

INFORMANT: DR. DANIEL J. KAUFMAN
INTERVIEWER: JENNIFER STEPHENS
DATE: OCTOBER 30, 2013

NOTES: This interview covers the life and career of Dr. Dan Kaufman, the first president of Georgia Gwinnett College in Lawrenceville, Georgia. It is a continuation of the interview began on October 21, 2013.

Transcribed by: Dusty Marie Dye, University of West Georgia

THE INTERVIEW:

[Recording begins]

JENNIFER STEPHENS: I'm here today on October 30 and we are doing our second interview in an oral history project with the inaugural president of Georgia Gwinnett College, Dr. Daniel J. Kaufman. So, round two of questioning today. How did you first hear about this new college and what led you to apply for this position?

DANIEL KAUFMAN: I was, uh, retiring from the Army in the summer of 2005. I was the chief academic officer at West Point, and I wanted to stay in higher education but, because at that time my dad and my wife's mother were still alive, they lived down in south Georgia, and our daughter and her family had settled in Greenville, South Carolina, and our son was become settled in Charlotte, and so coming back to the Southeast was important to us. And so where we lived was more important than actually what I did. But I had applied for a couple of presidents' jobs in the Southeast and was in the running to be president of some institutions, and literally, and I had been checking the Chronicle of Higher Education website for job openings, and literally the week before I retired from the Army in June of 2005, I saw the ad in the Chronicle of Higher Education for the president of "Unnamed State College" in Lawrenceville, Georgia. We didn't have a name in those days. And so I looked at it and thought, "Hmm. Atlanta's a fun place to live, it's centrally located between the parents that we had to sorta take care of and our kids and grandkids." And so [inaudible], that sounds promising. Plus, the very notion of starting a college from scratch was one that appealed to me, coming from the most traditional college on the planet, I.E. the military academy at West Point. But the chance to start a public institution of higher education from scratch and re...help to reimagine public higher education was just a phenomenal opportunity and so we applied for a job and were lucky enough to get it. But it was almost entirely serendipitous. If I hadn't looked on the Chronicle's website that day, almost literally before I turned off my computer when I was retiring from West Point, I wouldn't have seen it, so...I still carry that ad in my briefcase, by the way. I printed it out and I carry it...I still have it, today.

STEPHENS: Talk about the application process and the interview process. What do you remember about that?

KAUFMAN: It was kind of interesting, 'cause I... We were in transition, of course. We had retired a week after I submitted the application, and so we were staying with our folks down in

south Georgia and the process for a couple of other searches were ongoing. But then I got a call and said, would you be willing to come for, you know, the proverbial airport interview, you know, sort of first interview. Sure. So I drove up from south Georgia, where Kathy, where we were from, and met the initial interview team, which was primarily academics at the...and University System staff...at the site there by the airport and had my first interview. And that went...seemed to go fine, so I...they said fine, so I turned around and drove back to Brunswick. And then a week later, I got another call, said, okay, you made round two, so come on back again. We're gonna have a series of interviews. We're gonna do interviews with the Board of Regents and then we're gonna do community interviews. Fine. And it was both of us, Kathryn and me, so we came back up to Atlanta and interviewed with the Board of Regents and then, interestingly, came out to Gwinnett County and had an interview in...I guess it was in the Chamber, really, ironically enough, with the, sort of the community leaders. And there were 20 of them already around the table and, sort of...because the community really had worked hard to get the college founded. I mean, Gwinnett was the most populated county east of the Mississippi River that didn't have a four-year college in it. And so the community leaders had worked very hard with the Board of Regents and the General Assembly to get the college approved and so they obviously had an interest in who was gonna run it. And that was...that was interesting. And they were...I guess there were three of us who were interviewing...there were folks who were carrying us around, making sure we didn't bump into each other, and, uh, that went fine. And that's when we back downtown and, that afternoon, I was sitting in the Board of Regents' office, the University System office in Atlanta, and I had talked to the guy who was from the search firm and thought it was done, it was about 2:00 in the afternoon. So, Kat and I got up and we were gonna drive back to south Georgia, and the Chancellor at the time, Tom Meredith, I happened to run into him in the hallway, and he said, "I'll see you in a couple minutes," and I said, "Excuse me? What are you talking about?" and he said, "Oh, yeah, we have a final session here in a couple of minutes." I thought, "Oh, okay." If I hadn't run into him, I'd have left. But we had the session and he offered me the job. And so I, obviously, was delighted to take it. But that's...it was a very thorough and interesting interview process.

STEPHENS: Did anyone discourage you to take the job?

KAUFMAN: Um, no. I mean, it was, of course, a different time. There was no one associated with what became GGC. I mean, people were, I think, as excited as we were about the prospect of the college. I think it helped I can speak Georgia when I have to. I think it helped to have somebody from at least this neck of the woods who was interested in starting a new college, and people were excited about some of the vision we had for what we wanted the school to be and so never thought like that, quite the reverse, I mean. I was excited about it, Kathryn, my wife, was excited about it, and we were delighted when the opportunity presented itself.

STEPHENS: What did you think when you first came on the campus?

KAUFMAN: It was, of course, very different than it is today. The signature building was here, that [inaudible], but there wasn't much else here. Building A, which was the leased building, was there, and half of Building C, but after that it was empty, I mean, it was woods, and, literally, about 40 acres of kudzu out there where the athletic fields now stand, and so...and there was a, as you know, the [inaudible] University Center, there had been a, sort of, consortium of colleges

who were holding classes on the site. Not one college, but...the University of Georgia was teaching graduate programs, Southern Poly was teaching a couple of programs, the Medical College was teaching "rad tech," radiological technician program, and Georgia Perimeter had a lot of students here in two-year programs. And so, we were gonna, as GGC stood up, they were gonna, some said basically they were gonna move out, and that's...And so there were a lot of people here on the site, but, you know, it sorta wasn't one institution. There was nobody...was catering to Gwinnett County and surrounding area students with the kinds of programs that GGC ultimately offered. And so you could see the opportunity that was here.

STEPHENS: So, describe what you could see that wasn't here yet. You could just see the opportunity, you could see the possibility. What did you see?

KAUFMAN: Yeah...What I saw was based on taking advantage of the signature building, building B. Uh, we could build what has become the sort of central campus, the quad, in that...and if we could, if we were, if we were smart, we could build functional but dramatic architecture that would have sense of a twenty-first century institution that...GGC was the first new four-year college chartered in the United States in the twenty-first century and, of course, the first one in Georgia in over a hundred years, so, we were determined to take advantage of this very nice piece of property that the county had donated to the Board of Regents. And so I...You could see in your mind's eye, easily, what could happen here, and off we went.

STEPHENS: Tell me what your first day on the job was like.

KAUFMAN: Um, first day I was on was Sep...[interruption] September 19, 2005. Pulled up in the parking lot just adjacent to Building B and walked in the side door and not a soul knew who I was. No one cared, they just...they didn't, it didn't matter who I was. And I did have an office up on the third floor, where the Provost currently sits, and Martha Sosebee had been administrative assistant over at University Center and she was there, and so Martha actually said hello to me when I walked in, but the office was empty, and, of course, I was the only employee of "Unnamed State College," we didn't have a name, "Unnamed State College." And my mission was to open the college in August of 2006, which was eleven months later. So you think, "Hmm, okay. What do you do first?" You've gotta attract faculty, and you gotta begin to recruit students, but you can't do that until you hire staff. You gotta have a budget, which we did not have, and so you begin to think, "Okay, we've got essentially nothing." And the finance director for the old Gwinnett University Center, Eddie Beauchamp, was here and so I talked to him and we talked about budgets and there had not been much work done on what was going to become the GGC budget, so we started doing some financial planning, because at that point the University System was preparing for its next year's budget submission. And so we got together and said, "Okay, what do we need to ask for? What do we think...How much money do we need? How many faculty do we gotta hire? What kind of staff do we need?" And we're making all this up because none of it exists. I mean, literally, none of it exists. And we were taking over...We, what became Georgia Gwinnett were gonna take over the Gwinnett University Center, the space, on January 1, which we did. So I began to acquire resources and people, faculty. There were some folks that I knew I really wanted to have come work here, some who had worked for me up at West Point and some who I had known just in the course of my previous life, so I started making phone calls and saying, "Such a deal I have for you. We have a

chance to really start with a proverbial blank piece of paper and reimagine public higher education.” And people were excited. So we...we took out some ads in the Chronicle, by the way, and we had hired our charter faculty, ten folks, opened up an admissions office and started advertising and, as you know, acquired 118 students who showed up a year later. No, but that first day was, as I thought about it on a number of occasions, was really daunting because you don’t realize how little you have until you sort of sit in the chair and say, “Now what?” And now what was going to be whatever we did, because, as you’ve heard me say many times, hope is not a method. I mean, there wasn’t anybody gonna come to our aid and help us figure this out, so we had to do it ourselves. And off we went. So...Eddie Beauchamp became the Vice President for Resources here at what became GGC. I’d walk down the hall up on 3rd Floor, Building B in what is now the Presidential Suite and where the Vice Presidents sit was not even finished, it was just...it didn’t even have sheetrock up in the hallway there. You remember that. And there was this strange guy down there practicing his putting named Gordon Harrison, um, who had been in the development business over at Kennesaw State, had been doing a special project for the University System office on the use of educational technology in higher ed. And so Eddie and Gordon became Employees #2 and 3, they argued about which was which, and they started on January 1st of 2006. So, on January 1 of 2006, nine months before we were to open, eight and a half, we had three employees. And off we went. And we convinced Stas Preczewski from West Point, he had worked for me at West Point, to come down and be the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and the four of us sat through some interviews for a Vice President for Educational Technology...very strange people...and finally, miraculously came upon Lonnie Harvel who had been working out at Georgia Tech and he became our last Vice President and joined us...So by early spring we had the team together and we were recruiting faculty and deans and admissions office and off we went.

STEPHENS: Wow. I can’t imagine those first couple days, you know, those first couple weeks, first couple weeks, just all that must have been...just moving around and how you even process and organize all of it.

KAUFMAN: Yeah, I mean, there’s no manual, “How to Start a College.” I mean, you look around, you think, “What do I do first? What don’t I know that I need to be doing?” That’s the scary part, is...Some of the stuff you know you need to do, but some of the things, you think, “What am I not doing that I should be doing that’s gonna get me in trouble or keep our college from opening?” But we, to my knowledge, we didn’t miss anything important. We sorta sorted it out then kinda got it all up and running. But it...it was one of those...exhilarating and horrifying experiences at the same time.

STEPHENS: So...You’ve talked about what was exhilarating about it. What was horrifying about it?

KAUFMAN: Well, um...We...We had...nothing. We had no aim, no faculty, no students, no budget, no financial aid, no budget, no accreditation...And so anything that happened was going to happen because we did it. And so we literally had to do all of that ourselves. And...Oh, by the way, early on, in trying to get all of that stuff, we also had hire folks...Once we got students, we had to begin the accreditation process...It was just...Every single aspect of the college that most of us now take for granted because they’re there, they exist, we didn’t have. And so, we

kept...Every day, we'd say, "Is there something we're forgetting?" We'd all go...keep looking at, you know, the SACS accreditation stuff and figure out what kind of offices do we need to have, you know, for ADA compliance, you know, for student aid, and all the things that you have to have, whether you have a hundred students or whether you have ten-thousand students, there's a certain number of support staff that the laws, either federal or SACS requirements require you to have. We didn't have any of them. So...so that was interesting.

STEPHENS: You know, I've heard you say before that there's a reason that people don't start a college every day. Why do you think that is?

KAUFMAN: Um...for a couple reasons. One, administratively, they're not that hard. I mean, we did it and we did it in good fashion. Now, new organizations are perceived as resource drains by systems. Private colleges start all the time, the for-profits, or private colleges, start all the time. But public institutions require considerable devotion of public funds and in the last few years there just hadn't been very much. But even in 2005, before the great recession, starting a new college is a bit of an unknown, but you know you're making a significant commitment of financial resources in the future. And so, change is hard, for most institutions, for most professions, and higher education is no exception. Ironically, it is very tradition-bound. And so new institutions, new organizations, aren't readily accepted, frankly, because they are perceived to be a threat to resources. In other words, taking the same-sized pie and dividing it into more pieces. So GGC was the 35th school in the University System...it took us about two years to get the System office to stop saying 34 and acknowledge that there were in fact 35...and so...And we, of course...You're like a problem child. You require a lot of attention because you don't have anything, so you're always pestering people downtown or at the University System office about programs or administrative requirements or mostly resources, and so we require a good deal of their attention. And so that's why. I think it's just...It's not necessarily hard for the institution...I'd say it's exhilarating. But it's hard for systems to birth new institutions.

STEPHENS: What was *the* most challenging part of starting a college from scratch?

KAUFMAN: Um...we had to...we had to sell a notion that really didn't exist. We had to sell a product that existed only in our mind's eye. So we had to convince faculty, staff, parents, and students that this was going to be real. That we meant what we said, that we were going to be able to start the college and it was going to be accredited, that it was...and everything was gonna be good. But we didn't have any of that. And so, as you began to...and you have a passion for what the opportunity that we had...but you hope to convey...transfer that passion to other folks. Well, the good news is people came in and told *us* they were gonna work here. I mean, we weren't interviewing them, they were interviewing us. We had faculty members who came and just sat down and said, "I'm going to work here because the opportunity that you all are doing here at GGC is the way public higher education oughta be." And so we attracted a remarkable group of charter faculty and charter staff who had a passion for the vision and the mission of GGC. And after that...after that, we got that first tronge of faculty and staff and our first group of students sort of got in here and we opened the doors. And we were going to be fine. Likely...I think it was the uncertainty about can we really pull this off? Can we...Was I good enough to articulate the opportunity that we had to do what GGC was going to do? And then we did it, so, that was the most challenging, and the most gratifying, frankly.

STEPHENS: Now, I know you have cast a vision for this institution and what it could be, but you...but the vision also talks about higher education in general and what you envision that to be. Can you speak to that?

KAUFMAN: Yeah, I think we had some definite ideas about what we think public higher education ought to do and be and, as you know, GGC is... We want it to be a wellspring of educational innovation. Public higher education is ironically not very innovative. We still operate on a business model that we developed in the 17th century, and if you doubt that all you have to do is look at what we wear at commencement. And so it has...Higher...Public higher education...All higher education, in my judgment, has become more and more faculty focused and less and less student focused and we were determined that GGC was not going to do that, that we were going to be focused on our students, 'cause that's why we're here. And not just getting them in, not just accessing them, but "succeeding" them. That's not a word, but, you know, providing them with the support and the opportunities and the programs and the facilities and the faculty and the resources they need to succeed. You know, if we focused on them, despite their widely varying degrees of preparation for college, if we provided them that level of support, we were confident that would succeed. And they have, as you know. And that's, again, the remarkably gratifying part about it. What we did here at GGC. But I think that was the challenge, was to...Could we spread the gospel and get enough converts to join our merry band to really reimagine public higher education.

STEPHENS: If you had to describe Georgia Gwinnett College to someone who has never heard of it before, how would you do that?

KAUFMAN: I've had the opportunity to do that, even to folks still here in Gwinnett County, who apparently don't understand what's going on here. And certainly there are a lot of bumper stickers that you can use. You know, we style ourselves, of course, the "Campus of Tomorrow," but that...what that means is it's the way college oughta be. That's what I tell young people. It's what undergraduate, collegiate education oughta be, what the experience oughta be, because it's focused on their, as you know well...It's not just their intellectual health, you know. We focus on all veins of human development in terms of physical development and social development and spiritual in the sense of the human spirit and resilience and all the kinds of things that we want to produce...a capable contributing adult. And so, I think you try to tell people that GGC is the way college oughta be. And, as you know well, when people come out here, every one of them walks away going, "I had no idea. Wow, look what you guys are doing." To include, as you know, SACS, in our initial accreditation visit and the reaffirmation visit, as I understand it. So it's gratifying to see people marvel at what happens. You remember we used to say nobody grew up wanting to go to Georgia Gwinnett College. Now they do. And they do. And so that's another great thing about the ratification of what we've done here...is that...Young people, they have choices, and, you know, folks who have options choose to come here.

STEPHENS: Talk about how the University System received all this and how that relationship evolved.

KAUFMAN: Well, we were euphemistically called "the experiment," as, as you know, we don't have tenure. And so, as the only institution in the University System that doesn't have tenure, our

colleagues in the other 34 institutions were terrified that the Board of Regents would say, “That’s really a good idea. Let’s not have tenure anywhere.” And so the Chancellor, Erroll Davis, who was...got here about the same time, just after we opened the college, had a bit of a management problem because his other institutions were nervous about...candidly, they viewed us as an infection...about what we might do to infect the rest of the system. So we weren’t, you know, all that warmly received with our new model that focused on a different way of doing business and focused on student success, i.e. retention, progression, graduation ahead of time, candidly, when nobody did. Now they are, but back then they weren’t, because the college-bound population was growing, as long as you took in more new freshmen than you ...had tried it the year before, your enrollment went up and, since your budget is basically a head-count algorithm, life is good. The problem was nothing was coming out the back end, particularly at a state college level. And we’re not talking about the research institutions and the state universities. We’re talking about the access institutions, so state colleges and two-year institutions in the University System. Their graduation rates were *horrible*. I mean *horrible*. And so we were coming in challenging the status quo and saying there’s a better way to do business. And so, as you might expect, we were not warmly received with that...with that message. We actually had a very senior staff member down at the University System office whose name I won’t say, but at a meeting that Dr. Stas Preczewski and I were at, actually said, “What if you succeed? Then where will we be?” What a...What a horrifying thing to say in the University System. What if you succeed? Yeah? What would occur? Exactly. That’s the whole idea. And that...The system, to its credit, has since, with Complete College Georgia, has moved in that direction with focusing on student success, but it wasn’t that way when we started. Very much not so.

STEPHENS: What is so significant about tenure? Why is that such a core part, not having tenure here, why is that such a core part of the Georgia Gwinnett common vision?

KAUFMAN: Yeah...Tenure is...Was founded for good and valid reason 125 years ago. And that is, most institutions were private and faculty who sort of challenged conventional wisdoms were often dismissed. And so tenure developed as a way to protect, really, the independence of faculty research, so they had the freedom to express their views, publish their findings, in everything from science to theology. And so it was a way to protect those who challenged the status quo and conventional wisdoms. But, that basically is the scientific method and that’s how things change, is people come along and say, “Okay, I have a better idea about how things actually work.” But higher ed. didn’t do that. I mean, they were very traditional and conservative organization, ironically. And so that’s why tenure was developed, was to attract quality faculty members who knew that they could publish the results of their research and their work and articles and lectures or whatever without fear of losing their job. Fair enough. Well, time passes, and given the society in which we live in which due process now attends everybody, that sort of notion has disappeared in my judgment. What’s happened is, tenure has become a way to enforce a set of norms on what faculty do. I happen to believe, particularly at the undergraduate level, that faculty should teach. That’s what we’re in business for. But tenure committees tend not to value teaching. They value contributions to the discipline, i.e. research and publication. And so faculty members who wanna get promoted, they have to devote their efforts to what tenure committees are gonna reward because it is the tenure committees giving away awards. If you don’t get tenure then, you know, your appointment is terminated. And so that’s what people do, and they spend less and less time focusing on their students and more and more time focusing on their research

and publication and end up, as you've heard me say, writing articles for obscure journals no one is ever gonna read. And the *cost* of that approach is enormous. So tenure committees have this very powerful hold on, not only who becomes their colleagues at the tenure level. The ones who give tenure are... basically says that, absent some calls for dismissal, if I'm... moral turpitude... you're basically guaranteed employment for as long as you want to stay. It is the proverbial lifetime employment contract. Now, there are post-tenure reviews and people will say, "No, that's not true," but, in fact, it is. Absent some wild misbehavior, you are basically your job for life. Well, that leads to a whole 'nother set of pathologies in my judgment, because then people get very comfortable, innovation goes out the window, they say, "That's not the way we do it here. We, I, the senior faculty, run the place." And so focus on teaching and innovation is, in my judgment, squeezed out. So, for a system that started with good and valid reason, in my judgment, has now become pernicious in terms of its effect on higher education. So we were determined not to have it. We hired... I knew it would work, 'cause at West Point... Congress... The faculty at West Point used to be almost all military officers and Congress ordered us to hire 25% civilian faculty, which we did, but we didn't have tenure, and we still had incredible numbers of applications from remarkable... remarkably qualified applicants and they stayed because they loved to teach. We get in to this business because we love to teach, most of us. Some don't. Some wanna be researchers, which is fine. That's why research universities are important. What I'm talking about... at the undergraduate level in public higher ed. And so that was the model that we were determined to put in place and the system, to its credit, gulped and said, "Okay, you can be, quote, an experiment." They still refer to us as, to GGC, as an "experiment," only to calm people's fears that the Board or the legislature or somebody else would impose a non-tenure system. But, in fact, the number of tenure positions in all academe has gone down 'cause they're expensive. The problem is they're not replaced with our model, which is full time faculty. They're replaced with part-timers. And so higher ed. is now almost bifurcated in terms of tenured folks, a few tenure-track folks, and a whole bunch of adjuncts, which is not good, not healthy, in my judgment, truly can't be. So I think we have, GGC has a better model.

STEPHENS: Talk about no departments. That was also a part of the vision.

KAUFMAN: And as... as you... as we envision what we wanted to do and focus on student achievement. But also we wanted to be sort of twenty-first century in the way that we managed ourselves. And so we thought, "Okay. Most organizations are trying to flatten. They are trying to eliminate unnecessary levels of administration and bureaucracy and hierarchy," and it was easy when only had 118 students. It sorta didn't matter. When you get to 10,000 it was a little bit different problem. But what we wanted to do was not have solos, because a department chair, their job is to garner resources for *that* department and just... and then ward off all threats. Well, that's not the way the way the world works. And so we didn't want little enclaves of English professors and Psychology professors and Biology professors and... by discipline... and so we deliberately eliminated departments and assigned faculty members from various disciplines next to each other, so you had a biologist next to a historian next to a mathematician. And they actually talk to each other, it's an amazing thing. They like that cross-disciplinary opportunity, 'cause that's how problems get solved. Problem solving is a multi-disciplinary approach to whatever the issue is. Well, we wanted to reinforce that behavior and departments can detract from that behavior by creating silence within your organization. And so, as we stood up and as

we wanted to create that environment of multi-disciplinary approach to teaching so that our student would understand multi-disciplinary approach to problem solving, that's why we did it. And it worked, in my judgment. I know it was aggravating for some of the faculty members. But it helped to create the culture that exists here at GGC, of collaboration, regardless of discipline, of talking to the person in the office next to you who is not in your discipline. And so we got courses that were developed that were taught by professors from more than one discipline and extraordinary approaches to those kind of things. And, as you know, one of our most popular experiments was the freshman English course that's basically a computer game because the IT faculty and the English faculty got together and said, "We have a better way to do freshman English." And kids loved it and they actually did better. What a concept. And so I think...when we eliminate barriers to communication, we're almost always better off. That's why we did it.

STEPHENS: Now, do you think there's gonna come a time where GGC is gonna have to go back to some more traditional...[chatter]

KAUFMAN: We knew...Yes and no. We knew as we got big and more complex that we weren't going to be able to keep the management structure that we had, because, if you only have 3 English professors, life is pretty easy. When you have 40 of 'em, somebody's gotta, sorta, be in charge, not so much of management but professional development. Because one of the responsibilities of senior faculty is to provide guidance, mentorship, and development opportunities for junior faculty. Well, you can't...It's hard to do...It's easy to do if you're all on the same hallway. It's a lot harder to do when you're scattered all over campus. And so there's some...Now there's some trade-offs. Just in terms of administrative efficiency, if you're going to have a faculty meeting of the English faculty, where do you do it? Because they're literally all over campus. So people have to schlep and walk and carry computers...And so, yeah, now we're going to have to figure out how do we manage ourselves? How do we evaluate our faculty? I mean, as you know, assessment and evaluation is very important here at GGC. So how do you do that if you got...The Dean of Liberal Arts has about 200 faculty members to evaluate. Well, nobody...no individual person can do that in any reasonable form, so...Each of the schools is figuring out...We, at least when I was here, we did not impose a management model. We said, "Yeah, you're right. How're you gonna manage yourselves? Figure it out." And we...and they had some very different approaches within the various schools about how they did their disciplinary development for the programs and faculty development for the faculty. So...we don't call them departments, but there are, you know, those who are responsible for evaluation and assessment of faculty members, there are those who are responsible for professional development, and it works, so far.

STEPHENS: Switching gears just a little bit. What is the most difficult decision you have ever had to make as it relates to GGC?

KAUFMAN: Hm. That's a good one. I don't know that we ever had...They were all...I mean...Making decisions at times of resource shortage are never easy, but those are...those are kind of...those are kind of routine. Um...I don't remember one that was...I mean, we had some personnel issues. We had, as we were standing up, our admissions office, for example, we went through three or four admissions directors because we just couldn't find one that had what we thought was the right stuff to really spread the gospel about what was happening here at...what

was happening here at GGC. I had some folks who I knew personally who had worked for me in previous lives who applied for employment but weren't among the most qualified, so you had to tell a friend, "No, you can't come work here." That was hard. But other than that, I think, you know, we, as you know well, we don't like to say no, we don't take no for an answer around here, and so we just try to figure a way to make it work, and we did.

STEPHENS: How *did* you convince the first 118 students to come here?

KAUFMAN: [chuckles] Um...Good question. We...First of all, we started off doing it all wrong, because we thought, "Well, okay, we'll advertise in the AJC," you remember this, "we'll start advertising in newspapers, in the Gwinnett Daily Post, in the Atlanta Journal, and Gwinnett Magazine," and all the things that...young people don't read. And, finally, might've been you that had the idea that said, "Why don't we ask 'em?" And, duh, they said, "We go two places. We go to the movies and we go to the mall." And so we took out trailers every weekend in every movie theater in Gwinnett County, we took out a 30 second trailer that talked about this college that no one had ever heard of, Georgia Gwinnett College, because teenagers are sitting in movie theaters on the weekend. And, as you know, we rented a space next to the food court in the Mall of Georgia and we set up our little booth and literally accosted people as they were walking down the hall in the Mall of Georgia, in Buford, talked to them about what was going on at Georgia Gwinnett College. You meet the great American public on Saturday afternoon outside the food court in the Mall of Georgia. But we got a lot, we actually got some interest once we convinced people that we were real and dispelled a lot of the confusion about were we Georgia Perimeter, were we Gwinnett Tech, and identifying ourself. And so we got a lotta inquiries from...And, as you recall, all of us took a tour out...We all had our tours of duty out at the stand in the Mall of Georgia, and so we began to get some interest. And because of what we were doing, of course, we took everybody. I mean, we took trans...All of our students, by definition, were transfer students, because we decided, for reasons we can't discuss, that we were only going to take upperclassmen. We wanted juniors and seniors. So we weren't out recruiting brand new high school students. We were recruiting folks who had already been to college somewhere, sometime, some of them for a long time, and some of them to many colleges. So we were looking for transfer students. It was a slightly different population there at the first. And, remarkably, 118 of 'em showed up, of widely varying academic backgrounds...some who had...were just a few college credits...I think one of the members of our first class had something like 140 college credits in 140 different subjects. I mean, none of them added up to anything, and so...We called them juniors, we had to call them something, so we called them juniors. I think a few of them are still here. But it was...we were...We were ecstatic at 118. I mean, we've just...given where we started and the resource limitations that we had...it was...God bless those 118.

STEPHENS: Describe those students. I mean, what were those pioneers like?

KAUFMAN: They were...They were willing to take a chance on us. As I told them on every occasion...that they were our partners...and...it worked. Because we said, "Look, you've gotta help us start this thing." You know, the student government and the student clubs, the culture that we're trying to create...And so they were taking, literally taking a chance on us, a college that barely even had a name, you know, had no history, had 10 faculty members and four

programs, that's all we started with. And so they were willing to step up and say, "Okay, we'll take a chance on you guys." Now, to be candid, for a few of them, we were probably the last train out of town. They'd been to a number of colleges. But, in fact, a lot of them...all of them had been to college, but for various reasons they had to work or family responsibilities, whatever it was, it hadn't worked out, and they saw us as an opportunity to finish and do something different, I think. And they were great. I mean, they *bought it*. They were absolutely devoted to helping us start the place. They all felt like they were...That's why we call them pioneers. We were always together and it was...it a remarkable year for those of us here at GGC. And remember, we were still embedded...There were still four other colleges teaching here, so we were this little cast of characters in the middle of what had been the Gwinnett University Center. Now, that began to change as the University of Georgia went to another campus, as Georgia Perimeter went off campus, and Southern Poly and the Medical College stopped teaching here, so in a couple years we were here by ourself, but, I mean, we were this little island in our own college but...It was amazing.

STEPHENS: Talk about the name of the college. How did the college get its name?

KAUFMAN: Well, we actually had a community conclave and we said, "We don't have any..." Okay, so you're a twenty...You're a new college. Do you try to pick something that's, like, Vanguard College or something that connotes a sense of moving forward and being new and different...And we sorta didn't like any of the ones that we came up with, and we had this committee of folks from the college and from the community and that...And we said, you know, "Okay, everybody submit names." And it took up...I mean, we didn't have...We had a lot of bad ideas. Well, it occurred to me that...

STEPHENS: What were some of the bad ideas? [laughter]

KAUFMAN: I don't wanna offend anybody, but...In most states, unlike Georgia, in their university system, it's the University of...North Carolina at Charlotte. It's the University of South Carolina at Beaufort. We don't do that here in Georgia, so you end up with a lot of south by southwest Georgia. You end up with a lot of geographic Georgias. Well, we didn't wanna do that. But, had we done that, I mean, if we were like most states, we would have been the University of Georgia...at Gwinnett. And so I said, well, if you just take out the articles, you know, the 'the' and 'at', I mean, then you end up with Georgia...Gwinnett. We wanted to do two things. We wanted to, one, locate us. Okay, so, one of the ideas was that we were going to be Lawrenceville College, 'cause we're in Lawrenceville. Well, that doesn't tell you where we are, 'cause most people don't...outside of...even in Georgia...don't know where Lawrenceville is, and certainly outside of Georgia they got no idea where Lawrenceville is. Plus there's already a Sarah Lawrence, plus Lawrence, the man for whom Lawrenceville was named, was a navy officer. I wasn't going to name my college after a navy officer, so, that wasn't gonna work. So we wanted to locate. Well, okay, so we had to have the word Georgia in the title. But we also wanted to give credit to those who worked hard to get the college founded, which was the Gwinnett community. So we didn't want to be so local that we were named the town, but we wanted to acknowledge our community. So, for both of those reasons, I mean, we are...in a perfect world, we would be the University of Georgia, Gwinnett. Well, okay. Georgia Gwinnett

sort of pops right out of that, and it does locate us, it tells people where we are, and it does pay homage to our community, so that's how we got there.

STEPHENS: What about the colors, green and grey? What are the significance of those colors?

KAUFMAN: Um...honestly, because of my previous life. Green...well, for two reasons. One, it was the color of the uniforms we wore in the U.S. Army. So that was the first notion. But then, because, as we began to build the campus, we were committed to building a sustainable campus, as we wanted to be green. Okay, so that looked good. And, of course, we were the 35th college, you're not gonna be red and black, all the other colors were taken, so we were gonna be green, which was good. But, so, it was a combination of sort of my heritage as an army officer and our commitment to building a sustainable college. And the philosophy that we used to design and build GGC, the programs at GGC, the notion of small classes, the notion of intense student-teacher interaction, the notion of everybody teaches...I mean, that's the template of the West Point model. And so our philosophical origins were from West Point, and so the color that the cadet uniforms at West Point is grey. And so the grey really is...pays homage to our philosophical, sort of, founders, as it were, because that's the model that we use here, which works. So that's how we got to be green and grey.

STEPHENS: Okay. So, what about the Grizzlies? Talk about how the Grizzlies became the mascot.

KAUFMAN: Well...Well, the Grizzly...Um...We...We sort of designed the logo and picked the colors...We had to pick colors because we were designing the logo, if you remember that, and so we had come up with the logo, the cresting double Gs, and, actually you know that 'cause...your folks did it, after we paid a lot of consultant money, we came up with a lot of *bad* ideas, you and your team actually came up with the cresting double Gs. Anyway...So we had to have the colors. But we didn't have a mascot, and I wasn't even...we weren't gonna do that. The administration wasn't gonna say, "Okay, we are the X." Because that's a student obligation. And so we told the students this: that they could pick the mascot, and the only guidance to them was that you can't embarrass the institution. I mean, you can't...There are certain colleges out in California that are the Anteaters and Aardvarks and that sort of stuff. I said you can't embarrass the institution or our athletes and our students. And the students ran a competition to pick the mascot. And it came down to...They did it, we didn't do it...And they picked the term "Grizzlies," which is, I mean, it's alliterative, it's a great...it's a great mascot, even though there's not a grizzly bear within a thousand miles of here. But again, when you're the 35th college in the system, you're not going to be the Lions or the Eagles or the Bears, I mean, they're all taken, so you end up being the Aardvarks. Well, we don't wanna do that, so, Grizzly is a great...is a great motto, ah a great mascot.

STEPHENS: And the name of the mascot is General, and the students chose that name as well. And...Which is, of course, and homage to you, as a brigadier general. How does that feel?

KAUFMAN: Well, it's very flattering, but the rest of the story, as you know, is the mascot, the term that finished second in the voting was generals, again, because of me. So, the students, bless

their hearts, said, as homage to the charter president, they named the mascot General. But it finished second in the voting to be the mascot, so.

STEPHENS: Switching gears a little bit. Have you ever lost sleep for anything that has happened here at Georgia Gwinnett?

KAUFMAN: Every night. [laughter]

STEPHENS: What kinds of things have kept you up?

KAUFMAN: Um...Usually resource issues. As you know, we were growing very quickly and we filled up the facilities that we had at the old Gwinnett University Center very quickly. And so we had to go to the Board of Regents, initially, and then to the Legislature, to get facilities...and operating budget. And...And so...And for reasons that we can't talk about, our operating budget wasn't what it needed to be. And so we spent a lot of time working on the resource piece, both for capital construction and for operating dollars, and, you know, when you're growing, when you're doubling in size, when really you're actually tripling or quadrupling in size in the early days and then doubling in size every year, you gotta have the resources to make it work in terms of hiring the faculty and the staff and all that sort of thing. So I...We used to lose a lot of sleep about are we gonna get the resources that we need to do what we need to do, particularly after the recession started. I mean, to be fair, the State of Georgia...Georgia is a balanced budget state, and so its resources and its expenditures have to match at the end of the year. The governor has no leeway in that, and so...and he has fixed costs just like everybody does. And so higher education took some significant cuts, hits, during the recession. And so we were in an environment...resource constraints...frankly shrinking resources...and yet we were doubling in size every year. Now, ostensibly, the formula that is used to calculate in significant measure the operating budgets for the individual institutions is essentially head-count based, but there's a two-year lag in that number. And so, when we got to 5,000 students, our budget was based on 1,500. Well, that didn't work just because of the percentages. I mean, you can't have three and a half times as many students and expect that budget to work. And so we were constantly trying to catch up. And so we had gotten...Governor Perdue, to his credit, had established a special funding initiative for...just for Georgia Gwinnett College, to pay for the start-up costs associated with the institution, separate from the University System formula budget. It was new money, different money, free money, and so...Which was the good news. And so we had our own pile of money that reduced our liability and demand on the University System. But because the University System budget in Georgia is a lump sum...In other words, the General Assembly appropriates an amount of money...pick a number...a billion and a half dollars a year...It does not...The General Assembly and the Governor do not develop individual budgets for the individual institutions. That's the purview of the Board of Regents. So that big pot of money goes to the Board of Regents and the Board decides how the money is going to be allocated across the institutions. And that big number is sort of unassailable once it's passed. But our little special funding issue, because it was outside the formula, was assailable. I mean, as we said, the poachers and predators could come and say, particularly during the recession, "We've got a better use for that money. We can build boat ramps down in south Georgia," or whatever, "instead of wasting it on that college up in Lawrenceville." And so every year we had to defend our special funding initiative. And...which we did and actually got it to grow some, and that

helped us a lot. But it was no mean feat. We spent a lot of time working with members of the General Assembly who were absolutely supportive of what we were doing out here. One anecdote: When I got the job and went down and had my first meeting with a member of the General Assembly, first question he asked me... Wasn't a question, it was a statement... He said, "I guess you're going to have tenure, aren't you." When I said no, he lit up like a Christmas tree. He said, "Really?" I said, "No." We talked about the reasons therefor. And he loved us ever since, became one of our strongest supporters, because tenure doesn't have any credibility outside the academy, for good or bad, it just doesn't. And so, there's no general assembly in the country that likes tenure. And so, in my judgment, one of the reasons why public support for higher ed has gone down in every state in the country, considerably. So...he helped us, and that helped a lot. But, anyway, I lost a lot of sleep. And the usual...I mean, you know, during periods of bad weather you have to be up and decide are we gonna have class...once we got dormitories, we were 24/7, and so, if something happened on campus we had to be responsive because of course our first priority is security of our students and their safety, and so we were always worried about that.

STEPHENS: Who do you think has been the biggest supporter of Georgia Gwinnett College?

KAUFMAN: In general, obviously the Gwinnett community. I mean, they got us started. And once we got up and running and we began to tell the story of what was happening at their college they just absolutely blossomed in terms of their, not just vocal support, but in providing us with the private dollars that we needed to do some things as we stood up the college. They were supportive and generous in a financial sense. So I have to give them credit. Lots of our Regents...Richard Tucker was a stalwart in Board of Regents meetings in defending the budget, Senator Don Balfour, who was the chairman of the Rules Committee in the Senate...In fact, as you know, we were often labeled as Balfour University because he was the senator that got the resolution passed in April of 2005 approving the creation of "Unnamed State College" in Lawrenceville, Georgia...And so, Senator Balfour was there in those very difficult budget discussions when we were really needing those marginal dollars, so I have to give him special mention. The Grand Delegation in general has been terrific, as have the leadership of the General Assembly, the folks who run the appropriations committees in both the Senate and the House, the higher ed committees, they really bought on to what we were doing, as did members of the Board of Regents. So, the folks from not here, from outside, once they learned what we were doing, were very supportive, so...It wasn't just...We didn't get where we are by ourselves, obviously, but a lot of people helped us along the way.

(Pause for a break.)

[Interview resumes.]

STEPHENS: Tell me about a student that has really inspired you.

KAUFMAN: They all...They all...I mean, most of them do. You know, these young people understand the opportunity they've been given to change their life, their family's life, and they get it. And so they are...You know, 40% of them have to work at least 30 hours a week, they have family responsibilities...You know, we joke, they don't come here for football season, they

come here to get their degree and they get on with it. And so they are inspirational young people to be around. Many of them are the first in their family to ever go to college, many of them English is not their first language, and yet they persevere, they do the work, and when given the support and the resources that they need, they succeed. And it's just... So really, in general, all of them, all of them do. You know, if you have to pick one, I'll just pick one, just as an example. Homero Gonzalez who graduated in the class of 2011 was... and got here in 2007, in our first freshman class... Remember we started in 2006 with juniors... He was in our first freshman class. His guidance counselor in high school said, "Go get a job with a landscaping company." Basically said go spend the rest of your life mowing the grass. First one in his family to ever go to college, needed learning support in English, Hispanic youngster, and so started in learning support English, made it out of that, and went through and graduated on time, in four years, in the class of 2... in our first full class, GGC class of 2011. Was head of the Organization of Latin American Students, was a campus leader, was just a remarkable success story. Went to work for TeleMundo after he graduated and this past year just won his second Emmy. And so he really has done a remarkable, remarkable job. I use Homero because we took him down to the Board of Regents and he gave... They were having a special meeting and wanted a student, a learning support student who had succeeded, to come and talk about what the experience meant to them and Homero talked for... four minutes... and I was privileged to be there, and every single member of the Board of Regents came up to me and said, "That's the finest speech I've ever heard at a Board of Regents meeting." Realizing, of course, that I had done a lot of speeches at the Board of Regents meetings... but... as had we all... and they were serious. I mean, he was... he was so sincere and eloquent in articulating what GGC had done for him and for his family and candidly, now, for his community. And the best part of that story is Homero's younger brother and sister now go to Georgia Gwinnett College. And so you change one student, one student's life, you change one family's life, then you change a culture's life, a society's life, and it will change the nation's life and ensure that every segment of America in 2040 has the opportunity to go to college, the opportunity for higher education, and the opportunity to succeed. And so Homero is kind of the poster child, if you will, for what GGC does for these young people. But there are thou... literally thousands of them. *Literally* thousands of them. I'll tell you one more anecdote. When I was here in my last semester, for the kids who are the 4.0 kids, the perfect, the straight-A kids, their punishment is that they have to have breakfast with the President. That's their reward. And when we started there were ten of them. Last spring, in my last semester here, there were 800 of them. And remember this is an access school. These are kids who don't even take the SAT to get in here. So I was sitting at a table as normally do... I table-hop around and ask them, "Who are you and where'd you come from? What are you studying?" So I sat down with three youngsters and they were all 4-0 kids, obviously, 'cause they were there, and so I said, "What are you studying?" He said, you know, "Biology." He was pre-med. Wants to be a doctor. Great. I asked the next young man, "What are you studying?" He said, "Neurobiology." I said, "We don't teach that here." He said, "Yes, you do." I thought, "Okay, so we do." And the third one was microbiology. All three, two young men and a young woman, all three first in their family ever to go to college, all three African American. And these kids were not children of privilege. They're straight-A kids, all in a pre-med program. That's how you change a family, a culture, a society. And they're gonna do it, because of the opportunity they've had here at GGC. So that's the kind of people that we have. So you can't pick one. There's just... There are... There are *literally* thousands of those kinds of stories. And the youngster who works hard, does the best

he can, graduates with a 2.2, guess what? He has stretched him or herself just as much as the 4-0 kids have and changed their life. So, they're all an inspiration.

STEPHENS: Was there ever a point where you weren't sure that GGC was actually gonna work?

KAUFMAN: Um...I knew it would work. The question was gonna be were we gonna get the resources to do what we know we could do. Because we were growing so fast and other people began to say, "Wait a minute," you know, "you guys are taking students from us." Well, first, Gwinnett County had been subsidizing University System for 20 years. By virtue of the enormous growth in its population, the public school system here in Gwinnett County is the largest in the state, one out of every ten public school students in Georgia goes to a Gwinnett County public school and one out of every ten high school graduates comes from a Gwinnett County public school. And so those youngsters had had to ship all over the state in order to go to college rather than being able to stay here. And the kids, the sort of access kids, had no choice. They didn't have any options. So, I knew it would work and the only question was, not to sound paranoid, but were they gonna allow it to work. Were we going to get the resources we needed to make, to let it grow. And that's where, candidly, the Board of Regents and the General Assembly were stalwarts in supporting what we were trying to do out here.

STEPHENS: Looking back, is there anything that you would have done differently?

KAUFMAN: I wouldn't a had a recession. [laughter]

STEPHENS: That hit very quick after the college opened.

KAUFMAN: Yeah. It...They were tough budget times. But...um...No, I...Um...I'm a firm believer in the vision thing, and if you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there, so we had a very strong sense of what we wanted to do and to be. And the cabinet, every year, every June we'd get together and review our priorities that we developed from our strategic plan and assess how we did the previous year and then set our priorities for the coming year and go do 'em. And that was our road map, and we didn't...tried not to deviate from it, because I think we said, "This is what's important to come out this year." And so, I think we...collectively did a good job of sticking to the plan and making it work. So, you look back and you think, "What did we screw up?" I think we did pretty well.

STEPHENS: Now, some critics would say we grew too quickly. What do you think?

KAUFMAN: Yeah, well, we did grow very quickly. My response is, what's the alternative? To deny these young people the opportunity to go to college? Clearly the demand was there. As much as we like to take credit for our rapid growth, GGC was simply meeting a need that was clearly here in this part of metropolitan Atlanta, Gwinnett, and the surrounding area. And people vote with their feet. Clearly they thought this was the kind of place they wanted to go to, it was value for their money, it's a, frankly, an almost private-college-like education at a public college cost, and so...If they hadn't come...If we weren't providing that kind product, they wouldn't have come, or they'd come and left. And, I think, still, the majority of the freshman who come to GGC indicate in their freshman survey that they plan to transfer, but they don't. If we get 'em,

we keep more than our fair share, because they love the experience. And we've actually had youngsters who go to other state institutions, come to us and then transfer, and they come back because they're sitting in a class of 300 people and nobody knows, or cares, who they are and what they're doing. Not the case here at GGC, so...So my response is always: What's the alternative? Deny these people this opportunity? The market worked. And the market very clearly demonstrated that GGC was providing value.

STEPHENS: Why residence halls?

KAUFMAN: Seemed like a good idea at the time. Well, our timing was perfect because we were trying to get...It's a public/private venture, as you know, so we basically had to borrow the money to build and pay it back with residential fees and it was right as the recession started, the credit markets froze, they opened one day for about fifteen minutes and we literally sold \$100,000,000 worth of bonds in that fifteen minute window. Anyway...As we were growing and began to attract folks from outside our immediate region, and even within Gwinnett, people began to say, "It's not the complete college experience because it's a commuter campus. You drive on the morning and you drive off at night. And there's no sense of real college community." And that's what dormitories provided for us. Now, we knew all along that we were going to have dorms. I mean, that's part of being a real school. But we were growing so fast and people began to say, both within Gwinnett and outside, "Are you going to have a residential experience?" And so we thought, "Okay, this is something we need to provide." And we decided to do it and I think it transformed the campus. It really made it a real college. It gave it that campus feel. There were youngsters here, on campus, all the time, and it just made us, I think, whole, and added that...those growth experiences for the youngsters who choose to live in the dormitories. They have that experience. And it also allows folks from outside the immediate region to come here. Well, in fact, in Gwinnett County you can live two miles from here and still not be able get here, so, it really does provide, for those students who want it, that aspect of college life. And so I think it really added to the completeness of the experience.

STEPHENS: Another question is why athletics? The college has been growing quickly? It's just another dimension? Why was athletics important to start when it did?

KAUFMAN: Well, athletics, at every level is important. I happen to be a great believer in wellness and teaching young people good lifetime habits of diet and exercise and one of the ways to do that is to engage in sports at the appropriate level depending on your level of talent. And so you have, and GGC has intermural level sports, it has club level sports, and then we did we did a study at what I thought was the appropriate time about adding intercollegiate sports for that segment of our student population that had those skills. And again, just like peer residential life, it adds that dimension of the college experience, either as a participant or as a spectator, or a manager or whatever it is, it provides that completeness to the educational experience. But it also reemphasizes...It emphasizes...Reinforces the importance of lifestyle, of wellness, of being physically active, having the opportunity to participate in athletic events, which I...and so what you hope is that translates into a life-long commitment to physical fitness, so they make good lifestyle choices in terms of their own physical wellbeing.

STEPHENS: Now, right now, Georgia Gwinnett has soccer and tennis and softball and baseball. And the South is known for football.

KAUFMAN: Mmhm.

STEPHENS: Why did you not pursue football?

KAUFMAN: It's interesting. At the end of the opening...It's a true story. At the end of the opening ceremony in August...August 16 of 2006, the day we opened the college...At the end of the ceremony, Governor Perdue was here, it was a grand occasion...Faculty, staff, community, it was all great...One of our 118 pioneers walked up to me and instead of saying, "Thanks for the opportunity, this is great, I'm looking forward to it," said, "When are we gonna have a football team?" Day one. And I said, I was true to my word, "Not on my watch." Football is an extraordinarily expensive and intrusive sport. It just consumes an extraordinary amount of resources. We would have to build a field, I mean we'd have to build a stadium, which we don't have and even if we *had* the money I don't think it would be the best use of those resources. And so the cost and impact of that kind of sport, and not necessarily in a positive way, was, in my judgment...just disqualified that from any of our considerations. And I happen to think that happens to be right. MIT gets along quite well without a varsity football team, as does the University of Chicago. No one seems to think that their academic programs suffer for their lack of a football team. So I hope there's not one in GGC's future. It's just too much of a drain on resources and it crowds out a lot of other things. Now, at the big institutions, they'll say it pays for a lot of other things. But, at our level...There are only a handful of major universities in the United States that have athletic programs that make money. Most lose money. And football pays the bill for a lot of it, but we...The sports that we have, in terms of its impact on the campus and the opportunity for our students...and it really makes sense, because the soccer programs in Gwinnett are great, the tennis programs in Gwinnett are great, the baseball and softball programs are great...As we begin to add...We think about maybe basketball and cross-country or track, those kind of things that are relatively inexpensive but popular. Lacrosse. So...I think there's a lot of options to engage students in our collegiate athletics that don't involve football.

STEPHENS: You have recently left the presidency here at Georgia Gwinnett College. Did you leave GGC before you wanted to leave it?

KAUFMAN: Um...Well...I...Yes...Only because there was a sense of momentum, and, as I told folks, this tree has taken root. 'Cause even when I left, there at final commencement ceremony, the allied health and science building was going up, our athletic facilities had been completed, we were growing, we were getting the resources that the institution needed...There's just a vibrancy here and an optimism about the future and our ability to continue to attract students and add more new programs, such as nursing that's coming on when we get the building built...And so, yeah...I mean, it was really a...You know, you feel like you weren't running out on them. That you left them in a positive situation and that, as Bob Hope used to say, "Better to get off the stage ten minutes too early than ten minutes too late." So I think it was a...Candidly, I hadn't planned to leave, but when the opportunity at the Chamber came up and I asked myself, "Would this be an opportunity I'd be interested in?", I said, "No," to myself, 'cause it's not what I do, but then I thought about it. The Chamber can do for hope...can do for the entire Gwinnett

community...what GGC is doing for education...that is, bringing all the parts of the community together. And Gwinnett county is the most diverse county in the southeastern United States. Our demographic looks almost identical to what the United States will look like in 2040, and so we are, as we say now, the community of tomorrow, today. That logo may sound reasonably familiar to you, but that's what Gwinnett County is. And so we're gonna demonstrate, just as GGC has demonstrated, how to get it right, how to bring all the parts of the community together, develop a common vision for what we want to do, and then get after it. And that vision includes everybody, not just pieces of our community. Everybody.

STEPHENS: Is there something you wish that you could have accomplished before you left?

KAUFMAN: I would have loved to have seen the Allied Health building finished and the nursing program, but that's sort of a small issue. The facilities are here, the enthusiasm is here...I felt bad about leaving right before our reaffirmation visit, but that went, as I understand it, swimmingly, a reaffirmation, literally, from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, of what's going on here. As I understand it the teacher ed. program just got report cards that no one else has ever gotten in the history of teacher evaluation programs. And so that sense of commitment to excellence and that commitment to students is there and I think that's...that's the legacy of which I am most proud. And so, there's always more, but I mean, there's always more and bigger and better stuff, you know, more buildings, more students, more programs. But that's gonna happen, whether I leave or not.

STEPHENS: When you walked out on your very last day, what were you thinking about?

KAUFMAN: Actually, I was thinking about the day I first walked in on September 19 of 2005. Was an idea of what we wanted to do and walked out and said, "Look what we did." I could not be prouder of the folks here, because they did, the people who signed on this little experiment and committed their time and their energy and literally their lives to making it work and building what we see around us...And it's not just...I mean, the beautiful campus is actually the less important part of that. It's the culture, it's the commitment to student success that really defines this institution, and that's as the result of all the faculty and staff...and students...who are here. We all combine together to create that culture and sustain that culture. It's easy to do when there are only a hundred of us...It's a little harder to do when you're 10,000 students and 1,000 faculty and staff members. But we, together, did it. And so that, I think, as I was walking out, thinking, "Look what we did." That's what I meant. It was the creation of a culture that is extraordinary in public higher education.

STEPHENS: So what is your just all-time favorite story?

KAUFMAN: Ah...there are...[laughter]...There are so many of...About this place. One of them was, as you know well, the day...I guess it was in 200...6, I guess...We had gotten our first scholarship for Gwinnett Clean and Beautiful, we had...at the Governor's environmental address and luncheon they had presented us with a check for \$5,000 for our first scholarship and life was good and I came back to campus and walked into Building B and water was cascading down the atrium from the third floor. Well, a worker had knocked off one of the sprinkler heads in the attic and because that sprinkler system is under such enormous pressure, you know, they turned it off,

all that water evacuated right down the side of the building. And so, you were...happened to be standing right...which reminds me of the story...I actually got to issue the order, "Abandon ship." [laughter] 'Cause we had to evacuate the building. And so that was not...What had been our best day turned into our, one of our worst days. But the story that I really remember as I think about all the things that happened to us...And this was in December of two-thousand and...seven...and we were having the senior faculty holiday party at the house and my responsibility was to go out and acquire the adult beverages for the evening, and so I did, and went into the liquor store over there in Duluth and had my little truck full of adult beverages, pushed it up to the check-out counter with a somewhat immodest amount of adult beverages and the kid behind the counter looked at me and said, "Aren't you the president of Georgia Gwinnett College?" I thought, "We're gonna be okay," because he was one of our students, and I said, "Yes, I am." And so I knew we were gonna be okay, at that point, that we had taken hold, and that our college was gonna become a leading college of this part of metropolitan Atlanta, and it worked. But, 'course, I sent my wife to do the liquor shopping ever since then, but none the less, that was an anecdote that...that I always remember. And that's part of that...We went to a conference out in California just last year, 2012...I was checking into the hotel in California and someone who I had no idea who he was looked at me and said, "Aren't you the president of Georgia Gwinnett College?" My response, of course, was, "Why do you ask?", but then I knew we'd made it 'cause people who had no connection with us knew who we are, and so.

STEPHENS: If you could give any advice to a young person right now who is watching this, what would you say?

KAUFMAN: Never, never self-limit. Don't let anybody tell you you can't do something. We have a college...GGC is college full of young people who never thought they'd have the opportunity to go to college and whose families and whose guidance counselors and friends and everybody told them all along the way, "Don't even think about it. It's not in your future." But they made the decision. They took the chance. They devoted...dedicated themselves to getting the task done. And so, if I was talking to a young person, I would say never let *anyone* self-limit you. You can do whatever it is you set your mind to. Now, maybe you need some help, and that's okay. Everybody needs help. But if you set your mind to it, you can do it, regardless of your background, regardless of your circumstance, you can do it, and don't let, don't ever let anybody tell you different.

STEPHENS: Anything else that you would like to add?

KAUFMAN: If we're fortunate in life, we get to be associated with something that's truly special. I was privileged to be the charter president of Georgia Gwinnett College and that is the signature event of my professional career, an opportunity that I never thought I'd have, and one that exceeded wildest expectations because of the extraordinary people I was privileged to be around here at GGC...faculty, staff, students. And so, it has been just a remarkable testament to the spirit of this community and the willingness of dedicated professionals in every aspect of what we do and what GGC does who made it happen. And it didn't happen by accident. It didn't happen by serendipity. It happened because people devoted themselves to it. And it's just a joy to have been associated with this remarkable institution and it's only gonna get bigger and better.

STEPHENS: Okay. I think that's all the questions I have for you today.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

(Recording continues briefly with some chatter.)