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Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
April 17, 2013

WOMICK: I am Cally Womick, and I'm here in Collis with Karen Afre [pronounced AF-ree], right?

AFRE: Yeah, mm-hm.

WOMICK: Today is Wednesday, April 17th, 2013.

AFRE: And it's a beautiful, sunny day.

WOMICK: [Laughs.] It is. The first spring day we've had. I guess just to get us started, tell me about where you grew up.

AFRE: I grew up in Brooklyn, New York. My parents are from Guatemala, and they moved to the States in the 1980s, and had my sister, who's four years older than me, and then they had me. So it was really nice. I grew up in Sunset Park in Brooklyn, right by Park Slope and Bay Ridge. I'm not really sure if you know where that is.

WOMICK: I don't know Brooklyn.

AFRE: That's fine. So it's a very nice neighborhood, racially diverse neighborhood, and I absolutely love it. Like, it's a nice change from here at Dartmouth, so I enjoy going home.

WOMICK: Really!

AFRE: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: So how did you end up at Dartmouth?

AFRE: That's the question everyone asks. I knew I wanted to go somewhere that was at least far enough so my parents wouldn't be able to come surprise visit me but close enough so if I actually did feel like going home I'd be able to go home for a weekend. So Dartmouth is pretty much five hours away, a long enough drive that I shouldn't be getting a phone call from my parents, being like, "Okay, we're coming up this

weekend” but close enough, like, “Mom and Dad, I’m coming home for the weekend.” So it’s nice. That, and Dartmouth had the best financial aid package.

WOMICK: I hear that.

AFRE: Yeah, and so that worked out perfectly. So it came down to this school in Philadelphia, St. Joe’s University, and Dartmouth, and in the end, Dartmouth won out.

WOMICK: How did you hear about Dartmouth in the first place?

AFRE: My family didn’t know what an Ivy League school was, actually. So in my high school—I went to this very small, all-girl Catholic high school in Brooklyn called Fontbonne Hall Academy, so it really sounds like a prep school, but it’s not. So one of the teachers in the science department—her son had gone to Dartmouth. He was an ’05, Steven Koutsavlis and she connected me with him. And she was, like, “Karen,”— “Based on what you’ve done here at school, and based on your grades, you should really consider going into an Ivy League.”

And so I started doing my research and then seeing what Ivies were on the Common Application. At the time, I think only Dartmouth and Harvard were on the Common App. So I was, like, *You know what? I’ll just circle in one more thing, and if it happens, it happens.* And I actually went to a Brown info session, too. But then they weren’t on the Common App, so I was, like, *No, too much.*

I was in denial. I loved high school. I didn’t really want to come to college, so the whole college application process was kind of just, like, nerve-wracking.

So in the end, that’s just how it worked out. I talked to him about it. He gave me a lot of information, and then my senior year of high school, we came up to visit, the month of March. It was during a blizzard.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

AFRE: I don’t even remember my tour guide’s name, but I do know she was from Alabama and she lived in the Chinese

Language House, and she was an AMES major and absolutely loved it. So I just remember seeing her in the blizzard with tights, boots, and a little skirt and her hat. And I don't know. After the tour we just went to Lou's and had brunch, and it just—it felt really homey. I loved the rural setting because of coming from a very urban area. So I figured it would be a nice break and a nice location, where I probably would never come in the future [chuckles], so why not do it for undergrad?

WOMICK: Yeah. So what was it like moving up here for freshman year?

AFRE: So different. I mean, the first thing—like, I truly realized was how different Hanover is from Brooklyn. It was a clear night, and I was just crossing the Green at nighttime, and I just looked up and I saw all the stars. I mean, obviously, one: nature. You don't really get much of that in Brooklyn. Maybe Manhattan you have Central Park, but that's only limited to a block span. And two: the people. I mean, not to knock New Yorkers, but I think everyone's always in a rushed state of mind, and people don't take time out to, kind of like smell the roses. That cliché saying. And I feel like here in New Hampshire, people do. People are generally really friendly and want to get to know you, and they're not rushing around with their everyday business. Yeah. When, like, New York is people just walking around all the time and doing their own thing.

WOMICK: So did you go on a first-year trip?

AFRE: I didn't. Actually, I haven't even been to the lodge yet. I don't have that trips experience at all, but I think I did all right in the friends department. [Chuckles.] But I was supposed to go on—I don't remember what section it was, but moderate hiking, and then my aunt was having surgery at that time, and so my mom was a little bit of a mess, and so I decided to stay home. Yeah. So I came up on—yeah, right on move-in day for freshmen, and that's it.

WOMICK: What was move-in like?

AFRE: Well, I remember first the craziness of the UGAs 'cause, I mean—in Brooklyn people have a great fashion sense or, like, their own style. But here seeing students dressed up in

flair for the first time and I remember my UGA came up to me, introduced herself, introduced herself to my parents, and she was wearing these neon leggings, little neon pink shorts, and wearing wings, and just all decked out in flair with the rest of the UGA staff. So it was just kind of like in your face. Like, “Welcome to Dartmouth,” and “I’ll help you take up your stuff.” I lived on third floor Russell Sage.

WOMICK: Wow.

AFRE: It was an experience. But then again, I did that too, because I UGA’d for two years.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

AFRE: So I became the person in the flair, welcoming in all the freshmen.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. So what was freshman fall like?

AFRE: Oh, freshman fall was a mess. I don’t think I was prepared to come here academically, so freshman fall was just rough, like, struggling. I took Bio 2, Psych 1, and Math 3. And so even though I had taken calculus in my senior year of high school, I was not prepared to take calculus at a college level. And then Bio 2 was kind of just the course that pre-med students take as a review, and so I wasn’t used to a very lecture-based course. And then Psych 1 was intro, so it was just a lot of information. So, yeah—I pulled all Cs my freshman fall. But, I mean, I think it really kicked my butt, and, that’s when I, like, truly realized, *I need to put a little bit more effort in academics than, like, other kids here.*

Socially it was great. I joined the rugby team, and I played rugby for my freshman fall and spring. And it was cool ‘cause I got to meet those upper-class women, like, very early because—I mean, it is kind of hard to meet upper-class women on this campus, especially your freshman year, ‘cause your only social space is basically the Greek scene.

So I met them, and I don’t know, I felt like eventually I found my way. That, and also through, like, injuries ‘cause my freshman fall I really sprained my ankle and I realized that my life was just becoming rugby, which isn’t a bad thing

because rugby's a great sport, but I decided to take a break my winter term because rugby isn't that crazy in the winter; it's just conditioning.

And so I joined Class Council and Student Assembly and all these different clubs and kind of just realized that, I don't know, like, maybe rugby wasn't the only thing for me. So I really appreciated that winter term.

And then in the spring I went back to rugby, tore my ACL two weeks in—

WOMICK: Oh!

AFRE: Yeah. Ended up being on crutches my entire freshman spring.

WOMICK: Oh!

AFRE: They moved me from Russell Sage third floor to South Mass first floor 'cause I couldn't get up and down the stairs, and so my freshman spring I was in an upper-class dorm which was very different. I had never been—obviously, I had never been in an upper-class community before. And it's not the same structure. Like, your freshman year it's—I love ResEd. And so I love the FYRE [First-Year Residential Experience] program. And so it was completely different, but because of that, I explored different things. I think that kind of like directed what path I went on my sophomore and then eventually junior year.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. Did you get to know any of the upper-classmen on your—

AFRE: My UGA.

WOMICK: Yeah?

AFRE: Yeah. She welcomed me, 'cause I think it was a dean's room, so it's kind of just on reserve for any student that needed to move from their original housing. And so she was aware that I was a freshman and I was going to be there 'cause of my knee. And then the community director, at the time, Monique Roy, who—her office was right across the hall from my room. She would check in on me all the time.

But I remember that first day, like, leaving my door open and hoping that someone would pass by, kind of like on your freshman floor, where if you leave your door open, people will just come in?

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Upper-classmen are just, I guess, more busy. They just passed by and said hello. But I didn't really meet anyone in that dorm. But it was only for a term. And since then, I actually haven't lived in upper-class housing.

WOMICK: Where have you lived since then?

AFRE: So freshman year was Russell Sage. Then sophomore and junior year was McLaughlin as a freshman UGA, so I lived on freshman floors. And then technically in my senior year I lived in C&G. And then this past year, this past fall term I lived in Tabard, and now I'm living off campus. So I've never—I mean, I guess, like, Tabard and C&G count as upper-classmen housing, but they aren't really, like, dorm environments.

WOMICK: Yeah, a different sort of environment.

AFRE: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: So tell me, did you do anything over your freshman summer?

AFRE: Physical therapy.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

AFRE: Yeah. So I had surgery in June, and then it's basically a six-month recovery, so you just do physical therapy on a daily basis, and so that's what I did over the summer. I mean, I had my surgery here at DHMC so my family moved up here for three weeks.

WOMICK: Wow.

AFRE: Because at home in Brooklyn I live on the fourth floor, no elevator. And so I just knew it was going to be a hassle, like,

getting the surgery done in New York and going up and down the stairs. I didn't want to deal with that. And my mom also said that my grandma couldn't bear [chuckles] to see me in crutches, because I had the crutches on and a very long brace. So I had the surgery here and then afterwards stayed up on campus for three weeks, doing physical therapy. And, like, ORL was great about it. They let me stay in the dorms. And, like, my parents were even put up at Dick's House 'cause they have a room there, that alums actually donate money to, so for families who have kids who had surgery or are recovering, families can stay there.

WOMICK: Wow!

AFRE: Which is really nice. Not many people know about it.

WOMICK: Yeah, I didn't know about that.

AFRE: Yeah. So that was great, and so my parents didn't have to worry about that financial aspect. And then they switched me from my long brace into my short brace, and then that's when I decided I could go home because I was off crutches. So, yeah, the summer was me getting awful tan lines on the beach because of my brace.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: And so what about coming back for sophomore year?

AFRE: I feel like I grow every term, but I think the largest growth I've seen of myself here, when I think back on my years here, it's definitely freshman into sophomore year because, like, freshman spring I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and then sophomore year I took on more leadership roles. I was president of Link Up; helped found Real Beauty Initiative; rushed a sorority—just all of that my sophomore year. And it was definitely a new experience for me.

WOMICK: So tell me about rushing. When you came to Dartmouth, was joining the Greek community something you thought you'd do?

AFRE: Um, no! I'd always thought of sorority girls as, like, the stereotypical sorority girl you see on TV, or just like sororities in the South (not to knock the South), but just very—I don't know, very large mansion houses and when I hear about sororities in the South, a lot of them have cooks and itineraries, like, a cruise itinerary.

WOMICK: That's the way it is.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: I'm from North Carolina.

AFRE: Okay. So yeah. So here, I just—I didn't really think I would join a sorority, but then again I'd come from an all-girls school, so I was used to girls night out, like, every day of the week. And so after—my mom made me swear that I wouldn't go back to playing rugby, and so I didn't have rugby as a way of interacting with upper-class women and just, like, hanging out with my team. So I feel like I was looking for another outlet. And I did get that partly through Link Up 'cause it's a women's organization, a mentoring organization. But I felt like I needed something else.

And so when I rushed—so Kappa Delta is the sorority I'm in. They were a brand-new sorority. So I kind of saw it as a way of me being able to mold KD into what I wanted it to be?

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

AFRE: And so I think that's the only reason why I actually rushed and then committed to a house.

WOMICK: So going on to the rest of sophomore year.

AFRE: Mm-hm. Sophomore year was rough. Sophomore fall—like, it's when I rushed, and then sophomore winter I was just overwhelmed with everything. I was head of three different organizations. Rush had taken a toll on me 'cause in my sorority I was also head of recruitment. I just was not doing well academically at all. I had personal stuff going on, and so everything just, like, combined. And that was the term actually I took my first med leave.

But, I mean, it was a good decision. I had—kind of, like, a mini-breakdown. And then I decided I needed time to focus on me and just take time away from Dartmouth. And so I met with my dean and then at Dick's House with a counselor, and they highly recommended me to take time off. So, I don't know, I was thankful for that 'cause if they'd hadn't kind of, like, nudged me in that direction, I would have not taken a break, and so I probably would have stayed here my sophomore spring and just kept on struggling through the term instead of just taking a break, taking a step back and then eventually, like, thriving.

So I took a break and then spent sophomore spring at home. I volunteered for this really wonderful organization in Manhattan called Women in Need. It's a nonprofit that works with homeless women and their families, and so I worked in their substance and alcohol abuse counseling clinic. And so that was a great experience. But again, like, I threw myself into it, like, full time, and so what became kind of just, like, my time off from Dartmouth and me kind of taking a break became me volunteering full time and just—I don't know, really taking part in this organization. And it wasn't exactly the break that I was supposed to take.

But then my sophomore summer, I was forced to take a break 'cause that's the term my mom and I were in a pretty bad car accident, and so I had to do physical therapy—like, physical therapy two summers in a row. [Chuckles.] And so I did physical therapy that summer, too and it actually forced me to take a break. Like, forced me to take care of myself. It's obviously not the reality check that we all want, but I was thankful that it made me take a break, which was good.

WOMICK: And so you returned to Dartmouth the following fall?

AFRE: So I came back technically my junior fall. I guess it gets confusing with me saying "technically."

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

AFRE: So, yeah, so technically my junior fall I came back. I don't know. Again, I was, like, *You know what? I feel like I'm such a different person from sophomore year.* But I kind of just did it to myself all over again. I threw myself into different things.

I really committed myself to Panhell junior year, and that became one of my big communities. I was still UGA'ing 'cause I love ResEd and love having residents—

Academically, I think I finally figured out what I really wanted to major in, so that was a huge change junior year. For most of my freshman year, I was pre-med and then decided that I wasn't really sure if I wanted to commit to this because, pre-med is such, like, a rigid structure here. And so then I decided that I would explore different classes. And so, since I had liked Psych 1 so much, that I was going to keep on doing some of the psych courses.

And then my junior year, I decided that, *Okay, if I like psych classes so much then I should consider doing a major.* So I decided to do a psych major with a Spanish minor, 'cause I've always felt at home in the Spanish department and 'cause, I mean, I grew up speaking English and Spanish, and I absolutely love it, and so I felt like it was just a way of keeping home with me here. So I decided a minor was the best idea for that.

And then my junior year I took a couple of socy [sociology] classes, and so then I was, like, *You know what, Karen? Like, you might as well just do both.* And so socy modified with psych, with a Spanish minor. So I think my junior year was pretty much when I decided what I could consider going into after Dartmouth. But junior year was also me still trying to thrive here academically and, I don't know, kind of making it there.

WOMICK: Was it tough coming back after two terms off, in terms of your friends?

AFRE: Yeah. Well, I mean, most of my friends didn't—some of them knew what had happened. And, like, other friends weren't really in the loop. But it's also very hard to express vulnerability on this campus 'cause everyone's either getting these awesome internships or, like—maybe this is what we think about everyone because people don't have these conversations on a regular basis, that everyone's thriving and having an amazing time here. But my friends, who I had told what had happened, shared with me that they've struggled here too and that they've had some really rough

times. So it made me more comfortable in opening up about taking a med leave 'cause there's a certain stigma surrounding it, too, 'cause people just think something is, like, really, really wrong.

But, no, so I started opening up about it and talking with friends. The ones who hadn't seen me for two terms—some of them noticed, and then other friends since Dartmouth is such a fast-paced environment and sophomore summer is always a little bit crazy, didn't realize that I wasn't here, because I did come up and visit once during the spring and once towards the end of sophomore summer. So it's pretty much everyone's always crazy busy, and they would see me maybe, like, that one time that I was here on campus and then just assumed that I had been on campus the entire time.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: So it was interesting.

WOMICK: Yeah. So then what was junior year like in terms of, like, reorganizing your friend group? Did you have to do much of that?

AFRE: I feel like I've kept a lot of friends since freshman year, but I also love meeting new people, and so my junior year I think I just became more open to meeting more people. Like, I did this med leave support group at Dick's House, and I met two other students who had been on med leave. And it's nice 'cause—it's nice having a support group, just meeting someone else who has been through it. I mean, even if it's not a similar situation but just the process of being away from Dartmouth, doing the certain requirements, going to counseling or just working part time or taking classes somewhere else, and the process of submitting the paperwork and coming back. There's someone to lean on.

And then I met new people on my UGA staff and new people in my sorority, just like new people through different events and organizations I was involved in. So I don't know, I feel like I keep on adding friends, which is great.

And then I was here junior summer, and we did DPP together.

WOMICK: Yeah! Do you want to talk about DPP any?

AFRE: Yeah. So I was nervous to be here as a '12 during the '13s sophomore summer, but I knew that I needed to have a summer here and take classes 'cause I needed course credit. So I decided to live in Amarna, which was kind of like off campus, so I could be involved in sophomore summer if I wanted to be but not feel the pressure to really be involved in sophomore summer.

So when I saw the e-mail for DPP—I mean, I had seen e-mails for DPP before, but I just didn't have time that weekend or it just didn't work out with my schedule, so when I saw it and I realized that I wasn't really doing anything as a junior during '13 sophomore summer, that *maybe I have a shot and I should consider doing it*. So I sent in my application, and I, like, clearly expressed I was a '12, and, this was my last term, because I think you're not really allowed to—you're not eligible to do it as a senior.

WOMICK: That's the way it used to work.

AFRE: That's the way it used to work, yeah. And so I just very clearly put in my application that it was my junior summer and that this was going to be my last opportunity to do it. So I felt like I kind of guilt them into, like, letting me do it.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

AFRE: And then it worked, and I was also Tucker certified, so I think, like, the driving aspect really worked, too! [Laughs.] I think that that was probably the highlight of my junior summer here.

WOMICK: Really?

AFRE: Yeah, 'cause it's—I mean, what did we spend two days? Two days? Two days off campus, not even off campus. It's, like, less than a 20-minute drive from here and just giving students the opportunity to have conversations about identity in a very safe space. Some of us knew each other before

going there, but, like, the majority of us just met at DPP. I think just being away from campus and just not worrying about, like, what's going on or, *Where am I running off to?* or, what meeting—just having two days to devote to, talking about ourselves, talking about diversity and just being there. I don't know. It was definitely, definitely my highlight.

And I still consider, a lot of people—on that DPP retreat—some of my really good friends.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: And so even though I don't get to see you all that often, but it's when I run into you, I'm so happy to see you because we shared that moment together.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: That's true. And you weren't the only '12 there, either. I think there were some other upper-classmen. It wasn't just sophomores.

AFRE: I think I was the only '12 there with the '13s, and then the DPP kind of like facilitator or, like, the leader was an '11, Angelo Carino.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: He's one of my best friends, so it worked out perfectly. And so they accepted me first, and then he mentioned it—we were just catching up, and he was, like, "Yeah, Nora Yasumura asked me if I could facilitate for the DPP retreat," and I freaked out. I was, like, "YES! I know someone! This is great!"

WOMICK: So how did the rest of the summer play out after that?

AFRE: I hung out with a small group of '12s who were on campus during their junior summer, just like Hanover FSPing or doing research. And then I met a lot of really awesome '13s, and so I feel like after DPP, I continued being friends with those '13s I met and then met their friend groups, which was really

cool. And then, I don't know, I feel like I just set myself up for senior fall.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

AFRE: Yeah. And just knowing that I wasn't graduating with my class but also knowing that I have to make the moves into, like, becoming a senior. I don't know if that makes sense.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: So what was that fall like?

AFRE: It was crazy busy, as always.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

AFRE: Yeah! I just—I always set myself up to be really stressed out and running around all the time. But I want to say, like, I thrive off the pressure, but I guess I survive [chuckles] off the pressure. I think that's the right word.

So I lived in C&G, again: technically, my senior year, and that was a great community. It's a great location and it's right across from Collis. Like, it's central to everything, which is great. But it's such a wonderful community, and everyone really cares about everyone else. I love it. I really consider C&G my family.

And so I felt like fall term, I was just really happy. Like, it was nice being back—having my class year back on campus. Like, I had missed a lot of them. But also having to deal with the undertones of knowing that *They'll be graduating in the spring, and I won't be—and so I will still be here on campus, taking classes, and they'll be off in the real world with their career paths and—yeah.*

WOMICK: Yeah. So do you feel like you spent more time with people from your own class or more under-classmen?

AFRE: In general?

WOMICK: In your what would have been senior year.

AFRE: Yeah. So you'd think I would spend a lot of time with the '12s, I mean, it worked out because C&G is all seniors, and so I lived with '12s, and would spend a lot of time at the house. It got to the point that sometimes I wouldn't even leave the house throughout the entire day 'cause I didn't really need to. I had everything at the corner.

But I think from being a UGA for two years—I love meeting new people, and really realize how important it is for upper-classmen to meet under-classmen and kind of just not take them under their wing but just be there, be present in their lives.

I was also a FYSEP mentor my senior year. So I figured if I wasn't UGA'ing, I also wanted to do something else in a mentorship role, so I did FYSEP and met some really wonderful '15s. I love my mentee. And, yeah, I still kept on meeting new people every term.

WOMICK: What about the rest of that year?

AFRE: Oh, the rest of that year. So senior winter was just grim 'cause it's the winter. [Laughs.] But I just kept hanging in there and just trying to figure out financial aid, what courses I'll be taking for the rest of my terms, it was just a lot of logistics.

And then senior spring was pretty much—I was so wiped out from my senior winter—I had been on campus for three, four, five—I think senior winter was my sixth term straight in Hanover, taking classes.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: And so I was at the breaking point. I was kind of like right back to sophomore winter, when I took my first leave. I don't know why I set up my D-Plan like that. But I was still kind of convinced that I could make it through and maybe graduate, in the summer or the fall but then realized that was not realistic at all.

So I took two incompletes my senior winter and then decided to Hanover FSP my senior spring, get those two incompletes done, and just be here and enjoy being here for the spring and kind of just like celebrate the '12s send-off, I guess, or just be here 'cause I couldn't imagine not being here on campus and seeing the '12s graduate.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: So what was that like, seeing everyone graduate?

AFRE: Oh, it was rough! So I'm also a part of Tabard, and so in Tabard we have this thing—like, we have a celebration when it's 69 days until the seniors graduate, and so I went to this event, and I only stayed for an hour because it's—so I went, being really excited to have fun with my friends, and then an hour in, realize, *Oh, like, this is 69—like, 69 days until the '12s graduate*. So 69 days away from commencement.

And so a lot of my friends were just stressed out, trying to figure out where they were gonna be in the summer or the following year—like, applying to jobs; going on interviews. My friend and I decided to plan this cabin weekend and just invited a ton of our girlfriends, and we were just going to, hang out—just have one final celebration before everyone had to leave. We had planned it for a weekend in May, and we actually couldn't even do it because everyone had interviews, everyone was just busy, and so we actually ended up canceling it.

Unfortunately, I felt like a lot of my friends didn't really get to have the senior spring that everyone kind of like wants to have, because it's true. Like, it's you're going off into the real world. You need to figure out—if it's not applying for jobs, it's considering maybe grad school or, like, if you're going to take a gap year and take time off.

WOMICK: Yeah, it's a lot to figure out.

AFRE: Yeah. But I feel like once the second wave of midterms passed and it became the end of senior spring, then I think people started having fun because the weather got nicer

and, no one wanted to actually do work, so I want to say maybe the last two, three weeks of senior spring were amazing, 'cause I think everyone kind of just dropped their worries or kind of just were, like, "You know what? We only have two, three more weeks of time here. We might as well spend it having fun."

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: So when did you come back for classes again?

AFRE: What did I even do my senior summer? Oh, so senior summer I just decided that I was gonna be home and not do anything because for me, the concept of not doing anything starts making me twitch, and so my issue isn't just, like, relaxing; my issue is doing way too much. And so I just decided to go back to New York, have a fun two months. I went to the beach practically every week with my sister, which was amazing.

And then I guess technically my super senior year I came back and decided to live in Tabard. And I was still on Panhell at this time, so still programming everything and doing events and being a part of different organizations. Took up an exec position in Tabard and just had another busy fall term. Yeah. Trying to set myself up to succeed but not really. But also dealing with having the '12s not be on campus—I don't know, it was a little bit strange, but thankfully I met so many wonderful '13s that I still do have a friend group here, but it's very different being here without your class. I mean, I think it's so engrained in us, like, as freshman we just really identify and really bond with our class year.

WOMICK: Do you think it's made it more difficult for you to be involved with other things on campus?

AFRE: So fall term I was still pretty much involved in a lot of organizations. I think it's because I was here for the '13 sophomore summer and I know so many '13s. But I did feel kind of like—not that I don't have control over these organizations but that I don't really know their execs anymore. With the '12s, I was top dog on campus. Like, I

knew who was in charge of every organization. I knew if I wanted to get this event funded or collaborate on an event, I could just e-mail one of my friends, and it'd be set. But it's just getting to know different execs, meeting them, and then having to work with them and—I mean, it's possible, and, like, it's definitely doable, but it *was* very different.

WOMICK: Yeah. So since you've been here a while—

AFRE: [Chuckles.]

WOMICK: —how would you say that Dartmouth's changed in your time here, if it's changed.

AFRE: Yeah. So I have been here—so this is my fifth year, right?

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

AFRE: I've been here through three different presidents?

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: So President Wright—his last year, I think, was my freshman year. And then President Kim for his two years—two, three years. And then President Folt for her interim, and now I guess I'll be here for also President Hanlon, so I'll get to see four presidents?

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah. I don't know, maybe because it went from my freshman year feeling that Dartmouth was—I don't know, maybe I was just looking at Dartmouth with rose-colored glasses—I think that's the saying you use. But it's freshman year for me thinking everything was okay—like, amazing—at Dartmouth to maybe being the kind of jaded sophomore who starts realizing different campus issues and—I don't know. I feel like maybe personally I just became more aware of things my sophomore and junior year, and so I realized how many things are wrong on this campus.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Just, like, different issues that students fight for every single day, and I think I kind of threw myself into the women's issues organizations and fighting against sexual assault and trying to get more female-dominated social spaces on this campus and trying to knock down all the old men's traditions

And then continuing that my junior year and then senior year kind of just feeling like I did have the possibility of changing things, 'cause it's all the seniors were in charge of things and we could get this done. And getting to know more administrators my junior and senior year and having access to them.

So now, it's like, —especially with everything that's been going on on campus and everything in *The D*. I feel like Dartmouth is a different place, but I feel like it might also be because I've changed a lot since my freshman year. Or maybe—I want to say it's because I'm older and wiser, but I don't know.

WOMICK: So over your time here, who would you say has been most influential in helping you find and make your communities? Would you say it's friends, staff, faculty, other people?

AFRE: I think it's a mixture, definitely, 'cause I had some friends who were involved in different organizations, and that's how I feel like I met most of my friends. I met a lot of my good friends on my freshman floor and I met a lot of friends through things I was involved with. My freshman UGA became one of my really good friends, and she recommended that I should apply to be a UGA. I also got to know a lot of the community directors and so they kind of like nudged me to apply, too. I applied, was placed in McLaughlin—and met the entire UGA community, and they were my huge friend group.

But then I had a professor my freshman year, my Writing 5 professor, who's wonderful.

WOMICK: Who was that?

AFRE: Jennifer Sargent.

WOMICK: Okay.

AFRE: She also teaches some of the FLIP classes.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: She teaches Zumba. Oh, she's amazing. She realized it was my freshman winter and that I was struggling just a little bit. Like, not academically in her class, but socially. Like, I was never really, truly happy. She was the first person who said it—she said, "Sometimes it's very difficult being a woman on this campus." And that's when it clicked. Like, it's when I realized that I needed to surround myself with more amazing women in my life.

And then I started really becoming involved in women's organizations. That kind of brought me into applying to be on the Link Up exec board and meeting all those amazing women. And then through friends—like, whatever they were involved with—I'm always, like, the huge supporter, so I'll go and cheer them on or attend their event. And so I just met people through that. So I just feel like my friends have been, from a range of everything, everything I've been involved in.

WOMICK: Why don't you talk about your involvement with some of the women's issues groups and the work that you've done there?

AFRE: Yeah. I feel like I've surrounded myself with women all the time here. Like, my friend found this app on Facebook that pretty much determines how many of your friends are female or male. And mine is, like, 70-something percent female.

WOMICK: Wow.

AFRE: [Laughs.] Which is—I mean, I'm not complaining. That's wonderful. So my freshman year, I was a Link Up mentee. My Link Up mentor was—I still remember her name, Samantha Kaplan. She was on ultimate Frisbee, and she made it a point to meet with me every single week, so we would grab a meal once a week, regardless of how busy she was or how busy I was. And we would just, like, hang out, and it was nice having her upper-class woman perspective on everything. And so I decided that was something I really wanted to be involved with. And so through Link Up exec

board, I became really good friends with my execs, and we matched up over 300 mentors and mentees.

And so Link Up was very different back then. Like, it's back when we had funding. [Chuckles.] Or funding worked differently.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: And so we didn't have the Proud to Be a Woman dinners just yet. Like, that came later. But we would have Dirt Cowboy dates, and so mentors and mentees would get a voucher to get coffee together, we had a lot of study breaks, like, we did a fundraiser in the spring called Charity Denim, and we raised money for an organization. And we also did—well, which Link Up still does now, Sister to Sister. I think it ranged from, like, fifth grade to seventh grade? Or around that age group, girls from different local middle schools, would come to Dartmouth just for a full day—kind of like an empowerment workshop. It was great and a lot of women would get involved with that, too.

And then I rushed a sorority, became really involved in that and then moved from doing just KD to Panhell. I was a programming chair for Panhell for the past two years and I met so many women through that and ranged from doing, like, very small-scale programs to large-scale programs, like, the flag football tournament or large study breaks and collaborating with other organizations. And what else?

Huge, huge in V-Week. Love V-Week. Winter term is one of my favorites just because of V-Week. Slash, this is my fifth winter that I've been on this campus, but I haven't minded because I love *The Vagina Monologues*, and I just love V-Week. So I've been involved with that since my sophomore year like through being on one of the committees or helping sell t-shirts and being an active supporter. But my senior year, technically my senior year I was in *The Vagina Monologues*.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

AFRE: Yeah. My life is just women all the time. [Laughs.]

WOMICK: How do you think that's affected your experience at Dartmouth?

AFRE: Mm-hm. Well, I want to say since I surround myself with so many amazing and empowering women that I've had a great time here, for the most part, but I've also realized just how different it is being a male on this campus. Just the gender dynamics are very interesting here. I mean, the number one is definitely—like, it's the lack of female-dominated social spaces. Our social scene revolves around the Greek system. And, like, there's no chance that we'll be able to change that anytime soon. But I think we should have more options.

And so I feel like that's one of the reasons why I decided to do Panhell, 'cause I wanted to see how I could bring all the sororities together and bring unaffiliated and affiliated women together and kind of just, like, figure that out. But I feel like that's a project that was too much for one person.

And I think now there's more discussions about it. But I don't know if it'll ever change 'cause it's even right now, the only female dominated social spaces are either the local sororities, which are three houses, compared to how many fraternities do we have on this campus?

WOMICK: Like fifteen?

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: I don't know. And so even like the open to campus events, we do have, there are eight sororities under Panhell and then we have APiO, AKA, SLU, and the co-eds, but the only sororities who can throw open to campus parties are three. The nationals can't because we're under national Pan-Hellenic rules.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah. So I don't know. So it's like we can say we want to make more alternative social spaces, but—I mean, we do have... 53 Commons. [Laughter.] And Sarnier Underground. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall when they

were planning these locations or just know how these were going to be great social spaces for students.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: I don't know. I've been on many committees where the administration decides to get student input on things, and, I've just showed up to meetings and been talked at and that's it. And they pretty much have a set plan on everything, and at the end, it's, like, "Do you have any questions?" or "Can we clear anything up for you?" And there's no student input. But the next day, *The D* will report that "student leaders were present at this committee meeting" and that "they were able to voice their opinions." So when I read in *The D* that students were very actively involved in the planning of these alternative social spaces, I'm not quite convinced.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: I don't know.

I mean, it would be great if we actually had a bottomless budget or funding to throw large-scale events in these places, but unfortunately you do need the Greeks to support everything 'cause that's where kids are going to go on a weekend, and you don't really have the Greeks supporting any of our alternative social spaces.

WOMICK: Well, yeah. They already have their own space. So, yeah.

AFRE: They already have their own space, so—yeah.

WOMICK: What would you say makes a difference being a woman on campus from being a man, other than just the spaces? Although that's a big part of it.

AFRE: That's definitely a big part of it. But, like, even looking at our professors, like, specific departments all have male professors. It was just very different for me being from an all-girl high school—I think maybe we had three male teachers. And so I wasn't really used to learning from a male professor. And so I know it's been really hard for a lot of my

friends, too, majoring in the sciences or majoring in engineering not to have many female professors.

And then even class dynamics. In a lot of the upper-level science courses, it's, like, maybe you'll have two or three women in the class, and that's pretty much it.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah. So it's just—it's just been so different. So when I applied here, I didn't know that Dartmouth had just gone co-ed—this is, like the forty—forty years of coeducation, so we had a conference and that's it. [Laughs.] Like, there's nothing else on the student side. But I have that in the works. I've been speaking with a couple of other students, and I think we might be doing this panel in the fall, kind of like Dartmouth women through the decades.

WOMICK: Oh, cool.

AFRE: Yeah. So I started the planning for that way too late, so it's not realistic to do it this term, so I think we're going to postpone it. We'll see what happens. But I'm going off topic. [Laughs.]

WOMICK: No, this is good.

AFRE: No, no, no. What was the original question? Oh, yeah. So I was talking about professors and, like, class dynamics. Yeah. And so I didn't know it had only been forty years. So it blew my mind when I actually sat down and thought about it I remember wearing Dartmouth rugby gear. And one of our warm-up suits was sponsored by the Originals, the first class of Dartmouth women who played rugby. And then I saw the date on it, and I was, like, *Whoa! Like, that was so recent!* [Laughter.]

But just, like, little things. Or even when older alums come back and they want to sing "The Men of Dartmouth" song, which is the alma mater. And, I remember, kind of like cringing at that and just being, like, "Wait, wait! What song are you talking about? 'The Men of Dartmouth' song?" And them just being, "Oh, no, we have women now. Let's sing the Dartmouth song."

I would be curious to—I kind of wish I had—I mean, this statement's not coming out right. Not that I wish that I'd gone to another school, but I wish I could know how it's like going to another school that went co-ed a long, long time ago and not just forty years ago.

WOMICK: Yeah. There would probably be some pretty big differences.

AFRE: I think so. Slash I hope so. [Laughs.]

WOMICK: Hope so.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: Have you felt like you've been able to be very involved in the community surrounding Dartmouth and, like, not just on campus? I know you mentioned some mentorship with middle school girls, right?

AFRE: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: Has there been anything other than that?

AFRE: So I feel like besides my freshman year, my freshman winter, when I did my short stint on Class Council [chuckles], I had planned, like, this mini-ASB thing for a couple of freshmen who were still around for spring break. And we ended up volunteering for this food bank in Vermont and for different areas in the Upper Valley.

But besides that, I've been pretty much Dartmouth-focused. Dartmouth is definitely a bubble, and it's a bad thing because I always forget the surrounding world exists and, like, for some reason I just think *Oh, everything revolves around Dartmouth.*

But besides Link Up and the sister-to-sister event and KD, one of our philanthropies is working with Girl Scouts. We work with a local Girl Scout troop and we help them sell cookies, and they come for little workshops and stuff. I don't really think I've been, like personally involved with anything, in the surrounding community. I've done fundraisers or just been involved in very short-term projects.

- WOMICK: Do you think there are many opportunities to be involved, though?
- AFRE: There are. My freshman year, I did Wishing Well and Habitat for Humanity through Tucker. And so I feel like the Tucker Foundation really offers a lot of ways where you can give back to the surrounding communities, through volunteering. But it's also I feel like I've just been—it sounds awful, but I've been just way too wrapped up or too busy with other things that I just haven't had the time to commit to different—
- WOMICK: Yeah.
- AFRE: Yeah. I don't know. But I'm thankful that this year I actually do have time. I'm working for SEAD. I never had time to do SEAD before, but now I'm one of the assistant student directors. So I finally get my true Tucker experience and I finally realize why students love it so much. Like, I spend a lot of my nights there 'cause I work for academic skills during the day. I'm their study group intern, so I work 30 hours there and then 10 hours for SEAD a week, so I kind of like split my time up between our temporary location at Wilson and the Tucker Foundation.
- WOMICK: So big question:
- AFRE: Mm-hm?
- WOMICK: How do you think that your time at Dartmouth has changed you?
- AFRE: I just feel so old!
- WOMICK: [Laughs.]
- AFRE: That's a joke, but... I became very open minded. I was very conservative coming from high school, and here at Dartmouth, like, people got to drop some knowledge on me, which was great. I met so many different people, and I feel like I kind of took a little piece of them along with me. And so being here for so long, I feel like I'm much more open minded. I'm aware of people's baggage. I think that was one of my favorite terms I picked up from UGA training. Like for

yourself, it's when you walk into a room check your baggage at the door. So I'm more aware of knowing that people are different and come from different backgrounds and have different experiences. DPP also schooled me on everything.

WOMICK: Right.

AFRE: I don't know. In high school I felt like there was this pressure just to have, like, a set path and just,—kind of like the five-year plans that people do or whatever?

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: And here, it kind of just became, *You know what? I'm gonna take it one day at a time.* Maybe it's because everything I've been through, too. Like, *I'm just gonna take it one day at a time and not plan my future. I'm gonna open myself. It's a liberal arts school. I'm gonna experience different things and then just—*I don't know. By the end of my time here, my junior year or whatever, like, actually my official senior year—*I'll figure out what I wanna do.* It's just working a lot with students. Freshman year I came in, thinking I was pre-med, then sophomore and junior year I was convinced I was going into social work. And I feel like that's changed every single year.

And so now I'm pretty much—I think I might consider going into student affairs, 'cause I've worked for ResEd, worked with GLOS, worked for OPAL, I'm working with Academic Skills now. I feel like all I have left is Admissions.

So I think Dartmouth really allowed me to find myself and not worry that I was kind of like a work in progress and a mess in the beginning.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: So any plans for once you leave Hanover?

AFRE: So I still have eleven course credits left.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: So [chuckles] I have quite some time here. It really depends on how it works out with financial aid how many terms I'll be here. But after I leave Hanover, I think—

WOMICK: If you leave Hanover.

AFRE: If I leave Hanover—

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

AFRE: So my dad's convinced that he wants me to apply to be a Presidential Fellow or he wants me to get a job [chuckles] on campus right after I graduate 'cause he's, like, "Karen,"—he's, like, "I love New Hampshire. I would like to keep on coming up and visiting you on campus."

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

AFRE: And my mom loves the carrot cake at Lou's. So I feel they both want to come back all the time. But I think—so this year, it's figuring out what I definitely want to do, so regardless if that's, like, planning on going to grad school or just doing a two-year pro—like, a two-year master's program in student affairs and then maybe working in ResEd for another college and then maybe going—I don't know.

I think my end goal is—like, I think I would love being a dean, because the dean's office has played such a large part in my life here on campus.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

AFRE: And I feel like there's just so much—there's so much—not power. I don't think "power" is the right word in the dean's office. I guess deans have so much power to influence students' life or so much power to shape their life. I think I would definitely want to stay in the college setting, maybe being a dean or, like, a ResEd director or something, something along those lines. But I'm not scared about being flexible with what I want to do. But who knows? Maybe in a couple of months I'll be saying something completely different 'cause that's pretty much how my time has been here.

But I think I might make a pact that since I've been in Hanover for so long that I won't come back to visit until I'm an old alum with a family and will just come back to, like, reminisce a little bit and that's it.

WOMICK: Wow.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: So either you're going to spend the rest of your life here or you're not coming back.

AFRE: Exactly.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

AFRE: Or I'm not coming back for, like, ten, fifteen years. [Laughter.] And hopefully be that really wealthy alum who comes and donates money to OPAL. [Laughs.] And programs that really need funding.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Or should get *all* the funding.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: Yeah.

WOMICK: Well, how involved do you think alumni are?

AFRE: Unfortunately, I think that money really talks. [Laughs.] And so I want to say, like, I'll be that alum who gives all my money to financial aid, which will be really awesome. But I do feel like power goes to people who hold the purse strings.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: And so really that's one of the key reasons why a lot of students who talk about maybe getting rid of the Greek system would never be able to do it 'cause it's a lot of our donors are affiliated men. [Chuckles.] Yeah.

And you even see it with some of the Dartmouth teams—the men’s rugby team gets a lot of donors, and I mean, it makes sense ‘cause they’ve been around for so much longer than, like, the women’s rugby team, but there’s always been kind of just a little bit of an argument about how much funding the women’s team should get since, like, it’s not—obviously, like, all the money is coming from male donors.

But thankfully they always sort that out. But I think it’s very visible, like, where Dartmouth money is going. I mean, it goes more to building a new dining hall or building, like, a new visual arts center, which is great. I think they’re all things, like, we do really need. But it’s a lot of our money doesn’t go to, like I said before, like OPAL or, like, other offices that could do a lot with more funding.

WOMICK: Yeah.

So is there anything that we haven’t talked about yet that you’d like to?

AFRE: I don’t know. I feel like I just spilled my guts. [Laughter.] So I’m, like, *How much of this will they actually censor?* Because I just talked about *everything!* I don’t know. I mean, I hope people kind of get a clear picture ‘cause I feel like I jumped around from a lot of—like, technically, technically this is my junior year, or my senior year.

But I think the point is, I just don’t really care what year I am anymore. Like, it’s—I just am going to finish Dartmouth, hopefully thriving and not just surviving. So that’s my goal.

WOMICK: Yeah.

AFRE: That’s my end goal: to actually boost my GPA; be a little bit more concerned about my academics. And then I think everything else will fall into place. Hopefully.

WOMICK: Seems like a really good attitude.

AFRE: Yeah. Stay positive.

WOMICK: [Laughs.] Okay. I’m gonna turn these off.

AFRE: Okay. [Laughs.]

[End of interview.]