WOMICK: To get us started off, my name is Cally Womick, and today is Monday, March 24th, 2014, and I’m here in Rauner Library. So how about you introduce yourself and talk about where you grew up?

KLISSURSKI: Great. My name is Georgi Klissurski. I am a Dartmouth class of 2014, and I grew up in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. Bulgaria is a relatively small country in southeastern Europe, and Sofia is a vibrant city, I would say, which has been growing a lot in the past 20 years. It almost doubled, actually, over that period, from one to close to two million now, not quite two million, but it’s been growing.

WOMICK: That’s a lot.

KLISSURSKI: It’s a lot, especially considering the fact that the entire population of Bulgaria is about seven to eight million, so almost now a quarter of the population lives in the capital, which, you know, has a lot of both problems and blessings associated with it.

But I guess maybe I can tell you a little more about how I grew up in the city—first of all, maybe about my family a little bit? Both my parents are doctors, and I have an older sister. I guess it’s interesting that she was born in 1987, two years before the end of communism in ’89, and then I was born in ’91, which was two years after.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: So we’re kind of like equally spaced away from the big event.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: I don’t remember—well, she doesn’t remember anything from that time, and obviously I wasn’t alive then, but my parents tell me stories.
I guess what’s relevant is that even though both my parents are doctors, which in the United States obviously is considered a very—you know, a family should be very well off if both of the parents are doctors. In Bulgaria it’s not quite the case, surprisingly perhaps. Yeah, I think that my family was perhaps middle class, comfortable middle class now. But especially in the ’90s and the early 2000s, these were years when Bulgaria as a country was just transitioning from a communist to I guess a democratic or capitalistic system, so the whole economy was chaos, and doctors were not paid very much at all. Most of the hospitals were, and still are, public hospitals and just wages were pretty low, both by relative and absolute standards.

But I have to say that they always encouraged us a lot to do well in school, and they engaged with us a lot reading books and solving a lot of math problems, playing chess, some stuff like that, so, you know, we weren’t rich, but we had a comfortable life. And education was super important, which is great. Definitely education was the number one thing for us as kids, and then—

There was also a lot of fun games and stuff that I guess growing up I can touch on that. One of the things that always strikes me as a difference between the way kids grow up in the United States and the way I grew up is that—and perhaps I’m generalizing, but I played a lot on the street, and, of course, that would be the same for Americans; it just depends where you grew up and what part of the country you’re coming from. But I spent a lot of time out on the street, kind of just hanging out with other kids from the neighborhood and from the street.

And that was a great experience to have, I think, because sometimes we would do things we weren’t supposed to do, but other times we would try to, you know, build our own basketball courts or there was this one time when we tried to—there was an old racing car, kind of like—which somebody scrapped away, and then we tried to fix it and then tried to drive it and stuff like that.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]
KLISSURSKI: So there would be a huge range of activities, from just like benign games to sometimes [chuckles] harmful games to, you know, learning hard skills and playing a lot of sports as well, but also—you know, I guess it would be interesting to know that a lot of kids start smoking, for example, really young, and, you know, a lot of my friends started smoking as early as fifth grade, which is crazy.

WOMICK: Wow.

KLISSURSKI: Yeah. And at the same time, I know it was crazy and it sounds, you know, a little bit frightening, and honestly and all that, it’s very bad for kids. But I think all those things kind of exposed us to real-life a little bit earlier. I don’t know if it’s real life or something, but our parents gave us a little bit of freedom to kind of, you know, hang out along the street, and it was like we were trying to figure out life on our own. And I actually find this very valuable. And it’s great now that when I go back to Bulgaria for winter breaks, I always make it a point to see my friends from middle school and elementary school and the people that I hung out with from my street. We’re not super close anymore, but, you know, when I have a chance, I touch base with them and it’s great.

Luckily, you know, I was from a relatively nice neighborhood, so luckily nobody is doing, like, terribly badly. I guess there are a couple of people who didn’t go to college and kind of are—I don’t even know. It’s not necessarily bad, by any means, but I’m not sure that they’re very, you know, stable in their lives in terms of what job prospects they have or how they can create families and stuff like that.

But otherwise, everyone’s doing well, and it’s always very fascinating to me, going back and checking in with these people.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. So how did you end up at Dartmouth?

KLISSURSKI: So, you know, as I said, my parents stressed education a lot. Even though I did a lot of those fun things with people around the street and with my elementary and middle school, I was always an A student, and I guess what really contributed to me coming to Dartmouth was my high school. I was lucky enough to get accepted in this American high
school in Bulgaria, which is mostly for Bulgarian students. Perhaps that’s its purpose. Its purpose is to educate Bulgarian students. But it kind of combines the best of the American educational system and the Bulgarian one, which is really great.

We have about—perhaps half of our teachers and faculty are American, and the rest are Bulgarian, and that’s a very interesting mix. It’s a five-year program where the first year, you just do ESL very intensively, instruction in English so that the next four years you can take everything in English, all of your classes except for Bulgarian language and literature, which is of course in Bulgarian. I love the department and Bulgarian literature in general is just great.

So my high school is considered one of the best academic institutions in Bulgaria, and, you know, we do have the infrastructure set in place with college counselors, who help us apply to American colleges, as well as other international schools in the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe, also in Canada and Australia.

But, you know, we have a lot of alumni who have gone on to similar schools like Dartmouth, so that’s why I was able in the first place to know about Dartmouth, to, you know, take all the standardized tests and fulfill all the requirements that I needed.

Otherwise, I just personally—I applied early decision, and I really—Dartmouth really appealed to me. It was my clear number one for several reasons. There was pretty much no other schools that I was looking at which fulfilled all of my kind of criteria or what type of school I was looking for.

One of the really important things for me was always for it to be a good academic school, so Dartmouth had that. But the second most important, perhaps equally important criteria, I guess, was the availability of financial aid for international students, which I am.

So Dartmouth scores really high on that. They had need-blind admission for international students, one of the only eight schools at the time in the U.S. Now I think it’s actually
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fewer than eight because of the financial crisis or something. But that was incredible.

So being a great school, having financial aid, and then—I love the outdoors, so that was a big plus, the Dartmouth Outing Club and the location of Dartmouth were incredible, given that I love hiking.

WOMICK: Yeah.

KLISSURSKI: And just running and mountain biking. And I also liked that it was a smaller school. I kind of wanted a place where there would be more focus on the undergraduates. And I also found the international side of Dartmouth appealing in terms of,—you know, Dartmouth has a great reputation in terms of foreign languages and all of the other programs abroad, so with all of those, there was no other school which sounded better to me. And that’s how I ended up here. I was very, very lucky to be admitted on December 8th, 2009. That’s five years ago! Four years and a half. I cannot believe this.

WOMICK: Yeah. So how did your friends and family feel about the prospect of you coming so far away for school?

KLISSURSKI: I think it’s interesting. My friends from high school were totally fine because all of them were doing the same thing anyways. I actually have a bunch of friends who are now on the East Coast, studying at other schools, and it’s great. A few friends are also in the U.K.

My parents, I think—it’s interesting. My dad supports me in whatever I choose, so in a sense, you know,—he was very supportive of me, and he said, “Okay, go for it.” And obviously, you know, he would like probably to spend more time with me, but if that’s what I want, he backs me up.

My mom—she kind of likes to exactly state her opinion on matters and just tell me what I should do, in her view. And actually she really wanted me to go to school in the U.S. She in fact did not want me to stay in Bulgaria, which is perhaps interesting.
So I guess both of them were happy—my mom because I was in the U.S., which is what she wanted; my dad because that is what I wanted. So both of them were happy.

My grandparents—I think they’re just perhaps proud that, you know, I perceptively got to this great school. They don’t know too much, obviously, about it, but, you know, it’s supposedly a good school in the U.S., and they were very happy to send me off, though it meant that I would be away from them.

And, yeah, I guess one thing which is interesting there to note was that now that I’m almost graduating and thinking about what I’ll do after college, my mom still has the same opinion of “You shouldn’t go back to Bulgaria. It will be better for you to stay and work in the U.S. or somewhere in western Europe.” And if you want I can elaborate on that.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: Basically, I think she represents a specific type of a Bulgarian person, which is the people who are disillusioned with the current—the state of the nation in Bulgaria right now. What she really hates is—and so she’s not trying to, like, you know, send me off somewhere so that I’m far away from my family and friends. I’m sure she would love it if I were around. She just doesn’t want me to stay in an environment which is a complete lack of meritocracy and in which people that are capable don’t get what they deserve. That’s something she really struggles with, just in her job and in her career, and, you know, she always just has admired countries where, you know, people who are, like, really good doctors or something can go and have a good life.

Because what happened was that they were graduating from med school right around the end of the ’80s and the beginning of the ’90s, when the transition from communism happened, so a lot of their med school colleagues and classmates went off actually to Canada and to the U.S. to kind of like—right after med school, they still had to do, like, a brief re-accreditation or something, which is a pain, but they made that conscious decision, and now, you know,—I guess my parents compare their life with their friends’ life,
which is always just—it’s not only that they have more money; it’s just that they live in a more normal environment, what my mom would say. Like, their colleagues at work treat them nicely. You don’t have to deal with, like, crazy people on the roads and stuff.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: I guess it’s—yeah, I think for me it just stems from the fact that when people are not as well off in a country, they’re more stressed out, they’re more nervous, they become meaner to others. I think that’s an interesting consideration. Obviously, when people think about, you know, lower-income countries, a lot of times we think about, you know, maybe Africa or some parts of Asia. And I guess the stereotypical image might be they’re just poor people, you know, they’re struggling for sustenance and so on—and housing. But we probably don’t have the image of them of being mean. Like, perhaps if a westerner goes there, they’ll be, Oh, they might me for money, or something. But we won’t think of them as, like, Oh, they’re these mean people.

In Bulgaria and eastern Europe, perhaps, more broadly,—and people are always not as poor as in Africa or the global south, but I guess it’s just people who, because they’re not as well off, they just like to—they’re trying to always cheat on others, to make themselves better off.

So that’s just a very interesting phenomenon, I guess. Like, a major theme just with me growing up, and my parents and their jobs, and, you know, when I’m here at Dartmouth I constantly think about Bulgaria. I want to go back eventually and do some—I wanna, you know, go back there in a few years and just work there and contribute to some hopefully changes in a positive way, addressing a lot of those issues that I’ve mentioned already.

But that’s something that I think about constantly while I’m here, just the way Bulgaria is doing. And being an econ major, I also look at, you know, the political and economic situation, and all the socioeconomic and political issues are interrelated.
WOMICK: So when you first came to Dartmouth, like during orientation, had you ever been to the United States before?

JONES: So, yeah, I had been in the United States once before. I had this great opportunity during my junior year of high school to do a one-year program—just, like, spend a year at a boarding school in the United States. I won a scholarship where it’s run by an American NGO, called Assist. They select students from several different countries and send them to, like, some of the best prep schools in America. And did have very positive experience. So I had spent that one year before coming to Dartmouth.

WOMICK: Okay. So then what was orientation like here?

KLISSURSKI: Well, I think for me there were several parts to orientation. There was trips, there was international student orientation, and then the regular orientation.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: Trips was incredible. First of all, I like the outdoors. Second of all, my trip leaders were great, and my trippies were awesome. So I was absolutely ecstatic during trips. When I got back to campus, I thought that was the best school ever.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: Everything was just flowers and roses, and it couldn't have been better.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: Which it was at the time. I don’t regret—I mean, I think my first-year trip was incredible.

And then international orientation was great. It was a little bit more boring in the sense that, you know, there weren't many people around campus. But it was great to meet a lot of international students. To be honest, I’m still really good friends with some of those people to this day. They have really—you know, from start to finish they have been some of the people that I could really rely on.
WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And it’s been great to form this relationship for kind of a longer time horizon than Dartmouth. I feel like four-year friendships are kind of rare now. Perhaps not always, but—

And then regular orientation was when I started interacting more with my floor. Everybody came back on the floor. And that was a great time. I had a blast, actually. At that point, I thought that my floormates were all awesome,—

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: —and we did hang out together, and that’s perhaps why I thought they were great.

But later on, during the fall term, I felt like people on the floor started forming those cliques and started getting more exclusive, which is all cool, of course, or not cool but, I guess, you know, I can’t force somebody to be friends with me if they don’t want to. But, you know, there were some moments in the fall term when I felt kind of bad, actually, towards the end, even though in the beginning, during orientation I was, like, one of the social butterflies on the floor.

And then I was actually very surprised that this would happen to me, that I would feel miserable on that floor, but I did. And that was actually good, I think, because it made me a little more critical of Dartmouth, and I realized that not everything is just great.

WOMICK: Huh!

KLISSURSKI: Yeah.

WOMICK: Yeah. Are there any other things from freshman year that you think are important to talk about?

KLISSURSKI: Yeah, I think—it was funny. I guess academically my first term here I freaked out because I was taking Math 8, and we had two midterms. And, you know, I literally bombed the first midterm, which was crazy for me because I was really good at math in, like, middle school and high school, and I was,
like, *Wow, Dartmouth is this crazy institution where it’s gonna be so hard. Like, I’m gonna have C’s, and it’s crazy.* I didn’t think that would be possible. I got, like, a 60 percent or something, which is now not all that bad when I think about it.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: And then the second midterm obviously was, you know, maybe week six or seven of the term, but it didn’t get graded until, like, week eight or nine. So for those first eight or nine weeks of the term, literally the only grade I had was, like, a 60 percent on my midterm in math that I thought I was good at. So the first nine weeks of my fall term, I was like, *Oh, my God, I’m gonna be the dumb kid now. Like, I can’t believe this.* I thought I was good in math. And that was really funny, because I did really well on the midterm, the second midterm and the final. And I could finally breathe, you know, at the end of fall term.

But it was a good experience, I guess, to just—you know, just realize that you’re not always gonna get A’s and stuff. It was just a little bit stressful because I think it was more of a coincidence. It was the first third of the material in Math 8 happened to be, like, really hard. But it was just, like, a funny coincidence, you know, for the first eight weeks of the term I was freaking out how I was gonna fail all of Dartmouth—

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: ‘Cause if that was my first term in Math 8, what would Math 70 be like?

WOMICK: It can only get harder.

KLISSURSKI: Exactly.

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

KLISSURSKI: But then that was actually not true.

Otherwise socially, I think the most significant thing was—I touched on it already, but my floor. There was just this downhill. Orientation was great, and I loved some of my
floormates. But then, just as the term progressed, not only did some of them form cliques (which, again, is not necessarily a bad thing per se), they started also being meaner, especially when they got drunk. That’s what really drove me crazy.

Like, in Bulgaria, people do start drinking early, earlier than in the United States, just because the legal age is not being enforced and, honestly, nobody cares so much,—

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: —again, which might not be a great thing, but at least I had been used to drinking a little bit, and, you know, when I would have parties with my friends in high school, nobody would start, like, being mean to each other when we were drunk or something.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And here, all of a sudden I saw, like both guys and girls become super mean or belligerent when they were intoxicated, and that was, like, not only surprising to me but it also really just—I was really taken aback by it ‘cause, like, Wow. What are you doing?

For example, they would get drunk, like, we’d start running, and, like, they will push me as we were running to our dorm, in front of the door or something. And obviously they were drunk, but, like, you don’t have to push me in the snow or on the wall, you know?

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: Stuff like that. It’s not, like, important, or it’s not, like, hugely important, but I think it signifies some sort of an issue here.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And I think it can be extrapolated to some other issues at Dartmouth. I feel like—I don’t know. Now we’re talking about a lot of campus social climate issues. And to me it’s always a big question, like, What’s the problem? Is it the Greek system? Like, is it the people? Is it the culture? Is it the
alumni? And honestly I have no idea at this point. But I think that some people are being mean sometimes, and I’m not sure if it’s the environment encouraging them or if they’re just mean people. But they are out there. There are mean people here.

And that’s probably inevitable. There are mean people everywhere in the world. It’s just funny because we would somehow—we just expect people to be nice and honorable and to behave in some sort of a respectful way, whatever that means.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And perhaps we just get disappointed when we see that even Dartmouth is not this perfect world.

WOMICK: Yeah.

KLISSURSKI: We could do better, though, I think.

WOMICK: Yeah.

So did you take a term off between freshman and sophomore year?

KLISSURSKI: Yeah, I took the summer off. I went back home to Bulgaria, which was great. I was really excited because I was being able to, you know, travel around the country, hike, which is something that I love, see my grandparents and family and so on, and friends. And it was great.

What I also really enjoyed that summer was teaching an SAT prep course for about six weeks. There were two times three-week courses. And it was actually really cool just connecting with students who wanted to apply to U.S. schools. And, you know, they were obviously kids who, just in terms of self-selection, they wanted to achieve and they wanted to do well.

But it was great to serve as a mentor to them and tell them about Dartmouth and my experience in the U.S. And, yeah,—you know, I was only two or three years older than them, maybe two years, so I didn’t feel like—I took them as
peers. Obviously—it was very nice because I was able to have some authority in the classroom, which was great. I didn’t quite expect it, I guess. But I was able to do that, which is important. But then I was also being honest with them and just talking to them as my peers and equals, which was really cool.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISURSKI: And I formed some friendships, so that was really neat.

WOMICK: Yeah. And then you came back to Dartmouth?

KLISURSKI: And then I came back to Dartmouth. And sophomore fall was actually one of my best terms.

WOMICK: Really?

KLISURSKI: Yes. I was a little bit worried about it because, first of all, I was taking Engineering 21, which is kind of notorious, and, you know, sophomore fall is also the time when a lot of people rush, and that can also be just funny and crazy and ridiculous and stressful.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISURSKI: But luckily I ended up at a house I really liked, SigEp. Oh, think what really worked for me was that, first of all, during my freshman year I just met a bunch of SigEp guys that I liked, so when I rushed in the fall it wasn’t just, like, a blind choice of, like, Oh, everybody else is rushing; I’m gonna rush, and who knows what people I’m gonna meet. [Chuckles.]

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISURSKI: I knew, you know, maybe five or ten ’12s and ’13s relatively well. Not super well, but somewhat well. And they introduced me to more guys that I seemed to like, at least superficially. So that worked out very nicely, and the pledge term—we don’t have a pledge term officially, but that first term turned out to be very, very positive and fun. And I definitely felt like a part of something, but not only in the artificial sense. I did like the people and the other guys there.
And 21 was actually really fun, great, and it was a lot of work, but you don’t have exams or papers or all those things that I kind of don’t like. You have projects where you go and talk to your users and to real people. You talk to professors who have an expertise, you know, in certain technical fields that we might need for our project. So that was super cool. Honestly, I think engineering classes, which are design classes, where you create a product, are the best classes. Yes, they’re the most time intensive, but it’s really fun work that I at least really enjoy. And it’s not like you have to do readings or papers or, like, some of those annoying things.

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: So, yeah, 21 turned out to be great. And, yeah, sophomore fall was probably one of my best terms at Dartmouth.

WOMICK: What about the rest of sophomore year?

KLISSURSKI: And then sophomore year was a little bit more difficult. The winter was just more difficult because of my classes, taking Chem 5, which had a lab, and Engineering 22, which had a lab, and—yeah. So that was just a little bit more difficult kind of like after the great sigma term at SigEp. Then, you know, they didn’t pay that much attention to me all of a sudden, or maybe I wasn’t as invested and my classes were harder. [Pause.] So it was a little bit more difficult, I guess.

But what was great was my Writing 5 class that term. Absolutely phenomenal. My professor was Nancy Crumbine—

WOMICK: [Makes happy, sibilant sound.]

KLISSURSKI: Yeah, she was a great character and a wonderful educator, very funny lady who’s a great prof as well. She really pushed us to think critically about life, to be honest. And what was really cool with that, the people in our class became really tight, and we still have Nancy ’Tails, where we just get together from time to time, get a few beers and just talk about our terms and our lives and everything, and about Nancy.
WOMICK: Uh-huh.

KLISSURSKI: We have this huge collection of quotes, these things that she said—

WOMICK: [Laughs.]

KLISSURSKI: —which were hilarious.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: So that was very, very positive. And we still keep in touch to this day. In fact, we couldn't pull off Nancy 'Tails at the end of last term. We did it in the fall, so now I think I'm gonna organize it very soon, this term. Oh, so great!

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: And I'm really good friends with some of those people individually, as well.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: But that was a major highlight of my winter and just—sorry, that was freshman year. Uch! I'm totally—totally wrong, but—yeah, that was freshman winter, sorry.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: But still very important, actually. So, yeah, the winter of sophomore year was a little bit more difficult. Spring also. And just—both winter and spring of sophomore year were more difficult because, I don’t know, even though I had SigEp, socially I still didn’t feel like I had, like, a group—like, a small group of close friends. And this just always made a little bit life difficult. And, you know, the thing of, like, getting lunches and meals, it’s always, like, a little bit stressful. Walking into FoCo alone. That stuff. But, you know, things were okay.

I guess kind of like from sophomore spring was Engineering 51, System Dynamics, which is one of my absolute favorite classes of all time, which I really enjoyed. So, yeah, sophomore year ended well, but, you know, just I still, at the
end of sophomore year, didn't feel super comfortable socially.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. Yeah. And what about junior year? Did you take time off between sophomore and junior year?

KLISSURSKI: I took the summer off as well, actually. I chose not to do sophomore summer on campus. It was kind of a difficult choice, I guess, but I had an incredible opportunity, which I thought I shouldn't have missed, and I think it was totally worth it.

The Dickey Center has a partnership with ThinkImpact, which is an organization running kind of educational trips to Africa and now Latin America, where college students go to a small village, working with local people, and together trying to improve life in some way in this village through a design thinking approach and, like, a social business approach.

So this was an absolutely incredible experience. I was lucky to be with three other Dartmouth students there, as well as several students from different schools in the United States. I'm still very good friends with those people. We keep in touch. They're some of the most inspiring and inspirational people that I know. We share a lot of cool books and readings and projects and ideas, and it's really, really, really great to have them just as friends.

We try to travel together from time to time. We had a couple of reunions in New York and other places. But it was an incredible summer. I did a lot of reflection and journaling, which was great. It was honestly incredible not to have the Internet on your laptop and your cell phone. And I journalized every night, almost every night. And maybe in the beginning it was, like, two or three times a week, but then by the end, I was journaling every night for, like probably an hour. It was incredible.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And I wish I could do that at Dartmouth, but honestly, between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. I just stay on my computer. And maybe I do cool stuff. I still read cool articles which are thought-provoking and so on. But, I don't know, I really value
documenting my experiences, and it was great to have my entire summer, like, on paper. And not only do you have that for, like, from me, for the years to come and maybe even, who knows, my kids or something, but it also just—when I'm journaling, it makes me reflect on my experiences a little bit more critically, which is great. And in a fast-paced world, I sometimes wish I could reflect more on my experiences, as opposed to just going through them, and just by the time I have a chance to think about my previous experience, I have to face a new one.

WOMICK: Yeah.

KLISSURSKI: And perhaps it’s fine. Perhaps it’s fine. But, you know, I feel like there’s valuable things that we can learn, you can just grow as a person if you take a little more time to reflect with a journal.

WOMICK: Yeah. And so then you came and jumped right back into Dartmouth coming out of that experience?

KLISSURSKI: Yeah. And, you know, I felt very inspired. And one of the main ideas of the program was that every individual, in whatever environment they are—they have assets available to them. And if it seems like you’re, like, in a desperate position or there’s nothing you can do to improve your situation, you just need to rethink how you can use your assets to improve your situation. You can always combine them in new ways and try to innovate in some way.

But pretty much the premise is that there’s never a situation when you have no assets. There’s always something you can use and leverage in creative ways. You just have to, like, try new combinations of things.

So that was really great. I felt empowered to jump right back into Dartmouth and do well for the remaining two years. But junior fall was just a very difficult term academically. I was taking Econ 20, Econometrics, which is definitely one of my most challenging classes here. And one more econ class and another engineering class, so there’s three hard econ classes and one engineering class, which was serious. And—yeah. I just remember from that term it was difficult.
The one highlight, I guess, was that I did my first term of Presidential Scholarship research with a professor in the economics department, and that was really rewarding because I felt like I was doing real work. He gave me challenging, real projects to work on, which was literally part of his work. And that was really cool. I felt like, you know, I was part of his team. He and I were working on this cool paper.

And my task was mainly to use Disco software to manipulate a large dataset, which was really challenging, but I learned kind of like a lot through just doing stuff. He was really hands-off. He was kind of big picture, you know? He was giving the big-picture instructions, but then all the commands, all the little things I had to figure out on my own. And sometimes it was really frustrating, but there were times it was really rewarding, and I did feel like I was doing real work at Dartmouth, and that was great.

I feel like, actually, students should do more of that real stuff. I like, you know, the class assignments, but a lot of times they’re so artificial. And perhaps that’s how academia functions, but honestly, I’ll be happier if I just worked on more, like, real-life projects. That’s why I enjoy engineering a lot. And I’m an engineering and economics double major. It maybe came through. But that’s why I like engineering a lot, because especially in the design classes, 21 and 75 and 89/90, you get to choose something that you like and just create a product based on that, so, you know, that’s great.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: So that was kind of like the fall. I was in Bulgaria for winter break, came back for the winter and decided to do corporate recruiting. I was very excited to, like, you know, get a job junior winter, then, you know, I’ll be done forever with searching jobs, and my senior year will be a blast. Things didn’t turn out that way. I guess maybe my motivation for wanting to go through corporate recruiting—actually, I was looking for specifically consulting jobs, management consulting, not investment banking.

And the main reason was that, just throughout my experiences with System Dynamics, the engineering class
that I took my sophomore spring, and then ThinkImpact which was more entrepreneurship based, in South Africa, and just throughout my Dartmouth time, talking to people, it seemed to me like management consulting was a nice field where you get to work on exciting problems and solve them in a rigorous way. That’s what system dynamics was kind of about and what engineering is about, I think: problem solving.

Perhaps management consulting is more analytical because it’s, like, strategy and, you know, devise strategies. But I like this thing of: There’s a problem, you go out into the field, you collect data on the current situation, and then you think about the data, you analyze it, perhaps with some statistics and draw some conclusions, and then you form steps of action. That is what consultants do in management consulting. That’s why it was really appealing to me.

Yes, it’s for business problems, which is a relatively narrow field, and in engineering we do it for technical problems, but in something like the system dynamics field, you can do it for all sorts of socioeconomic, environmental problems, and it’s really cool. So that’s why I wanted to apply for a management consulting internship. I thought it would be just a good work experience.

Of course, as it happens, I didn’t get any of those internships because, first of all, I applied to very few firms, but second of all, it’s a very competitive and difficult process. And that was nice, actually; it was nice because it showed me that, obviously, again, things don’t work out according to plan, and it also allowed me to explore a wider range of options in terms of internships and just jobs and careers.

And while I was a little bit miserable during the winter [chuckles], getting rejected from the eight firms that I applied to, you know, it also motivated me to look to a lot of other things, so at the beginning of the spring term I applied to a variety of other jobs and things. And I was very, very lucky to actually get selected for a Paganucci Fellowship at the Tuck School here, which is absolutely incredible, first of all because it combines my interests in strategy consulting and perhaps international development or economic development in lower-income countries, so in a way,
actually, that was the best internship I could get because I'm not just interested in consulting for, like, any business problems. To be honest, I would be very miserable being stuck in, like, a tobacco company case. That would be miserable,—

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: —as much as I like problem solving.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: So the Paganucci Fellowship was extremely exciting because it allowed you to leverage this type of problem-solving, analytical approach with, you know, trying to solve a problem within the international development field. So that was extremely exciting. And that’s kind of like my junior summer.

One more thing year, I guess, about junior spring was I took my econ seminar in labor economics, which most people take as seniors, but I took it as a junior. It was great because, first, I was able to do an independent study on whatever—or an independent research paper on whatever I wanted. I looked at, actually, life satisfaction and happiness in Bulgaria. It’s very interesting because a lot of times, you know, there’s rankings of, like, happiness in different countries.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And Bulgaria is consistently one of the lowest, and especially when you look at happiness per income level, so for the amount of money that we have compared to other nations, we have the lowest amount of happiness per dollar of income, which is very crazy. So I wanted to look into that and why that is.

Didn’t quite get to the answer of why, but I found, through my paper, that people in the countryside are significantly unhappier than the people in the city in Bulgaria, and females are unhappier than males, which is interesting to me and signals kind of like perhaps some discrimination.
And there was one more finding, which I can’t remember now. But I think what’s most interesting to me is the rural part because I think that, you know, before 1989, during communism, agriculture was a really flourishing field, and there was this perception of people in the county as pretty much almost as well off as anybody else, and there wasn’t that much of a difference between people working in the country and people working in the city. Everybody had a comfortable life.

But after ’89, the whole agricultural sector just collapsed, and now rural areas are much more poor, and I think that kind of like—because the majority of the population still lives kind of in small towns except for the 25 percent living in the capital—a lot of those people are just severely unhappy now, and I think it’s from this change of—you know. They used to have a comfortable life back in the day, 20 years ago, and now they face high unemployment, no jobs in their small towns. And that’s actually part of the reason why a whole million people moved from the country to the city over the past 20 years.

WOMICK: Mm-hm. Wow.

KLISSURSKI: So that was cool.

But also the seminar was great because I took it with Professor David Blanchflower, who is a very, very renowned expert and economist. He is British and served on the Bank of England, which is the central bank of England. Now he serves as an adviser to the Boston Fed, which is just crazy. And every week he’s on Bloomberg TV, talking about something. He writes for The Guardian; he has a column every week. But he was all down to earth and just, like, talking to us and, like, working with us. He was actually super chill, cracking jokes all the time. It was kind of funny.

But what was really cool was that, because he’s British, he talked a lot about the European Union and about Bulgaria, and for me this was just, like, really cool to be in an econ class where a professor actually just knew a little bit more about my country and my continent and my context, because most of the classes are really just U.S. centered. And that’s fine, of course. But it was kind of neat to have a professor
who kind of was more aware of what’s going on with what I care about.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And then the summer. I’m not sure if I—should I go briefly through the Paganucci Scholarship?

WOMICK: Go.

KLISSURSKI: It was an absolutely incredible experience. Now, when I look back on it, I’m very happy that I didn’t those other internships. Where to start?

Great team. We had six students, all of them exceptional individuals. I enjoyed working with them. We worked closely with three Tuck professors, who were also just wonderful, phenomenal, so supportive of us, so nice, so knowledgeable. Made our experience an absolute pleasure but also very rigorous and rewarding and challenging.

The project was—you know, we had an organization that we consulted for and were trying to help with their strategy, and the organization is called Instiglio. They’re a nonprofit based in Colombia, the country. And they were actually founded by a Dartmouth ’08 and a Dartmouth ’09, which is really exciting. They’re only about two years old, but it was super neat. And, actually, one of the co-founders was a Paganucci Fellow six years ago, in the first Paganucci Fellowship in 2007 or ’08 or something.

WOMICK: Huh.

KLISSURSKI: So that’s super, super neat. So he was our client, in a sense, which is a great kind of full circle.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: It was incredible to work with them because they’re in this cutting-edge field of social impact bonds, which is just a fancy name for getting private-sector money to finance socially significant projects in a little bit of a complicated way, with the involvement of the government as well. But it’s this innovative scheme which seems to be very promising now.
And it started off in the U.K., and now it’s more popular in the U.S. There’s a couple of projects underway.

And Instiglio—it was trying to bring this innovative instrument to Colombia and, through that, kind of I guess countries in the global south. And that was really exciting because they were in a totally new field. They had to, you know, work with Colombian politicians, in the social sector and people down on the ground. And Instiglio—kind of their vision is to help start a few projects in Colombia but also in Latin America and potentially Africa and Asia.

So our job as the Paganucci team was to help them focus and decide whether—in which specific geographies they will have the biggest impact—maybe, you know, within Asia, Africa and Latin America—in which countries and regions they should focus their efforts and in which countries they should wait for now, because they’re a very young organization. You know, they can’t operate everywhere.

And the other main aspect was in which social spheres they should connect projects. So should they have projects in education or health care or environment or something else? And for all these kind of questions, we conducted a lot of research and talked to a lot of experts in really cool organizations like the World Bank and the Gates Foundation and other organizations—they provided us with data and with, you know, their expertise, so we were able to inform our research and then make hopefully valid recommendations to Instiglio.

In fact, I have to mention that President Kim was kind enough to respond to our e-mail, and he’ll connect us with a few people at the World Bank that we could talk to, just as experts, which was really great, and we didn’t expect it because, you know, he’d already started at the World Bank and was no longer working on Dartmouth. But it was nice of him to respond to a group of five Dartmouth students.

WOMICK: Yep.

KLISSURSKI: And then I came back for senior fall. I was coming off of the summer. You know, I was extremely motivated to finally get
that consulting job. I was now more than ever sure that that would be a great experience for the beginning of my career.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And this time was better. I got interviews at all the firms that I wanted but, unfortunately, after the interviewing process still didn’t get my top choices, which is totally cool, though, and fine. So I didn’t get the management consulting jobs. I did end up with an offer from an economic consulting firm. It’s called NERA. It’s the biggest, actually, economic consulting firm, and it’s a very well-respected firm in the industry.

And I will be doing antitrust consulting, so this means that every time there is a concern for a monopoly or, like, an oligopoly or there’s a merger or an acquisition which, you know, shouldn’t be happening because a firm will get too big and the consumers will be hurt in terms of prices, you know, my firm would be hired by either kind of those companies that are merging or, like, the Department of Justice, who’s investigating the case. And we’ll have to conduct economic research and, again, provide numbers and data to quantify how much consumer welfare would be detracted or by what amount the price would rise, you know, if this merger were to happen, or already, like, what are the damages to consumers by this monopoly.

I’m excited about this job because it will provide me with some really hard quantitative skills, which I think is very important in today’s world. Being an econ and engineering major, I like the hard numbers when I’m forming any decision that I make.

But I’m also excited because I believe that a lot of, you know, problems in the developing countries but specifically Bulgaria stem from the fact that, while there may be a capitalistic system set up, it’s really a crony capitalism where there’s oligarchs and oligopolies and monopolies controlling a large part of the market and in this way not only hurting consumers by high prices but stifling entrepreneurship and people trying to provide employment opportunities for many other people.

So for me, wanting to go back to Bulgaria and address some of those issues of, you know, reduced competition—it’s a
really exciting opportunity to be able to gain some experience in the U.S. first. Yeah. So I feel good about that job.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And I have said that senior winter was my best term—you know, the best term that I had. Number two comes sophomore fall. But senior winter so far has been best term. All my three classes were extremely interesting. I took Public Economics with Charlie Wheelan, who is an incredible professor and an author that I love. I have read three of his books: *Naked Economics*, *Naked Statistics* and *The Centrist Manifesto*. And a great class. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Product Design (Engineering 75), where I was able to do three projects where I actually built products for—things that I wanted to build.

And I took German 10, which was just a cool thing because I like German, and I want to be able to speak German, and I really picked it up, you know? I took German 3 here, but I was nowhere near fluent, so in the beginning of the term, when I started with German, I was terrible. And I really, really improved by the end of the term, which was great, and I’m trying to keep up my German. So that was really rewarding to me.

And I also went skiing a lot, took advantage of Dartmouth and the outdoors and the winter and the snow, and that made me really happy—you know, having great classes, skiing all the time, and I just—I felt very comfortable socially, so that was great.

WOMICK: Thinking about all of your time at Dartmouth, how do you think you’ve changed since coming here?

KLISSURSKI: Wow. Yeah, I always like to think about these a little bit more, but I think—I’m not sure if that presents a change, but one thing that I feel strongly about is always considering multiple perspectives on any issue. I do have my biases and my convictions, perhaps, but I always try to make sure that I consider others’ opinions, especially—you know, I think about economic and political issues a lot, and I try not to
dismiss perhaps ideologies which don't align exactly with me, so I kind of think that I'm a little bit a centrist, right? — in terms of the economic, political spectrum. But I love engaging myself in the far left's argument or the far right's, which I'm — neither the far left nor the far right I'm a fan of particularly, but I love thinking about them and hearing them and really thinking critically about how it fits in what I believe in, and whether I can learn something. I'm trying to give them the benefit of the doubt and see perhaps maybe that they're right.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: So, yeah, I don't think I specifically felt that way about things before. I guess when I was in high school and when I started Dartmouth, I thought there would be one right answer, and I was always searching for some truth, and — I like math a lot, a I mentioned, so I thought, *Well, you just solve the problem, you know? You can figure it out, no?* But coming to Dartmouth has really made me realize that to a lot of questions, especially when you're dealing with humans, which is what I'm interested in, there would probably be no right answer, which is really good to keep in mind.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: So that's one change, I think.

Another one is I think I've become confident and empowered that if I set my mind to a project or to an issue, I can really tackle that problem and I can contribute in a major way to resolving this issue or improving the situation. And I recognize that a lot of times I might fail or not being able to improve the situation, but I absolutely, hundred percent feel like I'm going to jump in and try my best. I don't feel bound to anything, and I don't feel like I should restrain myself from attempting.

And I think that's super powerful. I think that comes from, you know, experiences like ThinkImpact, where we literally went to a village in rural Africa and tried to work with local people in innovating and starting up a small business, you know? And programs like the Great Issues Scholars at the Dickey Center just provided me with multiple examples of
people who had gone out in the field and pursued really cool projects and tackled really serious issues.

So I don’t know. Perhaps it’s a little bit of a—it’s great that I have the confidence. Perhaps it’s a little bit of a self-righteous, like, Oh, I go to Dartmouth. I can do anything thing. But regardless, I think it’s great. I think more people should set their minds on things that they feel passionate about and go out and try to do their best.

The one thing that really just bugs me is when people either feel miserable or feel strongly about something but they feel like they can’t do anything about it. And I agree. I recognize sometimes it might be impossible or you might try and fail, but I think, you know, you should always give it a try. And I’m glad that I feel that way, myself, about things that I feel strongly about.

Other changes? I guess just being flexible and being okay with things not going according to plan. Yeah, I don’t—I mean, I plan stuff out and kind of have a vague idea of what I might wanna do, but I absolutely recognize that it might not turn out that way, and that’s totally fine.

And this has served me well. I’m happy—you know, I guess when I’m thinking about going back to Bulgaria and doing projects there—you know, who knows? Maybe five years from now I might want to remain in the U.S. I don’t know how things will work out professionally and on a personal level. But, yeah, I have my plan, but I know that anything might happen in terms of professional development.

Same socially. I mean, in terms of, like, friends and relationships. I used to be really bothered both by the fact that,—you know, for a couple of years I felt like I didn’t have a really small group of friends that I felt really strongly connected to, and that really bothered me because I did have that in high school back in Bulgaria.

And the other thing which bothered me was that I didn’t have, like, a very fulfilling relationship at any point at Dartmouth in terms of, like, romantically. I guess it was a little bit romantic or naïve of me, but I always thought, like,
Oh, I’m gonna meet some girl, and it’s gonna be a great relationship, and it’s gonna be great.

So neither of those things really happened, at least not in the first couple years, and it was really bugging me. But while, you know, I still don’t think it was great that it turned out that way, I think it was beneficial to me to realize that, you know, you can be a little bit at peace with yourself, even if you don’t have, like, a great relationship for four years. That’s probably okay. And it might come at some point. It might not come at some point. I think that’s cool. And that just makes me feel better about myself and about going with my life. I think I can do the things that I like better when I’m not worried about these things.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: So I think these are some of the ways in which I have changed while at Dartmouth.

WOMICK: We already touched on this a little bit, but have there been any times when you didn’t feel like you fit in here?

KLISSURSKI: Well, definitely at the end of my freshman fall. Yeah, I just felt a little bit estranged from some people on my floor, and—yeah, perhaps not that I didn’t fit but that I didn’t belong.

In terms of not fitting in, I was a little bit anxious coming in, just—I was wondering how people would react to my accent and how that might turn out in terms of friends and girls or just socially, but I think I was a little bit self-conscious about it the first couple terms, maybe the entire freshman year, but for the most part, people were very nice, and it was really never a big deal. And I don’t think, like, people shied away from me or anything because of my accent.

I think—yeah, maybe freshman year or even the beginning of sophomore year, I had a couple of instances when, like, I would be talking to girls in louder spaces, and, like, they couldn’t understand what I was saying, and they would, like, kind of like, “Uh…” and go somewhere else, and I was, like, Ugh! Great, you know. But that went away, I think. And honestly—again, it’s one of those things where I have learned to live with it. I think it’s totally fine. I know that
people recognize it right away and hear it, but when I don’t feel self-conscious about it and I still feel confident in the way I speak and the ideas I express, I think that makes people comfortable and willing to engage with me.

I think it’s a neat little experiment because—you know, that’s very benign. You have an accent. That’s kind of like one of my differences and one of the ways in which I’m different. But I think I still manage to, for the most part, be confident and appear confident, and people all of a sudden don’t care about my accent.

I think people who are different in other ways—racially or backgrounds, socioeconomically, whatever it may be—sometimes—and I know it’s hard, and I have no idea what they’re going through, but sometimes they feel self-conscious about it. And of course. Maybe it’s natural. I mean, they’re having hard times. They have grown up in very difficult ways, and coming to this seemingly perfect environment, they might feel intimidated. But I do believe that if you believe in yourself and you’re confident regardless of your backgrounds and maybe things that socially are accepted as different and whatever, you can thrive here.

And that’s about the other thing that bugs me. When a girl doesn’t speak up in class just because, Well, I’m a girl. You know?

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: And I have felt that way with my accent. Oh, maybe I’m not gonna speak up now ‘cause, like, I’m gonna sound funny or people are not gonna understand me. But you know what? Like, screw that!

WOMICK: [Chuckles.]

KLISSURSKI: Like, I’m gonna speak up, and I don’t care how I sound, because at the end of the days, it’s, like, my ideas that matter. And just because I have an accent or just because I’m a girl or something does not, like, make my ideas any less valid than anybody else’s ideas. So, yeah, that’s kind of my take on not fitting in.
And I absolutely recognize it’s not so easy. It’s not, like, *Oh, I feel confident, and I can say everything*. But I wish people found a little bit more inner kind of confidence.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: Yeah.

WOMICK: Do you think there are people who have an easier time feeling confident at Dartmouth?

KLISSURSKI: Yeah, yeah, of course. I mean,—yes. You know, just as an econ major and a social science person, I’m always fascinated by this question of nature versus nurture, or kind of like how much of your behavior comes from you personally, inherently, who you are, and how much comes from the environment that you’re placed in. And, you know, perhaps some people are just inherently super-confident and others are not. But perhaps Dartmouth is an environment which really makes it difficult for people who are not as confident to speak out. But perhaps Dartmouth is not this environment. Perhaps Dartmouth is a very great environment where some people are inherently, by nature, not confident.

And I don’t know, but I’m guessing it’s a combination of both the environment and your nature. And I can certainly recognize that, you know, the way people have grown up in certain environments, they have become more confident and that now, coming into Dartmouth, they feel more confident already, so they’re at a different playing field already, just by virtue of the way they’ve grown up.

So I absolutely recognize that. I just wish kind of like—I want more people who had, like, difficult times or, like, weren’t as confident—I want them to feel empowered to be more confident. And I recognize that sometimes when there are people who are super-confident, that actually makes it even more difficult for the other people to feel confident. But, yeah, I just wish sometimes people could forget about the social pressures for, like, *Oh, what are they thinking?* You know. Yeah.
WOMICK: Are there any ways that you’ve seen the community here change during your four years?

KLISSURSKI: I guess. I guess. Well, I’m not sure. There have been changes on campus, absolutely, in terms of climate and what students are bringing up to the attention of other students and the administration, which has been fascinating.

In terms of, like, the community over all, I’m not sure we have changed. I’m not sure we have changed. But, again, what individual groups or individuals are bringing up to the attention of everybody has changed, absolutely, comparing especially my first two years to now, junior and senior year. And I think that has been powerful.

What I like most is that people have become a little bit more critical because Dartmouth is great, and also Dartmouth has flaws, and I think we need to recognize both sides. I don’t like recognizing either the greatness of Dartmouth only or just the problems. But I think that when we are more critical about both, the strengths of Dartmouth and its weaknesses, it’s more beneficial to everyone. And I think we’ve been lucky to have students bring up a lot of very important issues to Dartmouth.

So at least our community has become a little bit more aware, and somehow more people are thinking about the way we go about in our daily lives. But not everyone. And I’m not sure if we are stronger as a community or if we feel more united or if we feel closer to each other. But this may—this may happen in the future.

WOMICK: Yeah.

So thinking ahead to your soon-to-be role as an alum of the College, how do you see yourself being involved, or not, after graduation?

KLISSURSKI: Well, that’s a very important question, I think. One way in which I will absolutely be involved is encouraging Bulgarian students to apply, not only to Dartmouth but to other liberal arts schools.
And I think one thing that I didn’t talk about was my work back in Bulgaria throughout my Dartmouth career. I have a couple of projects going on, mostly related to my high school and education, but right now there’s this exciting initiative that I’m part of where we want to encourage more Bulgarian students, if they’re going to apply to universities abroad, to apply to liberal arts colleges in the United States. We think that—the people I work with—there are a couple of other graduates of my high school in other Ivy League schools—we just think that, you know, as opposed to going to a state school, like, in Germany or in the U.K. or even, like, a private school in those countries, there is a very narrow focus on your academic field of study and not as much of a consideration about broader societal issues and, honestly, just the way the world works. [Chuckles.]

And we think it would be great for more Bulgarian students, if they want to go abroad anyways, to come to a liberal arts institution like Dartmouth because, even though we have majors here, we do take classes in multiple other departments, and even if you just forget and scrap all the classes, you talk to people about issues in society and in the world. Even those conversations we’re having about campus climate are so invaluable to I think every Dartmouth student going into the real world that—you know.

One of the things I’ll be pushing for as an alum is more Bulgarian students trying to come here. So I’ll be probably interviewing Bulgarian students. I’ll be encouraging them. I’ll be reaching out to my high school and other high schools. So that’s one part of it, working in a collaboration kind of like with the admissions and the alumni office.

Another way in which I’ll be involved is I think professionally, just helping out people with perhaps career guidance or, you know, if they need help with résumés and cover letters, connecting them with people that I know at any other—or just projects. I love—you know, if somebody has a project or research or whatever they’re doing or if they’re applying for a job or an internship, I think it’s really cool to help connect them with people already.

Like, you know, I was talking about Instiglio, who are alums. And one of their co-founders—he connected me, or he e-
mailed me a month ago, asking, oh, like, you know, “We’re looking at this organization that have a really cool project on these fisheries social impact bond. And I see that this Dartmouth ’13, Uti [Utkarsh Agarwal] is working there. Do you know him? Can you connect me with him?” And I was, like, “Yeah, of course.” And I connected them, and I think that’s super neat. So things like that are really cool.

Now, when it comes to more specifically Dartmouth life and influencing kind of like life at Dartmouth for students, I don’t know how I can be involved exactly, super directly, but I’m definitely interested in, you know, efforts just, like, in terms of why Dartmouth changes and social life at Dartmouth, but also specifically with a few organizations that I’m involved with: SigEp and Casque and Gauntlet.

I think Casque and Gauntlet is an easy kind of like organization to stay involved with and to help them because they’re always, like, a little bit socially conscious and so on, so that would be good.

I currently am an intern for the senior class gift, so I have been working a little bit with the Dartmouth College Fund. I’m mostly doing this because, as I mentioned, I’m here on financial aid, and I just am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be here, given my financial circumstances. So I think for me it’s very important to make sure that more students who cannot afford Dartmouth can come here and benefit from the incredible education. So I might be involved with the Dartmouth College Fund in various ways. I’m not sure if I will be.

There is the senior executive committee, which I didn’t apply for because it’s more like social and planning alumni reunions and stuff like that, so I’m not going to be involved directly with that, at least not for now.

But I’ll be interested in being involved in Dartmouth. Yeah. I’m not sure what platforms there might be for, like, you know, channeling my opinions and so on. I know of a couple organizations. I think there is, like, one Dartmouth organization—Dartmouth for Change, or Change Dartmouth?
WOMICK: Mm-hm. Dartmouth Change?

KLISSURSKI: Dartmouth Change. So that’s a very interesting platform, I think, in my opinion. And, of course, there is the ones more associated with the college, like all those class reps and obviously the board of trustees and those groups.

WOMICK: Mm-hm.

KLISSURSKI: But, again, I’m not quite sure yet how they work. And I might be interested in either of those organizations later on.

WOMICK: That covers all the questions that I had for you, but is there anything else that you haven’t gotten a chance to talk about yet and you’d like to?

KLISSURSKI: I think I said mostly everything, but, again, I think—looking back, there were ups and downs at Dartmouth, but I would not want to be at any other college. I think I would come here again, knowing what Dartmouth is like. And I’m lucky to be able to say that, but I feel very strongly about it. It’s been an incredible four years, and just having the opportunity to live with other Dartmouth students has been incredible.

And, again, the opportunity to feel like I have grown as a person and to feel a little bit more empowered has been extremely beneficial to me. So, you know, I have one more term, but I can for sure say that Dartmouth is a very, very important part of my life, and I will be very happy to stay involved, and I will definitely think very gladly of my four years here. And, you know, as I go along with my life, the years I spent at Dartmouth will always be really important years for me, and I will be drawing on the lessons that I learned out here.

WOMICK: I guess tagging off of that real quick,—

KLISSURSKI: Yeah.

WOMICK: —if you could offer advice to the incoming freshman class, the Class of 2018, what would it be?

KLISSURSKI: Wow. Yeah. I thought about this a little bit, but—I think I should think about it more. But one thing that I feel very
strongly about is take classes with professors that you know are good, because a lot of times when I had to choose between,—you know, there might be a class that I’m interested in, but then term one professor will teach it then the other term, a different professor. Most of the time, I took it with the professor that I heard better things about, and it was totally worth it. And the few times when I took it with the other professor, it was miserable. I think it’s very important, you know, above anything else: Take the classes with the professors who you know will be great. So don’t rush trying to fit something for a requirement or for your major. And sometimes it happens, but when you can, really prioritize the professors. So that’s one thing.

Another thing is take advantage of PE classes. And I know that some of them are expensive, and for me, as a financial aid student, that has been a little bit of an issue. I think they were talking about providing more financial aid for that or something, as part of the very, very recent discussions. I’m not sure what the stance is right now. I think actually even currently you do get a little bit of financial aid for that. Anyways, if you can figure out the money—and you should always ask the Financial Aid Office for help—definitely take advantage of those classes.

They’re incredible, because, you know, this past term I did cross-country skiing, and it was phenomenal. I picked up a new skill, and I felt like I improved a lot by the end of it. And now I feel like I can go and, like, later on in my life I can go on a cross-country skiing vacation and it will be super fun, and it’s great.

You know, I’m thinking about doing climbing now in the spring, another one of those. I was considering kayaking. There’s a lot of other really cool classes. And skiing—again, downhill. Sailing in the summer. So these are all really cool things that we usually don’t get to do or have never been able to do before and might not be able to do again in the future. Some of them are really expensive outside of Dartmouth. And a lot of them are really fun and rewarding, I think. So I would encourage people to take interesting PE classes.
And other advice: Don’t get too stressed out and bogged down. You know, there will be ups and downs, but—and everybody’s experience is different, of course, but I think that, you know, by senior year a lot of people recognize that while there have been a lot of harsh moments, overall perhaps it’s been worth it.

And the other thing which I want to say is that if there is something cool that you want to do on campus, don’t wait for next year or for your senior year to do it. If you want to, like, you know, do the DPP retreat or something cool, do it your sophomore year. I have been postponing this thing for two years now, and I didn’t apply for it in the winter because I was busy again. And I’m not sure if it’s gonna happen this term. So, for example, it may be one thing that I really want to do but will never do. And it’s okay. Like, you get to talk about those issues perhaps in other settings.

You know, don’t stress out. Like, it’s not the end of the world. But if you want to do something cool, just do it now. Four years go by incredibly fast, and you pile up projects and you start postponing cool things, and by the time you’re a senior, you might not have time for all of them. So don’t think, like, you have a lot of time in front of you. The four years will go by fast. Do the cool things now.

WOMICK: Excellent. Thank you.

KLISSURSKI: So that’s all I got.

WOMICK: Okay.

KLISSURSKI: Thank you.

[End of interview.]