

Michael Odokara-Okigbo, Class of 2012
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
April 25, 2012

LEDDY-CECERE: This is Meg Leddy-Cecere, a research assistant at Rauner Library and a Dartmouth '12. We are in the Ticknor Room at Rauner [Library], and I am speaking with Michael—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Odokara-Okigbo.

LEDDY-CECERE: Odokara-Okigbo, who is also Dartmouth '12, about his experience as a Dartmouth undergraduate, as part of the Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth World Oral History Project. Okay. So to start, can you tell us a little bit about your early upbringing and sort of your life before you came to Dartmouth and the transition into Dartmouth?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Well, I was born January, 1990. I was born in New York City and moved to Maryland when I was one, and I was with my mom. I was an only child, and she was a single parent. And we lived in Maryland until I was 12, so 'till 2002. And then we moved to Maine, where I grew up. I went to middle school and high school there, and then I came to Dartmouth.

LEDDY-CECERE: Can you tell me about your experience—how did you find out about Dartmouth? Was Dartmouth, you know, like always something in your life? Was it something that popped into your life later? Talk to me a little bit about how you decided to come to Dartmouth, what that situation was like.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. Funny story. I remember—I think I was 15; I guess we moved to this house when I was 14—and the street adjacent to the street that we lived on was Dartmouth Street. So I used to joke with Mom: “Mom, what if I went to Dartmouth?” She was like, “You’re never going to go to Dartmouth.” [Laughter] “I don’t want you to go there.” Because she wanted me to go to Northwestern or some other place. So, yes. Then I also did a TV show. I was an anchor on a TV show, a local TV show, in Portland, Maine, when I was 15. And I remember working with a man who also went to Dartmouth. And I just remember hearing stories of how he loved Dartmouth and how he was in the fraternity system and how it was such a fun school to go to. So those were my early impressions of Dartmouth College. And then I applied because it was on the common app.

And I heard a lot of great things about the school. I didn't visit it so I wasn't really sure about if I wanted to go here. But after I got in and after narrowing down my choices, it took me two seconds, and I knew like this was the school that I was supposed to go to.

LEDDY-CECERE: What about it hit you when you...? So when you showed up on campus, you just knew it was right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Can you talk a little bit about that feeling?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: It was those Dimensions. I just remember driving up. It was a beautiful day. We were driving up from Maine, me and Emily LaFond, who also—

LEDDY-CECERE: That's right, yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: She is from Maine.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And I remember she also had a lot of good things to say about Dartmouth because her mom was a huge Dartmouth alum.

LEDDY-CECERE: Oh, yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And I remember just—We separated, and I remember I was just like walking on The Green. I was like, This is where I need to be. And I just didn't look back.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. So when you arrived, like post.... So Dimensions community is sort of a different community than when you like start off freshman year. So can you talk about Dimensions and then that transition into freshman year and what you sort of.... Any differences you felt in terms of community, if you still felt that same feeling walking around the Green when you started going here versus the visit.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. Well, I definitely had a sense that people loved Dartmouth, and people had a lot of fun at Dartmouth, and people put a lot of themselves into this institution to make it what it is. And I had that early sense of it when I came for Dimensions. I guess for Dimensions they really try to foster community with the different skits and the different activities. So I saw that there was a definite

community here at Dartmouth. I think Dimensions definitely served its purpose. What's interesting to freshman year, along those lines there was even more community building. I mean I lived in East Wheelock, which is a huge community building, kind of residential life housing place. And then I was in the Dartmouth Aires, which was a very—they also fostered community in terms of like a small brotherhood.

LEDDY-CECERE: So you started that freshman fall?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. I started right before—Yes, right before first classes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Wow!

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And then also rowing as well, which instituted a community in terms of athletics. So I was lucky to kind of have like three different communities at Dartmouth starting off like before classes started. Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Can you talk a little bit about each one of those separately and sort of—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Sure. Like East Wheelock?

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes, each one. So East Wheelock and then we can move onto Aires or whatever.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes, well freshman year I think was a really interesting time because you're just kind of treading water, you're still getting used to everything. So it was cool just to have a really close freshman floor bond and also a communal bond. There'd be different activities that would go on. And I think it's Brace Commons.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Different activities that would go on. I remember watching President Obama being elected.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes, yes, yes, yes!

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Which was a really cool thing to watch at Brace Commons. And they would have a lot of great events, movie events, parties, and I would do homework down there so I was able to get to know the five different residential houses. And that was just really cool

because I started to make friends. And I remember that was one of the things I was really scared about was how I was going to make friends coming to Dartmouth. So that was a really great place to start to build community.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Especially when I lived with three other people.

LEDDY-CECERE: So you were in what? Like a two-room—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: It was a quad.

LEDDY-CECERE: Oh, wow!

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I was in a two-room quad.

LEDDY-CECERE: Oh, wow! So that's like a—How was that?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: It was interesting. It was hard. There were some times—they were annoying. But I think I was annoying, too. So it was just—

LEDDY-CECERE: Everyone's annoying.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: So just getting used to living with people. I'm an only child, so I never really had that experience before.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Learning how to respect other people's spaces and vice versa. So, yes, that was a really great experience because I learned about myself, and I learned more —what I like, what I don't like. So, yes, living in East Wheelock was a great, great experience. The Aires was and still is to me like an incredible—one of the things I look back on at Dartmouth that I'm really, really proud of. I just remember before Dimensions, I went on YouTube and saw videos of the Aires performing. And I just was struck by like how much fun they had.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And I did a cappella in high school.

LEDDY-CECERE: So this was something that you knew that you were interested in.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes, I wanted to do.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And I just remember thinking like, this is the group I really want to be a part of. But I remember at Dimensions, going up to some '09s that were in the community of the Activities Fair?

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes, yes, yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I remember meeting Adam and Nick, who are '09s, and they're just saying that they love Aires and you should definitely think about auditioning. And they showed me the song "Crazy" by Gnarl's Barkley that was sung by a '07, Jarret Cato and I just thought he had a great voice. So I wanted to be part of the Aires and the community that the Aires kind of have. And I auditioned, and I made it—thank God. And I haven't looked back since. Now looking back as a senior, like it's been really fun because I've just been able to kind of grow throughout the Aires.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And have had really incredible experiences that have kind of put in place what I want to do with my life after graduation, which is entertainment and music. So that was cool. And the four other guys that are in my class in the Aires are my best friends I think I've ever had. So there's a definite community in the Aires. And rowing, I mean you put so much of your time, sweat, your blood, and you suffer a lot of pain together. So, I mean, that in itself builds a strong community in the boathouse and outside the boathouse. So it's really, really cool just like—I have a practice in like 40 minutes. And we have a hard practice coming up, and we all know that, so it's like one of those things where we know to put ourselves on line.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And we're all going to do that for each other and for ourselves.

LEDDY-CECERE: So did those communities—so is East Wheelock something that sort of stayed in freshman year and was sort of like a foundational community for you, that didn't extend... Because it sounds like the

Aires definitely has like grown for you, if anything. And the same with rowing; it's remained something. Is that residential community still part of your life, or has that changed?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I wouldn't say the residential community is part of my life at this point. I don't live in East Wheelock anymore. I've been able to live in a lot of different places on campus. But I do say, like I still have—I still talk to the people whom I lived with. Sophomore year I lived with a floor mate of mine in Mid Mass. And it was like a really, really fun experience. Jesse Gomez is like a really, really cool guy. So I don't think the residential life aspect is still part of me. But definitely the friendships that I've made, I treasure. I'm so thankful that I have them.

LEDDY-CECERE: Stayed with you. How do you think—Say that you hadn't made it into the Aires. How do you think your life would have been different at Dartmouth? How do you think you would relate to Dartmouth, and what do you think would be different or changed?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: If I hadn't made it into the Aires, I hope I would have made it into a different a cappella group. If that didn't happen, I would sing—I was also—I got into the Glee Club. I probably would have continued that.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I chose the Aires over the Glee Club. And if not the Glee Club, then the Gospel Choir, which I still sing with. Oh, I sang with them until this past couple of weeks ago. I don't know. I would have definitely found a way to sing.

LEDDY-CECERE: So there are so many places that you could have gone.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Aires is one out of many places where you could have found—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: —sort of that same sort of space.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: So can you talk to me a little bit about—We’ve talked about sort of like individual communities that you associate with. Do you conceptualize a sort of overarching Dartmouth community? And if so, can you talk a little bit about that?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. I mean mostly definitely. And I think I became apparent to that when the Aires did the *Sing-Off*, which was a TV show that we did this past fall.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: We were lucky enough to make it to second place. And I just remember—I remember at first thinking, oh, like I guess Dartmouth doesn’t really care about it that much, which I was fine with. But it was like, I remember like seeing the Yellow Jackets, who were another competing collegiate group.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I think they made seventh place. And like, every Monday I think their school wore yellow.

LEDDY-CECERE: So like all this pride, yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: For the Yellow Jackets. So there was a lot of pride. But I think it’s just the different community that Dartmouth has, I don’t think.... I think Dartmouth kind of—A lot of people do a lot of great things. So I think people were kind of low key on it, which I kind of admired.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: But when we made it to the final four, like President Kim saying, “Vote for the Aires.” And then this alumni... I mean, I got hundreds of emails from classmates, alumni, and it was a really incredible feeling. Just also going into different Dartmouth clubs, because I went on tour with the Aires. We sang in the White House. And we were able to sing at different Dartmouth clubs and just to see the amount of love that we got from the Dartmouth community and the different clubs. It was overwhelming, and it was really cool. So it was— There is definitely a community, an overarching Dartmouth community; there’s definitely that. And now for me it became apparent through the *Sing-Off*. But I mean, like alumni from the Aires, alumni in the rowing club at Dartmouth. They come back,

and they support, both groups do. So, you know, I've seen community here since the very beginning. And I'm going to be one of those alums that are going to try and contribute as much as I can to the Dartmouth community as well.

LEDDY-CECERE: So what do you think...? Can you sort of...? So you see alumni as forming a really strong base outside of Dartmouth, and like keeping the Dartmouth community what it is. Can you define a little bit some defining features of this Dartmouth community that the alumni support and foster?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Let's see. Well, I feel like the Dartmouth community, first and foremost, support giving back to the College in terms of your time, in terms of your treasure, and in terms of—I don't know. I think those two things. The Dartmouth community really hopes that those are ways in which you can give back. Also, I just feel like they're a community. I mean, I've heard stories about this and also, like when I had to go home. I worked at home for a little bit. And I remember I reached out to a Dartmouth alum, and I was able to work under him. And I mean, that was because of Dartmouth, you know. So I feel like a lot of Dartmouth people help out each other when they're in need or when they need something or if they have a connection.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I've experienced that all along the line, too. So I think that's something, another thing that the Dartmouth community really fosters, just to be there for each other and be a strong community for each other because, you know, we all graduated from the same place.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. So do you think that there is—Would you say that there is such a thing as like a Dartmouth insider and a Dartmouth outsider? And if so, can you define those things or talk about it a little bit?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Well, off the top of my head, I think a Dartmouth insider I guess is one that is still active in the College.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: In whatever capacity, even in the smallest capacity, just talks great things about the College to other people. I guess I suppose a Dartmouth outsider would be someone who doesn't really have a strong connection, and who feels like their Dartmouth experience

was a bit thwarted or problematic. They resign themselves to being kind of unaware of what's going on at Dartmouth.

LEDDY-CECERE: Why do you think someone's experience would be problematic? Like what can you say about someone's—Are there general ways in which people have problematic experiences that you can identify? Or is it just very individually based?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I mean, yes. I feel like it's a very individually based type of thing to happen to someone. I mean, my mother, she went to a college in Kansas, and she's not really that involved. And I just don't think she cares—

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: —or they just didn't create a lasting effect on her life, which is totally fine. And I'm sure that there are people that have graduated from Dartmouth who had that same experience, which is completely fine. I think if you go a bit further, maybe there are things in the College that they didn't agree on. It could be the fraternity scene or professors that they've had. It just varies. But it's not something that's kind of different from all colleges, you know.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. Are you affiliated?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes, I am.

LEDDY-CECERE: Can you talk a little bit about that as a community as well?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. I'm affiliated with Sigma Phi Epsilon, which is a fraternity for men, a national fraternity. And I've been affiliated with them since I was a sophomore. I've been able to live in the house, and I've enjoyed a lot of people's company and made a lot of strong friendships from the house.

LEDDY-CECERE: So that was—it's overall a positive community for you.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Do you want to talk a little about— We've had all this recent upset with the hazing issues that have been bringing Dartmouth's community life into like a national public forum as well as bringing it into this community, like the forefront of this community. How do

you understand the ways in which people have responded to this issue?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. I mean there are definitely some forms of hazing that are very problematic. Hazing is very subjective. So if you feel like you've been hazed, and that's a problem... I do feel like, though, this whole hazing situation has kind of gone way overboard, and it's been sensationalized, especially the *Rolling Stone* article definitely did that. And kind of knowing... I mean, knowing Andrew personally and seeing how the trajectory has gone, I just... It's sad that—I mean, there's some positives and some negatives of the different kind of coverage that this whole story has gotten. The whole story of hazing and fraternities, it's problematic and unproblematic. In my experience, I've had a positive experience with the fraternity system. With different things that I've organized, there have been fraternities that have organized, I've gone to different groups on campus, the people who would donate the most money would be the fraternity system, the fraternity and sorority system.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: The people who would give the most time for community events would be the fraternity and sorority systems. I've been able to get, again, meet incredible people in my fraternity and people who are in other fraternities. I've gone to different fraternities, and they have been very welcoming to me.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And I've personally had no problem with hazing or anything of that nature. So for me—again, it's very subjective; but my view is that I've had a great experience with the fraternity system.

LEDDY-CECERE: And do you think that that's sort of like a generally—that this has sort of been sensationalized in a way that distorts a reality at Dartmouth? Or do you think that each experience is sort of like you said: If you feel as if you've been hazed, then that's an issue. If you feel as if you haven't, then that's not an issue. Do you think the *Rolling Stone* sort of highlighted an issue with our community? Or do you think it sort of created an issue that doesn't really exist?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Oh, I mean, if there's someone who feels like they've been disrespected or have had harm done because of hazing, I mean

that definitely should be put in the forefront and as a community, we should respond to that in the best way that we possibly can.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I just feel that we could have done it in a different venue. Or people in this institution—or I guess not in this institution—could have done it in a different venue that didn't seem so sensationalized and over glorified.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: It kind of put Dartmouth in itself in a bad name because I feel like for right now, a lot of what people have in their mind about Dartmouth is fraternity. And fraternities aren't the only thing that's at Dartmouth.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: You know?

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: So, yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: So would you identify yourself as like a Dartmouth insider, according to the definition that you gave me in terms of—I think you would, if you said that an insider is somebody who's going stay involved, who is involved, and an outsider is someone who sort of wants to disassociate post their educational experience. Then you would sort of classify yourself as an insider?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes, I would.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. Are there any ways that you feel like an outsider?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I mean, of course, there are tons of ways. I guess in terms of music, there aren't a lot of venues here to kind of learn about the music business. Or pursue music in that venture. Even the music department is kind of more in the classical realm. And the voice teachers that are here are kind of in the classical realm.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: There I feel like an outsider. On the rowing team, I'm the only black person on the rowing team. So I feel a little bit of an outsider there. I guess—I don't know. I mean Aires, too, sometimes I feel like I'm an outsider because my musical tastes are sometimes different or in how I approach music, it's kind of different than other groups. But I mean, it's human to feel like an outsider in some areas.

LEDDY-CECERE: [Laughs] Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: It would be problematic if you don't feel like an outsider in some areas.

LEDDY-CECERE: So it's not as if it's like an institutional construct that makes you feel like you're an outsider. You just feel like the ways in which you feel like you're an outsider are just natural.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Everyone sort of has venues in which they feel—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: —you know not essential. So you said that you're from Maine.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Mm-hmm.

LEDDY-CECERE: But lived in Maryland as well.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Mm-hmm.

LEDDY-CECERE: Maine—I don't know. Is where you live rural in Maine? I mean Maine is rural.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I live in the biggest town, or city, of Portland. The biggest city in Maine, which is Portland.

LEDDY-CECERE: Portland. So it was not like sort of a rural area.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: No. It wasn't a rural upbringing.

LEDDY-CECERE: So how did you sort of interact with Dartmouth's rural location, and how do you think that sort of impacts our community in general—if it does at all, in your opinion?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Oh, it definitely impacts the community to a large extent. And I think—I remember writing down things about what I wanted to have in a college and I said rural because I would want like a strong community that's kind of focused on friendship and focused on getting to know each other. And I feel like if you're in a more urban setting, there are more opportunities to kind of branch out and go to different bars or go to clubs and do different things that kind of spark your interest, leaving aside the kind of community that's already internal at your institution.

I feel like if I went to an urban setting, I'd try to be pursuing music and would just look for different venues outside of the College. Here, it's kind of hard to do that because you're in the middle of nowhere. So you just kind of have to make the best that you have—you have to do the best that you can with the resources that you have. So let's say like, if I want to make a song or do a song and I want to do a video for it, then I'll call a friend here at Dartmouth, and we'll set something up together. And then I'll get another friend who will record the video. And this'll just be internal, which builds, I feel, builds friendships.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And builds a stronger sense of community.

LEDDY-CECERE: So are you headed to a city next year if you're pursuing—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. So how do you think—Do you think that you'll bring any sort of, any of the values, like the community values, in what your talking about, like learning the interrelationships that you have in a community like Dartmouth versus a city? Do you think you'll be able to bring that to the city? Do you think that's something that sort of won't transfer to this new venue?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: So your question is bringing like that type of Dartmouth spirit that I have to the West coast?

LEDDY-CECERE: So do you feel as if the Dartmouth community, rather than just talking about the alumni and how that sort of transfers to life past, you know, residential life here—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Mm-hmm.

LEDDY-CECERE: — do you think that there are certain ways that Dartmouth fosters relationships that will transcend into different relationships not rooted in this same community?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I hear it, I hear it does.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And I've seen kind of what it did in, how the Dartmouth community is in Maine. I mean it's pretty strong. And I'm moving to Los Angeles so I can only imagine that it will be even stronger. I mean, I haven't personally, I haven't seen it firsthand but I think it'll be very strong when I move out there.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I hope it will be strong.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. That will be nice. So can you talk a little bit—Have you seen any changes in the community since you've started? Over four years, have you seen any concrete things sort of transform or change or things that you think are different now than they were when you were a freshman?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: As an institution?

LEDDY-CECERE: Or any way that you notice. It could be the character of the students or institutional decisions or...

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Honestly, no. I don't think I've seen any vast difference except for FoCo food.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I don't know. I don't think I've seen, other than—yes. No, I don't think I've seen any change. I feel like it is a kind of administrative venue. The College still kind of limits student participation.

LEDDY-CECERE: Can you expand on that a little?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Okay. I mean, we're looking for a new president right now.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I think only two students are allowed to like look for the president—the new president—which for me doesn't make a lot of sense because I feel like students should have a right to kind of voice our opinion on who should be the next president, especially where like now, I'm 22 years old. So I'm now like legally an adult, you know? And so are my other classmates. They have the kind of capacity to kind of search along with the other people for the president. So that limited kind of awareness of student participation. I still feel like that's around. In terms of the arts, at Dartmouth they still bring in a lot of great performers up to Dartmouth.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I still think the Hop kind of lacks some things that should be improved on.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I can't say, I don't know personally that they've made a lot of strides to it. But hopefully I think the 50th annual of the Hop coming up, I heard that there'll be a lot of things that'll be instituted. So I'm excited to see what happens.

LEDDY-CECERE: What sort of changes are you hoping for?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: They stated that they're going to redo the major auditorium—I forget what it's called right now.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes, yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: They're going to redo that. And then also add some more teachers and professors, vocal teachers. I think that would be great.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: And expand on the arts at Dartmouth because I feel like they can definitely do that. Athletics I'd have to say maybe there's a little bit of change I've seen. There's a new program called the DP2, which is kind of taking that physical approach to seeing how athletes at Dartmouth can improve on.

LEDDY-CECERE: Will you explain that a little? I didn't get it.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: So Dartmouth Peak Performance, DP2. It's kind of using different methods, scientific methods, mathematical methods in gathering data from athletes at Dartmouth to see how they could best improve athletic performance of the students.

LEDDY-CECERE: So does that track like over time or something.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: It tracks, yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. For example, at rowing there's a thing that they gave us to kind of track our sleeping habits and our recovery that would see how we can best improve on our performance.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: In and outside the water. It wasn't very successful, but I think those methods are positive.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: They seem to be more staffed and kind of I don't know. More staffed and more kind of aggressive on what they want to accomplish. But in terms of athletics I've seen, that's—They've done that a little bit.

LEDDY-CECERE: And you see that as like a...like that didn't, that wasn't that effective. But that was like a positive change in the program.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: It's a positive change, trying to see how they can improve, yes. In the academics, I perceive—I don't think I've seen that much change, which is not a bad thing.

LEDDY-CECERE: No. Well, what is your major?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I'm a history major.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay. Very cool.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. I do hope that one day they'll be able to institute a global health major at Dartmouth.

LEDDY-CECERE: I'm surprised that... I mean, I would think that if Jim Kim had stayed for a little bit longer that would have been probably like on the list of to-dos.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Mm-hmm.

LEDDY-CECERE: For him.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. We'll see.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. So have you seen yourself change in tangible ways, if the Dartmouth community has remained, you know, pretty static? But you've seen some sort of like moving forward. Have you changed a lot in your four years?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Oh, yes. Yes. I've changed a whole lot. I mean a lot of me has changed, but a lot of me, I still see the same. I kind of just—I just feel like I have grown up more.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I feel like I entered college just like lost and like unaware of the world. I still kind of feel that way. But I still—I feel more grounded on things I want to accomplish in my life.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: When I came to Dartmouth, I had no idea that I want to pursue entertainment and music. And because of Dartmouth, because of the things I've involved myself with, I've come to an incredible love and kind of an addiction to the arts, to music. So that way, I've definitely changed. Also I entered Dartmouth as like a non-athlete. I wasn't planning on rowing when I came to Dartmouth. I walked on the team, and it's completely changed my life.

LEDDY-CECERE: Really.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: In how I see fitness and how I live, you know.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: So in that way, it's completely changed me as well.

LEDDY-CECERE: So sort of reflecting, your mom was like, I don't want you to come to Dartmouth. Has that changed for her since you started?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I think it was more of a kind—She was kind of joking and kind of being coy. [Laughter] She honestly didn't care where I went to school. She just wanted me to be happy. And I think she's loved... She's loved Dartmouth. I mean, it was one of those things where I think as long as I liked it, as long as I was successful, you know, in her opinion then it's totally fine.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes, yes. I heard some statistic like how something like 90 percent of Dartmouth parents of students are together. Do you ever feel as if like coming from—

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Wow!

LEDDY-CECERE: Isn't that absurd? I couldn't believe it when I heard that.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Makes sense.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. It's interesting. So do you feel like coming from a single-parent home, which appears to be a minority in the Dartmouth community, do you feel like that has sort of affected you in any way or not?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: No. I don't think so. And it's never really affected me because my mom never wanted it to affect me.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: My mom has always been the type of person that would try to give me like male influences.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Because she knew that she couldn't be both the mom and the dad. And also, my father is in my life as well. So I don't think... I think maybe when I was younger, it affected me. It was harder for my mom because just putting... allowing me to do the activities, it was harder for her to take me to different things, because she's only one person.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right, right.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: But no.

LEDDY-CECERE: But in terms of like coming into the community, it doesn't.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: No.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes, yes. Okay. I think we sort of hit all of the main points. Is there anything else that you want to talk about?

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: I've loved my experience here. I think Dartmouth is what you make of it, and I think I've tried to make it as best of an experience as I could.

LEDDY-CECERE: All right. Thank you.

ODOKARA-OKIGBO: Yes. Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]