

Jason Wong, Class of 2013
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
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WOMICK: My name is Cally Womick. And I'm here in Rauner Library with Josh Wong.

WONG: Jason.

WOMICK: Jason. Sorry. It's Friday, May 10, 2013. So to get us started, why don't you talk about where you grew up?

WONG: Okay. Well, I grew up in New Orleans, which is a lot warmer. I miss the warmth. What else do you [chuckles] want to know?

WOMICK: Talk about your family and your school or any—

WONG: Okay. So school was—I went to a private school in New Orleans from about kindergarten through ninth grade, I believe. And then Hurricane Katrina hit. So we drove up to Connecticut. That was a long drive. And I went to a local public school there for actually only about three days. [Laughs] And then for whatever reasons, my parents switched me into my mom's old, I guess, private school. But the school was nice enough to waive my fees. So I was there for a semester. Then went back to Newman, which was the private school I was in in New Orleans to finish off ninth grade. Except my parents—or, more specifically, my dad—got really frustrated with the administration at Newman for some reasons and I ended up switching to a new public school. I'm not sure how comfortable I feel calling it a public school because, yes, it's free; but it has admissions requirements kind of. It was one of those new type things. I'm not sure how new it is. It's a charter school. And it's kind of funny because my brother protested—my older brother—protested about that more than I did.

WOMICK: Really?

WONG: Yeah. He was really worried about how that would affect my, I guess, chances at college. Because since it was new, it didn't really have—it was, you know, unknown. Whereas Newman was pretty well established and regularly sends people to like top universities. So it has a good name behind it.

But I think in the end it helped in the long run for me to switch schools for social reasons if nothing else. Because at Newman I was kind of... Since I'd been there since kindergarten, I kind of had my little group of friends and never really wandered out of that. And going to Lusher kind of forced me to open up a little more. So that was...I think that was good although the first year was kind of rough.

I was kind of used to a certain level of, I guess, academic rigor from Newman, and in tenth grade I wasn't really getting that. When I was at Newman, I'd go home and regularly have like two, three plus hours of work every night. Tenth grade year I would go home and have nothing to do because I'd be able to finish all my homework in class. A lot of times I didn't really find it necessary to pay attention in class so I'd just do homework.

And [chuckles] it was actually kind of funny. My parents told me they went to a parent-teacher conference and met with my math teacher. And all of these parents were coming in complaining about how much homework their kids were getting, and they were going, like, said, "You need to give our kid more homework. He's not doing anything when he gets home." [Laughter] Got the strangest look from the teacher.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

WONG: But junior year fixed that. Once I got into all the AP courses I could handle or possibly more, it evened out. All throughout that time I was also on the swim team, club swim team, which ran all year 'round; as well as the school swim team, whether it was middle school or varsity.

I was actually on the varsity swim team starting in seventh grade because the varsity swim coach at Newman was also my club swim coach. So he kinda realized I would be able to swim the longer events like 500 free better than most of the high schoolers [chuckles] just because I'd been swimming since about second or third grade competitively. So I actually had the stamina and technique to do that race well, as opposed to the high schoolers. So, unfortunately for me, seventh and eighth grade was mostly about swimming the long events.

But the coach was a good strategist. I think my eighth-grade year we only had about seven guys on the varsity swim team, and we won our division at state. So it worked out, and I'm not sure how that worked.

Let's see. I was on the track team in school for a short while, but trying to do track and swimming didn't really work out. It didn't end up being healthy because I'd go to school, straight to track practice, straight to swim practice. And my body just couldn't handle that. What else? Oh, played piano all throughout that time as well. Hmm. I think that covers most of what I did back home.

WOMICK: Yeah. So how'd you end up here?

WONG: Well, obviously there's the whole application process. Dartmouth was actually one of my top choices. I think at the time Dartmouth, Yale, and maybe Princeton were kind of all tied for first in terms of where I wanted to go. Didn't get into Yale or Princeton. Actually didn't get into Dartmouth straight off the bat, either. I was waitlisted. But I eventually got in, which, you know, made my day. Woke up my parents at like three in the morning; they weren't too excited at three in the morning. [Laughter] They were just like, "Oh, okay. Go back to sleep."

WOMICK: Oh....

WONG: And I applied to Dartmouth.... I think I was somewhat influenced by my older brother because that was also my brother's first choice in school; unfortunately he didn't get in. But kind of looking at it, it was a smaller school, which was something I was looking for. I didn't really want to end up in a huge school. Not really sure about my reasons behind that. It was also a good engineering school. I wasn't sure if I wanted to do engineering at that point. But my dad had suggested it in terms of things that might interest me. And it seemed to combine a bunch of my interests. I was kind of a science person, although still really didn't have any specific ideas about what I wanted to do. So freshman year I took Engines 21 which, kind of looking back on that, I regret. But it helped me figure out that I want to be an engineer.

Hmm. Just thinking on the whole college application process. I know it frustrated my parents to no end. I think they wanted me to be done with it in the summer or something. And it didn't end up actually finishing until mid-December, though I still think that was

early considering most applications aren't due until like New Year's. But my parents are kind of over-achievers, I guess. I don't know. I guess you could call them typical Asian parents except my mom's not Asian. Sometimes I feel like she might as well be. Of course obviously not as bad as that tiger mom thing from whatever book that came out a few years ago. [Laughs] That was kind of scary. Not actually very surprising, but kind of scary. [Laughs]

So I ended up choosing Dartmouth because it was my top choice. The other schools I'd gotten into were, I believe, University of Rochester and Syracuse on scholarships. And while I think my parents would have appreciated it if I went there with the scholarship money, they also from kind of the beginning told me that they would find a way to pay for me to go anywhere I wanted.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

WONG: Which I didn't quite realize how big of a gift that was until sometime later in high school, maybe my junior year, when I was talking to some of my friends who were older and going through the application process, and were like, "Yeah, my parents are like, 'You can apply anywhere you want, but you're going to LSU,'" just because, I guess, they couldn't really necessarily afford it, or weren't maybe quite as willing to find a way to afford it maybe. So it was a gift. On top of that my parents kind of had a whole three-state radius rule, which was I couldn't apply to any school within the three-state radius of New Orleans.

WOMICK: Really?!

WONG: Yeah. My parents felt that I couldn't get a full college experience unless I was far enough away that I couldn't come back home whenever I wanted to, which obviously [chuckles] put LSU out of the question; although I don't think I really wanted to go to LSU. Kind of—Back home it's kind of known as the 13th grade because [chuckles] a lot of people go there after high school. And so you'll hang out with all your friends from high school, and nothing really changes except that you're in Baton Rouge as opposed to whatever high school you were in.

So I was glad to get out. And then the only other geographical requirements were something I instituted myself. For whatever reason, I didn't want to be in the Midwest. I'm not really sure why. I don't even know what I have against the Midwest. [Laughs] I was

just like—I just didn't want to be in the Midwest. And I think that was just kind of arbitrary. So mostly I applied on the East Coast and...Stanford. [Laughter]

WOMICK: So how much of a role did Dartmouth's location play in your choosing this college?

WONG: Well, other than the fact that it wasn't in the Midwest and was further than three states away, location wasn't too much of an issue for me. College...I felt that I, well, one, my parents didn't let me visit any of the campuses before applying. I visited some of them after I got in. But location was never really an issue. It was something that I didn't feel was all that important in determining where I wanted to go to college; because I realized I could adapt myself to any location, but I wanted to be in a school that would, I guess, challenge me academically and had a lot of good resources. And of course obviously, since I was applying to the Ivy League schools, had a good reputation.

So I think those were more my factors than location. Why that didn't play much of an issue either: because I could adapt to that as well. Although [chuckles] sometimes I've wished I'd gone a little closer to the South; the winters can get really cold, and I tend to hibernate. Which is not very healthy, especially for my, I guess, checking account or whatever because [chuckles] when I hibernate, I tend to not even go out to get food. I'll just order in [chuckles]. I think sophomore year was the worst. Yeah, sophomore year in terms of that. I think I was ordering in almost every weekend, a very expensive habit.

WOMICK: It is.

WONG: Yeah. So I tried to break that, but I still order in occasionally, though now instead of when it's because I end up being at Thayer for so long that by the time I get out, most of the, like, FoCo and all that, those kinds of...all dining halls are closed. So, kind of have no other choice.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

WONG: And it always makes me really wish that there were other late-night delivery places besides EBA's. Like if there was a Domino's up here or any sort of decent like big chain, fast-food restaurant, it

would be really nice. But, eh, I don't do it that often, so it's not that important.

WOMICK: What was it like coming here? Was the first time you saw campus during orientation?

WONG: No. The first time I saw campus, it was after I'd gotten in. Actually the first time I saw Dartmouth's campus, I think, might have been orientation. And, of course, ran into the Sun God and that was just very strange. Yeah, so the first time I saw Dartmouth's campus was orientation. I was pretty impressed. I thought it was a great campus. Sun God weirded me out; weirded my dad out as well. [Laughter]

I think before that, I'd visited University of Rochester and Syracuse because I'd gotten in. And I think I visited them sometime over my spring break maybe. I'm trying to remember if high schools had spring breaks. It's been so long. [Laughter]

I kind of wonder [chuckles] how I got through high school anymore because, you know, it was like sitting through classes for like eight hours a day. And then I went straight to swim practice, and then I went and did homework. And I was so organized in high school. And I'm just kind of wondering what happened once I got to college—too much free time I guess [chuckles], and my parents weren't looking over my shoulder either. Not that my parents ever had to nag me to do anything in high school. But since I was living at home, they were kind of there. So just their presence kind of helped, I guess. [Brief interruption]

WOMICK: So what was it like transitioning to Dartmouth without that sort of motivation, parental motivation, to do things?

WONG: I don't know. Motivationally speaking, I guess... I was always motivated to do my work. So like I've always turned in my work on time and stuff. It was just more organizationally I kind of lost some of my organizational skills while I was a—it was a kind of gradual process because I realized that the more free time I had, the less organized I was. But freshman, sophomore year I was still kind of busy since I was on the swim team at Dartmouth. And so that was kind of a huge time-sink. And so that forced me to stay organized to a certain extent. And I kind of noticed during the spring, when we weren't in season, that I would get a little less organized because I didn't have as much stuff to do. So the swim team kind of helped, I guess, ease my transition into things to a certain extent.

Although, it kind of introduced new factors, as well, that were a little disconcerting to me, I guess. Mostly from—I'd say the swim team environment, I guess—or not environment; I'm not sure that's the right word—wasn't—I guess the community was quite different from the community I'd had in my swim team back home. And that was mostly revolving around...like here there is a kind of dichotomy, I guess, between the men's swim team and the women's swim team. And it was a little disconcerting. The guys.... One minute they'd be very friendly and, you know, we're all one team kind of thing. And another minute they'd be, I guess, making fun of the women's swim team for whatever reason: They don't swim as fast. They're lazy. They're fat, they're this, they're that. And that—I was never comfortable with that.

And, fortunately, I think it was a bigger issue before my time. And it's kind of been—and I believe it's been gradually going away. I think that was more of a kind of environment that resulted from some of the older members of the swim team that eventually graduated. So their influence kind of waned. I'm not really sure what's happened with that now. But from the trend I was seeing then, hopefully that's mostly gone away by now.

But the swim team back home was a lot more, I guess.... There was still some, I guess...it was a lot more unified, I guess, though there was still some kind of divisive elements. Because for the longest time—actually for a long time—our swim team was kind of more dominated by the women's side of things because the girls on the team were like the fastest in the state. Whereas the guys, mmm, not so much. It's not so much that the girls were faster than us, although in some cases they were because they were just really fast. And then on top of that, most of my swim coaches have been women as well. So having that divide between the male and female swim teams was really weird for me.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

WONG: Because I'd always kind of viewed them as equals or better in terms of the swimming aspect. But other than that, the swim team was kind of a good buffer because it was something that I'd done back home. So there's that part. And so it kind of helped me transition from high school into college. Kind of gave me an automatic friend base, that and obviously the DOC trips helped with that. So it kind of gave me a good basic kind of start to figure out I

guess my place at Dartmouth and what I was comfortable with and not.

And then I left the swim team after sophomore year for, I guess, not quite, sort of academic reasons. Not because I felt my academics were falling behind, but because I felt that starting junior year I was gonna start taking a lot more of my engineering courses, which take a lot more time than all of my other courses. So I kind of thought about it and realized that I didn't think I'd have time for the swim team anymore once I was doing all my engineering classes.

And I kind of combined that with my D-Plan. I took junior fall off and was at home for the fall. And that's our main, I guess, training season. And unlike some of the people, other people, on the swim team—a few girls come to mind—who managed to take the fall off and then just come back on training trip and—for the winter—and somehow manage to do well. I guess they were maybe training back home, although one girl was in South Africa, so I'm not really sure how much she was actually training there. And they somehow managed to catch up. And I kind of realized that I wasn't going to be able to do that. And I wasn't sure if I even wanted to do that.

And it was funny. The time off made me realize that I love swimming, but I didn't really like the competition that much. I was never excited by doing swim meets. It was just kind of something I did because I was on the swim team. And it never really...I didn't really figure that out until I took a step back and stopped swimming. But by that time, in terms of, I guess, Dartmouth, I'd made myself at home. And was spending most of my time in Thayer [chuckles]. So...yeah.

WOMICK: Did leaving the swim team change your social environment much?

WONG: Hmm. Maybe. I'm not entirely sure. I think while I was on the swim team, I might have, I guess, been different socially than I am now. I was probably actually more social when I was on the swim team 'cause that was kinda one of the aspects of the swim team, just socializing with everyone. Then once I stopped, I never was really all that motivated to get out. I liked doing work. So I was doing work. And I interacted with classmates and with my tripees, so you and Rachel [Wang '13] and Rochele [Brown '13] and all of them.

But other than that, socially, I never really did much because there wasn't much I really wanted to do. I was very comfortable

[chuckles] just staying in my room and reading or watching TV or, well, I would say, doing work. Except when I'm in my room, I never seem to be all that productive. I tend to have to work outside of my room to get anything done. So being on the swim team kind of forced me to socialize to a certain extent. And then after that, it just kind of fell off. So....

WOMICK: Would you like to talk more about your DOC trip?

WONG: [Chuckles] I'm not really sure what to say about it. It was a great experience. And it certainly got me excited about Dartmouth. I met you there, all the other trippees there. Unfortunately, we didn't get to interact as much with one of our trippees as the rest because the first day she got stung by—it was either hornets or wasps or bees or something. Had an allergic reaction and had to be rushed to the hospital.

And thinking about that, it's an interesting experience [chuckles] just because me and Rochele didn't actually get stung. I'm not entirely sure why that is. We might have been the ones who [chuckles] upset the hive to begin with. I think we were, I guess, leading the group at the time, just kind of rushed through and maybe upset the hive, and [chuckles] it stung everyone behind us. So I felt kind of guilty about that, but I guess it happens.

I had a lot of fun on the DOC trips. There's a lot of bonding with the trippees obviously. And then once we got to—what was it, Moosilauke? Interacting with everyone else.... I don't know. It's one of the things Dartmouth does that it just seems like a stroke of genius. If you want to look at it from a cynical point of view, it's kind of like Dartmouth's kind of, I guess at the beginning of your career, is kind of massive brainwashing people to [make them] like Dartmouth. And then—although that tends to fade a little after you've been at Dartmouth for a while, you start noticing that Dartmouth, like everything and everyone else, has its flaws. But at that beginning, at that initial like starting point, the DOC trips manage to get, at least everyone I know, very excited about being at Dartmouth.

And it's a good.... It also served as a good way for people...for the new students to just start making some friends before classes start and kind of make that friend base to, you know, I guess form that, to help their transition from high school to college. Because not everyone has a sports team to fall back on or, although there's

other options like clubs and things like that. So I think as long as you're motivated to do something, there's always something to do.

Though, kind of going back to the location thing, I kind of, looking at it now, as much as I love being at Dartmouth; if I was gonna do grad school for any length of time, like if I was going to do med school, I don't think I'd want to be here. I kind of figured out that I'm a city person. And that might, partially, just be because there's more things to do in a city. Like here, whether it's good or bad, a lot of the things to do revolve around the Greek life.

I was always, I guess, biased against Greek life, coming from New Orleans. Because the South is home to like all the horror stories you hear about things that happen in fraternities and sororities. And I know of at least two or three fraternities in New Orleans that got completely shut down because of their practices. So I was never all that interested in joining a fraternity.

And my parents were.... That was one of the few things [chuckles] my parents were pretty much completely against. They wouldn't stop me from.... They obviously wouldn't and couldn't stop me from joining a fraternity if I wanted to. But they let me know that they would not help me in any way with a fraternity. They wouldn't help me with any of the fees or any of that kind of stuff. So I'd be on my own. So that was another factor.

Because I think I was tempted at a certain point just because when you're on the swim team, I'm not sure how much now, but most of the swimmers tend to pledge Psi U. Although with my class that kind of... I mean still a good number of them went to Psi U, but a lot of them branched out to like SAE and Bones Gate. Actually, I'm not sure my year was Bones Gate; I think that was a year ahead of me. But SAE and either Sig Nu or Sig Ep. I always get those two confused. Since I don't really do the Greek scene [chuckles], I'm not very knowledgeable about any of the fraternities. [Laughs] Most of my Greek life experience was my first years at Dartmouth because of kind of various swimming events that would take place at fraternities or sororities.

So Greek life was never really an option for me. And not really being motivated to do things socially, I just kind of dropped off the social scene because I realized that there are things to do outside of the Greek life. But I was never all that motivated to look for it. And I'm not really sure if that's necessarily on me. I mean I know

it's on me to a certain extent. Maybe it's on Dartmouth. Maybe they could make non-Greek life a little more available...or maybe not available. But advertise it more. Because it's something you don't really hear about all that much, or at least I don't. I'm not too aware of it.

Of course, one thing being at Dartmouth has taught me is I tend to be a little bit oblivious to certain things. [Laughs] Dartmouth and one work experience. When I took that fall off, I was working as a waiter at—oh, what was it? A hotel restaurant. And at one point I was serving a table, and all the guys at the table were apparently hitting on me, and I didn't realize it. It took [chuckles] one of the other waiters to kind of point that out, because I kind of made a comment. I was, "They keep on talking about my belt, and I don't know why. It's like—it cost five dollars." [Laughs] Just because it's like part of the uniform. They're like, "Yeah, they're not all that interested in your belt." [Laughter] So after that I kind of figured out that I tend to be a little oblivious to certain things. That one went straight over my head.

So, yeah.... And I think in terms of social motivation, part of that's kind of maybe the result of how I was raised. I've always been raised and kind of been encouraged to be very independent. Somehow that didn't really seem to.... My brother didn't really seem to get that message. I don't really know how that happened. [Chuckles] He's kind of the black sheep in the family. He's like the definition of social butterfly. Though after college, once he started doing med school and kind of toward the later years of college, he became, I guess, more independent...I guess. But he is still very social. I feel like he needs kind of a social life, I think, to function. And when I say he became independent, it's not that he went away from the social life, it's that he started, I guess, organizing it more. He became kind of the central figure behind it. So in med school he was kind of a central figure around organizing a lot of these big social events like dances and barbecues and things like that.

And he had one thing in common with me in terms of schools in that, like, I went to a new high school. He went to a new med school. And that, I think, might have affected him more than going to a new high school affected me. Because from all the stories he's told us about that med school, it's kind of terrible. [Laughs] He was like, "I'm not sure how anybody from our first two years passed the boards." If people did, it was more because of them as students than the med school's teachers; because I think at some point one

or two of the teachers were arrested and put in jail. Or fled the country or something because of illegal practices or something. I don't even know. It is just...very interesting.

Although some of that is probably somewhat exaggerated by my brother. He's always been a great storyteller, which you would think would make him great at interviews, and to some extent does, but he also has a tendency to put a foot in his mouth. Which worked, at least for my parents, when he was applying to colleges. He really wanted to be a Navy SEAL. He wouldn't have cut it as a Navy SEAL. It's just not in his personality. Physically, maybe. Mentally, I don't think I could ever see my brother killing someone. I mean, I guess they could train you to do it. But I just never saw my brother doing it. But that Navy thing didn't work out.

The Air Force, on the other hand, he almost made it to the Air Force but on the final interviews he told the interviewers: "Oh, I never really wanted to be in the Air Force. I wanted to be a Navy SEAL." That didn't go over quite so well. So my parents were quite happy about that.

Though it's kind of funny. When my parents and I were actually talking about it, my parents were kind of like, "You know, unlike your brother, we could see you being a Navy SEAL." [Laughs] It's like, "What?! I'm friendly." It's like, "Yeah, but you hold grudges." It's like, "Thanks. Great positive image there." To a certain extent I guess I have to admit it. My brother's way too friendly to do it, whereas I guess I could maybe see myself doing it if forced or whatever. Don't really see any reason why I'd kill someone. But I think they were just trying to say I'm more likely than my brother. Not that it would ever happen.

Another thing my parents like saying was if they could blend me and my brother together, they'd have the perfect child. I'm not really sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. [Laughter] I guess.... They're just kind of recognizing they couldn't. There are parts of our character; I was always the more motivated one, but not very good at social stuff, whereas my brother was kind of the other way around.

WOMICK:

Mm-hmm. So if not the Navy SEALS, what do you see your future after Dartmouth looking like? And do you think you'll continue being engaged with the college?

WONG:

In terms of things I'm gonna do after college, at this point I'm not really sure. I mean, I'm going to be here for a fifth year to finish off my BE. After that, I think it's more than likely that I'll probably take a year or two to work for whatever, hopefully, whatever field I'm interested in. And then I'm pretty sure I'm gonna go to grad school.

At this point... I mean, going to grad school is kind of never really, I guess, an option for me in terms of sheer competitiveness. My dad has a doctorate—two actually, if you count a law degree, which is technically a doctorate, I guess. My mom has a doctorate and my brother has a doctorate. So I kind of feel like I have to get a doctorate; probably not the best reason to get a doctorate. But [chuckles] I've always pretty much been sure I was going to grad school. After kind of figuring out my interests more, I think I now have another motivation for grad school because I'm not entirely su—haven't quite entirely figured out what specifically I want to do. I know that I'm very interested in kind of the biotechnology and biomedical field or maybe leaning more to the biotech side in terms of how that applies to therapeutics.

Last term I took a protein engineering course, and that was probably the most interesting course I've taken at Dartmouth. And that kind of helped me figure out—that and taking biomaterials this term—kind of helped me realize that I'm probably not gonna be doing anything in terms of the implant side of things. Or I might do stuff with implants, but won't be on, I guess, what I'd originally imagined. Because kind of looking at what we're doing now is—I never really... I don't find that, I guess, gross material properties all that interesting. I'm more interested in, I guess, the biological side of things in terms of how do you make an implant bioactive? Like what properties does it need to have? And that tends to be less gross material properties and more micro-properties, if that's a word. And kind of chemical factors and things like that.

So I would love to do... I'd love to be more into that, although I'm not sure whether that'd be research or not. I haven't really figured out whether research is something I want to do and that's something I'm kind of—trying to figure out whether I want to do research by either starting.... I need to actually be getting around to emailing professors to see if I can do research with them over the summer. Or if that doesn't work out, then starting in the fall with my BE or just do some work in their lab and kind of figure out whether that's something I want to do.

When I was applying for internships over the summer, I ran across a predoc program that Adimab offered and kind of seemed like the perfect fit me after my BE. So that's something I would probably apply for after my BE.

And then in terms of my interactions with Dartmouth outside of that, I'm not really sure honestly. I would probably donate some money. When that would start happening, though, I'm not sure because I probably wouldn't do it immediately after college because I'd probably want to save up money first. So if I did, it'd probably be pretty minute.

In terms of things immediately after college, I don't really see myself doing anything for Dartmouth right after college, other than.... Well, I might use the network to kind of help me with jobs and things like that, to whatever extent I need. Maybe once I'm more established, in a job or whatever, I could see myself doing more things for the college, like helping with college interviews and things like that. But I'm not really sure what I'm doing fifteen years from now, so I have no idea what's going to happen with that.

But kind of one of the silly—not necessarily silly—but dreams I've had is kind of like if I ever become, you know, like ridiculously, filthy rich, that like when I die or whatever, I'd be able to donate enough money to Dartmouth so that they could kind of institute a program like Harvard has where if your parents make below a certain amount of money, you can just go for free. And I'd really like Dartmouth to be able to do that. Because while Dartmouth, yes, they still do have a pretty nice chunk of money, it's still not anywhere near the amount of money Harvard has. I would, I guess, basically just like to be able to open up Dartmouth to allow...give Dartmouth enough money so that they can, so it can be opened up to a lot more people, and they wouldn't be hindered by money like a lot of people I know were in terms of applying for a college. So I guess Dartmouth's rubbed off on me in the sense that I love Dartmouth enough that I want it to be available for everyone.

Though I think I'd still like.... I think I'd also like it if instead of necessarily being in Hanover, being—well, I'm not sure actually. I was gonna say, I'd want Dartmouth to be in a city. But thinking about it, Hanover provides a very safe place for a college. Unlike a lot of colleges you go to, you don't have to really worry about anything happening to you at night, wandering around outside. Maybe in like... I know we've instituted things like SafeRide,

although I think that ends up being more of a chauffeur service for people who are just too lazy to walk somewhere. Because honestly, nothing really happens... As far as I know, not much happens to people outside late at night. Now if you're in a fraternity late at night, something may happen like—I realize that. And I'm not sure how much we're ever going to be able to do about that. But for the most part, Hanover's a very, very safe environment. And that has major advantages.

The only up of being in a city, I think, it would just make things a lot easier in terms of for people who aren't all that into the Greek life, in terms of providing them with a lot more things to do. Because here, like, if you want to do something outside the Greek life, there's stuff available on Dartmouth's campus. Maybe not a wide variety—maybe not necessarily a wide variety. There's stuff available outside of campus, although you generally need a car for that.

So, you know, if you're in a city like Boston, that has a lot of public transportation. Like I was in Boston over the summer to take organic chemistry at Harvard. And—while yes, I spent most of my time doing organic chemistry because they were combining both terms of organic chemistry into one summer—I was also able to just go out in the city and enjoy myself to a certain extent. I really enjoyed that. And it kind of made me realize that Dartmouth's kind of missing that aspect, at least for me. Though again, part of that may just be my motivation to actually socialize.

WOMICK: I want to be mindful of your time, I know you have class soon, so I'm only going to ask you a couple more questions.

WONG: Alright.

WOMICK: I guess, just first off, over your four years here, how would you say that Dartmouth has changed?

WONG: Hmm. How has Dartmouth changed? I mean the really only big [chuckles] thing I can see is—because I tend to be a little oblivious is, well, obviously the president changed. I just find that endlessly amusing that we got a new president before our class graduated. Though I'm happy that former President Kim went on to bigger and better things. And I feel like that will help Dartmouth somehow.

Then there's the meal plan, which—I hate the new meal plan. But unfortunately I don't think that's going to change. And I think—I

mean the meal plan's one thing that kind of made me aware of Dartmouth's flaws, I guess. Because they told us that they had "student input." And it's like from everything I heard about that, you know, five, ten students asked: What do you think about this new meal plan? All of them said no. They went ahead and did it anyway. [Laughter]

WOMICK: Student input.

WONG: They had student input. They just ignored it. Which, I mean, I guess I can understand to a certain extent in that the college can't really be completely run as a democracy or else nothing would ever get done, I don't think, because there'd just be way too many opinions. So there'd be bickering back and forth about this and that. So, yes, to a certain extent you do kind of have to ignore people and just go ahead. But I don't think I've heard anyone say one good thing about the new meal plan.

The new dining halls—Like renovating the dining halls, that was good. Like for the most part, I think the dining halls and the food has gotten better. I just really don't like the new meal plan. And it just feels like Dartmouth's trying to find other ways to squeeze money out of us. Oh, and yes, maybe they need that money so they can do all those renovations.

But it still seems kind of.... I mean, why would you force the freshmen to be on the 20 meals a week plan or whatever? And that basically just forces them to go to FoCo for three meals a day. And they end up wasting a lot of money because I don't think a lot of college kids really eat breakfast. So instead [of] three meals a day, maybe usually two.

The only time I remember really eating three meals a day was when I was on the swim team and I was up that early in the morning. Oh, God! Ugh. [Chuckles] Just remembering morning swim practices, and just kind of remembering hearing other athletes complain like, "Ohh, we had practice at ten in the morning. It was so terrible." Like, you're complaining [chuckles] about ten in the morning. It's like, [chuckles] how'd you like to get up at five-thirty in the morning to go to practice?

But other than that, nothing. Maybe the Greek scene has changed a little bit. I feel like it pro'bly has. I'm just pro'bly not all that aware of it since I don't really play much of a role in that. But from

everything I guess I've heard and I guess the Dartmouth news and from other people, it sounds like the Greek scene has been slowly changing, and, from the sounds of it, for the better after kind of all of the negative things that have happened, like that whole thing like SAE.

Though, I'm not sure how true any of the stuff with SAE was. I didn't really find what's-his-face—I can't even remember his name anymore—to be all that credible. I think he just wanted attention, honestly. And I think that was the prevailing opinion on campus; because while unfortunately, yes, Dartmouth does have hazing practices, I don't think any of them are as bad as what what's-his-face was saying. Because I honestly feel like Dartmouth students are, I guess, aware enough that—at least I'm hoping [chuckles] they are—that if those kinds of things were going on, that (a) someone would report it, or (b) they just would refuse to do it. You know, if anyone tried to force me to do any of the things that are mentioned in that article, I'd just be like, Oh, hell no! And I feel like Dartmouth students are, for the most part, smart enough to realize that for no reason should they have to put up with any of that.

But not really knowing.... But I also now realize the pack mentality, or whatever you want to call it, that can sometimes let those things happen. And I know they do happen, considering what I grew up with down in the South. Which is maybe why I never really considered hazing at Dartmouth all that much of an issue because like I see what happens in the South and I see what happens here. It's like the worst I've heard happen here is drinking a little more than you should. Whereas like in the South, back home, there's two different frats that poured either (a) boiling crab oil or (b) boiling water on their pledges' backs and sent them to the hospital. So I'm not sure anything at Dartmouth would ever compare to that.

WOMICK: Yeah.

WONG: That's about all I can think of in terms of things that might have changed at Dartmouth.

WOMICK: What about you? How have your four years here changed you?

WONG: They've made me a lot more aware of my flaws. I kind of... I think most people probably had the same experience in that you come to Dartmouth, and if you're coming to Dartmouth, you are pretty much the top of your class. And were, at least at that point in your life,

conceivably good at everything you do, for the most part. I mean, not everyone can be an athlete, so there's those obvious things. But for the most part, coming here, most people are like, oh, I'm good at everything. And when you get to Dartmouth, where everyone's coming from that same background, and you realize, Okay, maybe that's not quite so true.

So it made me a lot more aware of the fact that—I think the biggest thing that changed was, honestly, the organizational aspect. It made me realize that while, yes, I can be very organized and motivated, I thrive in highly structured environments as opposed to environments where I have to set my own structure. And it's kind of forced me to try and change that and improve that about myself. And honestly I think there's been some improvement in that field. But I think I still have a long ways to go because I still tend to, you know, coop myself up in my room and read for hours at a time when I should probably be doing work.

And then there's what I mentioned with the swim team. Made me more aware—kind of made me aware of the fact that while I'm very competitive, I don't necessarily like competition. And then academically it's kind of helped me refine my interest, I guess. So I think overall Dartmouth's had a fairly positive effect on me. And I think a lot of that kind of came about through just helping me realize truths about myself that I didn't before. And I'm not sure if that's a Dartmouth thing or whether that's a just being away from home thing.

WOMICK: That's great. Is there anything that we haven't talked about or that I haven't asked you that you'd like to cover?

WONG: I don't know. I find the questions on this list about insiders kind of interesting because I had no idea what I'd say about them honestly.

WOMICK: Mm-hmm.

WONG: I can say that I've never really necessarily felt all that much like an insider. Although at the same time, I've never really felt excluded, either. And I'm also pretty sure I probably wouldn't be able to recognize an insider. As I said, Dartmouth's and other life experiences made me realize that I'm probably pretty oblivious. I kind of get into my own mode and just ignore everything around me. [Laughs] Which is good and bad. I don't know. I think that covers most of it.

WOMICK: Okay. Well great. Thank you for taking the time for this.

[End of Interview]