Joseph Wood Interview

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SPEAKERS

Interviewer: Bedell Terry

Interviewee: Joseph Wood

Bedell Terry

Dr. Wood, this is Bedell Terry, and it's October 27, 2021, at 3pm. I'm with Dr. Joseph Wood on the online Zoom platform. We're about to begin our oral history interview for UB [University of Baltimore] stories. The purpose of UB stories' 100th anniversary oral history project is to celebrate the university's centennial by preserving the memory of those influenced by the University of Baltimore over the years. We'll be creating a digital archive and exhibit making these recordings available online through the Internet Archive [website]. So, thank you for joining me today, Dr. Wood. The basic format we're going to use is [to] ask a few questions about yourself as well as your experience at the University. We'll have between 60 and 90 minutes to have a conversation about both of those things. So, getting started, where were you born? Where did you grow up?

Joseph Wood

I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and spent most of my youth there, although I went to high school in Hudson, outside of Cleveland.

Bedell Terry

So, tell us about your family life. [Are] you from a big family [or] a small family?

Joseph Wood

I'm the oldest of three children. I've got a younger brother and a younger sister. My father grew up in Cleveland; my mother was from the Philadelphia suburbs. They met in college, moved to Cleveland after my dad came home from World War Two, and started the family there. My brother and sister and I thought of ourselves as having a pretty normal family life, although my family was struck by polio in 1954, right before the Salk vaccine. My father was 35 at the time and spent the rest of his life until he was 78 as a quadriplegic. So, my brother and I, and my mother all took care of him when we could, although my parents wanted to make certain that I, my brother, and sister, as I said, had as much of a normal life as possible. My sister was also struck by polio; she was a year and a half old and had some

initial paralysis and muscle loss. My brother and I had fevers [that] never really affected us. But one of my earliest memories is my father being carried out of the house on a stretcher. I was eight years old and don't recall a lot about childhood actually, other than I spend a lot of time in my room so I wouldn't bother my mother taking care of my father and reading. So, I learned to be an avid reader, I guess, out of all that experience.

Bedell Terry
Well, we coincide on the reading part, especially under the covers with the flashlight.

Joseph Wood
Well, I did that. My parents also sent me to boarding school for the last three years of high school, where that was how we did our homework, even though we weren't supposed to. People would come around and check and look for light under the door to see if we were doing that under the covers. I think I studied a lot of French literature in the bathroom down the hall.

Bedell Terry
I see that you have a very diverse education and career background. What prompted you to get your degrees in Geography?

Joseph Wood
Well, you know, as a kid, I saved national geographic maps and put them up on the wall in my room. So, when I was reading, I was looking at a lot of those maps, although they weren't really as interesting as maps are today. They were mostly boundaries and rivers and place names. But I never thought about geography as a profession. When I went off to college I was very interested in history. I had AP exams in both American and European History and expected that I would get some credit or something for that. The college acknowledged that, but it was a pretty exclusive place, and they expected you to take their courses. I took a history course from a very renowned professor and decided that I liked better the kind of history I'd had in high school, which actually was more academic than I thought I was getting as a freshman in college. So, I tried political science, and that bored me. Then I tried Economics and I figured once I knew macro and micro, I really didn't want to know more. My advisor all along had been assigned when I first arrived. He was a geography professor, and he said, well, it's time to try geography. So, I said, “Fine”. In the spring of my sophomore year, took the introductory geography course and got a D in it. But I got hooked on what the professor was trying to do in the course. Things happen. I liked it enough that I stayed with it and finished that degree. And then 10 years later, I was hired at the University of Nebraska to teach that introductory course.

Bedell Terry
I see your choice of schools, Middlebury, and University of Vermont. Conscious choices?

Joseph Wood
Yes. Well, the first was, although it was more conscious on my parents' part. That's where they'd met. I thought I wanted to go to Swarthmore, but I was talked out of that because it was seen as too radical at the time. This is 1963-64. In fact, I got my acceptance to Middlebury a week after JFK was shot--at the end of November in 1963, because I'd applied [for] early admission. And then I went on, and I had a

wonderful time at Middlebury, although, in retrospect, given my career, I sometimes wish I'd gone to an urban college or university.

Bedell Terry
Well, I went to an urban College in New York, and you didn't miss a lot.

Joseph Wood
In Middlebury in the middle of the 60s there were two bars and one pizza parlor in town. And you had to drive up to Burlington or down to Rutland to find a movie theater if you had a car. So, it was a pretty quiet place in a lot of ways. And it missed a lot of what was going on in the 60s, although that all crept in eventually.

As for UVM, it is a long story. In the first two years of college of Middlebury, as was the case across much of the United States in the early 60s, if you were male and able bodied, you were expected to take the first two years of ROTC--sort of like Phys ed credit. So, at Middlebury, every one of us except the Canadian hockey players, took ROTC. Then, in summer of 1966, just as Vietnam was heating up, we were given the choice of continuing what was called the Advanced course, during their junior and senior year, or not. People were already beginning to talk about the draft, and how college deferments might go away. Or we could be immediately drafted the day we graduated, if we did not flunk out first. I did some quick calculations. I figured that if I took the advanced course, I could stay in college, I could graduate, I might even be able to extend another year or so before they called me up. And we'd only been in World War Two for three and a half years all together. So, there wasn't much chance that the war in Vietnam would still be on by 1970.

So, I took the chance and went with the advanced course in ROTC and was commissioned in the Army when I graduated in 1968--the same year that Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Donald Trump graduated college, which I don't claim as any kind of a special attribute but tells you something about the 60s. We didn't all agree in the 60s about things, and not everyone who graduated in 68 ended up in the military. Anyway, I went back to Cleveland to work until the Army caught up with me in May of 1969.

I had indicated engineering as a combat branch because I was sure they would want my geography experience in terms of maps and mapmaking and things like that. But the Army decided would make me a “destruction” engineer. I spent time in training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and then they sent me to Fort Benning, Georgia, where I was the platoon leader. I was the only person in that platoon leader [who had] never been to Vietnam. A year later, in May of 1970, a week after the shooting at Kent State, I arrived in Vietnam, what I sometimes referred to as my extended involuntary field excursion.

I came home in April of 1971 with all of my fingers and toes, even though I spent most of the time blowing stuff up. My mother was very distressed because I kept telling her that I had all this Army training in demolition, and I was sure the Weather Underground could use some of my help, because they were blowing themselves up. My mother didn't like that very much.

Bedell Terry
She didn't see the humor enough.

Joseph Wood
She didn't see the humor. So anyway, I got home. Meantime, I had gotten married while in the Army, and my wife went to Vermont while I was in Vietnam. Since I decided not to join the Weather Underground, I went to graduate school. And the closest place where I could walk up to and say, “I know I'm late, but could you take me?” was the University of Vermont.

Bedell Terry
And your PhD. What was the thesis on that?

Joseph Wood
Yeah, sure. Well, I did a lot of quantitative analysis in geography in my MA program at Vermont, and I was encouraged by my professors to go on for a doctorate. And Penn State was the place that I decided on, I was going to go, and I was going to learn how to do a lot of spatial statistics. Actually, I ended up finding a topic on the historical geography of New England that was much more interesting.

My dissertation was the New England village as an invented tradition, for which I did a lot of fieldwork and a lot of archival work to try to explain to historians why they had it all wrong about colonial settlement patterns. They didn't know how to look in the field, they didn't know how to look at the architectural and settlement landscape. When they ran across the term “village” in the archives, they assumed it was what we think of as a village today—a small, nucleated, compact place. I argued that in fact a landscape and cartographic analysis showed that the places called a village in all those historical records were not nucleated. The idea of a colonial village was something that was invented as a tradition. So, I wrote about that and elaborated on that and how that tradition got invented. It was pretty revisionist, and it set me up. Historians were not happy, but geographers loved it, and that made me pretty saleable as a young professor.

Bedell Terry
Oh, being a historian, I can understand the failure for us to hang on to that theory.

Bedell Terry
Now I look over your career, and I see again, it is very diverse, and what caught my eye was the South China Normal University.

Joseph Wood
So, my first job was in 1977 in Omaha, Nebraska, where I was hired to teach that first geography course I had at Middlebury. Other than Vietnam, I'd never lived west of the east side of Cleveland. But Omaha offered a chance to break into some new research on old railroad market towns and historic preservation, as well as offering a chance for travel.

The chancellor of the University of Nebraska System was going to take a group of faculty and staff to China in the summer of 1980, as a lot of universities were doing to begin to build relationships, and I heard about this, and I wrote to the chancellor “How come it's all very senior people going? Why don’t you want some junior faculty to go along and be part of this?” He wrote back and said, “Okay, you're

coming if you want." I jumped at it. I'd been home from Southeast Asia for nine years, long enough that I wanted to learn more about Asia as a geographer, and this proved to be my first **voluntary** extended field excursion.

In China—again, in 1980--we visited several major cities, a number of universities, and some of the major historical sites. My university then decided to begin to build this relationship with South China Normal University (a normal University was a teaching university), in Guangzhou, China I was able to spend half a year in there in 1984. I spent the entire fall semester at the university and traveled extensively around China with a Chinese student who is my guide and interpreter. It was a fabulous experience. (And I got to see an Asian countryside where I didn't have to worry about who was around the next corner, or whether I was going to step on a mine or something like that.)

Bedell Terry
What about the politics of that visit?

Joseph Wood
Nixon went to China in 1972, and after a slow start, some exchanges were beginning to get going by the time I got there in 1984. As far as the Chinese government was concerned, I was just another American professor, one of hundreds in the country, although I was the first one at that university. And interestingly, one of the things that they did was to take me out into the country where a lot of small teacher colleges were staffed by South China Normal University's best graduates.

They wanted me to go out and speak at these places, where most people had never seen or heard an American speak. They wanted to hear a native speaker because they were learning from non-native speakers. So, I had a lot of interesting experiences in that regard.

Many of the people who sort of helped me get along and helped me set up travel arrangements, were former Russian faculty members. No one in China wanted to learn Russian anymore, although given how few Americans Chinese on the street had ever seen, I was often accused of being Russian because I had a beard and wore a Mao cap. People on the street would speak to me in Russian sometimes. And then when they realized that I wasn't Russian, they would try out their limited English. I've got lots of little stories about these interpersonal interactions. Maybe another time I can talk about people asking for information about something about the United States or something about the English language, as they were all desperately trying to learn it.

Bedell Terry
And you were teaching geography, teaching teachers how to teach geography.

Joseph Wood
Yeah, well teaching geography as an academic discipline. I taught a graduate student seminar with eight Chinese students, all of whom had a little bit of English, some better than others. I would talk a little bit about a topic and ask them a question, and they would sometimes discuss in Chinese. Then one of them would answer back in English what they collectively agreed upon in Chinese, and I would respond, and then they discussed the question in Chinese some more. It was fascinating experience,

because I didn't really understand Chinese, although I could find my way around Guangzhou and around China. I used to take the bus to go into the city and call my wife once a week. I had to get to a telephone and there wasn't one on the campus that I could use. I am tall, but I was especially tall for South China, so people would sort of move me around until my head was inside one of the air vents or, so I was standing in the stairwell. It just sort of happened spontaneously, without anyone directing how it would happen. Everyone sort of got it. It was kind of a cool experience.

Bedell Terry
You left your family in the States?

Joseph Wood
Yes. My wife and my 18-year-old stepson came over with me for the first couple of weeks. But they had to get back; my wife had her own job and my stepson had to get back to school. But they had a good time. They enjoyed it. I was there for until right before the holidays, including a several week trip by train around northern China in November and December.

Bedell Terry
I see you're in a couple of other universities. You're in a few universities before you got to the University of Baltimore. Is that the same kind of setup there at George Mason?

Joseph Wood
These were really different kinds of experiences. I was bored after 10 years in Nebraska. And my wife and I talked about it. My step kids were out of high school. And so, my wife put out feelers and I put out feelers for jobs elsewhere. She had three job offers, one in Boston, one in New Orleans, and one in Washington. I had no job offers, but I thought about where I might land something, and we decided to move to Washington. She became the head of the Upper School of a private girl's school in Bethesda, Maryland. As the trailing spouse, I was able to get a one-year, halftime visiting position at George Mason University in Virginia and some consulting work with the Association of American Geographers in DC.

George Mason in the late 80s and into the 90s was an incredibly dynamic place. There were a lot of things you could do if you brought some creativity and energy to it. The next year, I got a full-time tenure-track position and started tenure all over again. The next year, I became director of the small geography program that I had joined. The next year, we set off as a separate department joined with the geologists, and I became the department chair. And then the next year I got tenured again. And a couple of years later, I was involved in creating something called New Century College, which was an effort to create a kind of residential college inside George Mason, even though Mason was not a residential institution in those years.

We called it New Century College with the intent of reinventing undergraduate education. Full-time students worked in teams rather than as individuals in our very creative curriculum. Students spent eight weeks just on one course four-credit course, and then moved on to another one. I had such a great time doing it that I stepped down as chair so I could do more of it. In the meantime, a new president had come in. I'd been one of the faculty members on the presidential search committee, and

the new president asked me to lead a strategic planning effort, because he wanted to get it out of the administration into the faculty, which was a good thing.

All the while, I was working on scholarship and promotion to professor. In Nebraska I had worked on market districts in railroad towns and historic preservation. in Northern Virginia at George Mason, it was Vietnamese refugees and how they had become very visible in terms of placemaking in Northern Virginia. I went back to Vietnam to do some research on and wrote about that as well. I also worked on a large National Endowment for the Humanities project on the historical development of the National Road, which is today US Highway 40 running west from Baltimore I also finished a book on my New England work.

After doing the strategic planning for the new president for a year, my dean, who had become provost, asked me to be his vice provost and gave me all the jobs he didn't want—I was graduate dean, undergraduate dean, and responsible for admissions, registration, financial aid, and continuing professional education, and anything else he wanted me to do. Again, this is Mason, it was a place where you could apply a little energy and a little creativity, and you could go a long way. So, in ten years, I moved from half-time visitor to vice provost. And a couple years later, the provost took a presidency elsewhere, and I was briefly interim provost at George Mason. I was very supportive of the new provost they hired, but he had his own thoughts on how to organize the office and didn't need me. It was an opportunity for me to look around and see what else I might find I could do.

My wife in the meantime had gone off to Columbia to get an EdD at Teachers College, and that made us pretty mobile. And so, we made the next move in 2000 to the University of Southern Maine, where I was hired as provost. People there appreciated my new England work plus the planning and administrative experience I'd added George Mason. I led some more strategic planning and worked to professionalize the faculty even as we tinkered with the curriculum.

I spent seven years as provost, working with the same president until he got promoted to the University of Maine System chancellor, and they did a presidential search. And while they were doing that, I was interim president always assuming that I would return to the provostship, when the new president arrived. Unfortunately for me, when she arrived in 2008, she did what is frequently the case. She told me that she wanted her own provost, and that I should go find another job. I had earned a paid leave, did some new writing, and applied to a number of provost positions and a couple of presidencies. And late in the game, in 2009, UB came along and offered me the provostship. I liked the fact that it was an urban institution with a number of professional graduate programs, and it was in the I-95 corridor, as both George Mason and Southern Maine were.

Bedell Terry
The function of a provost, it's mainly administrative?

Joseph Wood
Yes, it's about managing academic affairs. As provost, I was on campus every day and had to wear a tie most of the time, stuff that I hadn't always done as a faculty member but then did again when I finally stepped down from the provostship at UB and returned to teaching.

It's administrative, but with the sensitivity of a faculty member. The provost who has not been a faculty member is not going to be a very effective provost. You're the one who encourages, supports, and facilitates scholarship and teaching, and thus ensures the effectiveness of the curriculum. But more than anything else, approves faculty hiring, tenuring, and promoting, and sometimes fires or chooses not to reappoint a faculty member, The provost also directs the academic work of the deans of the colleges. And the provost also works with the Faculty Senate. The faculty senate is a kind of advisory committee to the provost in a lot of ways.

The Faculty Senate has a lot of responsibility—if it accepts it—and a good level of authority. I was a faculty senate president in Nebraska. And I'd served on the faculty senate at George Mason and worked very closely with the faculty senate and a faculty union in Maine. So, it really became most of the time I was an administrator during the day. If I taught, I always taught at night. And I was sort of like an adjunct faculty member. I might have rank and tenure status in a department, but I got the night courses because I was too busy during the day

Bedell Terry
Now, when you became Provost in the University of Baltimore, what kind of challenges did you run into when you walked in the door that first day?

Joseph Wood
I think the biggest challenge and one of the reasons that I think Bob Bogomolny [President, University of Baltimore, from August 1, 2002, to July 6, 2014] wanted to hire me was that I had spent a lot of time working with faculty on undergraduate curriculum. I'd been part of a creative team at George Mason. At the University of Southern Maine, I raised half a million dollars of outside money to support faculty working on revising general education and making it what I thought was something more coherent than simply this long list of Introductions to My Discipline 101.

And I thought, you know, at the end of the day, it made more sense to focus on concepts and outcomes than on whether or not you learned enough to decide you wanted to be a sociologist or historian or a marketing major, go to law school, or whatever it is that you were thinking that you wanted to do. And we were so successful that we got some national recognition from the American Association of Colleges and Universities. And, so, you know, I think that experience helped, because in 2009 when I arrived, UB was just at the beginning of admitting freshmen and sophomores for the first time since the early 1970s. It had been an institution that only recruited and admitted transfer students at the junior and senior level in additional to its professional programs.

And in fact, up until about the time I arrived, most undergraduate courses had been night courses. One of the things about building a freshman and sophomore program, as Bob Bogomolny decided to do, was that it meant more students using campus resources more effectively, because you weren't constrained by space the same way. And in those earlier days, before admitting freshmen and sophomores, the day students were the law students, most of whom were white students. Opening as it did to more students and more day classes was really a pretty dramatic transition to becoming the minority-majority undergraduate institution it is today.

So, my job was to figure out how to make a much more robust undergraduate experience. You know, in retrospect, looking back from where we are today, and I know Kurt Schmoke [President of the University of Baltimore, 2014-] has had to consider this, it may have been a mistake to try to do what was done by opening to freshmen and sophomores. It helped the institution financially, especially when the law school suffered a significant enrollment decline about 2013—as did many other law schools.

Bob Bogomolny and I didn't always agree on how to make the transition work better. One of the real failures of the introduction of the freshmen and sophomore program even before I came was that w stopped trying to recruit transfer students. Even years later, we still got more transfer students than freshmen and sophomores in any given year, but not as many as we could or should have gotten to offset the too slow growth of freshmen over the last decade. As we struggled to recruit freshmen, our usual transfer students were getting recruited in a way, say from the Community College of Baltimore County, or Baltimore City Community College, and Anne Arundel or Howard County or what have you. They were getting recruited away by Towson, UMBC, and others that had not historically been transfer institutions.

Leaving that aside, I think that was a big disagreement on our part, but I was interested in trying to build a robust liberal education for the undergraduate students in an institution that was historically a professional one. The Law School and the Business School had always been the important parts of UB as a private institution since the 1920s, when it started as a commercial law school for the largely white working class in Baltimore.

William Donald Schaefer [Governor of Maryland (1987–1995), Mayor of Baltimore (1971–1987)] got his baccalaureate degree in law [LLB] at UB. And a lot of other people did as well. Only in the 1970s did UB became part of the system. And part of the reason it didn't have freshmen and sophomores at that point when it became part of the system, was that the community colleges didn't want UB competing with them. BCCC wanted and needed as many students as it could get. And if UB as a public institution suddenly started competing for freshmen, that would have drawn as much as anything from BCCC or CCBC.

So, there's a long period of transition in the institution from private to public, to part of the system. Initially, it was part of the state's Trustee Schools, Frostburg and Salisbury and Towson, and then those schools merged with the University of Maryland schools, College Park, UMBC UMB, and UMES and with the HBCUs, Bowie and Coppin.

When this is happening, UB is an outlier because it didn't have residence halls like Salisbury, Frostburg, or Towson' it was not an HBCU, like Coppin, Bowie, or UMES, and it was not a University of Maryland School. But it had the only other law school. There's never been a large undergraduate program. And Bob Bogomolny was trying to change that relationship, and I give him credit for trying to change it. But I think the mistake was we didn't do enough transfer students. So, my role in that was working on curriculum.

I made a major decision even though I knew it wasn't necessarily the first thing that a new Provost should do. I made a proposition to the Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts faculty that if they would study the question and consider it, I would encourage and push for splitting the college into two parts.

There was a lot of resistance at first. I wrote a white paper, shared the white paper with all of the faculty at the Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts, and at the end of the day, somewhere around January or February of my first year, the faculty voted to split, and the split meant we created the College of Public Affairs in the College of Liberal Arts. [That white paper should be in the archive.]

The College of Public Affairs was to be made up of professional programs like Public Administration, Criminal Justice, and Health Administration and a number of other programs really didn't fit well in a College of Liberal Arts that had the responsibility of doing general education for all undergraduates.

One of the things I always liked about the UB undergraduate program was that we had a number of 300 level courses that every student had to take to graduate, which meant that you couldn't do all of your Gen Ed before you came to UB as a transfer student. When you got to UB you still had to take an upper-level writing course, you still had to take an ethics course, you still had to take an arts and ideas course, and you still had to take another cultures course. And I wanted to perpetuate that, but we needed to bolster that lower level as well. We just didn't have the classes that we needed, so we had to build those.

Meanwhile, the professional programs were a kind of albatross on the liberal arts programs in my mind. And the liberal arts programs are kind of albatross on the professional programs in that college, and by splitting what we got were two more coherent entities with unique missions rather than one big college with two independent missions. So that's what I had to do. And then of course, I went through the process of leading searches to hire new Deans.

Bedell Terry
Did you run into a lot of resistance in those changes?

Joseph Wood
From time to time. I had learned as a faculty member, both as a faculty senate president and as a member of a faculty union (and actually a leader of a faculty union), to listen to the faculty. One of the things I knew was that when you tell faculty what's going to happen, when you don't ask faculty what should happen and how to make it happen, you don't get anywhere. You're much better off working with the faculty.

And, at the end of the day, I think that effort proved its worth; the College of Public Affairs has proven to be a remarkable college on par with the School of Business and the Law School. I think it has the largest enrollment of any of the four colleges today. Some of that's because the Law School lost a lot of enrollments in 2013-2014, as all Law School's did then. The Business School continues to grow, but Public Affairs has just exploded. And as the dean likes to say, it's Maryland's only college of public service, which, with Business and Law, is very consistent as a professionally oriented institution. It serves as a sort of the third leg of the stool, if you will.

Meanwhile, the College of Liberal Arts has been hurt by the failure of growing first and second year enrollment, and without that growth, it was never able to produce a general education that the students that we were able to recruit, really deserved. And much of that was not its fault. So, you asked me about roadblocks and things like that. One of the issues I dealt with was the resistance on the part of the Business faculty, for instance, to the General Education program.

General Education is required by the University System of Maryland and by the state of Maryland, and by our Middle States accrediting agency, but how you do it is your responsibility as an institution. I was trying to make a strong, robust, general education program, whereas many faculties outside of the College of Arts and Sciences wanted their students—in their majors--not to have to deal with it. They were happy for an English faculty to teach writing. And they were happy for the Philosophy faculty to teach ethics, as long as it didn't take away from the courses, they wanted their students to take in their school, even if those courses did not meet general education requirements for any student.

When she was Dean, Darlene Smith [Darlene Brannigan Smith, Business School Dean (2008 – 2013), Provost (2016 – 2020)] worked out a mechanism whereby the first statistics course of Business was taught in Arts and Sciences, because they needed that enrollment and in the Business School didn't. And we coordinated it. So that first statistics course was a general one, not a business specific one, which meant that it could satisfy Gen Ed. And the business school didn't have to worry about doing it. But I think a lot of Business faculty thought that I was taking their stuff away, despite the fact that there's some very strong faculty teaching basic statistics at UB. But that arrangement was not typical.

So those are the kinds of issues that the provost had to deal with. How do you make these things fit into the institution as you're constantly trying to enhance the quality of the institution, its attractiveness, its enrollment, and the success of the faculty? Other things, too. For instance, the professional faculty have lower teaching loads, right? I worked hard although not successful to help the Arts and Sciences faculty have more time for scholarship relative to teaching, as the professional school faculty had, often due to their unique accreditation associations.

One of the ways you can do that is by having larger class sizes, so that you don't have to teach multiple sections to achieve the same student credit outcomes. If you have something like the auditorium in the Business School, you can teach a large class. But if your classrooms are the size of the ones in the Academic Center, you're teaching maybe 30 students, when you could be teaching the same material to 60 or 90 students. I cut my teeth teaching 140 students in each of two different sections of that course that I was hired to teach in Nebraska that I had gotten a D in as an undergraduate. And I did it fairly successfully. I did it every semester for 10 years, so I know it can be done. Not everyone's good at it. I'm better at a seminar than I am something like that, but it can be done.

So, I know if I've covered a lot of territory there, but you asked about political issues. Every issue pretty much in the Provost Office ends up being political simply because not every member of the faculty is going to agree to it and needs to be convinced or wants to have a resolution in front of the faculty senate that condemns the provost for pushing an idea. And it comes with the territory. The provost also

protects the president in that regard. Think of the provost as sort of the buffer, so the president doesn't have to deal with those issues.

Bedell Terry
Any thoughts on President Schmoke's proposal to have the University of Baltimore kind of form a kind of CCNY type?

Joseph Wood
I actually think it is not a bad idea. I've thought about certainly with respect to BCCC, and I was very involved in working in partnership with Coppin at one point. I would say two things about that. One is when the Board of Regents first instituted a mentorship award for faculty across the system, I knew that we had an opportunity to do something to get some attention. For many, many years, UB and Coppin jointly shared the Health Administration program with students taking classes on each campus. The faculty made it successful for the students. We nominated the two faculty members from UB and Coppin for their collocative mentorship of the students, and they won the regents award that year. The award documented that that kind of thing could work if you wanted to make it work.

And then at the same time, Coppin had just built a magnificent new Science Building, much larger than what it needed for its science faculty, and we had no science facilities to speak of. When we started the freshmen program, in fact, we had very few mathematicians and very few scientists. We had to build up math and science in the College of Arts and Sciences simply for general education. We built a science program in urban ecology: I love it that the faculty talk about the Jones Falls as their field station. You can walk it over by the Amtrak yards, go down and check it out, and take water samples, and in doing so learned a lot of science. But we didn't have the variety of sciences and labs that they had at Coppin, in no small measure since Coppin is a major producer of nursing students. That was something that we had to grow in order to have in order to have the first- and second-year program, but by collaborating, we would not have to duplicate facilities and faculties, if we could collaborate with Coppin. If we had access to Coppin's faculty and labs, we could have had a much stronger science program very quickly.

And there are other ways that we could have done it. You know, we have no teacher education program. We could have had students going back and forth. My granddaughter had that experience at a small college outside of Philadelphia. She was at a college called Haverford. She took classes at Bryn Mawr, and vice versa. Those kinds of collaborations are very doable, especially when there is a complementarity as between Coppin and UB. And the complementarity between those two institutions, and BCCC could make all three institutions much more successful and capable of providing a top-notch higher education to Baltimore students, many of whom are non-traditional or must attend part time.

Bedell Terry
Yes, at the University of Baltimore, the age goes from children who could be my grandchildren, to folks older than me, and I'm 71.

Joseph Wood
You're still a kid [Laughing]. But I know what you're saying. So let me tell you two quick stories. Since this is about stories. I was still Provost; I was teaching an evening class on the History of The American

Landscape. A student came to visit me with his father. He was 16 and was interested in coming to the University of Baltimore, to finish his college career. He'd been taking dual enrollment classes. He'd been taking online classes. His father worked at Howard and didn't think Howard was the place where he would fit in. He lived in DC, but he could take the train up every day to UB.

And he needed upper-level classes to finish this baccalaureate degree. And I was intrigued enough. I'm trying to remember how, there was some connection back to George Mason, somebody at George Mason had told the father to look me up and bring his son up. Well, this kid was great. You know, 15- and 16-year-olds don't always have the same level of conceptual understanding as a 20-year-old. They can be very objective about something; they can memorize facts and what have you. And he was able to move more than a lot of 15- or 16-year-olds were from sort of fact-based learning to a much more contextual and conceptual understanding of things. He graduated from UB after two semesters and went off to North Carolina Central University Law School, and graduated law school at 20.

So, the second story: When I stepped down as provost and went back to the faculty, I took a leave in 2016 and started teaching in spring 2017. While I was on leave, I spend several weeks in Iran, and so I taught a course on Iran, because there was a lot of need for non-western cultures courses. There was a need for a full-time faculty member to teach American government, as most of my colleagues in the School of Public and International Affairs were teaching in the graduate programs, so I agreed to do it. I reminded them that I had that class, it was called Civics and I took it in junior high school in 1959. But other than that, I thought I knew the material fairly well and I was happy to teach it and turned out to be quite successful at it.

I remember one class where I had a couple of 18-year-olds who part of the freshmen program. And I had a 60-year-old retiree. And that was so cool, because when I would talk about a topic in historical context, the 60-year-old could say, oh, yeah, in Baltimore this is how that played out. So, I had a student who could confirm that I wasn't telling lies to an 18-year-old. And it really helped.

So, one other story. One of the things that I will always remember about my time at UB was the Divided Baltimore course that we ran in 2015, after Freddie Gray died that spring.

Kurt [Schmoke] was in his first years, as President. I remember us talking about what are we going to do, and we had to close couple of classes for the evenings, not because we were a fearful of anything happening to us, even though we weren't far from where things were going on. But our students couldn't get to evening classes because they couldn't walk or drive over from West Baltimore because parts of the city itself were locked down for about a week or so. But we closed evening classes, much to our chagrin, because it was our students who were in the middle of all of that, both on the streets or impacted by others on the streets, unable to get to class. So, we designed this class. And it was all about structural racism, which is something that I had come to be teaching, both in my History of Landscape courses as well as in the Public and International Affairs courses that I've been asked to teach.

Bedell Terry
Can you tell me a little more about the Divided Baltimore course?

Joseph Wood
So first of all, we have to go back a couple of years before that. It came to my attention that the great historian of the Martin Luther King, Jr. years and the Civil Rights Movement, Taylor Branch, lived in Baltimore. I had reached out and we talked about UB at some point. I was really eager to see if we could bring him on board. He had taught a seminar at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, his Alma Mater, at some point in the past. I thought, however, if we can get Taylor Branch, we shouldn't have a small seminar. We should try to figure out how to make it something bigger. So, we talked on and on, and he was involved in a project. And that project meant that he wasn't ready yet to take on a course. And then he heard about MOOCs [Massive Open Online Courses], which were sort of the big thing about 2013 or 2014. MIT was doing them, and others were doing these things, these massive online courses. And so, I got a call from him, and he said, “What’s a MOOC and can I do one?” And I said, “Well, you don't really want to do MOOC because it's just about you are lecturing. I know, you're much more interested in engaging with people, building relationships with students, and bringing other people in and what have you”. He said, “Yes, so how can we do that?” So, we talked, and out of that came a course that we ran as an Honors Course at UB and with partners taking our live course online- we had Norfolk State and another in New Orleans, plus Coppin students were invited to participate online--. Anyone—in person or online—could send questions to us, and Taylor brought remarkable figures from the Civil Rights Movement into class and interviewed them: We had Bernard Lafayette, we had Diane Nash, we had Julian Bond, we had Bob Moses. And we had Harry Belafonte.

And we had a Jelani Favors, who's now a faculty member at Cappin State, an HBCU in South Carolina. He served as Taylor’s teaching assistant and managed a course Twitter account so students could send Twitter questions. He would feed the questions to Taylor, who would then ask his guests some of these questions. But we also opened the course up to community folks to come and other students to come even they weren't taking the course. We were also streaming the course out to Hagerstown, to the University System of Maryland campus out there.

And Taylor had the for-credit students and a lot of the not-for-credit students put themselves in a situation where they were going to be uncomfortable, much as civil rights workers had to do in the 1960s. A black student went to a synagogue in Pikesville, where he made the mistake of walking in the women's side of the synagogue. He was welcomed, nevertheless. We had a policeman in the class who decided to do a gay bar, even though he was not gay. Students wrote about this experience of being uncomfortable in trying to engage someone who was different than they were

Okay, long story short. So, we had that experience. So, when Divided Baltimore came along, Taylor was involved in something else and wasn't available. But we liked the model of being able to bring community people and even students from different class levels using the same course content in class. We set up a graduate section, and we set up an undergraduate section. We had high school teachers from City College. We had any number of different majors represented: Criminal Justice students and History students and Legal and Ethical studies students.

And we had community people coming. They knew that every Monday night through the semester there would be” lecture,” although no one really lectured in the traditional sense. It was much more like TED

talks, 15 to 20-minute presentations. We'd do two to three of those in an evening and then have a discussion. We videotaped it all. We put the videotapes out on the web, capturing every evening's conversation. And we'd have a topic each evening with two or three or four different people from different disciplines or perspectives, including faculty from different universities or government officials or non -profit leaders speaking on that topic, and then engaging the folks. We offered the course in the former Law School building's Moot Court, and it was fabulous. It was absolutely fabulous.

I remember a couple of very quick stories. A young Black woman, undergraduate, but maybe 23 or 24, just a little bit older, spoke up after the first lecture. We'd been talking about the history of segregation in Baltimore and introducing the notion of structural racism. And she put her hand up and said, "I have to say that this class already succeeded. For the first time, I understand my own life. She lived in West Baltimore, probably just south of Druid Hill Park. Her parents were professional people. She'd had an opportunity to go to Roland Park Country Day School. But she talked about being one of the very few Black girls in Roland Park Country Day School, where the white girls wanted to touch her hair or see if color rubbed off her skin, the kind of things that Black people often experience when they're a distinct minority in a particular situation.

And she said, "Now I understand why my neighborhood is Black and that neighborhood where I went to school was white, and I understand why it was really unusual and a real privilege for me to be able to go to that white school. You've just explained my life to me." And I think that comment alone sealed it for me that this course would be a success. Then weeks later, another woman who I think was a graduate student spoke up. She was an older, single mother, and she said, "I live in Sandtown-Winchester, it's been six months since Freddie Gray was killed and nothing has happened, why not?" I was moderating at that point, and I said something like that's why we need this course…"

Interestingly, students began to complain that the community members were asking too many questions. And the students didn't get enough time to ask questions in the limited time we had each Monday evening. Excuse me, when was the last time you heard the students complain about not having time to ask questions. [Laughing] So, when we started sending the students off, the graduate students would go off with their instructor for the last 30 or 40 minutes, and the undergraduates with theirs. and we had a dual enrollment program going as well: High school students working with Ron Williams, who continued to teach that course, as a dual enrollment course in subsequent years, and they would work on projects. Well, anyway, the community members then got upset because the students were leaving, and there was nothing for them to do.

So, they started having dinners. In the space outside the moot courtroom, so they could continue the conversation. And sometimes speakers would also stay and talk with him, things like that. It was just the most amazing course because of the experience that so many different people had with it. And the relationships that got built around the course. And the openings that the course allowed for those of us from the university into neighborhoods in West Baltimore and East Baltimore, and the way in which many people felt welcomed on campus.

That reminds me of one last thing. Last week I hosted an academic conference in Baltimore on Race, Ethnicity and Place [www.repconference.org] for people, mostly geographers from around the country,

and I was able to call on people in West Baltimore and elsewhere in the city to help me organize presentations and field experiences, where, for instance, I sent people to Pennsylvania Avenue to walk Pennsylvania Avenue to meet people. I think the Divided Baltimore course sort of moved me to the point where I was comfortable sending people someplace without me taking them there myself.

And what was a real highlight of the conference was a plenary on the Friday evening, just last Friday evening, at which Kurt Schmoke reflected on Baltimore because as we know, Kurt grew up in the city and he went away, came back and he was the state's attorney and Mayor, went away again, and then came back as president of UB. So, you know, this sort of going away and coming back gave him some unusual perspective on the city. Roger Hartley also spoke about UB and public service, and Ron Williams read some poetry about Baltimore. (I first met Ron when he gave his undergraduate commencement speech at UB and then involved him as a graduate assistant in Divided Baltimore. And now he has an MFA from UB and is an adjunct teaching Ethics courses.)

The keynoter was D Watkins reflecting on his journey from crack dealer to spokesman from, as he puts it, forgotten Black America. And anyone who was registered for the conference got a copy of his third book with the help of the T. Rowe Price Foundation Board.

Bedell Terry
Oh, this was specifically to get you to give us some stories that nobody else would give us. But do those tapes for the divided Baltimore still exist?

Joseph Wood
They still exist. You have to talk to the folks over in Information Services about where the tapes are, but I am sure they are in the Archives.

Joseph Wood
One last comment about Divided Baltimore. As I was retiring, Ed Gibson and some other faculty members put together a course on the Poor People's Campaign in 1968, basing it on the Divided Baltimore format, bringing in people who'd been there, having different course levels, streaming it involving the community.

They did it with Marc Steiner and Lenneal Henderson. The College of Public Affairs won a national award for that course, for the format and the openness of it. As an aside, most provosts would probably not let you do such a course regularly, because it expends too many resources for too few credit hours paid for by the students. On the other hand, the goodwill that comes to the institution, and the number of people that are attracted ultimately to the institution made every one of those extra dollars that those kinds of courses cost very appropriate.

Bedell Terry
Well, is there anything that I missed that you'd like to talk about?

Joseph Wood

In my last year at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, I was chair with my college faculty advisory committee to the dean. We advised the dean on curriculum and budget and things like that. I was also responsible for a review of the dean, and I called on an outside person who was a former president of the University of Northern Iowa and then teaching at the University of Iowa. He came over for a couple of days, and we paid him, and I asked him to look at the college, talk with people, and do a review. Having outside eyes, especially from someone who's fairly experienced, is really very helpful in whatever kind of review you do.

And one of the things that I learned from him was that while he had been a college president, the best part of his life was going back to the faculty. So, after 20 years in one provost office or another, I spent my last two years at UB teaching again. It just wasn't my discipline, but that's okay. I made my discipline part of it. I taught Community Studies, I taught American Government, I taught Race and Politics. I taught the Geography of Iran.

And I really found that maybe it was the best teaching I'd ever done. I don't know if the students would agree. But I felt very comfortable in what I was teaching, and how I was teaching, and how I was connecting with students. And so, I really appreciate Kurt allowing me to go back to the faculty and teach. And then I finally retired at 72. Maybe it was passed time to retire. But I was happy to do it. And happy to talk about it. I have great affection for the University of Baltimore. I'm very appreciative that most people still are happy to hear from me or, at least when I call, people respond.

All four Deans who were hired under my Provostship are still there. A lot of people in student affairs, especially Student Academic Affairs, whether they work out of the College of Arts and Sciences or out of the Provost Office, are people that were hired when I was there. I'm really pleased with how many people in administrative or semi-administrative positions are still at UB and happily so, it appears. I guess that makes me feel that I had some positive impact.

Bedell Terry
Well, Dr. Woods, I want to thank you for your time today. It's been a really enlightening discussion which is nothing else.