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Paul Schley

Paul Schley
Illinois Wesleyan University

Abigail Szunyogh 2014

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Oral History Interview with Paul Schley, The Ames Library, January 17, 2014

Abby Szunyogh: My name is Abby Szunyogh. The date is January 17th, 2014, and I'm here at Illinois Wesleyan University's Ames Library. Mr. Schley, if you could please introduce yourself and your association with Illinois Wesleyan.

Paul Schley: Okay. I'm Paul Schley, I'm recently retired from the University Admission Office, where I worked for 39 years. I was Associate Dean of Admissions and Director of Transfer and International Admissions, as I finished my degree.

Szunyogh: Alright, thank you. And then is it alright if I take your picture after the interview?

Schley: Yes.

Szunyogh: Thank you. So I guess we'll get started with what qualities drew and kept you to Illinois Wesleyan.

Schley: My wife and I had been married one year, and I was working at Marquette University as the Assistant Director of Financial Aid, when I was offered the opportunity to interview for a job here. And the weather in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the time was horribly cold and wintry, along Lake Michigan where we lived. And we drove out here and it was like going to Florida.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: So one of the best things that attracted us here, especially my wife, was the warmer weather and the friendliness of the people as we interviewed. We loved the campus, and it was just a very good decision to be able to leave the urban setting in Milwaukee, where we were living and both working, to a friendlier community, and we found here.

Szunyogh: That's good.

Schley: Yeah.

Szunyogh: That's good. And then did you find it as friendly and warm over the years as you first saw it?

Schley: Well I think in general, yes. Certainly, yes.

Szunyogh: That's good.

Schley: I did not fit in as well at Marquette as I thought I might. I had graduated from Carroll College now Carroll University in suburban Milwaukee in Waukesha and began my career in

Admissions there for three years as their Chicago area representative. And that's how I became familiar to the Dean of Admissions here and Illinois Wesleyan hired me, and I then went to Marquette University to work in Financial Aid and found that that size university was just too large of a working environment for me. It was too bureaucratic, too structured. I did not find the comradery there that I had known at Carroll, and that I did find here at Illinois Wesleyan.

Szunyogh: Okay. So when you came to Illinois Wesleyan, did you start off in Admissions?

Schley: Yes. I was hired specifically to be in Admissions here as an Admission counselor. We were a small staff at the time of Dale Wolf, and J.W. Price, Dave Hughes, and Lee York. And the Dean of Admissions at that time, I believe he was a Director at that time perhaps, was Jim Routi.

Szunyogh: Okay. And then, you said you worked here for 39 years in Admissions?

Schley: Yes, doesn't it sound like an eternity to you?

[Schley and Szunyogh laugh]

Szunyogh: It's quite a long time to me.

Schley: Yes, I was here for 39 years to the day.

Szunyogh: That's pretty interesting.

Schley: I started on August 1st of 1974, and I retired last July in the afternoon, on the last day of July of 2013.

Szunyogh: Wow. That's pretty—

Schley: That's 39 years to the day. It seems to me that it has gone rather quickly, but I certainly can account for a lot of change over that time, to the campus and in particular in the growth of the university.

Szunyogh: Yeah. What were some of those changes?

Schley: Well, I've been thinking about this, because when we arrived, my wife and I moved to town, we were so impressed with the campus because at the time the entire quad had just been re-landscaped. All the sidewalks renewed, so many of the trees were little. That row of trees between Presser and Holmes Hall that now are fairly large oaks were just little spindly oak trees held up with metal stakes so they wouldn't roll over!

Szunyogh: [laughs] Yeah.

Schley: And we were very impressed with that. There was a street that ran in front of Memorial Center when you come down the steps now, there was a street that ran through there, and the

Sigma Chi house was there. There was a tennis court behind the school of Nursing. And there was a parking lot, a large parking lot behind Magill Hall, and upon which Rust House was built and that mini quad was built. Oh okay.

Schley: So there were a lot of things different that you'd be amazed to know about. Of course Shirk Center did not exist, and Fort Natatorium did not exist. When we got here, it still was a very beautiful campus, and I knew we were moving in the right direction under Dr. Eckley's leadership at the time, because he had been here by then six years of his tenure. And I did interview with him as well as the Dean of Admissions. I mean, you had to interview with Dr. Eckley to be hired, I guess, it went well.

Szunyogh: What were some of the changes that occurred in the Admissions office while you were there?

Schley: Well, the—we began to grow in size. We added several new counselors over time, and now the staff is twelve, I believe, total, and yet we still at that time looked for about the same size freshman class. The challenge grew with—we wanted 550 new freshmen back then. Dr. Eckley would have a meeting with us and say our goal was 550. And today, the goal is between 570 and perhaps 600, depends on the year. So it's not too different with the sudden growth of the university and the size of the staff growing. And it's focused more on recruiting outside of the state of Illinois. To go national, that was Minor Myers, especially wanted more attention from other parts of the country to find what a great place Illinois Wesleyan is. And so we began much more effort to recruit nationally and then ultimately internationally as well, which is what I was doing for over 10-12-13 years at the time that I retired.

Szunyogh: Okay. So you didn't start out in international relations?

Schley: No, no. We all had divided up territories, mostly in the state of Illinois. When I started, I had different parts of the state that included suburban Chicago, up in St. Louis area, I had Decatur area, I had Peoria area, I had Quad Cities, and then I was the first, I believe, to open the recruiting in Wisconsin.

Szunyogh: Okay. Was that because you lived in Wisconsin?

Schley: Partially, yes, and they began—they wanted to do more out of state and we just took small steps toward the surrounding states initially, and then expanded that over the years more so that we now have a representative in Texas, we have recruiting going on in California and the East Coast for a much, much wider focus.

Szunyogh: Mhm. So when did you—if you started out with actually quite a few areas of Illinois and then moved to the states, how did you get started recruiting for the international students?

Schley: It was a decision made by the Dean and Minor Myers to take that over. It had been primarily based in the Registrar's Office at the time to just process applications and admit

students. And I think to put maybe a little more control on that process, it was moved to Admissions specifically and then was offered to me. And it just was something of interest to me and I was very happy to have it.

Szunyogh: That's good. So what was that experience like transitioning from recruiting nationally to recruiting internationally?

Schley: Well at first it was a very small part of my job, to be honest. I mean I think the primary thing I needed to spend my time on was recruiting domestic students from the country and Illinois, my territory. However, that grew in interest as the University's Board of Trustees and the Administration wanted more diversity on campus. It was part of the diversity initiative for not only domestic students who were of minority backgrounds but also international students. And so I saw the balance shifting just a little bit more and more toward international over time and the same for transfer students. I mean, there was a time when, if you got an international application, fine, but it's—it didn't—I don't want to say it didn't matter but it wasn't a make or break kind of situation. It wasn't a set goal of a certain number to bring in, the same as transfer students. It was just nice to get some transfers. But now it's part of the planning process. There's always a goal they would like to have of a certain number of international students, certain number of transfer students, to round out the new class each fall. So it was a growing transition. It was a growing process. It was very gradual, but I began to see my work divided in a third, a third, a third, domestic, international, transfer. Before it was probably like 80% domestic, maybe 20% the others. I mean when it was handed to me, everything was just kind of in a cardboard box with some papers, said, here, do this, what is that? And we had to really develop an entirely new process with just the two of us, my secretary who worked with me, and I really developed an entirely structured process of admitting transfer students and international students, communicating with them in letters and so forth that now is in place, thankfully.

Szunyogh: That's good. Sounds like you made a lot of progress.

Schley: I did. We did. I did, it wasn't just me, I mean certainly I had great support to do that and encouragement. And what has always been nice about working in Admissions here is the freedom to do the work you're doing and to roll that in directions you want. There's not a lot of—I mean everybody's doing similar things but you also have an opportunity to do supportive things that you're interested in, and grow that, and make that better.

Szunyogh: Mhm. So you mentioned that you had some support from your secretary at the beginning. Did you sort of accumulate more people to help you with international admissions? Or was it mostly you and your secretary handling things?

Schley: As I retired it was still the same way. It was—

Szunyogh: Oh really?

Schley: —primarily a secretary who had her time divided, not just for my work and me. I always had a committee, an international admissions committee of several members of the university faculty or staff, typically it included the associate dean of faculty, the registrar and the director of international studies, study abroad and on occasion, one of the members of the staff—that's how right now Chris Kawakita is the new director of international admissions and transfer admissions. He was on my committee for a couple of years, too, because I knew that we needed someone to transition—to take it over. But for the most part, it still was my office, with the secretary of the office.

Szunyogh: Okay. So in your final years as director of international admissions, did you—were you still doing some national work?

Schley: Yes. But it was structured different. I still had schools to visit in primarily Indianapolis. And then we divided up some of the work which was becoming much more to do every year in the Chicago suburban area where several of us in the office would help follow up on applicants that counselors in the Chicago area were seeing at the schools so that they didn't have such a huge workload. So if for example, Bob Murray would visit New Trier High School and speak with students, when they visited or applied or contacted the office with questions, it was my responsibility to help him work with those students. And I did the same with Jennifer Shaughnessy and Chris Kawakita as well, because of their workload.

Szunyogh: Okay.

Schley: So it was the follow-up that allowed me to be more in the office to do that, and continue the work of the international and transfers, more of a campus-based operation, than having to travel to the suburbs, which I had done a number of years ago, and now I was following up instead rather than the primary contact.

Szunyogh: Okay. So with national admissions, it sounds like a lot of the admissions counselors traveled to their regions—

Schley: They do. Oh they do, yes.

Szunyogh: —did you get to travel at all for the international admissions?

Schley: Yes.

Szunyogh: You did.

Schley: Yes. For about six years. My last six years of time here at the university, we began to travel. My first traveling included Toronto which was considered a tremendously international city to visit high schools and also—that goes back more than six years, so that's perhaps eight or nine years ago that that began. I did that for a few years. I also got to go to Bermuda—

Szunyogh: Cool.

Schley: —which, of course when you go to Bermuda in November, the rest of the staff wonders why are you going to Bermuda.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: You had to really emphasize that it was to recruit students in a structured program in a college fair where I did see students. And they are British, and so they're international. That was—that was short lived.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: It was only a couple of years. And then I did primarily focus the last six years of my time—it was Hong Kong and Bangkok in Thailand. So those were two areas that I visited—I would go for twelve to sixteen days I'd be gone—primarily a full week in each city to recruit at high schools and meet counselors and go to college nights, college recruiting almost like here in the States, and they were mostly international schools—they were all international schools, if I can recall where I visited to speak with students who were interested in coming to the States to study. Their English background's really strong.

Szunyogh: Okay. That's really interesting. So, let's see, I'm trying to think of a question I ask next. I know that I heard that the incoming international student class for this year was the largest it's ever been.

Schley: Yes it was. And I was very pleased to have that as my final effort. We—I had great support from everybody to make that happen. The President wanted as many international students as we could get, of course. The Dean of Admissions was very supportive, and he followed up on some of them as well. He helped with some of them coming in and contacts. My committee members were very supportive. And of course the Director of Financial Aid, because—and the Dean of Enrollment Management. Both of them helped with the awarding scholarships and assistance with students as they were coming internationally because it's a little different process than if they're coming domestically. So it was a great team effort, a great team effort. But I was very, very pleased to have the highest number ever come in and as a result, meet the goal that President Wilson had set for 5% of our enrollment to be international. We always were inching toward that, we came close, we came close, and my final year, we hit that, and it was a great way for me to leave with my chin up and happy that I could leave with that achievement. Be part of our group who worked together to make that happen, yes.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That sounds like a pretty exciting accomplishment.

Schley: It was. It was.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That's great. I guess are there any further improvements that you would like to see in the near future for Illinois Wesleyan?

Schley: Well, I would love to see a specific scholarship fund established or perhaps endowed for international students. It is a very significant part of our recruiting with international students at this time, until we become even better known internationally than we are. Many of the students will tell you they're here because they know we're a fine school, a great school, and they have friends who attend. We have legacies of students who have brothers and sister who had attended.

Szunyogh: Oh. That's nice.

Schley: And that's great. But many of them are here because we do offer scholarships to help them enroll. And it'd be wonderful to know there was an established fund specifically for international students. It perhaps could have a name of some maybe international alum. [It would] help to begin that.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That would be really great. I can imagine to leave your family and come to a foreign country for college would be daunting, and it would be helpful to have just that financial support.

Schley: Mhm. Well, and we—one of the things that I found very appealing in our discussions when I would travel internationally to the high schools in Bangkok and Hong Kong, I emphasized so frequently how supportive this university is for international students from the moment they get on the plane in their home country to their arrival, and to make sure that they've arrived safely, and into a friendly, welcoming environment, that they're settled, and get off to a very, very good start. And that's with the support of the international advising that we offer here that really I think is well beyond what many schools offer, especially larger schools.

Szunyogh: Yeah. I know I don't know very much about other schools' international advising, but from what I've heard from international students here, it seems like they do a very good job and are very, very helpful.

Schley: They do. I emphasize you said there is someone on call, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for an international student who'd ever need it, to contact for any type of assistance. I always would add, it better be a good reason if it's 3 in the morning but if it's 3 in the morning and they're at the emergency room, someone will be there. And the parents appreciate that. And I think the students know that we really take that responsibility very seriously here and want that to be a sense of belonging that you don't maybe get at large campuses when you're international. Maybe they do things in some ways I don't know about, but certainly we really foster that here.

Szunyogh: That's really great. Well I guess you kind of mentioned that a lot of the international students that come here are legacies, and they have siblings or family members who've been here, and so we seem to have a good reputation nationally—internationally.

Schley: We do. We're getting there.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That's great. So what kind of reputation have you encountered Illinois Wesleyan to have over the years and how has it changed since you first arrived here, both nationally and internationally?

Schley: Well, I—when I began, I think one of the things that I learned very quickly was that we were very, very well known for only a couple of things, even in the broad sense of within Illinois or the Midwest. And that was for our school of music and our school of nursing. And I think preparing teachers very well. We used to have no difficulty with enrolling those areas, especially nursing, when it first began. And then we expanded that, and I think that that became important to the university to have a broader draw so to speak for people who would come here for a wider range of major interests and minors that we can put together to help them. So certainly that was a big change. I forgot your question. [Chuckles]

Szunyogh: Oh, just what kind of reputation—

Schley: Oh reputation. Yeah there we go. Okay. I think we were—our reputation initially was much more of a Methodist university or college. We—when I began here, we used to have Methodist youth day and a football game. We did [bring] Methodist youth groups to campus. We had boxed lunches for them. We would—I would—when I traveled throughout Illinois, I was expected to stop at Methodist churches, to drop off literature about the university and college catalogs, and encourage them to talk to their youth group about us. We even had a time period where I spent a number of evenings over a couple of weeks, in the Chicago suburban area, in an office of a Methodist church calling their youth group members to see if they wanted to attend college at Illinois Wesleyan. And so there was a much bigger push so to speak to use that base of interest because we were and are affiliated with the Methodist church. So that reputation probably carried, and I think we had a very positive reputation on helping students financially to come to Illinois Wesleyan whether they were first generation or from a family that typically could not afford Illinois Wesleyan that financially was a very, very important part of the process and we were there to help as much as we could. So I think the reputation as far as the Methodist connection has changed some. Historically, the—traditionally, the connection's still there, but I don't think the emphasis is there at all anymore. I mean, I think I would suspect there's some students who attend here that don't even know we're affiliated with the United Methodist Church. And I'm not United Methodist myself but I certainly knew about the connection. And the reputation academically has become so strong. It was very good when I came. It was becoming better month by month, year by year as the university did self-studies—again, the leadership of Dr. Eckley, in particular the focus on quality over quantity. He always wanted to maintain the strength academically of the university over filling a class just to fill a class. And thankfully we were able to satisfy both of those and over time with him and not disappoint him. But because of that emphasis on quality academically, we grew in great strength that way. And our academic reputation certainly has carried us much, much farther than somebody would maybe realize over the time, and taking us to national ranking. So I mean after all we were

number one in the Midwest ranking. When U.S. News & World Report first came out, we were number one for five straight years.

Szunyogh: Wow.

Schley: And then they moved us from a regional ranking to national ranking where of course it's much more competitive. And yet we still held our own amongst our peer group. And still do today.

Szunyogh: Yeah. Yeah, I know that when I was looking at colleges I—

Schley: Mhm. You looked at that.

Szunyogh: Yeah. Just a bit. Are there any traditions that have changed since you started at Illinois Wesleyan? And are there any in particular you were sad to see go? And any that you're glad are in the past?

Schley: I'm not aware of a lot of traditions here at the university to be honest. It's perhaps something that I know has been discussed, that we perhaps are lacking in having many, many traditions. Perhaps the passing of Homecoming parade, we used to always have those. They were fun for alums to come back and watch especially if they had children. Townsfolk would come to that. A little sad to see that go, I suppose, but again, times change. I think it's the tradition of having a yearbook. It's unfortunate that that has passed because they really are a great record of history of any campus. And I know many campuses maintain that today and I do think it's unfortunate the university has somehow lost that. Otherwise, I'm not aware of any other great traditions that I can speak about.

Szunyogh: Okay. That's fine. I know that I enjoy looking at my mom's old yearbooks. So I agree that it is sad, and it's kind of—

Schley: And even if it isn't for the people, the campus, or what's in the background or what are they doing there, that—oh they had that organization, where are they today? Because traditions of Greek life, for example, are—many of them are so long. That has been maintained. I think that's an important activity in the university that perhaps thankfully has not remained quite as strong an emphasis as when I got here. Or a much higher percentage felt the need to join a Greek house, in order to belong whereas today I think it's just one of many, many great choices of what you'd like to do with your time and your friendships. And I think it's much healthier.

Szunyogh: Mhm. That's good. Well since you aren't aware of that many traditions here, I guess a better question might be do you have a favorite story or memory or multiple stories or memories of Illinois Wesleyan that you would like to share?

Schley: Well I know when I first came here I very much enjoyed the relaxed summer that we had because in admissions it's good to recharge over the summer. And we had time as a staff to get

together for coffee and just build comradery. And unfortunately that's gone. We're—admissions today is day by day, year round, pretty much six, seven days a week in some parts of the year. And we used to spend—we would have time even during the school year to get—there was a place on campus where faculty could go for coffee as a break in the afternoon. And we would take a break and go and join them, and I love that interaction. And that went away as we grew and became busier in what we do. Favorite stories...the university provided, initially, in admissions for quite a few years, actually when I worked here, the university vehicle car—

Szunyogh: Oh!

Schley: —for us to do our work so we didn't have to—we had a spouse, they could have the family car, and they provided a car. My very first car here, I don't remember what brand it was, I think it might have been Dodge, I don't know, but I do remember that every time I turned a corner, the passenger door opened—

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: —because it was such a piece of junk and it couldn't have been a worse start in terms of a car—

Szunyogh: Oh no.

Schley: —that was provided. My wife and I would laugh about it because she said, make sure you're careful turning left or right because the door's going to come open. And it got better after that.

Szunyogh: That's good.

Schley: And I'm always glad to know that we improved on that little part of the job as well. I loved at the time doing—we had office traditions. April Fool's Day, I loved playing pranks on especially the secretaries. I would go in at night, because I had a key. And I would switch their drawers around and I would do things to their phones and just really have a lot of fun doing that, and I loved that. But again, that got set aside as we shouldn't be doing that.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: And to this day I miss that.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That's too good.

Schley: I did April Fool's with my children, and I love doing that with other people at the office, too. I like that. So going to coffee together, having time together that way, and little office celebrations. We would have a great time at Christmas in our office. We'd do what you could call a Christmas poem, and it was more like a roast.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: Because they had something on every one of us, and whoever wrote it got to come up with something to remind you to keep for yourself to stay humble. And we would laugh and laugh. And one year they did a video of that, and another year, well it was usually a poem, a Christmas poem, but now that I think about it, it was great fun, great fun, and I still have a couple copies of those to look at and remind me of who I worked with—together back then and what we were laughing about together, and we would have some food together, and that was usually our lunch, during our long lunch hour one day in the office. We would just close the door and have our poem, and our time together as a staff with food and laughter. And it was a good time. I really liked that. We don't do that anymore either. They do get together for Christmas lunch though in the office, with music, but they set aside the roasting part with poetry, I guess they maybe thought that that's going to offend somebody, I don't know.

Szunyogh: Oh. That's too bad.

Schley: Who knows.

Szunyogh: It sounds like a lot of fun to me though. [Laughs]

Schley: They were, trust me. They were great. They were honestly great because there were inside jokes that we could just enjoy so much. Let me think of anything else. Of course I so much enjoyed to see the campus facilities become what they are today. Going back to those coffee times together, when we would sit and—kind of sit and dream and wish and say, I wish we had a new science building. And then we would raise the money and we have the new science building. And I wish we had a new dorm. We got Harriett Rust House. Then I wish we had a better athletic facility, and we got Shirk Center. To see those go from the wishing and dreaming and the fundraising and the effort and the great effort that went into making sure that that happened and this great library, Ames Library. I can remember when they announced Ames was going to be built, and this whole area was full of small homes, houses. There were two blocks of houses here. And I remember that the streets—parts of those streets are still the ones coming into the sides which—

Szunyogh: —with the circle? Yeah.

Schley: —when you come in the front door here. And somebody went out where the intersection was, so it'd be out the front door of the theater, that you'd come out basically. And the intersection was there like a T. And somebody had taken an orange spray paint and drawn a great arch, and said these will be the front steps of the library. And I stood there and I couldn't imagine what that was going to be like. And today as I walk up those steps, that's where that curved arch was. It's just a wonderful experience to be here that long. To see the university go from wanting and hoping for a great facility to watching the joy of it happen. And that's wonderful. That's wonderful.

Szunyogh: Yeah. I imagine it would be. I know just seeing the new State Farm Hall go up—

Schley: Yes. And you're so fortunate for that.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: Oh!

Szunyogh: It's very nice.

Schley: We did [want] that for so long.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: Those new buildings help Admissions a lot when you think about it, because students love to see what's happening at a campus that is progressive, that's improving, and that's showing that it's alive and well and really that's what Dr. Eckley did when he first got here was make the quad look better. There was a story told that he and his wife, Nell Eckley, walked across the campus soon after they arrived and they were ankle-deep in grass and weeds and I think the story goes that Nell turned to Dr. Eckley and said, "Bob, what are we doing here?"

[Schley and Szunyogh chuckle]

Schley: And to this day, I believe it's—there's a plaque [I think] now on the Eckley quad that their contribution to the beauty of the quad, because all of the trees had died from Dutch elm disease. And the walkways went out to buildings that didn't exist anymore. And it was like, what? It was very confusing. It wasn't at all as attractive. The buildings weren't as nice. And they made a great effort at making it a beautiful facility and its focus on growing the endowment so the university had a solid financial base, and growing academically. Whenever we can emphasize that growth, got us to where we are today. I mean I've been here under Dr. Eckley, and under a brief tenure of Dr. Wayne Anderson, and then interim president Wendell Hess, Minor Myers, and now Dick Wilson. And certainly, I see the contributions of Dr. Eckley and Dr. Wilson, and their focus on the academic and the financial strength of the university is so important, and Minor Myers' vision to make this a stronger university nationally, and if possible, internationally, and to have strong facilities. His love of this library—this was his pride and joy. And so you can look at those presidents and what they've done, and it was so wonderful to work under them and to be part of that in a way, and also to be able to experience and enjoy that.

Szunyogh: That would be really, really interesting to see all those changes.

Schley: Right. And of course under several deans, Dean Routi and then Dean Jerry Pope, and now Tony Bankston and his...associate, co-worker. It's hard to define exactly. He is Dean of Enrollment Management. There are actually two deans, I should say it that way, and Bob Murray. And so...these are great people to work with and under. I wouldn't have stayed if it weren't a very welcoming and positive work environment.

Szunyogh: Is that the main reason you stayed, was because the people you were working with—

Schley: Certainly in large part, I really enjoyed what I was doing. Right up to the last morning I got up to come to work here in July last summer. I didn't regret having to come in to work. I mean, every job has its ups and downs, and there are hard parts of admission that anybody in this staff will tell you they don't enjoy. And it's hard and demanding and there's a lot of pressure. But yes, the very fine working environment overall that's provided here is what kept me here. And I know that in many, many other offices the turnover in admissions is constant. And there isn't the intention given to the growth of the individual within the profession that you find here. I was given the opportunity to get my Master's degree in Higher Educational Counseling at Illinois State University on a part-time basis. Several on staff did that. We were encouraged to do that. And that then led to additional responsibilities in managing the admission operation. Whereas in some offices in admissions, you just stay as admissions counselor and when you burn out you leave and move on. And some people had that happen here. Of course they moved on. But a lot of our staff have been together for a long time because of those advantages.

Szunyogh: You mentioned that there were some parts of admissions that were difficult but then parts that were very enjoyable. What were—what are some qualities, do you think, that are needed to be successful in the kind of work that you were doing?

Schley: Well so much of the work is individual. You have to be a self-starter, self-motivated, to realize that you are given a responsibility, and yes you have accountability but it's still up to you to be accountable to yourself that you can honestly say you've done the work. I never really felt that if 4:30 arrived, I had to walk out the door at 4:30. I often stayed longer. I did a lot of my international work at home in the evenings, on weekends. I remember answering emails on Christmas Eve one year, because I wanted to stay on top of my work. And I think anybody who's doing well in admissions will need that quality. And some are better at it than others. I think there are others on the staff that are even better than I am, more organized than I am perhaps, but I did my work. And that's certainly a quality. You have to be a people-person, get a good read on people, and that's something that is constantly evolving, so to speak, because families today are much more savvy about the admission process and financial aid than when I began. When I began working here it wasn't unusual to interview many seniors in high school, who are just starting to apply for admission and find out about it. They were just visiting for the first time perhaps in the middle of their senior year, in some cases. Whereas now we have sophomores and juniors visiting. I interviewed two freshmen a year or two ago.

Szunyogh: Wow.

Schley: Their parents wanted them to get in, and I thought, this is way too early. What are you talking about? Your braces, you're in drivers ed soon—next year.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: How are things, you know? Your first year of high school—it's a little bit early. My point is that families were very different in how you could approach them and to get a good read on people, and so often I found that if we were doing the interview together, and we always included parents in the interviews. Not all schools do that, but we would invite them and typically they would join in, and so they'd take a tour, perhaps go to a class, but if the opportunity came up for me to say, would you like to go to lunch with me, that it's a less formal way of learning about the student and parents over lunch. And to have a very relaxed conversation that is beneficial to them and to us to get to know each other better. And I always felt that that was an important part of my work was that my lunch hour wasn't mine, and Dean Routi actually told me that when I was hired—

Szunyogh: Really. [Chuckles]

Schley: He said that the lunch hour was not yours, and you're expected to take the family to lunch because it's part of getting to know them, and I really believe that. And that was something that I think is a quality of knowing how to do your work, because again not everybody does that. They have other ways of relating well to the families. For me, that worked very well. And that I think is certainly one thing that I would emphasize, yes.

Szunyogh: I know that when—the reason I came here was because I enjoyed all the interactions I had with the people here. I think it makes a big difference.

Schley: Right, right, yeah. And I enjoyed going to the faculty dining room and having lunch to try to interact every now and then with them and other members of the departments over in the dugout area. That was a way of kind of continuing that earlier thing I told you earlier about where you get together over coffee or you get together over lunch. You see it's not always just us in the Welcome Center waiting for people to come see us.

Szunyogh: Yeah. Do you think that before you were able to have more interactions with the faculty because you had that space where you could go and meet them for coffee? It sounds like you had more time in the past to interact with other faculty members than you did.

Schley: Yes, when we were in Holmes Hall—the Admissions Office was in Holmes Hall more faculty would stop in to see us. They were in their committee meeting, or they were there to see the dean. They might be there for another reason, registrar, dropping off grades. We saw faculty, we would have a chance to get to know them, talk with them, and there are many faculty from that earlier time period that I know much better than faculty today. I mean there are faculty here today who I don't know them. If I saw them on the quad, I wouldn't necessarily know them because everybody's kind of off in their camps and very, very busy doing what is best for their students and I appreciate that but I also do miss the interaction because we are a little bit more removed now over in the Welcome Center, away from campus, unless you are fortunate enough to be on a committee or have them on your committee, as I did with international admissions where at least they would come once a week for a semester to get together and build up

friendships that way instead. I made a point of trying to stop in some offices to just say hello. I would still go over to Holmes Hall because I did miss the friendships we had over there. Because we all worked together very well over there.

Szunyogh: When did Admissions move to the Welcome Center?

Schley: About six years ago.

Szunyogh: Oh, okay.

Schley: I think it was six years this fall—

Szunyogh: Okay.

Schley: —I think.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Schley: Could be down a year.

Szunyogh: That's okay.

Schley: But I believe it's five to six years ago now.

Szunyogh: Okay. Do you think that was when things kind of started to get more busy in admissions?

Schley: Not necessarily.

Szunyogh: No?

Schley: We were so busy in Holmes Hall if you can imagine. We had visit days where—you've been in Holmes Hall?

Szunyogh: Yes.

Schley: When you walk in where the stairway is, the planter is—

Szunyogh: Yes.

Schley: —we had so many visitors, we set up rows of folding chairs up there, and if you walked in the door it looked like a choir sitting there waiting for you.

Szunyogh: Wow.

Schley: We had people waiting out there because the waiting room—where the soft furniture, so to speak—the waiting area was so full. And we were bringing people in and out of there. So, we were very busy then, too. And that's what forced our need to build a better facility where, one

they could find us; two, there was better parking. And we had a wonderful auditorium to meet with people, because when we had large groups on visit days, we would start at Holmes Hall and march them over here to Ames to the auditorium on the lower level on muddy days, rainy days, snowy days. It took quite a while just to get people over here and get going and get back for a tour. And the need developed and we knew that.

Szunyogh: Yeah. So it ended up being a good move.

Schley: A very good move. Yes, a very necessary one, and I cannot imagine how we would do the work that's being done today, still in that facility because we outgrew it. We grew into other people's offices. The Registrar used to have a bigger office and we one day went in with a tape measure and said, we could use this space and all of a sudden we had new offices that took up a wall, and moved it over there and all of a sudden we had their space, and we started moving down the hall, and Financial Aid used to be on that level with us but they went to the lower level. And we began taking those offices that are going down toward the Business Office.

Szunyogh: Yes. That sounds like you definitely need it.

Schley: We were annexing spaces as much as we could, yeah.

Szunyogh: Yeah. We covered quite a lot. Let's see.

Schley: I'm just trying to think of other things that I might have wanted to—I talked about how the campus was so different when we first arrived. For example, Munsell-Ferguson were originally built as women's dormitories.

Szunyogh: Mhm. They were like that when my mom was here.

Schley: Right. Did she go onto the roof and lay in the sun?

Szunyogh: I don't know. I didn't know that was a thing.

Schley: One of them, I don't know if they both did, but one of them, Munsell for sure, had put down a wooden deck on the roof so that students could go up there and sunbathe.

Szunyogh: Ah! That's funny.

Schley: And when we interviewed, my wife and I were here given the campus tour, we were taken up to the roof to look at the quad. It was—there weren't any students up there because it was for the spring but you look over the quad. And one year we came over when my children were very little and watched fireworks for the Fourth of July from up there.

Szunyogh: Oh!

Schley: But then they closed it down. It was a safety issue. So that was very interesting, and to see those buildings then go co-ed as they have. And of course the most desirable dorm for men

was Magill Hall at the time because the rooms were so large, and they had—I don't know if they still have the corner—I think they do—they just call it the toy box. There was a giant box built into the corner with a storage lid, just like a toy box. And then, a bed on one wall, a bed on the other wall, and desk, desk. And then they had built in dressers and wardrobes, big rooms. But the toy box was always the fun thing to show people. All the storage is great to show that building. So that was the number one dorm on campus for so long to get into.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That's really interesting, because I've seen the bathrooms in Magill. The dorm—the rooms themselves are large, but the bathrooms seem very—the showers are so small.

Schley: Very small. Well sadly, we had a student who enrolled and was in Magill Hall, and because of his size, he could not fit into the shower.

Szunyogh: Oh.

Schley: And he was so embarrassed by that. It was a very sad story, and he probably moved to another part of campus. But I know that became—he didn't want to tell people about it but that was very difficult for him. Yeah, but you're right it was built for another era.

Szunyogh: Yeah, yeah. I know, I have some friends who are on the basketball teams, so they're very tall—

Schley: Yes, right. Well they must feel the same way when they go into Munsell-Ferguson—

Szunyogh: Yeah, they also lived there.

Schley: —because the ceilings are so low in the hallway in particular. And I've always thought that Dodds Hall, which is such a confusing building—

Szunyogh: It is.

Schley: First of all, you have to be very, very good at finding your way through that building. But if those rooms were singles, it would be a wonderful facility. And I'm beginning to think the same for Munsell-Ferguson. If they were single rooms, rather than doubles and continue to build apartments, to continue with Harriett Rust House to allow for larger space that students are more familiar with now coming from their homes offering more space, that that would be a nice change on the campus. They probably will—I do think that the apartments like the Gates are our future residences for many students someday. They're wonderful.

Szunyogh: Yeah, they are nice. I went into one for the first time a couple—I guess it was last semester.

Schley: Did you? Yeah.

Szunyogh: They're very nice, yeah. And I do know that a lot more sophomores were able to move into Harriett this year because, yeah.

Schley: And I think that's great. That's great. There was a time when it was difficult to find housing for sophomores on campus. We used to have a rule that—three years—you had to live on campus for three years. And so only senior year then students could move off, so to speak and then of course that was changed, and I think that's under consideration to be changed again—

Szunyogh: Oh really?

Schley: —to maybe go back to that, I've heard.

Szunyogh: Yeah. [Laughs]

Schley: It's only a rumor.

Szunyogh: That's good.

Schley: I'm trying to think of other things. So of course, the campus changes that way. The food service, I mean great people—

Szunyogh: Oh yeah.

Schley: —you can remember there was a time in the Dugout when it was out where, now that fireplace is, that rounded area.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Schley: That place used to be the serving area—

Szunyogh: Oh!

Schley: —and the grill was behind there—

Szunyogh: Really.

Schley: The wall went across—I never knew that curved area existed until they took down the wall—

Szunyogh: Oh.

Schley: —because they must have stored food and supplies back there.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Schley: And there was a serving line, and then literally there was a dugout. There was—you went down a couple of steps to a curved area.

Szunyogh: Oh!

Schley: And then I guess that's why they call it a dugout.

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Schley: And it was very small. I believe that—this was before I came—that originally that was the main cafeteria for the campus, that area down there, and then when they put the addition on that is now used for the commons they went upstairs. But I believe that that was—the whole area was the main cafeteria.

Szunyogh: Hm!

Schley: So that was kind of fun to see that evolve into a much, much nicer food court that there is today. And much needed, much needed. I'm happy to see that evolve too.

Szunyogh: Yeah. I know, it's weird going in there now, because I still remember how it was before, and it does—

Schley: Yes. What a shock when you came back this year, right?

Szunyogh: Yeah, yeah.

Schley: It was just—it was so much fun to see that happen over my last summer here and to go in and go, boy, people are going to be impressed when they see this changed.

Szunyogh: Mhm.

Schley: It was just amazingly nice.

Szunyogh: Yeah. It does look very nice, but it doesn't feel so different that it doesn't feel like the Dugout.

Schley: No, it's still welcoming, very comfortable and just—and I'm assuming that it gets a lot more used than it used to. People are down there a lot, right?

Szunyogh: Probably. I don't have a meal plan this year, so—

Schley: Oh, don't you?

Szunyogh: No.

Schley: You're living off campus?

Szunyogh: Yeah. I like to cook for myself. Yeah, but I know that the times that I have been in there it's been very nice. And it seems a lot busier than it used to be.

Schley: Yeah. One tradition that has stayed and comes to mind—

Szunyogh: Uh huh.

Schley: —is Saga.

Szunyogh: Yes! Heh.

Schley: Saga food—

Szunyogh: Yeah.

Schley: —was here when I got here. Saga food was at Carroll College when I attended there so I was familiar with it. And the S-A-G-A stood for the initials of the two people who started this business.

Szunyogh: Oh.

Schley: Stuart Anderson and George, maybe? Anderson. S-A-G-A, Saga. And they were the food service for a long, long time and they were then purchased by Marriot—

Szunyogh: Oh.

Schley: —Corporation and it still was called Saga. And now it's Sodexo and nobody remembers it was Marriott, they still call it Saga and Saga stairs. And that happened also at Wheaton College, by the way.

Szunyogh: Really?

Schley: Yes, because I visited there, and they had had Saga for a number of years, but it'd left and they still called it Saga food.

Szunyogh: Uh huh.

Schley: But I think it went away. And for some reason that has always stayed. And it's a great oral tradition to be handing down. I'm all for it. Having Saga stairs—and it annoys Saga not Saga, Sodexo management. And they just throw their hands up and say, yeah, yeah, okay. It's Sodexo. And I think that's a great tradition that has stayed with us to think about that. And we had a counselor on staff, well, it was Jerry Pope, who, when he was an admission counselor and actually when he was a tour guide. So it goes back when Saga was the food service. And he would tell people, his sense of humor was such that he would tell people that it was actually not the names of the two owners but it was the Soviet Attempt to Gag Americans—

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: S-A-G-A stood for Soviet Attempt to Gag Americans—

Szunyogh: That's funny.

Schley: —and that way they always provided complimentary Pepto-Bismol with the meal—

Szunyogh: [Laughs] that's funny.

Schley: —he told more people, that was just his way of relating as a tour guide, and people loved it—

Szunyogh: I like that. Yeah. That's funny.

Schley: Yeah. Those things are with us to this day. And there was a lot of very interesting faculty who worked here too. Justus Pearson, who just within the past year, I think, passed away at a very ripe old age, but was the English faculty here, and he and Dr. Eckley evidently did not see eye to eye on many things because there was a known friction between them, but he for the most part—his office—faculty had offices on the top floor of Holmes Hall when I got here.

Szunyogh: Oh!

Schley: That whole area upstairs was a whole row of faculty offices, along with the President's Office, and then they were moved to other places as they built other offices for faculty. The English House opened up. Center for Liberal Arts was built. Faculty could move over there. But anyway, so Justus Pearson was known for the fact that he pretty much lived in his office. He cooked in his office.

Szunyogh: Oh wow.

Schley: And we used to kid about the fact that we wish somebody would get him a cookbook because his food didn't smell that great.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: We knew he was cooking up there. He was known to be on campus in the winter because he didn't like spending money to heat his home.

[Szunyogh chuckles]

Schley: And things like he rode a bike year round even in the winter—

Szunyogh: Oh wow.

Schley: —he'd ride a bike from Washington Street where he lived over here. He was quite the stereotypical, unusual faculty member that everybody kind of wonders about, does every college have somebody who really stands out as being very different, and Justus Pearson was among them, who certainly, of all of them I remember the most as being perhaps the quirkiest. A great

teacher, very bright, and yet known for a number of unusual things that I probably won't go into here—

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: —but yeah. So it's always fun to think back of some faculty and probably administrators, too, who were very different than you would expect when you get behind the scenes and get to know them in other ways.

Szunyogh: Yeah. Are there any other faculty members that stand out that you remember?

Schley: Well certainly many fine faculty, yes. Bruce Criley, Chair of Biology he grew that department into the wonderful department that it is today.

Szunyogh: My mom still talks about him a lot.

Schley: Mhm. Yeah. I forget his name. Who's the current chair? Don't put this in.

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: David Bollivar. David Bollivar is Chairman of Biology.

Szunyogh: Mhm.

Schley: And he reminded me that I interviewed him when he came here as a student—

Szunyogh: Oh.

Schley: —from high school and I take great pride in knowing that he enrolled, he graduated with his degree, went on for a Masters, Doctorate and came back on faculty and now he's chair of the department which also makes you feel very old—

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: —but at the same time it's a great point and pride to see that happen. But Bruce and Norma Criley, wonderful faculty, yes, and oh many others that if I—Pam Muirhead, who added so much to the quality of instruction here and the way they care for students. There were faculty who would really—they would talk to me about students that I knew I had helped enroll, and wanted to be sure that they were helping them, that care. And I don't remember the faculty member but I do know of an instance where a student who had passed out in class over in Holmes Hall, and they had to call an ambulance, and I had interviewed the father with that student. At the time he was a faculty at Cornell University.

Szunyogh: Oh!

Schley: And he found out later that the faculty member not only made sure that the student—that an ambulance was called for the student but he went with the student to the hospital.

Szunyogh: Oh wow.

Schley: And I think he made the comment that that would not have happened in Cornell.

Szunyogh: Really.

Schley: And that's why he was so happy his son was here.

Szunyogh: Yeah. That's great.

Schley: Yeah. It's like that. Dr. Criley, I know, went to the bedside of a student who had had a health issue and they became great friends over that. And that student is now a physician in Minneapolis area.

Szunyogh: That's great.

Schley: And actually, if I remember the story correctly, Dr. Criley was in his wedding party—the student's wedding party.

Szunyogh: Oh!

Schley: And they became—they were that close.

Szunyogh: That's really sweet.

Schley: Yeah it was. I mean, great connections made over time. And I just recently heard from a student who is now in Tokyo teaching English who worked as one of my student workers in the office. And one of the things that did keep me here was the ability to be able to keep in contact with students, not a great number, but certain ones who you just knew you'd have a chance to make a friendship over their time here and sometimes after. And that's—it just makes it that much more worth it, to know that it's not just a process, but it's a sense of community that you're building, and it continues, and I know many faculty that stay in touch with their students, and many, many of us on the Admissions staff are in touch with one or another of students who have moved on, and they'll come back. Of course, the ones that come back with their sons and daughters, really made me realize that it's time to retire—

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: —because it's like, okay, we're there now. And that's really special, very, very special to me. And those are the things that I would take away as a good feeling of Illinois Wesleyan. The people—it wasn't the paper—

[Szunyogh laughs]

Schley: —pushing the paper. I always said it was people over paper every time. And we were expected to drop whatever we were doing to assist a student, whether it was on the phone, or a parent calling, or when they were visiting. They could come first, because that's a reflection of what we wanted the university to be for them when they got here. And I certainly hope that's still the case, that there are many faculty who would go out of their way to help students, be available to students, and the relationships that you can build are very, very rewarding whether you're having a good day or bad day, right?

Szunyogh: Mhm. Yeah. I know that I—the relationships that I've built with my professors have been—it's been very nice to get to know them. And they're always available.

Schley: Right. And foster them even after you've left. I really—I get real excited if I get an email from a past connection with a student or a phone call, even if it's years between discussions or contact that that is very valuable to know that you've made an impression and helped them. And actually I just got an email the other day from a mom who, her daughter is just about to finish here now, just to say hello, she had retired, just to keep in touch.

Szunyogh: That's really nice.

Schley: And it's—yes it's very nice. It's very, very nice. Still be able to walk on campus, people wave and say hello, and ask how you're doing. Yeah. It's family in a way.

Szunyogh: Mhm. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Schley: No, I think we've covered quite a lot.

Szunyogh: We have. We talked—

Schley: Have we satisfied what you wanted to cover?

Szunyogh: Yeah, yeah! I think we've covered all the questions that I had pulled together. I mean we covered when you first got here, and a lot of the changes with the offices, and the quad, and the dorms, and different memories and stuff. So if there's nothing else you'd like to add—

Schley: Not at this time, no. I think certainly I'll think of something later, and there's always something else that might come up, but I think that those are the things that I'm happy to share with you today.

Szunyogh: Well thank you, it's been a pleasure talking to you.

Schley: You're welcome.