

Nick Valentini, Class of 2013
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
May 9, 2013

WOMICK: My name is Cally Womick. And I'm here in Collis with Nick Valentini. What is today's date?

VALENTINI: The 9th.

WOMICK: Today is May 9, 2013. So to get us started, why don't you talk about where you grew up.

VALENTINI: So I'm Nick Valentini. I'm a '13. I was born in and have spent my entire life in Georgetown, Massachusetts. It's a mid-size town about 30 to 35 minutes north of Boston. I consider it a nice mix of, you know, suburban and rural. Pretty decent place to grow up. Typical small town, mid-size town.

I do have a lot of family history there. My grandparents moved to the town well before I was born, obviously, and my mother was born there. My grandfather was very involved in like town politics. And my mother spent basically her entire life there, and I have so far as well, minus these four years. But I'll probably return to Georgetown after I graduate—at least for a little while.

WOMICK: So how'd you end up here?

VALENTINI: I almost didn't. I—typical, you know, high school student with a moderately competitive application, applied to like 14, I think, schools.

WOMICK: What?!

VALENTINI: Yeah, 14 schools. Back then it was a little excessive. Apparently now it's normal, which kind of scares me. A lot of the high schoolers are like, "14, 20, 30, why not?" So I applied to like 14 and, you know, some acceptances, some rejections, some waitlists. What it came down to was Dartmouth, Tufts, or the waitlist at Harvard. And I decided to go through the waitlist process and consider Dartmouth and Tufts as well.

I was pretty set on Tufts actually. I'd gone to their version of Dimensions, which now, seeing ours, I can say is exponentially cooler. But I went to their version of Dimensions; I stayed over at Tufts. I wanted to be more towards a city, like this urban area, where I could have all this stuff to do, and like be in this vibrant culture. So I was like, yeah, Tufts.

I was dating someone at the time, and she was a year younger than me. So she started going through college visits, and she asked me to come up to Dartmouth with her, because I'd been up here, and I kinda knew a lot about the school. So I came up here with her. It was really close to the deadline. It was like late April my senior year. And I was walking around Dartmouth and I was explaining stuff to her after the tour. And something just kinda clicked. I was like, I think I should be *here* instead.

So, totally pulled the plug on Tufts. Like, dropped out and like declared to Dartmouth...actually a little bit after the May 1st deadline, so don't tell anyone—we'll wait 'til after I graduate. [Chuckles.] So, yeah. So I came to Dartmouth. I've loved it. You know, there's...it's certainly not like this magical combination of Disneyland and Hogwarts that I keep hearing about. But overall my experience has been awesome, and I'm really glad that I came here.

WOMICK: Yeah. So that was the first time that you'd seen the campus?

VALENTINI: No, that was the third...third time. But I can only remember two of them. So I was told that I came to Dartmouth when I was younger on a trip up to Vermont with my parents, and we were on campus for a while, but I don't remember any of it. And then I came up, obviously, for my college visit and spent some time here. And then I came up here for my girlfriend at the time's college visit as well, so.

I'm fairly comfortable with like New Hampshire. I've been to most parts of the state. Like I know a lot of kind of the surrounding areas. But before actually coming here for orientation I'd never spent a lot of time in Hanover. Yeah.

WOMICK: So the first time you really spent a lot of time here was during orientation?

VALENTINI: Yes. Yeah. [Chuckles.] So Trips—I did Trips. Canoeing, up in the Grant. It was awesome. Had a great time with that. And then, since

I was one of the local kids, they were like, "Get out. Come back later." So, went home for a couple of days and like twiddled my thumbs. It was like, "I wanna go back, I wanna go back, I wanna go back." And then came up for orientation, and that was my first time here for a while. Yeah.

Didn't take a lot of getting used to. I was a little worried. I think kind of the stereotype of Dartmouth for a high schooler is it's in the middle of nowhere. It kind of is; it's not that bad. But I was a little worried about that. But as soon as I got here, I realized like there's so much to do on campus and so many things to involve yourself with that it's really not a problem. You don't have like Newbury Street, in Boston, with everything going on. But I've never been bored here. I've always found ways to keep myself entertained. And I've never felt like there was a lack of opportunity here.

WOMICK: Mhmm. So where were you living?

VALENTINI: Freshman year?

WOMICK: Freshman year, yeah.

VALENTINI: Oh, see, this is.... I'm glad we're recording this, 'cause people need to know about this in future generations.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: I lived in Butterfield, which is actually a dorm. It's connected to Russell Sage, via the Hyphen. It does exist, I promise. It was actually taken out of commission, I guess, as a freshman dorm the year after. So now it's like transfer students or something. But, great, great place. It was like pretty close to all the things on campus. It was, you know, mid-range. It's not as good as Fahey-McLane or McLaughlin, but decent dorms.

And I was in a single. But it was like a 14-person floor, and everyone was in singles except for two rooms which were two-rooms doubles. So everyone was like super close. We'd always keep our doors open like, you know, wander in and out, talk to people, hang out. Had a great time. I'm still really close with a lot of my freshman floor mates. And I think it was just kind of because of the structure of that dorm, you know, smaller, that we built a really nice community out of like that floor and also like the floor above us.

You know we were really close with them. Russell Sage 1, you know, would kinda migrate around.

But, yeah, I was in Butterfield. So that was the place.

WOMICK: [Laughs.] So were a lot of the first friends that you made here on your floor?

VALENTINI: Tripees first.

WOMICK: Tripees first.

VALENTINI: And I'm not as close with them anymore. I'll still, you know, I'll say "hi," and we'll chat. But, yeah, tripees were definitely the first friend group. And then I think I transitioned out of that a lot quicker than—I did—than some other people did. I know a lot of freshmen were like very close with their tripee group more than their freshman floor group. And I pretty much instantly connected with my freshman floor and started hanging out with them almost exclusively. I think the UGA at the time, Marissa, had a really good impact on that. She was an awesome UGA. Back before they were like cops, RA's, whatever they are now. But yeah, she was an awesome UGA. And she really had a—like, played a big part in making sure we all bonded. So, yeah. Freshman floor groups.

WOMICK: Yeah. So how did the rest of the freshman year go?

VALENTINI: It was, um, overall great. I think it was still one of my best years at Dartmouth. There were certainly problems with adjusting to college life. I think one of the first kind of stumbling blocks was like comparing myself to other people a lot, especially because, you know, I came from a smaller public high school. My graduating class was 97 people. So it was a big difference coming here and, you know, competing with people who were like, "Oh, I just finished my 12th AP class." We had like five AP classes total. And I think I was the first person to go to an Ivy League school from my school in like 10 or 12 years. So, I really wasn't used to kind of like that academic caliber. It was definitely a step up here. So both in like my peers and in classes I felt like I had a bit of catching up to do. But I managed it well.

And, you know, there were—social was great. One of my trip leaders, who I still really look up to today, Teddy Sinsheimer, he's a '10. And so he was my trip leader, and he was also a Tri-Kap. Tri-

Kap was one of the first places I like hung out socially as far as Greek life, and loved it, and then ended up rushing there. [Chuckles.] So, you know, I spent a lot of time there. Obviously, like exploring like different fraternities. You know, freshman dorm parties, Collis parties. I like totally—I actually just remembered that they used to have like Collis, like, first-floor dance parties. I haven't—I don't know if those still exist. I haven't really like seen them lately. But those used to be pretty cool.

WOMICK: I don't think they have been. Yeah, it's been a few years.

VALENTINI: Yeah. So, you know, typical freshman stuff. I tried not to be in too big of a schmob, but it happened, you know.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: But, yeah, I feel I had like great social connections with my freshman floormates. It used to be you can meet everybody, you're like, "Hey, what's up?" You know, you could talk to anyone. And I kind of regret that you lose that over time at Dartmouth, that like you don't have that just blind eagerness to like go up and talk to someone completely new.

But, yeah, there were certainly a few challenges. I got really involved in EMS. I was kind of involved in it before college with my fire department as a first responder, but I really got involved in it here. So kind of balancing that and the stresses of kind of that job, and...you know. But that was also great. That was another one of my primary friend groups freshman year, was like the EMS crowd.

Yeah, there was, you know, a little bit of academic challenge, social conflicts every once in a while. I don't feel like it was anything too major. Just, you know, adjusting to college life. My parents called a lot; they still call a lot. I don't mind. But, yeah.

WOMICK: Was it tough being away from home?

VALENTINI: I thought it would be. It wasn't. And I was very proud of that. I actually think that in terms of like being prepared to live on my own, I was pretty far ahead of the curve, especially when I compare myself to some of the people that I lived with freshman year who would ask me like how to do laundry or.... One especially vivid moment was one of the girls on my floor asking if the pan that she was about to take out of the oven would be hot. So—

WOMICK: [Sharp exhale.]

VALENTINI: —kind of the common sense life skills: How to manage your finances. How to do laundry. How to, you know, email someone professionally. Or, you know, how to not sleep 23 hours a day and then, you know, totally ignore all your work. I feel like I've managed that very well.

I wasn't really homesick. Like, I think maybe if I'd been in California or someplace like completely like different, I might have felt a little more separated from home. But same general region, same seasons, you know, same general like atmosphere, New England atmosphere, which I'm extremely proud of. Obviously the best region in the US.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: Yeah, I felt pretty prepared to come here.

WOMICK: 'Kay. So you would say that freshman year went well, overall?

VALENTINI: Yeah, freshman year went well overall. No major instances. There was one situation where I had to get Safety & Security involved, before I really knew them; and it was just a drunk conflict for people upstairs, you know, doin' some damage to the hall. But nothin' too bad.

WOMICK: Yeah.

VALENTINI: Yeah.

WOMICK: And so what did you do that following summer?

VALENTINI: That's an excellent question. What did I do? Oh, I went back to the aquarium. So, in high school I was total volunteer nerd. So everyone who comes here is like, "Yeah, I volunteered." No. Like, I volunteered. Like, emphasis. To like, to an unhealthy extent. So my senior year I was actually awarded like one of the top ten volunteers, youth volunteers, in Mass. So I did a lot of it and I loved it. One of the key things I did was I was a volunteer at the New England Aquarium in Boston, 'cause back then I thought I was gonna be a marine bio nerd. Still kind of am. Fish, water, oceans, all that good stuff.

So I went back to the aquarium and I interned—paid position—with them for the summer. I was in the wet lab, which is Northern New England tropical area—not tropical area, the fish. And a couple other, you know, subspecies that are also common to the area. Managing exhibits and, you know, going home on the train every day smelling like fish.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: It was great, 'cause you got like the whole compartment to yourself.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

VALENTINI: But, it was awesome. That's what I did.

WOMICK: That's terrific.

VALENTINI: Yeah.

WOMICK: Did you come back that following fall?

VALENTINI: Yes, yeah. So I was on for fall and then winter, but I was off in the spring for an FSP. But, yeah, so the fall was rush, fraternity rush. And I had my heart pretty much set on Tri-Kap. Got a bid. Went through the rush process. It sucked. It, you know—honestly, like, I know the whole like Greek system controversy on campus right now is a big thing, and I agree that there are some concerns. But I also think that we're like light years ahead of where we were two years ago. And definitely light years ahead of where we were like ten years ago; from talking to alums about some of the stuff that we did on campus at that point.

So, yeah, it was rough. I wouldn't say I suffered, 'cause I had fun with a lot of it. I met my—you know, my pledge class was, I think, one of the strongest classes in Tri-Kap in recent memory and I'm excellent friends with every '13 Tri-Kap brother. I love that. I love that social connection, and I love, you know, kind of having this place at Dartmouth where I can come back to, you know, 10, 20, 50 years later and still kind of call it like mine.

But, yeah, there were certainly tough points. There's, you know, there's drinking, there's hazing, there's—you know all that stuff. And, yeah, it was just, I guess, something that I dealt with and kind

of moved on to better things. I was still involved in other things, you know, during fall term. I was taking classes. Didn't suffer as much as I thought, in like academic work. I actually did pretty well that term, which is weird, 'cause [chuckles]... yeah.... I don't know why. But, yeah, did pretty well that term.

And—yeah, that was—I mean rush was really—it's a time commitment, it's a big time investment. So that was really what I was doing—pledge term, rather—for all of the fall.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm. What was that like? I don't know; is there anything that you can talk about?

VALENTINI: Yeah. Well, yeah. I mean obviously like.... It's—I wouldn't—Let me think about this. Like, the stuff that Andrew Lohse published is just false. Like, people who think that hazing here consists of like throwing pledges into a kiddie pool filled with vomit are just not correct 'cause it—that does not actually happen.

I would say like the tough part of pledge term is really the time commitment. It is—it's a drain on you. It's not necessarily like what you're doing, it's just the frequency of having to be at the house or be involved in events, be that social events or drinking events or brotherhood events or philanthropy events. There's always something that you can be doing. And while on one hand it's very draining, it's also very rewarding because, you know, I found myself being exposed to new people on this campus that I never would have met before. You know, from sororities or from other houses that would come over and socialize. Or to new events, like, you know, we did a lot of philanthropy with the blood drive that term. And I had never really considered donating blood or like being involved with that and I became a blood donor after that.

So, I'm not like—it's not all bad. There are parts that need to be reformed, and I think a lot of fraternities, Tri-Kap especially, have taken some actual steps to moderate that, especially evidenced by this past pledge term. We still have some work to do. But even two years ago—like, it's not violent, physical hazing that I think a lot of people like think happens on like a nightly basis. We're people. Like, the frat bro is not like some animal; like, we're people, too. We have other interests, other social lives, other connections outside of our fraternity. And the people that are pledging are eventually gonna be our brothers and are gonna be like some of our strongest friends on campus. So it's not like we're trying to harm them or

alienate them or scar them. Like, that would be counterproductive to what we're eventually trying to like incorporate them into.

So... I don't know. I could go on for hours about all of the Dartmouth problems and my perceptions on them. But I don't think that we have that much time. [Laughter]

WOMICK: We can move on. What did you do—I guess, you were on for sophomore summer?

VALENTINI: Yes.

WOMICK: Yes? How was that?

VALENTINI: Yeah. So I was on. Sophomore fall I was on, sophomore winter I was on. Sophomore spring I was Government FSP in DC, which was awesome. And then I came back for the summer. So sophomore summer was—still is—one of my favorite terms at Dartmouth. Barring one incident, it was my best term at Dartmouth. It was great. Less people around. You know, the class really comes together again. It felt almost like orientation 'cause, you know, it's like this fresh start, where you have, I don't want to say an excuse, but like an excuse to just go out and meet new people and hang out, is the term I like to use. I mean, we did.

I inherited a sophomore summer guide from the older people in Tri-Kap that was like a bunch of different things you could do. Anywhere from, you know, "swimming at the Ledges," to like, "renting a bus and going into Boston for a weekend." And, "here's a list of cool things you could consider." So like I really tried to like incorporate a lot of those into the summer. And it was great. Yeah, I studied occasionally. But I really like just kind of—being here at Dartmouth, with less of an academic burden—I was only taking two classes—and really kind of...relishing those opportunities to just spend time in a relaxed environment with friends.

Especially like, the Tri-Kap '13s like, one group of—you know, this was our time to really have the house to ourselves and to, you know, kind of shape the brotherhood how we want to. Like, the EMS '13s, like, you know, this was our time to shape the organization how we wanted to. I was director of EMS that summer, and we did a lot of kind of like planning as to the future of the organization. We're still working on some of that stuff.

The one incident I mentioned was unfortunately with a friend who was sexually assaulted. And...very unfortunate for her just kind of the way that it ended up playing out. She developed a lot of psych issues and ultimately had to withdraw from Dartmouth. But, being an EMS responder and being someone who I consider to be very connected to a lot of resources at Dartmouth, I spent a lot of time trying to help her through it. It was my first real experience with kind of like that responder-patient bond that turns unhealthy. 'Cause I spent hours and hours per day on it. It was dragging me down mentally, physically, and emotionally. And at a certain point I just kinda had to step back and say, you know, "I've done all I can do for you, and I still want to help you. But it's just killing me, and I can't." So that was kind of the negative point of the summer.

But in the grand scale of things it was—it was a cool term. I would stay for one more sophomore summer, if given the opportunity.

WOMICK: And so did you take another term after that?

VALENTINI: Wow, I feel so old. Fall term, junior fall, I was off. So I did a road trip down to Florida with my parents. So all along the way, stopping at pretty much every state we could, every, you know, city that we found interesting. And then back along a slightly different route. But we hit every city on the eastern coast south of Massachusetts. Not every city, every state. Most of the major cities. You know, we'd stay for two or three nights, take in the sights, and get back on the road. And it was great. Like, I love road trips. I love traveling around. I love seeing new places. And my mom and my stepdad especially hadn't really ever had the opportunity to do that. So it was a cool trip. My grandmother came along as well; my dog came along as well.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: Really, just picture this really big SUV filled with luggage and people and dog, my dog.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: Who had by far the most space. I offered to drive basically the entire road trip, kind of selfishly because the driver's seat was the second most spacious seat in the car besides the dog's seat. So I drove, and, yeah.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.] That sounds wonderful.

VALENTINI: It was awesome, yeah. That was about a month and a half of fall term. So that was like all of October and like halfway through— rather, all of September and halfway through October.

And then I came back to Georgetown, and I got more involved with the fire department. So I was working with the fire department; I got trained as a firefighter. And I still work there to this day. It's something I really love doing, firefighter, EMT. It's given me some great life experience. Some great like practical, hands-on skills. Ultimately I shifted the course of what I want to do in my life, but I guess we can talk about that later.

WOMICK: So, did you come back winter term?

VALENTINI: Yep. Winter term I came back. Gosh, junior winter. What'd I do? I guess junior winter and junior spring don't really stick out with me that much. I'm feeling like junior year for me, it was kind of anonymous in my grand scheme of like my Dartmouth experience. 'Cause a lot of people were off, and I didn't feel like I did anything like really impactful except for like towards the tail end of junior spring.

But, yeah, I mean I stepped into a bigger leadership role in EMS. I continued like, you know, my relationships in Tri-Kap. You know, hangin' out with the guys; developing the house as best we could. And really like the one major thing I think I did was like switch my major. It's pretty late in the game, I think, to switch a major.

WOMICK: Yeah, junior winter.

VALENTINI: Junior spring.

WOMICK: Junior spring.

VALENTINI: Even worse.

WOMICK: That's pretty late.

VALENTINI: Yeah. So, I was a biology and government double major. And I liked biology, but I, at the time, didn't really like the heavy science focus; I wanted something a little broader. Because I'd switched really from marine biology, as I mentioned earlier, to more of like an

environmental policy, broader look at things. So I was environmental studies and government...—uh, biology and government—and I switched to ENV5 and government. Which wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. Most of the bio courses I'd already taken counted.

And then I attempted to add in a minor in rhetoric. I'd taken a lot of speech courses here. Speech 20 with Professor Compton, was by far like the best could I've taken at Dartmouth. And it really got me interested in that. Unfortunately, I couldn't fit in the five courses that were required for the independent study minor. I just have four. But I still think it's a big part of like my academic experience. And I've definitely gotten better at communicating my ideas, and speaking and interacting with others. And I really like that I've been able to do that.

So, yeah. Change of major. Not—nothing—I don't consider it earth-shattering. I didn't go from, like, hard-core sciences to like art. But kind of a small shift.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm. Did you notice that changing the people you were spending a lot of time with any, or...?

VALENTINI: Not really. I never...oh, this could be bad to say. My apologies to any administrators who listen to this. I've never really heavily prioritized academics at Dartmouth. I've always found Dartmouth to be a place where I will look to invest my time in something else first. EMS has been a big one. Anyone who knows kind of what I've done for the organization will say that I've given up a lot of time for it and sacrificed a lot for it. But I'm extremely proud of like the developments that I've made with the group. But, yeah, it's come at the expense of academics. And I will routinely kind of put academics kind of like second or third on the priority list.

I'm not entirely sure why. It's not that I don't like learning. It's not that I don't like classes. I took a lot of engaging classes here, and I've also taken some horrible classes here. But, yeah, I've just always kind of had other priorities.

But, yeah, so to your question: I've never really had a friend group or peer group based on my majors. Certainly people that I knew and that I took classes with repeatedly and that I felt comfortable talking to and interacting with. But I never really considered them

like friends, just more of like general acquaintances. So, yeah, I don't think it really changed that much.

WOMICK: Alright. So moving from junior to senior year: You were off that summer, right?

VALENTINI: Yes. One of my favorite summers I've ever had. I wanted to do something borderline stupid, life-altering, and amazing. So, I really wanted to travel. I'd been "out of the country," quote-unquote, before, but like to Canada and Bermuda, so not really. So I wanted to go abroad. I didn't necessarily want to go with a Dartmouth program. I just wanted to kind of go out on my own and see like how I would do.

So I was looking at options and this idea was kind of in the back of my mind that I always wanted to go do something with Great White Sharks. So I completely, randomly found a program that the biology department sent out to a listserv that was like, "We don't really know what this program is. But they sent it to us: here's some information. We don't know of anyone who's gone on it before, but feel free to take a look if you want."

And it was an internship for a month and a half in South Africa working with a Great White Shark cage diving company. So you do like half like eco-tourism and like interaction with the public and like you cage dive. You kind of support... The business kind of side then supports the research side of it. So you're also doing a lot of Great White Shark research. I was like, Wow. That's awesome. 'Plied to it, got accepted, and spent half of July and all of August in South Africa; with two brief stopovers in London which were also really cool.

But South Africa was great. I was living in a flat with different people from all over the world. We had UK, couple Americans, Australia, South Africa... What am I missing? Canada. Sorry, I forget Canada. [Laughter.] But yeah, bunch of different people like kind of my age, you know plus/minus one or two years. And we were all interning for the same program. And it was great.

My mom was freaking out because I kind of decided that that month and a half would be where I just checked off a couple of life goals in the crazy slash borderline stupid department.

WOMICK: Uh-huh.

VALENTINI: So that included (1) cage diving with the sharks; (2) free diving with sharks, so no cage. That was awesome. I told my mom about that one after I was back in the boat. And then bungee jumping and skydiving. Just kind of had to get it all, all out of my system.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

VALENTINI: It was great. And people always ask me which one was the coolest. Biggest adrenaline rush was bungee jumping, not skydiving, ironically. I don't know why. But bungee jumping was just like a huge rush. And it was off like the tallest or second tallest commercial bungee jump in the world, Bloukrans Bridge in South Africa. It was just amazing.

But then like I think the coolest experience of that was like the free diving, 'cause it's just you and like...big shark. Yeah, wasn't dangerous...might have been dangerous. Lot of—there's a lot of liability forms—

WOMICK: Yeah, I can imagine.

VALENTINI: —involved with that. But, yeah, that was great. When I came back, my mom said that I appeared well rested, energized, and more mature and aware of the world. I still haven't fully processed what she meant by that. But it definitely changed me in some small way. I definitely came back more relaxed.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

VALENTINI: Which some people just look at me like, What are you, crazy? You were diving with *sharks*. How does that *relax* you? I don't know, it's like the same way that being in the back of an ambulance relaxes me. They just—maybe I'm weird.

But, yeah. So that was one of my greatest Dartmouth experiences not connected directly to Dartmouth. Ironically, I found out that a '14 did the same internship like during the fall, so my senior fall; so she was there I think like a week after I left. And it was like the first time that a Dartmouth student had done that. So, yeah, I talked to her and we both had great experiences.

WOMICK: Yeah. Maybe settin' a precedent.

VALENTINI: Settin' a prec—yeah. If more people wanna do that, then: White Shark Africa, Mossel Bay. We'll put it on the record.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: Look 'em up. Go intern.

WOMICK: Right. So then senior year.

VALENTINI: Senior year. Senior year's been great. It's not like...let me be really cliché like, you know, "YOLO, senior year, hashtag #seniorspring," all that stuff. It's not like that. I've definitely tried to like do a couple of things that I've never done before. Friday I scheduled some time to go to the greenhouse. Never been to the greenhouses; I don't know why. [Like,] I wanna go walk around. I think that's cool. But senior year's been great.

So, finishing up my major; finished gov last term, finishing up ENVS this term. My biggest involvement by far is directing EMS. And I think it's been a great culmination of like four years in the program. We've definitely expanded kind of our reach on campus. We've dealt with some of like PR issues that we've been experiencing...because we tend to get wrapped into the whole like alcohol debate, 'cause obviously we're very heavily involved with responding to alcohol incidents.

But people were very afraid of us and very hesitant to use us as a resource because they thought, "Oh, you know, you guys are like the cops." And it's the exact opposite. We're not at all like the cops. We're really just there to look out for like student health and safety. And I think we changed that perception a lot. Grown the organization. Become a little more professional. Like a lot of different kind of very operation-oriented things that're all [chuckles] basically getting done within the next week or two. So I'm really happy about that.

Outside of that, you know, Tri-Kap. We're going through leadership change, so obviously—our leadership structure is spring, summer, winter—fall, winter—and then you change. So, like the '14s are leading the house now. So there's a lot of transition related to that. Kind of, you know, making sure they know the traditions and kind of how they want to guide the house you know in the next year. Hopefully we're getting renovations, knock on wood [knocks on wood]; 'cause if you've been in our house recently, it's...yeah.

WOMICK: Could use some help.

VALENTINI: Yeah. If you're a Tri-Kap alum and you're reading this within the next couple months, please consider donating to the Kappa Capital Campaign.

WOMICK: [Laughs]

VALENTINI: 'Cause, yeah, we need a new house, 'cause it's not safe. So please. [Laughter.] Yeah, I had to. [Chuckles.]

Yeah, I think I initially wasn't ready to leave Dartmouth. I applied to Presidential Fellowship to work in the president's office and the dean's office. And I wanted to stay here for another year. I wanted like that transition year because I've been looking at jobs for environmental policy, and I got a few offers, but I wasn't really excited about it. So I guess I kind of wanted to go into like a holding pattern because, understandably, like the next step just really scared me. 'Cause for a while I was thinking like, Alright, this is it. Now I gotta buckle down, find the same job that I'm gonna do for the rest of my life. Get married, 2.5 kids, white picket fence, dog, minivan, all that stereotype kind of idealized American Dream type stuff. Yeaah. It doesn't help that my grandmother asks me if I'm gonna get married every time I go home.

WOMICK: Yeaah.

VALENTINI: So, I was thinking that for a while and I realized that I have a lot of time still. So I started kind of reflecting on what I actually wanted to do after I graduate. And that led to another career change. I had—I've never been premed. Not really a hard science guy, or wasn't. It's not that I didn't like do well in it, it's just that it never really appealed to me. I've really kind of liked the broader mix of humanities and science. So, like, ENVS and gov. But, I am now premed. Let me just get that out there. [Chuckles.] I'm premed, woo!

I switched four weeks into senior winter. I decided that that is something I want to pursue. I want to go to medical school. And I want to do emergency medicine. And that idea popped into my head one day. I was meeting with the EMS medical director at DHMC and he was talking to me—he's a Dartmouth '01—he was talkin' to me, and just something he said just [snaps] flipped like a

switch in my head. And I was like, *this* is what I want to do. And it was the first.... I sat on it for a couple days. I didn't tell anyone. I had a mini-life crisis. I went and talked to Kristi Clemens in the dean's office for a couple minutes. But I sat on it for a couple days. It was the first idea that I've had in all my life that I've been passionate about and felt excited about. So like I didn't really... I was like, Yeah, I can do an ENVS job. But I'm not *really* happy about doing that. I felt like I needed to do something else. But emergency medicine, yes. That is what I want to do.

So now I'm in the process of working towards that goal. I have a couple science classes. But I need, you know, orgo, physics, biochem, all that fun stuff. So I'm applying to a postbac program at Tufts. Tufts, hopefully. Harvard Extension, maybe. A couple of other options. We'll see where I end up. But, yeah, postbac to finish up the premed requirements and med school.

It's—it's scary. I think all my involvement in EMS has certainly contributed to that, 'cause I've been pretty involved in that general emergency care community over the past four years. But it's still scary. I mean, it's a big investment. Financially it's huge. Like, time it's huge. There are sacrifices that you make—you know, it's basically the next ten years of your life between med school and residency and fellowship and kind of settling down and all that stuff. And, you know, I have other goals in life. I've thought about like kind of how I want to like have a family and really be there to support them, and like really be involved in like raising kids when I eventually have them. And I'm kind of worried about how that will fit in with med school, if they're compatible. 'Cause I've certainly heard horror stories about, you know, being like 35 and \$250,000 in debt. With like, you know, an entry-level job as a resident—or as, not a resident, but an entry-level doctor.

WOMICK: Yeah.

VALENTINI: Yeah. So I don't know. We'll see. I still have time to change again. I'm actually totally okay with that concept of kind of being up in the air. So we'll see where it goes. Maybe by the five-year reunion I'll have it down. I'll have a better answer for you.

WOMICK: [Laughs.] So looking ahead past graduation, what do you see your involvement with Dartmouth being?

VALENTINI: I would like to stay involved. In the short term, meaning like the next one or two years, I'll probably still be very involved with Dartmouth EMS, just in like an advisory capacity. Tends to be a trend with the directors; they stay around and connected for a couple of years just to help out.

As long as, you know, the Tri-Kap '15s, at minimum, are still here, you know, there's gonna be people that I know there. And I think I'll definitely come back and be involved in the house, especially on big weekends.

I think I'll always be connected to Dartmouth. I can definitely picture myself like coming back here frequently. I like it here. Like I said earlier, there are certainly problems, but I've always felt at least mostly comfortable and mostly accepted at Dartmouth. And I want to continue that. I think that Dartmouth does a really good job, probably better than other schools, at fostering that kind of lifetime connection.

WOMICK: How do you think that happens?

VALENTINI: Hoh, wow! I guess it plays into that whole Hogwarts Disneyland thing that I keep hearing about. We're definitely not that idealized place, but there's some aspect of Dartmouth that to me is like that. People just kind of feel like this place is special. 'Cause I mean, at purely face value, this is just a college. But there's something else here, whether it be the people, who are, I think, are certainly more friendly and open than students at other colleges; or like the setting, kind of how we're isolated in this little community that we make our own. I think there's just some aspect of Dartmouth that fosters that like lifetime connection.

WOMICK: Mhmm. Yeah.

So during your four years here, you've been involved a lot, and you've seen a lot going on. How do you think the college has changed?

VALENTINI: I think the college has changed for the worse, to be honest. I really think the trends over the past couple years have not been positive. And I really haven't been happy with a lot of the things that I've been seeing. I think that President Kim took us in the wrong direction. I understand what he was tryin' to do, you know, give us some more global reach and further kind of our graduate programs.

But I think he did a lot of ignoring the undergraduates and the real purpose of Dartmouth, which is strongly an undergraduate institution. And I think that catalyzed a lot of the problems that we're dealing with right now.

I think President Folt kind of did the same thing, she— Interim President Folt. Fix that. Interim President Folt. She just kind of put us in a holding pattern until Phil Hanlon comes in. And honestly I'm very hopeful for President Hanlon. I think he's gonna take us in the right direction.

But I also think that it's stupid to just consider the leadership. Because, yes, they are leadership; they're figureheads of the college, and they have a strong ability to kind of shape the direction of this institution. But it also has a lot to do with the students. And I think there's a lot of student-level issues that people are unwilling to admit that they have. I actually just gave a speech about this today. It was my topic for Speech 30. Second best class I've ever taken here. Speech 20 is still a little, little better. Both with Professor Compton. So, if you're reading this, take a class with Professor Compton. He's cool.

Yeah. So, students...I mean...the kind of punch line of my speech today was "Dartmouth does not have a problem. You have a problem, I have a problem. It's our problem." And I think a lot of people don't recognize that. I think a lot of people will say, you know, Dartmouth does not automatically have to be a community. There is *no* Dartmouth community. We're not obligated to support each other. And that's just blatantly false. Because we are here together in the same place for a minimum of four years. We're living together, we're interacting with each other. And like it or not, your actions affect the people around you. So you do have a responsibility to uphold a safe and positive community.

And I think a lot of people don't wanna realize that, that even if they consider it joking, or they consider it normal behavior, they consider it, you know, tradition, it's hurtful. And whether that be hazing or discrimination or sexual assault or even binge drinking, people just kind of need to realize that we have a problem, and people need to work towards solutions. I think a lot of Dartmouth will reflexively stomp their feet and say, "Lest the old traditions fail!" And that's not necessarily the best approach. For some things it is. Like Tubestock, which I've been thinking about a lot lately 'cause the weather is great. Like, that's a tradition that we could very well

stomp our feet for because that would just be awesome. I would love to do that. But, you know, fraternity hazing rituals: recognize that they're harmful, and let's moderate them a lot.

Gosh, I mean there are so many—I think another one of the problems is we've done such a good job of like putting these issues out there, that we've kind of oversaturated people. 'Cause I mean I've been hearing the buzzwords "binge drinking," "sexual assault," and "hazing" strung together in the same sentence for about two years. And at a certain point I just kind of stop listening. It's not that I don't consider them problems. It's just you hear about them so much that they automatically just kind of lose this priority.

But I think, you know, I think we're taking small steps towards it. I think that high-risk drinking has moderated at Dartmouth. I mean, I was talking to an alum who was up last week, a Tri-Kap '02, and he would routinely say that people would be passed out on the front lawns at Webster Avenue. And no one would bother them. You know, sometimes if they were in real danger, Safety & Security would bring them to the hospital, which was in the Dewey Field parking lot at the time. But for the most part they were just kind of left alone. And you don't see that anymore.

I mean, I've had a lot of experience with Good Sams and alcohol policy and kind of how it's affected the student drinking culture here, and I think that overall drinking at Dartmouth is pretty safe. What I think the problem is, is people—not people—is there are certain parts of the administration that view alcohol as a problem to be addressed through punishment rather than true harm reduction. I think the only way you're really gonna get an open dialog and productive conversation and progression towards a solution of high-risk drinking is if you eliminate the punishments for it. **

I think the College should be more aggressive towards Hanover police. I don't think there's any reason that the police need to be citing people for underage drinking. I think they should selectively prosecute that, and by selectively I mean not at all. Because when people hesitate to call for medical help for someone who truly needs it because they're worried about a Diversion charge or worried about getting arrested, that's a problem. When people worry about calling Safety and Security because they maybe can't afford a night at Dick's House or they're worried about what Judicial Affairs is going to say to them the next morning, that's a problem.

I think really the only way to address it is you need to eliminate any barrier at this College to a student picking up the phone and saying, “I need help,” “for myself” or “for a friend” or “for a stranger.” And until you eliminate those, there’s gonna be problems. So, that’s one of ‘em. I mean, there’s many more, but, yeah, again, time constraints.

WOMICK: Yeah. So, sort of the same question: past four years, only, how do you think you’ve changed in your time here?

VALENTINI: [Sighs.] I thought about that yesterday. Was actually inspired by a fellow DOSC [Dean’s Office Student Consultant] who encouraged all of us to reflect a little. So, I was thinking about socially: I think I’ve become more social. I was the awkward kid in high school, I really was. And maybe didn’t want to admit at the time, but like—it wasn’t like I was like evil or like excessively nerdy or anything. I just kind of, I don’t know, I wouldn’t consider myself a social butterfly. Think that’s gotten a lot better.

I think I’ve definitely become a better leader. I was a leader—“leader”—in high school (with quotes). I think I really learned a lot about how to lead and how to manage and how to incorporate diverse perspectives. At Dartmouth, I think my leadership strength has grown a lot. And I think I’ve also become more aware. When I came to Dartmouth, I was coming from Georgetown, Mass, which is, per census data, 98.6 percent white. So not a lotta diverse perspectives. Pretty much the biggest difference we had was whether you were a moderate Democrat or a moderate Republican. There wasn’t much of a difference between those guys, either.

So...yeah. I mean, I was exposed to a lot of different cultures and ideologies and race at Dartmouth. And I wanted that. I wanted that experience, ‘cause I mean, I’ll go back and talk to people from Georgetown who are just ignorant, just blatantly ignorant about the world and about stereotypes of different people, people who are different than themselves. And I hate that. I think that there’s no excuse for that. So I’m really glad that I was able to be exposed to that at Dartmouth. And I think I’ve done a fairly good job of really trying to learn other people’s points of view and understand where they’re coming from.

Yeah, I mean, other changes? I drink. I mean that’s a very superficial change. But, yeah, I used to not drink, and I drink now—to excess occasionally. Very moderated and very safe mostly, and

socially a lot. So, I don't know. I think that's another thing that I've seen is that distinction of like you're a drinker versus you're a non-drinker. And it's really not that black and white. There's a lot of room in between the two.

Changes...changes? Clothing style's actually probably got a little bit better.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

VALENTINI: I always considered myself to be very classic. Meaning...safe, the way I dress. Jeans and a sweatshirt is great. In the summer, shorts and a T-shirt. Pretty much—that was pretty much my wardrobe. So, I think I've gotten maybe a little more mature in how I dress. You can thank my mom [chuckles] for that one.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: She kind of suggested that I maybe...class it up a bit more. So...yeah. I think that's it.

WOMICK: You mentioned, earlier, when you were talking about the Dartmouth community and how we're responsible for one another; I'm curious, who do you consider part of the Dartmouth community?

VALENTINI: Hoh-kay, that's....

WOMICK: If there is such a thing as the quote "Dartmouth—

VALENTINI: There is. There is a Dartmouth community. I will be very adamant about that. Because like I said, whether or not you're going to admit it, if your actions affect someone else, you and that person—or group of people—are involved in a community. I have a very loose definition of community.

So, Dartmouth community. There's different circles. So the big circle is everyone: Hanover residents to, you know, 70-, 80-, 90-year-old alums, all-inclusive in the middle. I think the core of the Dartmouth community is obviously students, faculty, and staff. I'm sorry, what was your question again?

WOMICK: Who makes up the Dartmouth community?

VALENTINI: Oh, right. Hey, I answered it already.

WOMICK: You just got it.

VALENTINI: Yeah, I think there's levels. I mean, in terms of like micro-level, day-to-day changes and day-to-day impacts, students, faculty, and staff.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

VALENTINI: And those groups at different times, especially now, can be very distanced from one another. I think a large part of the faculty has no idea what the students are thinking. And I think the administration, especially right now, has no idea what the students want, except maybe that we're frustrated. But on the other hand, I think a lot of students don't understand what the faculty and the administration are trying to do.

I think I've been fortunate to see a little bit of both sides, especially being involved kind of on a higher level with harm reduction and emergency planning and stuff like that at the College. I've seen that the administration recognizes the problems that we present to them, more so than the students may think. It's just kind of, given the nature of the College, is a little slower response. And I'm not—it's not the best thing. Kind of an inefficient bureaucracy at times, but they're workin' on it, I guess, is the simple way to sum it up.

So, yeah, separated at times, but I mean my definition of the Dartmouth community: students, faculty, staff, alums, Hanover residents, you know. Pretty much all-inclusive. People who are impacted by Dartmouth.

WOMICK: Mhmm. Do you think there are any people who fit in better here in the place?

VALENTINI: Oh, certainly! I think there's people that.... [Sighs.] One end of the spectrum is the person who will go through four years of Dartmouth thinking that this is Disneyland and Hogwarts combined. I've really used that quote too many times in this thing.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: But there are people who will do that. "Dartmouth has no problems. This place is great. I'm in the Dartmouth Bubble. I can do whatever I want. Period." And then there's the person who will definitely go through Dartmouth miserable and marginalized and hating this

place. And I think...I don't think that either of them are invalid experiences. I think it's possible to have either or. And I think one of the problems is people don't recognize that that happens. But I think most people are somewhere in the middle on the spectrum. Moderation is a concept that I think a lot of people should consider right now. Moderation is key. So... Dartmouth community experience was the question? I keep getting sidetracked.
[Laughter.]

WOMICK: What sort of people would you say have an easier time here, and maybe which ones have a tougher time? Just in your opinion.

VALENTINI: Humm...Okay. Easier time is people that recognize problems, think of solutions or at least know the next step that they need to take. Harder time is people who (1) either don't recognize they have the problem or don't recognize they're causing a problem; or sit and complain about the problem and don't do anything about it.

I've t—obviously I'm a Dean's Office Student Consultant. Dean Buckley's gonna be really mad that I haven't mentioned that before now.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

VALENTINI: Sorry, Dean Buckley.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

VALENTINI: I'm still gonna take you up on that pong game after I graduate.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

VALENTINI: So...yeah. So I've counseled a lot of people who will be so stuck on, "I have a problem. I have a problem. This is miserable. My life is over. I can't do this anymore." Without realizing that there are a lot of resources out there to help them. And it's either a problem with people not realizing that the resources are there, or the resources not making themselves well known.

But, yes, I don't think that, you know...one of the Dartmouth stereotypes that's come up a lot lately is the stereotypical upper-middle-class or upper-class white male. And I don't think if you come in here as an upper-middle-class to upper-class white male

you are automatically gonna have the best time at Dartmouth. I just don't think that's gonna happen. It's really an individual thing. Yeah.

WOMICK: That's good. Are there any things we haven't talked about yet or that I haven't asked you that you'd like to talk about?

VALENTINI: So this is an oral history project. And one of the things that I'm always very interested to see is change over time, institutional change over time. Or change in perception over time. And I hope that anyone who reads this or uses this, can put it in context. 'Cause I think a lot of the things that we go through at Dartmouth are cyclical.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

VALENTINI: Like, either have been addressed in the past or, you know, have come up in the past. Not so much that just history blatantly repeats itself. But certain aspects certainly will. So I think it's actually really important to kind of get these things down in some form to reference later on. Or at least, at pure face value, that the '13's were here, and we're the best class ever.

WOMICK: [Laughs.] For the record.

VALENTINI: For the record. It's on the record.

I... Ah! I did have something. So a lot of what I've been hearing lately from people is, you know, "If you were a parent, would you send your son or daughter here?" You know, "If you were a prospective student, would you come here?" That's been really something that's been heavily discussed lately. And my thoughts on that are, yes, come to Dartmouth. Because Dartmouth has problems, but so does a lot of other places. And I honestly don't think that any of our problems are exponentially worse than any other place.

And I think that, if anything, we're doing some really good things to address them. Might be slower than some people like. Might be in the opposite direction of what some people want. But I think we're at least addressing them. And we're acknowledging that they exist. And the last thing that I would like to see happen is for Dartmouth or Dartmouth's reputation to go downhill because of these things.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

VALENTINI: Because certain people feel like, you know, they—their perspective is the only one that matters. And their view of Dartmouth is the only one that matters. I think Dartmouth is a very enduring institution, a great institution, and one that will be around for a lot longer than any of us. So, context is important; and overall, it's a great place to be.

WOMICK: Great. Anything else before the machines get turned off? We're good?

VALENTINI: No, I think that's it.

WOMICK: Alright. Thank you.

[End of Interview]