little more aimed at the staff side.

I don't have any answers, off the top of my head, for how to completely bring it back to that small feeling. But I do feel like the collaborative relationships are still really strong, and where there's something strong that draws people together in terms of the work....

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B: Yes, it's happening in the programs, and in the functions, your function....

G: Has this new building made a difference?

D: I feel like it has. The dining hall downstairs, the dining room, is a great magnet. It's one of the things I've noticed, as big a place as MIT is compared to Sloan, in those years when I was doing the re-engineering thing? If you stood in the lobby of Building 7 and just got your coffee in the morning, the world passes by and you could get a lot of work done just by being there at the right time of day.

Having a place like that. And E52, whether it was the 4th floor in the Dean's office and the tables there in the early days, or the lobby of E52 back when we were smaller, served a bit that way. Then, as we grew but the buildings didn't grow, it got tougher and the faculty were atomized all over the 8 or 9 buildings and Kendall Square. Now I think there is more of a sense of a core, and a heart, which is really at the center of what we tried to accomplish with this building.

I think the whole School may be that way. I'd ask you guys whether you feel like it's achieved what we set out to achieve in terms of the faculty collaboration explicitly. What it didn't get at, absent the dining room, is probably what you're getting at which is the faculty and staff being more interspersed. Again, optimistically speaking, when the E52 renovation is finished and all those student-facing functions are the things coming back into E52, and presuming we're still around here, then you will have brought back a good chunk of the staff. I presume those folks who are over at the Galleria are probably not coming back. And at some point we'll end up over there, too; it's inevitable. But I think all the student-facing functions will be in close proximity. That's the optimist in me.

G: I asked, because I think some faculty have mentioned the dispersion, particularly with the graduate students, has been more difficult.

But I was also thinking that on the other hand, all the Masters students can be together in a way that we were too tiny over there. For the faculty, it had everybody together with the Ph.D. students, anyway. Now that's changed.

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B: This has been a great journey through the School.

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