

Roland Mansilla '13
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
April 14, 2013

WOMICK: I'm Cally Womick and I'm here in Baker Library with Roland Mansilla. Today is Sunday, April 14th, 2013. So to get started off, why don't you tell me about where you grew up?

MANSILLA: Okay. So I grew up between—multiple locations. I was born in Mexico City, Mexico, and from there I moved back and forth between Mexico and Florida, and Fort Lauderdale almost every single year until I was about 11, when my family then moved to Cleveland, Ohio, which was an exciting, different change of pace. I got to see snow for the first time at a place that was my home, because before that, I'd visit family, but I'd also been to mountains in Mexico. So that kind of describes a little bit about how I grew up, internationally, then domestically here in the U.S.

Since then, I've lived in a variety of places, but I spent the majority of my childhood, at least the years that people would probably declare more formative towards the end of it—middle school and high school—in Cleveland.

WOMICK: Okay. So do you want to talk about the moving around when you were younger and then what it was like moving to Ohio, what that change was like?

MANSILLA: Sure. So moving around when I was younger afforded me the opportunity to sort of develop a character that I feel most people don't develop until they're a little more mature and older. Maybe I shouldn't use the word "mature" because that was kind of essentially what I'm pointing out, but I learned very quickly that you couldn't rely on a lot of things to be permanent forever, through moving back and forth to different schools. Again, until I was about 11 or 12, I hadn't stayed in a single school system for a period longer than about a year,—

WOMICK: Wow.

MANSILLA: —which was the nature of moving back and forth.

That being said, I did go to the same school several times, but things change. People moved. My classes were different. When I caught back up with one class, for example, from, like, the first grade and then back—you know, it was different when I was there during kindergarten, et cetera. Most people—they kind of write off the experiences of a small child, at the young age that I was at, but I was very much aware of what was going on, I think, in terms of things changing and being different. And that kind of made me very dependent on my family. And I learned the value of having—I learned more so, I guess, to appreciate having a good, strong family base upon which I could rely.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. So how did you hear about Dartmouth? How'd you end up here?

MANSILLA: Okay, so that puts us forward quite a few years, but the first time I'd heard about Dartmouth, I must have been—it must have been when I was younger, I suppose. My grandfather, who's actually my step-grandfather on my mother's side, grew up in New Hampshire. I think he made a mention of the school a few times, but nothing that I would have really noted.

I guess the first time it actually stuck out to me was around my junior year of high school. This is the first time that I actually paid attention to more than just the name, and that's when I kind of started looking into the option perhaps of attending Dartmouth.

And through the program, for instance, that really solidified my pursuit of Dartmouth as a high school student for a college option was during my junior year, when I was extended an offer to come in for a program that I believe targeted Hispanic students, Hispanic student recruitment to increase diversity on campus. I don't exactly remember the name of the program. There's a Destination Dartmouth or something like this.

It wasn't so much even just the entirety of the program, because the program in and of itself was interesting. It taught me a lot about the school, the chance for me to come visit when I otherwise wouldn't be able to during the school year.

Them paying for me to come here to see the school and learn more about it was a very unique opportunity that I very much appreciated.

However, the one experience while I was here on that program that actually made Dartmouth stand out to me was the fact that I went to dinner with an admissions officer who stuck with me as I was asking questions about the school and getting to know more about the people on campus for about an hour or two past the time that the dinner ended.

WOMICK: Wow.

MANSILLA: It was very interesting. And it just kind of happened organically. I wasn't pressing her with really hard questions; we just kind of had a good time in terms of she was asking me about why I wanted to come to Dartmouth, and we got into sort of a real conversation, not just the standard set of questions.

So at the end of the night me and another one of the visiting students that was with me went back. Oddly enough, both of us were also staying in the same dorm room together, in the McLaughlin cluster. We just kind of talked about how that experience was something we never experienced before. I think that makes things actually even more unique for my instance because this was a person with whom I had already visited—who, in the future after this experience, I visited two more colleges on these types of programs. We always ended up similarly placed in terms of housing on the campuses or where we were in the time in the program: seeing which speaker, on which panel, to learn more about X and Y school. So we kind of kept in touch throughout the whole process, and everything that stuck out was exactly what we had predicted that night when we went back to our room.

The really neat part about Dartmouth—at least we believed this is true, and I still believe this is true—is the fact that people are actually willing to sit down and engage you in their community and start a dialogue. Throughout my entire time here, being able to point out as many things that I think might not have been good experiences for me or some of my peers or some of the faculty or administrators here, people in

the community, I think the one solid thing that, throughout the whole time, that has kind of given me a little bit of reassurance in my decision is the fact that if I try, no matter where I am within my Dartmouth career, I can still find that sense of community...which has its own ups and downs within it, the sense of community, in terms of what we attach ourselves to at Dartmouth. But that kind of sums up why I ended up deciding on Dartmouth instead of another school.

That and the fact that I'd grown up in big cities my whole life, living in Mexico City, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, a couple of other places, with Cleveland being the smallest, and I was making my decision to end up either here or New York City. I figured that it was probably something that would be interesting to challenge myself.

WOMICK: Right, so something small and rural. That's actually what you wanted.

MANSILLA: That's what I wanted, yeah.

WOMICK: Okay.

MANSILLA: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: So how do you feel about that now, four years later?

MANSILLA: I feel happy about that. I'm very satisfied with my decision, four years later. I feel that it afforded me the chance, again, to extend my experiences or my horizons as an individual in a way that most people don't get the chance to or maybe aren't open to doing. I think a large part isn't just a product of my education within schools but maybe because of personal experiences with family and friends. So, yeah, I'm very happy with my decision.

For this, you can ask any of my friends at home. They would never imagine that I would know how to hike, let alone set up a, you know, tarp on a DOC trip, something like that. My friends used to always joke around that I would never leave a city, and now they all kind of have the table turned on them. Most of them ended up in schools in cities, and I ended up out here.

WOMICK: Yeah, out in the wilderness. [Chuckles.]

MANSILLA: There we go.

WOMICK: So what was orientation like?

MANSILLA: Orientation. You mean the week adjusting to Dartmouth, coming in?

WOMICK: Yeah, just coming in.

MANSILLA: From my personal experience, again, I think it was a little different from most people. I was on the first section of trips—I chose to go on a trip—and the first section of trips that came back that we were allowed to move into our dorms. So I think I had about two weeks' time pass of the complete—you know, the entirety of pure orientation, basically, until the actual orientation program had started. And, to a degree, being as curious as I am, I kind of figured out a lot of things about the school, I think, before other students in the Class of 2013 got around to being able to do such, because they weren't on campus yet.

But I had to figure out how the dining hall system worked at the time. I had to figure out—or I had the chance to—I didn't have to—I had the chance to figure out what departments were in which buildings, kind of look more into what professors and what courses of study I wanted to take. A lot of students had already come back to campus who were involved with groups, student organizations and, though they weren't marketing themselves directly to incoming students to try to get them to join their groups, I kind of ran into a lot of different subcommittees on campus, a few of which I would later become a part of.

So it was a unique experience, and I think the transition from high school was really easy, too, in that way because there was a lot less pressure. It was like every day that I woke up, there were, like, 50 more students of my class on campus, and it was, like, a subtle transition instead of, I think, being on the other end of that, where you come and everybody might have already come on from trips, onto campus, and you might have been somebody who might have chosen to not do a trip or something like this, and, you know, you're like

a drop, dropped in, like, an ocean or something. You're one student out of a thousand all of a sudden, which might not be a shock to some students from big schools, but I think being in a new place is enough to give them a shock, so—

WOMICK: Yeah, yeah. So did you feel prepared for everything that Dartmouth threw at you during freshman year?

MANSILLA: Boy, I think that question needs to be broken down in a lot of different ways, but...yeah, I feel that I was prepared for the majority of, you know, occurrences that came across my way freshman year. Classes were probably the most difficult thing for me to adjust to, not necessarily because they were more difficult but, on the other hand, I thought they were probably easier than my high school.

And balancing a larger period of time on my own was something that I probably didn't do very well. I signed up for a lot of club sports and a lot of student organizations, and I didn't really pay a lot of attention to my studies the first term I was here, which is coming back to haunt me now a little bit, 'cause I wish I could have done better the first term that I was here and chosen a better set of classes to take for my interests and what I wanted to do later on, because of the constraints of distributive requirements and credits for graduation, et cetera.

WOMICK: Yeah. Yeah. So how did you make friends during your first year here?

MANSILLA: Well, so I had the benefit, I think, maybe—maybe I should rephrase that, 'cause I feel a lot of students who come to Dartmouth are social. I think that's one of the things that interviewers look for when they're trying to make a Dartmouth class. They look for people who are outgoing and interested in meeting new people and trying new things. That doesn't always translate into people who are social butterflies or anything like that, but I think it's people who have generally an open outlook on life.

For me, it was a little bit of everything. I was very interested in trying new things, meeting new people. I didn't really have much regard for restraining myself. The first few weeks we were here was really easy 'cause everybody was that way.

Everybody was new. But actually that started to get a little awkward when I was still remembering people's names and other people didn't remember my name. But I think they eventually caught up to me, I guess. I met so many people, I can't really keep track of everyone, and I kind of carved out my own little group of friends from those people.

I think a big part of that for me and a lot of other students on this campus is their freshman floor. That being said, I do know a fair amount of students who didn't connect well with their freshman floor, and that's always kind of something that's I think a little unfortunate just because it's sort of one of the layers of, you know, like, quote-unquote, "protection" that students receive in their first year. And it's a group of students who are supposed to be a little bit closer to them, that they kind of rely on to get meals with, to maybe discuss classes with and things like that, 'cause you're living in a little unit together on a floor. It's not like you're sharing an apartment together; you're each in your own living situation, whether you're in a single dorm or in a dorm with roommates or what have you. But I think that the freshman floor dynamic in and of itself provides sort of like the first, again, network that students might rely on when they're here.

And, again, we don't really have UGAs—we have UGAs; we don't have RAs, so I think that's sort of s'posed to be the second layer there. If you don't have, you know, a strong friend group on your floor, at least your first resource you might be able to refer to when you have any sort of problem where you don't know where to direct it to might be your UGA, and they can guide you in that direction.

And, actually, I became really good friends with both my UGAs my freshman year. We had one UGA move out halfway through the year because of her D-Plan. But both UGAs were very helpful in this process. And, again, kind of pointing me in the direction of maybe upperclassmen who I wouldn't have had contact with otherwise, with similar interests to me and to what I wanted to get done on campus.

So that was another way I made friends freshman year, was kind of leveraging the little networks that I developed for myself and kind of turned those into bigger networks. That, and then trying completely new things all together, programs

that are—you know, first-year leadership programs, programs at the Rockefeller Center, the Diversity Peer Program that was around here my freshman year. Things like that as well.

WOMICK: Where did you live your freshman year?

MANSILLA: My freshman year, I lived in Russell Sage 110, the back right corner room; the right corridor of the Russell Sage building. I always remember that room because it was on the first floor. Open up my window and I could see Rocky right outside, the desk where I was studying for the classes that I—you know, earlier—later in the day I'd be taking in that same building. If I walked out the hallway and turned to the right, there was actually a window that didn't have a screen on it that was often left open that I remember a lot of students would jump in and out of to get to class more quickly than walking down the hall the other way and out the normal door.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

MANSILLA: I guess it's, you know, that extra minute you need if you slept in too late. [Chuckles.]

WOMICK: Yeah.

MANSILLA: But it was a unique experience. I was in a two-room triple with a roommate from the West Coast and a roommate from the South. I was coming from the Midwest, but sort of a mixed background, and I think the three of us worked really well. We ended up joining the same fraternity later on, and we're still very good friends. Even if we don't keep in contact as much as we did freshman year, we still see each other at least once a week or something like that. So that was, again—maybe I was lucky in having that sort of first layer beyond the freshman floor, of having a strong connection with my roommates.

But it was interesting trying to cramp three guys into two rooms. Luckily, we had our own bathroom. We didn't have to share with the floor or anything, except for our shower—

WOMICK: Oh, that *is* nice.

MANSILLA: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: So what about the transition to sophomore year?

MANSILLA: So my transition to sophomore year came about maybe as—maybe it was overshadowed by my freshman summer in terms of, you know, actually getting onto campus sophomore year—you know, how difficult it was transitioning into, you know, sophomore life or what have you. I had a much more interesting and much more eventful freshman summer that I think, as I said, overshadowed that because I was on an LSA in Brazil, which is a very interesting country, and I kind of was faced with a great amount of culture shock.

Even with my background in Latin America and having grown up in Latin America, Brazil can be a very different place from other places within Latin America, so a lot of things that I experienced there were familiar, but there was just enough that was different to kind of *really* shock me. That was kind of the majority of my transition the sophomore year because after that, once I got back to campus, I was so happy to be someplace familiar that it didn't even really occur to me that things were different.

There were a few things that were obviously different. I mean, people were starting to join Greek houses. Upper-level classes became something that were more feasible. Starting to think more about a major that I wanted to declare officially and also beginning to further carve out the D Plan that I wanted to make for myself throughout my time here. Those all become things that became a little—all those things became a little bit more clear to me, I guess, or more—I guess more real, because freshman year you don't really have to worry about that; a lot of things are planned out for you outside of classes.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

MANSILLA: So I guess my transition was pretty smooth overall.

WOMICK: So did you choose to rush sophomore fall?

MANSILLA: I did. I chose to rush sophomore fall. Again, as I said earlier, I ended up joining a fraternity with my two freshman

roommates. We ended up joining Alpha Delta. I think a lot of my peers might have joined the fraternity for their own reasons, but mine were maybe a little different from most of theirs. A lot of people, I think, made the decision based off of the reputation of a house or maybe based off of their peer group of friends—I mean their classmates, where they were ending up and where they wanted to rush.

I based my decision off of the upperclassmen within the house, people who I wanted—‘cause I saw it as an opportunity, again, as any other campus organization, to get to know more people and to maybe have that be a chance to be involved in things that I wasn’t involved with earlier in my Dartmouth career.

So I really liked the Class of 2011 in Alpha Delta and the other classes as well, but I think that a lot of the members of the Class of 2011 sort of took me under their wing and brought me to new groups. A few of them helped start the Men’s Forum, which now I’m involved with the leadership of, which I’ve been a part of throughout the entire time that it’s been in existence, but it’s interesting to see how they kind of got it going with some help from underclassmen, myself being one of them, and then now we’re still carrying that on today.

Also my sophomore year with those same friends, upperclassmen friends at the time, I kind of started a tradition where every term that I was on campus that year, we would do the Special Olympics together over at the Skiway and then in other locations in the warmer weather. That’s something that me and a couple of my Class of 2013 friends still do and are trying to get the underclassmen involved within AD as well, because it’s kind of something that they had got us involved in, and now we’re getting the younger guys involved in as well.

So it’s really gratifying this year, during my senior year, to be able to offer a ride to any underclassmen from my fraternity that wanted to go over to the Skiway with me to help in any capacity that was needed for that event, because it’s something that I thought there were a lot of people from a bunch of different places helping out with that event.

The only, like, people I was working with directly were people from my fraternity, so it was a good bonding experience outside of campus, because you're just far enough away that it doesn't seem like you're quite—you know, having the same experiences when you're hanging out at the house or doing other things on campus together. But it's still close enough that, you know, it's a Dartmouth activity; it's not, like, a Dartmouth activity outside, like, an LSA or a study abroad or a field trip. I haven't had a class that's taken a field trip, but I know some classes do take field trips to Boston or what have you.

So that was a cool experience I had. I think that I also didn't make a lot of new friends within my own class as well because—with the reason of joining a fraternity, mostly because of the upperclassmen, I didn't really know any of the other Class of 2013 men that were joining the fraternity that year other than my two roommates. So I think in the class there were 36 of us that rushed that term—or pledged that term—and I only knew two others, so it was a lot of new friends to make.

WOMICK: Right.

MANSILLA: So—yeah.

WOMICK: Kay. So how 'bout junior year?

MANSILLA: Junior year. [Chuckles.] Junior year, I wasn't here much. I wasn't here in the fall, I wasn't here in the winter, but I was here in the spring. During my fall term, I decided instead to take an internship in Washington, DC, working for the U.S. Treasury and the White House within the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. It was an exciting time to be working in DC, because the Jobs Act was sort of the big issue in the news those days, and I was directly involved with a lot of the policy that was going into that or that had gone into that.

And the experience has also really allowed me to kind of see how the real world worked. Even then, shadowed a little bit by the fact that I had an opportunity to work with some very high-level administrators and also some very high-level

private-sector executives who worked with the Council as well.

Also, again, it was an opportunity to make a lot of new friends. The other Dartmouth students who were in DC or maybe alumni who were also in DC became sort of the secondary network outside of my immediate friend group and coworkers. But it was nice to switch things up a little bit, to have to take public transportation to get to where I needed to be throughout the day instead of just walking across the Green. That was refreshing. Sort of just being in a city instead of being in Hanover—again, with the reason I chose to come here, for it being a little more rural, it was still, again, refreshing to be able to get back to a city for a while.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

MANSILLA: I didn't want to quit that, so then during the winter I took another internship opportunity, this time in San Francisco, which—competing with my sophomore spring, which I spent on an LSA in Rome—this might have been my favorite term at Dartmouth, even though it wasn't physically on campus, because there was a large group of Dartmouth students in San Francisco. A lot of them with whom I was friends. And we got together a lot—you know, after work. I had the chance to room with one of my close friends from Dartmouth as well. Actually, that was during the summer that year, not during the winter. I went to San Francisco twice 'cause I liked it so much. And came back to the same job.

But it was a really unique experience where, again, I gained a lot of real-world experience. Whatever that means, I guess, is more actually a chance to apply what I learned inside the classroom at Dartmouth to something that I could do outside as my own project, being part of a small company and actually seeing my real work affect somebody—you know, a firm, that I was working with and affect it in a way that—you know, grow the profits of the firm or having an effect on the marketing of the firm, things like that.

It was interesting because, from an inside point of view at Dartmouth, we don't really realize that a lot of the work that we're doing has a net effect, that being that we're smarter for it, or better people for having studied more, whatever you

want to interpret that as. In the real world it's easier to see that because you can put a dollar sign next to your work or you can put a project name next to your work.

[Transcriber's note: The sounds of voices and the noises from the hallway become intrusive now.]

WOMICK: Continue.

MANSILLA: Okay. Where was I? Oh, what students do and the amount of work that they put into things. So, yeah, I think that's sort of why a lot of people or a lot of students at Dartmouth find it exciting to go out on an off term. That's why it was exciting to me, too, because I got to work for something more than just a grade. I also had the chance to sort of support myself in real-world scenario instead of just on campus, where what I'm paying for is textbooks and a dorm on campus. In the real world out it kind of felt, again, a little more, quote-unquote, "real" because I was paying for an apartment and groceries and other things that didn't really pertain to education issues.

[Pause for discussion with students wanting to use the room]

MANSILLA: Where was I?

WOMICK: You were at an internship in San Francisco and talking about how great that was.

MANSILLA: Oh, right. So moving on from that—I guess I kind of spoke about that enough. I'm losing my train of thought a little bit here.

The rest of my junior year then became sort of an adjustment I guess I never had to deal with that we talked about before, freshman year or sophomore year, because this was coming back to Dartmouth for the first time after having a very different experience, though Dartmouth related, not physically on campus.

In that spring term, I came back and things were very different because it was the first time that I really saw the D-Plan sort of in effect. A lot of people previously, I'd heard complain about their friends weren't on campus or things

were different because of different D-Plans for different people, and that spring was the first time I really saw that because before that, I feel a lot of my close friends were on campus or a lot of the same people who I hung out with or were used to seeing on campus were there. But that spring, things kind of changed a lot.

It was also, I think, the first time that I came back, after sophomore summer, which is discounted for this example just because of the nature of it—that I was there that one of the classes who had been there above me was no longer there, because I wasn't around the spring of the term before, and obviously they weren't there. Those upperclassmen weren't there in the summer. So campus maybe felt a little bit smaller in that way as well.

And having been gone for so long, I had no opportunity really to get to know the incoming class of freshmen that year either. So campus felt like a very different place. But, again, I was fortunate enough that a lot of the friendships that I made freshman year, through my freshman floor, through the different student organizations that I was involved with—I was fortunate enough that they were there on campus, so I wasn't completely left alone. Like, you might hear from some students who say that that's happened to them, that they had to make a completely new group of friends.

And, of course, I had the reliable experience of my fraternity as well, with a lot of my friends who I'd made there in the past year. And then some people I actually met while I wasn't even on campus, who were in different places: somewhere else, in San Francisco or DC or different students who were from different parts of campus that I got back in touch with once we were back on campus.

So spring term overall, I guess through the entirety of the Dartmouth experience up until this point that I've talked about, in my experience at Dartmouth—it's interesting to note that I just haven't mentioned any classes yet, or any professors or any experiences in that way in particular. But I think that's maybe something that I should have talked about a little bit earlier, because even some of the professors—John Watanabe in the anthropology department in particular

comes to mind—are people who I’ve kept in touch with as well.

So, for example, actually in about a week from now, I’m gonna get tea or coffee—I think he prefers tea—with Professor Watanabe to catch up. And I haven’t taken a class with him since freshman fall, but it was the first class I ever stepped foot in at Dartmouth. And we still keep up to this day, so I guess that’s kind of a small bit of evidence that attests to the fact that the community here, the reason that I came here, really stands out, still, for me and assures my decision to this day.

So, brief aside from junior spring there. We can move on to the next question.

WOMICK: Well, that would be about senior year.

MANSILLA: All right. Moving into senior year, I think that sort of in the same way that people came in with wide eyes and a really open attitude about a lot of things freshman year, senior year was sort of on the opposite end of that in a *unique* way, ‘cause people aren’t exactly—again, they’re not having closed opportunities or lookin’ at things with a very narrow view, but there’s a lot of things that are pressing issues all of a sudden, such as finishing a major, finishing PE requirements, finishing distributive requirements, making sure that you have all your papers filed correctly to get ready for graduation, making sure that all of the groups that you’ve been involved with since your freshman year now have a succession of leadership that’s reliable, making sure that through all this mess if you have some sort of senior project you’re doing or research that you’re doing, that that gets finished by the time you graduate and that you have that neatly packaged and ready to go.

So I think there’s a lot of stuff that gets added on there that makes senior year different in that way. So the fall, coming back here, things weren’t very different, I would say, from junior year or the previous years at Dartmouth. But in the winter, once campus kind of shrunk down and a lot of students went away on LSAs or their D-Plans took them away from campus, I got very comfortable with sort of

developing my own space and taking that with me no matter where I was on campus.

I didn't rely as much on other networks that I previously established, such as my fraternity or student organizations. And I guess this is why earlier I said it was sort of the opposite end of freshman year 'cause instead of seeking a wide variety of new opportunities, I was now seeking a way to sort of narrow down everything that I'd already been involved with, to make sure that I either could finish it by the time that I graduate or that I could be able to hand off the projects if they were a student group or something like that to somebody in it, one of the classes below me.

And then there's also, behind all that, the fact that I was still trying to focus on finishing all my classes and credits to complete the purpose I came here in the first place and get an education and a degree.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

MANSILLA: So senior year's been unique in that way. But, again, having sort of this idea that I have developed my own little space and bringing that around with me to campus, everywhere I go, means that I don't necessarily need to be dependent on so many other people or on so many other traditional sort of structures, organizations or institutions on campus. I'm less cautious about having to structure things in a way that'll please my professors or that'll please the administration but more in a way that I know will actually better my education or my own experience.

That might sound a little rebellious, but I don't think it's quite so. By that, I more mean it's just, you know, having previous experiences on campus, an administrator—and this has happened this year multiple times—approaches me to be involved in another process or projects. Or have another professor approach me to ask me to do research or maybe become a tutor for their course or something. I feel a lot more comfortable saying no. I have stuff I need to get done in my own time. I don't need more stuff. As of right now, I'm feeling very comfortable with that. But then also feeling a lot more comfortable going out and finishing what I want to get done.

So, for my culminating experience—one of my culminating experiences within my government major—I'm taking on an independent study in research in Japanese politics, which is something that had I just gone by the way that my adviser told me to do it, I probably would have just taken another upper-level course in the government department. He thought that I didn't need the extra stress senior year of doing my own original research, but, again, I think the reason I came here is to get an education, and I should be able to push myself a little bit.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

MANSILLA: So that kind of brings me up to where I am right now, in a sort of very round-about, vague way.

WOMICK: Yeah.

MANSILLA: But I guess that kind of ties up my Dartmouth experience to right now, on April 14th.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.] So how would you say that your community changed over your time here, from freshman year to now?

MANSILLA: I think overall, my community changed—well, there's different levels of community here at Dartmouth, and I think that's more important, to focus on those changes than the sort of idea of an overall community. There's a constant for everybody who's going through this process, and the constant for me as well, is the fact that we're students at Dartmouth, we're involved with Dartmouth College in one capacity or another, but I think what actually students tend to notice more when they're coming and going—you know, maybe professors coming back and forth from sabbatical or something like that; I don't really know much about professors' experience here—I'd say the thing that changes is probably the smaller groups or smaller communities that we feel very comfortable within the larger Dartmouth community.

So, you know, again, I think it kind of sticks out, again, through the examples that I gave before: coming back my junior year and realizing that a class had left campus and a

new class had come onto campus and that I hadn't really noticed that before or been aware of it, at least, or that it hadn't impacted me directly.

But I think that transition of classes coming and going in the four years actually being very short, a very short period of time as compared to other school experiences we might have early on in our lives—I think that sort of, again, plays back to the reason that the smaller communities become more important in terms of noticing change.

So housing, as I mentioned, freshman year was a big part of my community and I think is a big part of a lot of Dartmouth students' communities. I tried living off campus and changing my community drastically because I didn't have a UGA, I didn't have floor mates, I didn't have—you know, any of the immediate resources in the dorm when I decided to live off campus in the apartments above Murphy's. But I lived there only for one term because I realized the price was just the same and I was probably actually paying a lot more for a lot less than I was getting out of it, and I decided to move back to campus.

I also liked the idea of a dorm being sort of a community. I know that traditionally Dartmouth has a rich history of dorms being very strong communities. Over time, though, I think now we notice that that isn't necessarily the case. Intramural sports aren't based out of dorms and things like that, for example. But I think that there definitely still is a sense of community within dorms, with students respecting each other's living space and knowing that they're living in a community of students and not just an off-campus house.

Not to discredit the experience of living off campus. I think it was very important. And I think that for a lot of people, living off campus is a great option. But I was never fortunate enough to find a good place to live off campus. I usually—when I was looking around the few times that I tried to do it again, every place I looked was already rented out or something like that, so things just didn't line up, and I decided it would be easiest to be back on campus.

So that kind of covers the issue of the housing community, just speaking off the top of my head, the only way that I'm thinking about it.

Beyond that, I guess people are involved with sports teams. That's another big one. I was involved with the Ultimate Frisbee® team my freshman year and throughout my time here at Dartmouth until about the end of my sophomore year. After my freshman year, I wasn't very much involved with the team in sort of competitive play, but there was still community because there were some of the people who I spent the majority of my time with my first year here as a student. And later on, I moved beyond the Frisbee® team, but it was still an important part of my community, how that experience—that that's one way that it changed.

And through sports my community changed further because at the end of my freshman year and through my sophomore year, I helped start the club squash team. It's actually a co-ed club squash team. I helped start that with some upperclassmen and a few peers. It was interesting to see that now the majority of my friends on campus I can relate back to a sport. We're friends from squash rather than Frisbee®.

You know, that's another thing. Beyond that, I started playing water polo later on, started paying less attention to squash. All sorts of small things that changed, but then the usual decisions that we make as Dartmouth students that affect our communities.

I think to a certain degree, it all has to do with—again, bringing it back to how short of a time college is, from the four years here at Dartmouth, it's sort of like a mad rush to join as many communities as you can to kind of feel out what you might like freshman year, and then slowly, over time, either catching the ones that, you know, slipped through the cracks freshman year that you didn't find out about, that you might like later on while you're also trying to get rid of a whole bunch of stuff that you signed up for freshman year that you don't necessarily want to be a part of.

So, yeah, I can't really think of any more specific examples off the top of my head, but that's kind of the gist of it.

WOMICK: So you talked a little bit about Men's Forum earlier, but why don't you talk about that some more?

MANSILLA: Okay, great. So Men's Forum has been a very important part of my time here at Dartmouth. It was during my sophomore year that it was founded by a couple of upperclassmen who I really respected, and having the good fortune of knowing them very well, even though I was, you know, an underclassmen, not very involved with a lot of the same other communities that they might have been involved with, whereas varsity sports or, you know, their own peers and their classes or their fraternities at the time—this is before I joined a house—they still respected my voice and were very interested to see what my opinions were on a lot of issues that had to deal with the Dartmouth community because that's sort of the focus of Men's Forum.

Men's Forum really tries to provide, at least in its capacity that it operates right now and that it's operated in for the past couple of years—it really aims to provide a safe space for men to come talk about masculinity issues, issues about gender relationships on campus, gender and sexuality issues and issues about the Dartmouth experience as a whole that could affect anyone identifying as a man on campus.

I think that's really unique also—you know, furthermore here, because it allows men not just a safe space but actually really sort of excites or attracts a lot of men to that place who normally would be involved with a lot of the conversations otherwise on campus that talk about these issues. We get a really wide variety of people showing up to our meetings, but the unique part is it's never really a very, very large group of people at the meetings; it's usually a very diverse and different group each week, depending on the nature of our meetings that week.

The reason I think that happens, again, with the nature of our meetings is that we've decided to structure our group in such a way that every week we meet once and have a guided discussion, or an open discussion after a little bit of guidance, on a particular topic. So I don't think that every week all of our members feel that they have some stake or

something to say about each topic, and they might choose to focus on their homework instead that week or spend time with friends instead of coming to the meeting.

I guess since I've been involved with it, Men's Forum has transitioned into sort of a more active voice on campus. There've always been a lot of events aimed towards men from Men's Forum, mostly to its membership, but this past year and a half we've had a lot of events focused more on, like, outward displays of our work toward the Dartmouth community.

We put on an event called Upstaging Stereotypes this past term that aimed to show the different sides of masculinity on campus and to sort of explain to those who might have not grasped the concept or may have not known about the concept before that it's a very real thing that there are different types of masculinity, that there are different masculinities, that there are different ways people identify on campus. So we had a bunch of our members, as well as some of their friends who heard about the project and wanted to get involved come together and put together a performance that sort of explained this better than if it were to just have been a speech or a panel, as a lot of Dartmouth groups seems to have put on.

Then this term, Anne-Marie Slaughter, who was at Princeton University until very recently and who wrote an article in *The Atlantic* titled "Can Woman Have It All?" There've been so many responses that I've also read and similar titles, they're kind of blurred at this point. [Laughter] That just speaks to my point here that Men's Forum put on a dinner with Women's Forum, together, and we invited our memberships and the campus to show up and speak about any responses they had to the article, any new thoughts that might have been sparked by reading the article, and any ways that maybe we should be aware or be thinking as a Dartmouth community, as a community of students about to enter the world and maybe have families of our own or interact with people who have families, or be the bosses of people who have families or work for people who have families or, you know, any capacity that affects the topic of the article. Sort of it gave them—the meeting gave them a chance to bring up these issues and talk about 'em. And we had a good

showing for both Men and Women's Forum. I think we had about 60-plus students show up.

We also had Dean Laskaris from admissions show up, and we also had two professors show up. So it's a really diverse group of people to talk about the issue. I think that some very valid and very plausible points about progress and how progress can be made were brought up during the meeting. So that was an interesting event.

Those are the events that kind of stick out right now to me, but we have a whole bunch of planning that goes out into the future and that we've done in the past as well that rounds out the group, and I think that our overall goal as of right now is to just continue operating in our capacity while we still explore other options to better provide a safe place and provide education on issues of masculinity and gender, because I think that a lot of people have a very narrow view of what that means; they think that it might only be queer studies or might only be women's studies or might only be talking about women's issues or issues about, again—you know, issues for queer students on campus or something like that, and have this very narrow view of what gender issues actually are, and they don't realize that it involves everybody because it's a part of humanity. So we're aiming to kind of spread that idea around campus, particularly to populations that normally don't self-select into conversations that, you know, include a lot of this material.

WOMICK: That's really cool.

MANSILLA: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: What would you say are some of the most pressing issues on Dartmouth's campus right now with regard to gender?

MANSILLA: So at this point in time, I think that there are a lot of issues that kind of affect a lot of different areas on campus in different ways, but I think that overall, the largest problem is sort of a reflection of, you know, our community at large and our culture. I don't think it's fair to say it's particularly really, you know, northeastern or particularly a part of Hanover or New Hampshire or being American or something like that, but just sort of this overall idea that's more, maybe, pointed

towards, like, a historical view or not as developed view of gender and the relations and relationships that occur between people of different genders that really just kind of leads back to respecting the basic dignity of another person, and the idea of respect in that regard.

I think the one big issue that often passes over people's heads in the discussions that occur on campus is we're not asking people to become best friends with everybody in the whole world; we're just asking them to respect one another and understand that everyone deserves that basic dignity and to develop an understanding that that requires an education of the issue and of the issues surrounding gender, that it involves that everyone takes at least a minorly active role, because I think that the examples of these problems come up when very bad things happen, whether it's cases of sexual assault or bias incidents or hate crimes.

And that's when a lot of the campus really draws their attention towards these issues. But I think that could all really be avoided if we could just take it back to that basic idea. It seems very simple, and it's easy to say, but I think that's ultimately what makes it very complex, because it's hard to understand who's understanding the concepts, because it packs a lot within it, say, in understanding the basic dignity of every person or respecting everybody for who they are and who they identify as and respecting their identity as the way that they, you know, display it or portray it or identify with it.

So I think that manifests itself into real problems on campus, real problems on campus because you have people who are turned away from educating themselves on these issues. Like I hinted at before, I think there's a large problem of when there's an excellent opportunity to learn more on this campus, whether it's through a guest speaker or through an event that's put on by a different department on campus or something like this, a lot of students self-select either their way in or out of that. So a lot of the people who are already very educated are the ones who fill the rooms for those events, and the people who previously don't have much experience with those events or these sorts or issues or these problems are the ones who select to not be involved in those.

That's ultimately where I think Men's Forum has been such an important part of my time here, because we're trying to change that. And that's—you know, and recognizing that that's probably one of the largest issues on campus. That's probably one of the reasons why, again, I enjoy Men's Forum so much because I can see that I'm making real change.

WOMICK: Great. How would you say that the Dartmouth community *has* changed since you've been here?

MANSILLA: The Dartmouth community has changed a lot in a lot of very visible and invisible ways since I've been here. When people think of change on Dartmouth's campus, I think coming from the perspective of somebody in *my* class, a lot of the examples manifest themselves through a change in the dining system or maybe a change in the culture around the Greek system or maybe the building of new buildings on campus and other physical, visible changes.

But I think that the biggest change that has occurred on Dartmouth's campus in the time that I've been here has definitely been invisible. It's not necessarily something that's come about because of just the students on campus, but I think the administrators, the professors played a large part in this, and I think it's not exactly a change that's easily describable. That's why I'm kind of hesitating right now to kind of put a name on it as to what this change has been.

But, you know, since I've been here, Dartmouth has become a much more diverse school: socioeconomically, culturally, racially, ethnically. In the time since I've been here, I feel that the campus has overall become a more welcoming place. A lot of people point out problems with the Greek system or social systems on campus and the fact that Dartmouth has a lot of trouble moving away from its traditions or is very hesitant to move away from traditions. But I think that what's often overlooked is the fact that Dartmouth comes up with very creative ways to maybe change these traditions or alter these traditions into a way that works better for the current time period.

Again bringing it back to the idea of the Greek system, a lot of people think that the Greek system should be abolished because it's kind of a relic of the past, when Dartmouth was an all-male school or something like this. I haven't exactly worked out my complete opinions on the Greek system, and it's a very complex issue that deserves a lot of attention, more than just kind of speaking off the top of my head in an interview. And I have given it a lot of thought—just to articulate what I want to say about it, that would require a different amount of attention.

But I think what is very visible within the change of these social spaces is a lot more has been done to create social spaces that are more accessible to a wider variety of students. For example, just last week I was very impressed that when I attended an open mic session and sort of an exhibit that happens every Wednesday in Collis, in One Wheelock, an event called Green Fish that displays a lot of the works of digital music grad students and then also invites the works of undergraduate students who might be involved with animation, or digital music or some sort of performance in that way to display their own works.

And then directly after that is this other event I was talking about that's an open mic, hosted by one of the managers of One Wheelock, a guy named Kwame. It was interesting to see a lot of people actually be involved in that, because I remember in my freshman and sophomore year going to these events and being one of maybe one of one or two people in the room. People were making very accurate claims that alternative social spaces didn't exist on campus.

And this isn't to say that they've become very solidified and become a very, you know, like, a new mainstream changed culture at Dartmouth, these alternate social spaces, but they've become places where people actually—they've become places that are more respected by students in a way that they're sort of treated as more legitimate.

So just to speak to that—again, back to my example, that there must have been at least 30 or 40 students at this particular event,—

WOMICK:

Oh, wow.

MANSILLA: —which is something that I would have never seen freshman year, I don't think. There were a lot of '16s, the current freshman class, exhibiting their own work or at least showing up and being involved, which I think would be awfully intimidating as a freshman, when I was a freshman, at least.

But, you know, I think that just kind of talks about the change of the climate on campus and sort of the social spaces. The social aspect is mostly what I think *has* changed. You know, same classes, for the most part, are being offered. None of the departments have really changed. The administration has changed significantly, but I think from a student perspective, the changes that actually affect day-to-day life here aren't quite as obvious. I think you need to be a little more involved with those topics or follow those issues a little more closely to notice that change. So I think the big issue that's really caused the greatest amount of change in the campus overall has been social.

WOMICK: Okay. I think that—oh, there's one more, the big question.

MANSILLA: Mm-hm.

WOMICK: How do you think Dartmouth has changed *you*?

MANSILLA: I think that's a very, very good question, a good question in the sense that it's something that I think not a lot of students put a lot of thought into but often think about. What I mean by that is that I think it's something that's constantly on the back of somebody's mind but is never the main issue that somebody's focusing on or thinking about or reflecting upon when they're looking back at their time at Dartmouth or their time during Dartmouth or their time that they're currently spending at Dartmouth or doing Dartmouth-related things.

For me personally, I think Dartmouth has really been not so much a process of change that could lead to, like, a 180-degree change of character or personality or who I am but almost more to, like, a 360 change back to who I was coming in here, having taken in a lot of new experiences and information and thoughts and thought processes and opinions while I was here.

I think that personally I've just had a very great—I had a really good high school experience. I had a really good community, sense of community, sense of myself coming out of high school that ultimately, I think, was extremely clouded by, you know, freshman and sophomore and junior year—you know, the entire Dartmouth experience when you're furthermore trying to figure out exactly who you want to be or what you want to do with your life, and I kind of forgot a lot of the simple rules that I had set out for myself when I graduated high school. I think most of this has to do with the fact that I went to a Jesuit high school where we were forced to memorize a lot of small phrases or quips about morality or ethics or philosophy or something like that.

But there are things that actually really very much guided my life until I kind of forgot about a few of 'em at Dartmouth. And, you know, the religious aspects aside, I think that one of the biggest ones for me was the motto of my high school, which was "Men for Others." It also happens to be the motto, I believe, of the Jesuits, who were the Catholic priests group that ran my high school and was kind of known for education, runs a lot of schools and universities across the world.

But I think that's something that I kind of forgot about at Dartmouth because, again, the change seemed to always be focused about, like, an external system of how the changes—like looking externally at the system of how Dartmouth has affected me instead of looking from within and actually seeing myself and how I've changed and how Dartmouth has caused this change in me—has kind of brought me away from that idea of being a man for others because, again, the focus was on—everything was focused and the responsibility for everything was focused on the environment around me and less about the decisions that I was physically or mentally making in my day-to-day life up until my senior year when I'm starting to remember that more. And I think I talked about this a little already when I was talking about developing my own space and taking it with me.

So I think that Dartmouth definitely made me a better person for that, though, because in that mixed confusion, I was forced to learn a lot of new things, a lot of new ways to deal

with problems that hadn't come up before, how to confront and cope with a lot of different experiences that entered into my life throughout my four years here at Dartmouth, but then, at the end of the day, being able to remember—and maybe that's why they stick out. Maybe it wasn't necessarily even the fact that, you know, they were, like, *my* mottos or my ways that I wanted to live my life or sort of, like, ideas of how I wanted to develop my own personal philosophy.

Maybe it's because they're just kind of good things to live by, so we're not really mine, they're just kind of universal. Coming back to that, at the end of Dartmouth, and being able to add in my entire Dartmouth experience into it kind of folded back into my own life and make Dartmouth *mine* in that way, I think, is kind of the biggest way that that's brought about change *in* me.

I can't really point out a single attribute. I guess I look older. [Chuckles.] I have a lot of experience that I can put on a résumé or a transcript. But I think that the biggest change Dartmouth caused or sort of brought out in me has been sort of just kind of—it's too much of an experience to really boil down back into one question, and that's why I think maybe I focused on the fact that it kind of brought me back to myself. Though that *is* very vague, I think it kind of covers this great idea, the concept that I'm trying to explain right now, 'cause it kind of encapsulates the greater concept or the process, I guess, of taking everything that I learned at Dartmouth and being able to kind of see how that affects me in my own life, but then being able to still keep my own identity.

I haven't become—I'd like to think that I haven't become, like, Roland from Dartmouth but, rather, like, Roland who has been to Dartmouth or Roland who has experienced Dartmouth or Roland who received his education at Dartmouth or has a Dartmouth education and not necessarily—you know, I'm not trying to be Roland at Dartmouth forever. I'm not trying to be Roland stuck in this point of time of Dartmouth or this Dartmouth-ness forever. And I think that's kind of the biggest change overall. I know that's very vague, but that's the way I see it.

WOMICK: No, that's great. Thank you.

So just to wrap up, is there anything that you haven't gotten to talk about that you would like to before we turn the machines off, anything I haven't asked that you think I should have?

MANSILLA: Nope, I came into this thinkin' that it'd be best, after just very briefly looking over the questions, to do it as candidly as possible and to keep it much in that way. I can't really think of anything off the top of my head right now that I think is of consequence or value, so I think this has been a good interview, and thank you for the opportunity.

WOMICK: Well, thank *you*.

[End of interview.]