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Salvatore Ciolino  
*Gettysburg College*

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## Interview with Salvatore Ciolino, July 9, 2002

### Description

Salvatore Ciolino was interviewed on July 9, 2002 by Michael Birkner about his time at Gettysburg College when Charles Glassick was president. He discussed his position as director of Financial Aid during the 1970's-1980's.

**Length of Interview:** 73 minutes

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### Keywords

Charles E. Glassick, gettysburg college, financial aid

### Disciplines

Educational Administration and Supervision | Education Economics | Higher Education | Liberal Studies | Oral History

**Michael Birkner interview with Salvatore Ciolino, July 9, 2002.**

**This interview was conducted as part of Birkner's research for a pamphlet, The Presidency of Charles Glassick: An Appraisal, published by Musselman Library in 2002. What follows is an edited transcription of that interview.**

**Birkner:** This is July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002. I'm Michael Birkner. I'm sitting in the office of Salvatore Ciolino, the Institutional Research Officer, here in Pennsylvania Hall. We're going to be talking about the Glassick presidency. Sal, we just were talking about the fact that you are entering your 32<sup>nd</sup> year at Gettysburg College. So you were already here, working in the financial aid when Charles Glassick arrived in the fall of 1977. Were you a financial aid officer at the time that he came to Gettysburg?

**Ciolino:** Yes, I was. I was director of Financial Aid and working with me was a staff of two support staff people.

**Birkner:** What was your first interaction with Charles Glassick?

**Ciolino:** The very first interaction was a bit unfortunate. I had to schedule a meeting with him to inform him that we had been cited by the U.S. Department of Education for an oversight which had to be corrected. And he understood completely and authorized me to take corrective action as soon as possible and that we did. It was something that many colleges were cited for. And basically student earnings were not subtracted from their total need and



colleges were not monitoring that independent student earnings. But the law changed and we had to do that.

**Birkner:** OK. So you had to go in and just take a deep breath and tell him this?

**Ciolino:** Absolutely. And that was our very first meeting.

**Birkner:** How would you describe your first impressions of Charles Glassick?

**Ciolino:** I thought he was together, very much together. He understood the institution before he got here. As you know, he himself attended Franklin & Marshall College and was the Provost at the University of Richmond prior to coming here. And so he knew very well what kind of institution we were and what our needs were. And so it was no surprise to me when I met with him on that day that he was already familiar with the issue, which I didn't expect him to be.

**Birkner:** When I spoke with Glassick about what he considered to be the great challenge or opportunity of his presidency, coming here in the late 1970s, he said something that was interesting and that in some way must connect to your job. And that is, he had to learn how to "cope with the downward slope." He was referring to this demographic slide in the number of eligible 18 year olds who might go to a liberal arts college and the fear that in the worst-case scenario the weakest liberal arts colleges would actually falter and die. And you were in the business of helping attract students to Gettysburg College through your financial aid role. To what extent did you quickly get into that realm with him? He's talking about managing



enrollment downward and managing financial aid to maximize our yield and so forth. Could you comment on that?

**Ciolino:** Yeah. Shortly after he arrived, we had a meeting regarding just that issue. The demographics were very clear. The number of eligible college bound students was going to decline very rapidly and it would not be a change until the late 1990s. And as a result he wanted me to put in place some, some ways of monitoring what was happening in financial aid. He had a saying at the time, which was that by overcompensating in financial aid, we might mask an admissions problem. However he recognized that by making more aid available it would expand the number of people that might be eligible to attend Gettysburg. And with that in mind over the next three years he set out to create the enrollment management division. It was Enrollment and Educational Services, which included all the components involved. It included financial aid. It included admissions, athletics (because of their recruitment and visibility), and it also included academic advisement.

**Birkner:** Would you mind giving me the name of that new agency that he's establishing again?

**Ciolino:** It was the Division of Enrollment and Educational Services, he called it at the time.

**Birkner:** Division of Enrollment and Educational Services. Is that the division that Frank Williams would head?

**Ciolino:** Yes.

**Birkner:** And was Frank Williams the first person to be in that new role?

**Ciolino:** Yes.





**Birkner:** OK. And where did you go? Did you go into that division?

**Ciolino:** I went into that division and I wore several hats. I was Associate Dean of Enrollment of Educational Services, Director of Financial Aid, and also responsible for automating the administration and institutional research.

**Birkner:** That's a lot of things to do.

**Ciolino:** It was. The idea was that we would get some help to deal with Financial Aid. We would then begin the process of automating the administration, which was very important in order to streamline the admissions and financial aid operations, as well as registration, and also to become more efficient in our contacts. As those areas became self-sufficient, I got out and supervised them. And then settled in at the institutional research side, which was multi [faceted]. First and foremost was marketing and enrollment research, followed by student satisfaction research and assessment research, all of which fed on one another in order to make sure that we got the right students who were happy and would be retained.

**Birkner:** Had you been doing any of this student satisfaction and assessment research before this change in the division of enrollment services or was that a new responsibility?

**Ciolino:** It was a completely new responsibility. The reason I got involved with it initially, which preceded the division, was because of my doctoral work where I had developed some models in just that area. And I had been working as a consultant for the Commission for Independent Colleges and Universities, which is a president's organization, basically putting together some studies that might be helpful statewide for us to understand what was happening to private



higher education. Let me point out during that period some colleges were too far behind the curve and oh I would say about half a dozen colleges closed during that period of time between 1975 and 1985.

**Birkner:** We're seeing, of course, another wave of these closures right now, the smallest colleges, including some that have been around for a while. Particularly little Catholic colleges, but not only Catholic colleges. And that was a concern then, that if we didn't be proactive and get ahead of the curve, we could wind up being crushed by whatever the demographics were going to produce over the next ten years. Let me back up a second, and I realize that you have a limited purchase on the question I'm going to ask you, but I'm just curious. I have the impression that things had slowed down considerably at this institution in the last years of Carl Arnold Hanson's presidency. We had weathered the storm, if you will, of the Vietnam era but the period, let's say '73 to '77, was not an era of much institutional dynamism. Is that a reasonable assessment on my part?

**Ciolino:** I think so. I think the key words during that time were steady state, stability, equality. Give you an example, no department could go out and raise, try to raise any money for a project because every department was going to be treated equally. No department was to rise above others. We had reached a point of I would say stagnation.

**Birkner:** And part of it, of course, President Hanson was not only older but increasingly in ill health. He was not even as active as he'd been earlier in raising money. Our library campaign was pretty much stagnant. We were not making the progress toward building a building. So it was time for a new leader, right?



**Ciolino:** Yes, it was.

**Birkner:** And Glassick comes in in his mid-40s and has some energy and some ideas.

**Ciolino:** Well, you know something that happened during that time though was that it wasn't for Arnold's lack of ideas as much as it was a lack of support. There were a number of people who had felt that our athletic program suffered under Arnold Hanson and as a result they were critical of him and did not support him in other ways.

**Birkner:** I've noticed that, in fact I just wrote about that this morning, that I had the sense that certain people who tangled with him on different issues, some of them felt for example he was too "lenient" on student protesters, resolved that they were not going to give money. As an example, the man who wrote the college song was a longtime trustee and I just discovered in Hanson's papers a letter he wrote angrily attacking the student protesters and saying that he would not give the college anything. Hanson wrote him a letter that was surprisingly unsympathetic to the man's point of view, and the man wrote back an even nastier letter and then they had to work it out. So I think you were right, there was some baggage there and that hurt. In dealings with Glassick, what kinds of words come to your mind in terms of what you're thinking about this guy? I don't want to put words in your mouth, but, you know, are words like 'energetic' or 'purposeful' words that are appropriate? What words did you think of when you thought of Glassick?

**Ciolino:** I think he was very focused, he was very efficient. He was energetic, purposeful. He had a vision of what he believed the institution could become and a vision of what his role in



becoming that, that he would have. And at that point in time when he saw his role waning, he decided it was time to retire.

**Birkner:** What kind of a vision is it? Just that Gettysburg is going to be good or is it something that you could put more flesh on? I mean, what was the vision for?

**Ciolino:** He believed that Gettysburg could be among the top 50 to 75 liberal arts colleges, that it was a good institution, a strong institution which regrettably was underendowed. He simply didn't have the resources to do the kind of job that our competitors were able to do. And despite that, we produced a very strong, solid graduate. And what he saw was [that] our facilities and our financial resources were at a point that we could achieve even more. I think if you look at the focus during these years [there was achievement] – the physical plant, improvement in the faculty, improvement in the endowment, improvement in the student body, and attracting very qualified administrators.

**Birkner:** That's a fairly good laundry list. Let me take one of these pieces for starters, and that is the issue of endowment and the institution's financial position. In 1977, our endowment was about \$3 million but Arnold Hanson had what some people called a rainy day fund for an accumulation of end of year positions, surpluses, whatever you want to call it, that was apparently about \$9 million more. Were you aware of the \$9 million being out there or did that just suddenly surface?

**Ciolino:** No, it was very open and known. We had two budget processes. We had a regular budget process where allocations were made and at the end of every year, if there was money left over a certain percent of it went into this reserve and a part of it was reallocated according





to the requests that were made, to achieve some other goals. The problem really was that they were not tagged to endowment or some other purpose; they were just rainy day funds, as you said. It was a reserve. When Charlie Glassick arrived, he recognized that a \$3 million endowment was really a very, very poor endowment and determined at that point that these end of year surpluses that had accumulated really should have gone into a quasi-endowment, an unrestricted endowment. And therefore, by doing that, our endowment could grow with some money that is raised internally, rather than only growing by external gifts and asset appreciation. And some of those reserves were accumulations of unspent financial aid dollars, Gettysburg College money that had been budgeted and a financial aid reserve was set up for some of those funds.

**Birkner:** So you're saying some of the money was ticketed to financial aid?

**Ciolino:** Yes.

**Birkner:** Let me back up on that point. What was your perception of the position we were in in the mid-70s in terms of recruiting students? I realize you were not the director of admissions and I don't know that you had all the data for that but you were in the middle of the action because you were trying to recruit the people we most wanted to get here, packaging financial aid in a way that would be attractive to them. What's your take on our standing as far as recruitment of students in the mid-70s was concerned?

**Ciolino:** Our standing was pretty good, but the demographics were declining. Institutions in the mid part of the country, like Carleton, were suffering under enrollments and they were clearly among the top twenty-five. And so there was a concern that if the demographics



continued to slide, and they were going to, that places like Gettysburg College that were underendowed simply didn't have the resources, would not be able to compete adequately. And so one of the reasons for doing some of the things that Charlie Glassick did was because he had already seen the evidence, he didn't need to be convinced that Gettysburg needed to look beyond where it had looked before, it needed to identify new markets. We needed to become more price competitive, our pricing structure was very, very low at that time and positioning and pricing and recruitment plus many other areas are very important how people perceive the institution and so he set forward to put in motion an organization that would be able to present the institution in a way that would be perceived to be more competitive with other institutions.

**Birkner:** How much of this was internal and how much of this did he depend on outside consultants to come in and shape this for your current staff? I mean, were you guys doing these game plans on your own or did you bring in people to tell you these things?

**Ciolino:** We started out on our own. I think we had the information we needed to begin charting the direction but we also needed some outside help, primarily where you could bring in an outside expert who can get everyone on the same page where we could work through certain issues. And after about three years that the organization was put in place, we began the process of bringing in the outside consultants. We were ready now and the consultants were very supportive and encouraging of the efforts we already had put into place and basically recommended that we expand those efforts by putting more resources into them.

**Birkner:** Such as specifically what?



**Ciolino:** Well, I was doing institutional research almost on a part-time basis. And one of the consultants recommended that we needed to do this full-time, that we needed to develop our research much more. Not that we weren't doing enough but that we could be doing more. In fact they thought that we already had exceeded some of the large universities in the kinds of things we were looking at but we were benefitting by it. Also recommended, for example, that while admissions was able to keep up that we could boost things significantly if we had an additional person in that department. Also recommended some recruiting strategies and very strongly recommended that we put a plan in place, a measurable plan, so that we could see where we were going more efficiently. And Charlie Glassick very much wanted to move in the direction of being data driven.

**Birkner:** Sal, it's hard for me to visualize what the actual change in the enrollment management was, given that Del Gustafson was exceedingly conservative in his approach to admissions. I don't know that I need to go into micro detail about it. You worked with him, you observed it, you know that he was very conservative. What kinds of changes could I point to as a historian that, aside from beefing up the admission staff or targeting financial aid a little differently, would strengthen our competitiveness in recruitment?

**Ciolino:** For one thing we went into student search. We could now buy the names and addresses of students that met our profile requirements and write to them with literature about Gettysburg College. Quite a few places were already doing that, Gettysburg had not. Gettysburg began doing that. Now I don't know if you remember, but the admissions office basement was a rock, a stone foundation that was white washed and it used to leak, let in the



rain. And the water would run down. Located in the basement were two full time secretaries with ticker tape typewriters, two ticker tape typewriters and two IBM memory Selectrics; that was it. Everything else was on paper, hard paper files. You couldn't do any sort of selects, you couldn't even do a quick "what's the profile of the applicant pool?" It was impossible. And so, one of the major things we did was to automate the administration of admissions and by doing so we eliminated duplicates. We could identify those schools where we got our best applicants. We could look at an inquiry and determine, based on their high school, we could compare them against people we have gotten from that high school in the past. We could become data driven. That made a significant difference in our operation. We could now generate hundreds of letters a day. We could now generate a letter very specifically, personalized to a particular individual, which prior to that time was very difficult to do. I mean, the acceptance letters said, "Dear Student."

**Birkner:** Right. These, of course, are technical changes that presumably any institution that is financially able to do is going to do. I mean, it wouldn't matter if it was Juniata or Dickinson or Gettysburg, they should be doing the same thing. So the question then becomes, what is the substantive idea behind admissions? I think you've given me some very good tangibles here that help me understand ways in which you can upgrade your admissions process. Was there a substantive vision? The first thing that comes to my mind is that perhaps you're going to extend your reach into New England or something like that. Is that what you were going to say?





**Ciolino:** That's part of it exactly. In fact because we were now automated, we could do an analysis of our applicant pool. We could then acquire other databases and then the questions start to come up that you answer. Why is it that you have applications from a particular high school in a certain community and across the street, not even a quarter mile away, is another community very similar to it, very similar high school and demographics and you don't get a single application? So now you can begin to plot what your recruiting strategy needs to be in order to get people from that other community. It was during that time that we determined that there was a community in New Hampshire, just north of Boston across the border that was growing --

**Birkner:** Nashua probably. Nashua was growing very fast.

**Ciolino:** Exactly. And it was growing so rapidly and the profile of those people was identical to the profile of the people we got from the suburbs in the Boston area, in Connecticut. And so it became a no brainer to be able to say, "Somebody should go up there once in a while and talk to those people."

**Birkner:** It's funny, one of my majors in History is a Nashua person so I understand what you say right away. We could extend our targets of opportunity.

**Ciolino:** Yes. Not only would then, see, and many colleges were looking at targets of opportunity outside their normal service area. They were going to the Sun Belt, the northeastern transplants, you know, Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, San Diego, Los Angeles -

**Birkner:** But even today that's not really a major source of students for us, right?



**Ciolino:** No. What we decided to do was put less emphasis on that and greater emphasis on recruiting within our own service area from those schools where we felt our students were underrepresented. We just simply didn't have as many from there. And they were good, strong, solid students. We didn't ignore these other areas but – you know, kids in Texas don't leave Texas very often.

**Birkner:** Well, I can understand that; it makes sense to me. I'm gonna guess, life being often serendipitous, that if you [looked at] a Bucks county community with a Gettysburg College graduate in that town and some kids start going to Gettysburg because of their connection with a teacher or a minister, but the next town over doesn't have that same connection, it's more of an F&M connection. So the same demographics, but one town is sending students to us and one town isn't.

**Ciolino:** Exactly.

**Birkner:** You can start breaking into that other town, right?

**Ciolino:** And that's where you use positioning because, because then you don't challenge the competition, you bring it up. We're like F&M. And see, it opens up alternatives for these other people when you get your foot in the door. When you can, because many of the guidance counselors in those schools where they were being called upon by everybody and many of them simply say that's it, we're not letting any more colleges in here, we just don't have time in the school year.



**Birkner:** Is it a fair guess that to some degree that focus that you just described more or less describes us today? That we're doing some of that today still?

**Ciolino:** We're still doing it. We continue, we started those practices, we're continuing to do them. They're being reviewed annually to be fine-tuned, but we're expanding it. There are others things that can be done now that couldn't be done then, part of it is because of technology, part is because of databases. And so it's an ongoing process.

**Birkner:** . . . When I interviewed Charles Glassick, he told me that he was not happy in the first three years of his presidency here with the performance of the director of admissions, and that he told the director of admissions that he felt the director of admissions needed to find a new job. And he told me that he would sleep on it for a night, he told the director that. Then the director of admissions came in the next day and said to him, "I'll do what I have to do, whatever it is you want me to do so that I can keep this job." Were you aware that there was a level of, a presidential discontent with admissions here? You were aware of that?

**Ciolino:** [nods]

**Birkner:** Now, Glassick's story is, well things got better and "I was much more happy." It's hard for me as an outsider to know whether that's just his current storyline or whether that's in fact true. But it was interesting to me that there was something that was not cooking in a way that he was satisfied with it. Just for the record, you're nodding your head vigorously yes as I've been talking here. Are the changes that you've just described what came out of that particular going to the woodshed with the president or were they already in process when the woodshed event happened?



**Ciolino:** I would say it was a combination of both. Some things were already under way and some other things were not. The --

[tape cuts out for a second]

**Birkner:** OK, we're rolling again. It's a fairly complicated matter, I can see. Glassick of course comes here and fundraising is his essential concern. He's gotta get the library built, for example. I don't want to rehearse all that here. I just want to get any ideas you have in terms of this business of his priorities and the whole issue of money raising, whether you have any particular story to tell or judgments to make.

**Ciolino:** Very, very clearly, raising money was a very high priority. But he needed somebody to do the preliminary work of knocking on doors. When Charlie Glassick arrived here, the entire division of college relations was, consisted of two people in public relations, one person in estate planning, one director of development and a director of alumni relations. That was it.

**Ciolino:** One person in estate planning.

**Birkner:** That was Dick Walker.

**Ciolino:** Correct. One person as director of development, Bob Butler.

**Birkner:** It took [Glassick] ten minutes to size Butler up and get rid of him.

**Ciolino:** Right. And one person as director of alumni relations. That was Bob Smith.

**Birkner:** What about Paul Peterson?





**Ciolino:** Paul Peterson at that time was assistant to the president. And he had been assistant to the president for a few years. He was Arnold Hanson's assistant.

**Birkner:** I guess he had been director of development and then he moved into assistant to Arnold.

**Ciolino:** Yes. And prior to that he was in the music department or something, I don't remember exactly.

**Birkner:** Did he play out his time here till retirement or did he leave earlier to go to something else?

**Ciolino:** He left early and went to the Minneapolis/St. Paul area to work for I think the Lutheran Brotherhood.

**Birkner:** I think you're right. What you're describing is a very small shop.

**Ciolino:** Very small and inadequate. Most colleges of our size had a much larger shop. They had created a tradition of supporting your alma mater; Gettysburg College had not. And together with that was the fact that we produced ministers and teachers in large numbers in the 1930s and 40s. We didn't have the wealth out there that some of our competitors had. And we had [fewer] people involved in raising the money. And so he reorganized that division completely by first hiring someone who could come in, who had a lot of energy, who could build a department and then a division so that we could become competitive in raising funds. And that was [his] first priority.

**Birkner:** That's our first modern fundraising shop at Gettysburg College.



**Ciolino:** Absolutely. And it wasn't until exactly about twenty years ago, it was about 1982, when that division finally got to a point where it could raise money. Not only that, they weren't automated either. And so in order to get them started quickly, they bought a stand-alone system that they could use in order to do the very same kinds of things that we were trying to do in admissions.

**Birkner:** Just as a tangent at this point, you earlier mentioned the need to automate in other areas. Was that occasion for the hiring of Dick Wood or is Dick Wood strictly on the academic side?

**Ciolino:** He was strictly academic. He had been here before that and we had an IBM 1130, it was used for academic purposes and for instruction and Dick was here for several years doing that. We did at one point go through the process of thinking that we were going to write our own software for administrative purposes and we actually had our own staff, two people, for about two years. And everyone sat down and reached the conclusion that it was impossible to do that and we probably needed to buy something that was already out there.

**Birkner:** So that's part of the issue for fundraising. I'm assuming that this is a case where leadership from the top is crucial, that he's willing to go out and shake people's hands and ask them for money, looking them in the eye, right? And he is willing to go on the road in a way that Hanson just hadn't been.

**Ciolino:** Absolutely. But he was willing to do that providing there was somebody out there who could knock on the doors, do the introduction, somebody who could qualify whether or not the



people that Charlie Glassick would visit were in fact capable of giving and willing to give. I mean, you don't send a college president to do a cold call.

**Birkner:** I could be reading it wrong but I don't think I am. [Glassick] gave me the impression that in the first years the development office was much too conservative about who he could ask and what he could ask for, that on a couple of occasions he asked for substantial amounts of money and they got in the car and he was rebuked by his development officer, saying, "You asked him for \$50,000, you shouldn't have asked him for more than \$10,000". And he tried to explain to that person that that's not the way it was going to work anymore and if necessary he was going to get a new development person. And I thought that's very interesting, because he's got a different take on money raising clearly than ever before.

**Ciolino:** Absolutely. And if you look at his record at the University of Richmond, at the time that he was there he had raised the largest gifts for the University of Richmond in support of the curriculum and faculty of anyone that had ever been there.

**Birkner:** Well, he was fortunate in that as he arrived there, it's either the Robbins Corporation or the Robbins Foundation that gave \$50 million and then they went from there.

**Ciolino:** Exactly.

**Birkner:** And that's a nice nest egg to have dropped on you. I've got to pursue that issue a little bit for some background. So Glassick is a much more aggressive fundraiser, and of course we've got his efforts to try to get the library campaign jump-started and we did raise just enough to get the library built and not in any way a lavish building but at least a viable and



important building for us. When you were working for Glassick, I realize you didn't necessarily see him every day, but could you describe a little bit of his personality? We've already talked about the fact that he was purposeful and disciplined and so on but just about his persona, especially given that you worked for Hanson as well. Some comparison and contrast?

**Ciolino:** I think that the way I described the institution and the institutional differences also [suggests] the differences between the two men. Arnold Hanson had dealt with some very major issues when he first came to Gettysburg College: the issue, role of athletics, the issues of the unrest of the 1960s, the issues of stabilizing an institution that didn't have a firm identity. I think what happened with Charlie Glassick is he took what Arnold Hanson had built and wanted to move it forward. He wanted the institution to become well-known for its academics. He wanted the institution to be one of the very best and used his energy toward that end. He made sure that he was on the right presidential committees. He wanted to represent the college in as many prestigious forms as he possibly could, knowing that he would be associated with Gettysburg College. And so if they felt that if what he was doing was purposeful then that the institution was purposeful. And if he was directed and high quality that it all represented the institution. He always said, to me at least in our conversations, an institution is really the people within it.

**Birkner:** Right.

**Ciolino:** And that's one of the reasons why he started the whole process of wanting the faculty to consider scholarship as one of the hallmark elements of what makes for a good faculty member. Good scholars produce good students.





**Birkner:** He was absolutely right about that. At least, I firmly believe that that's right. One of the stories that was told me, I don't need to identify the person who told me this, but I think it's got a psychological truth to it or at least a shrewdness to it, [my informant[] said that Glassick quickly understood the system of US News in the early years where they relied heavily on what other presidents thought about peer institutions.

**Ciolino:** Exactly.

**Birkner:** And so he figured out that if you go and schmooze with the presidents, that the guy from Wabash College who likes having a drink with you, when he has to say what institutions have strong leadership, he's gonna say Gettysburg College. You're shaking your head yes.

**Ciolino:** Yeah, absolutely! Precisely; he knew that well. And that's why he got on all these committees and commissions and so forth and encouraged others at the college to do the same.

**Birkner:** So you got involved in your national organization, he liked that.

**Ciolino:** He liked that.

**Birkner:** In fact, you have been deeply involved in your national organization, haven't you?

**Ciolino:** Yes, I have. A number of them, given my different hats that I've worn over the years. But in one year, Del Gustafson was the president of the National Association of Admissions Counselors and I was president of the Pennsylvania Association and a delegate to our national association. So we had a high visibility.



**Birkner:** And that leads me to something like the Gettysburg Review. That's a way of getting the institution identified with a quality product, right? Or a quality activity.

**Ciolino:** Absolutely.

**Birkner:** He wasn't so much himself a literary man as he was looking for an opportunity to make a statement about Gettysburg, wouldn't you say?

**Ciolino:** Absolutely.

**Birkner:** I mean, it could've been biology,

**Ciolino:** Right.

**Birkner:** It could've been something else if the opportunity had been there.

**Ciolino:** Exactly. And he used those opportunities to build what he felt was a prestigious image, which was very important in our positioning in the market place, not just for students but for money.

**Birkner:** Let me just ask you quickly, going back to financial aid for a second. I realize your job has evolved and you're not doing financial aid after a while but you're knowledgeable about it in any case. Gettysburg's model in financial aid as best I can understand it, at least until very recently, has been on the scale of liberal arts colleges among the most egalitarian. Would that be fair to say? That we have not targeted our money where by the smart kid gets twenty thousand and the kid who is just over the bar gets three thousand. We've sort of said if your need is seven thousand, you get seven thousand.



**Ciolino:** Yes, but the smart kid gets more grant money toward meeting that need than the-

**Birkner:** And this was true during the 70s and 80s also?

**Ciolino:** That was why they brought me here. They wanted to develop, see I was the first full-time director of financial aid.

**Birkner:** What about Homer Wood?

**Ciolino:** He was part-time; he also did career services. So they wanted somebody who could develop a program that would make us competitive with Bucknell, Franklin & Marshall, Dickinson and Swarthmore and so forth. And attracting students while abiding by the rules of the time, which was meeting need. Very little merit was given.

**Birkner:** Elaborate on what you came up with.

**Ciolino:** I came up with -- it turns out actually it was a program that had been in place at a number of institutions. It's a need based financial aid program with merit components. And so that among needy students, you select those who are the very best and you begin awarding to satisfy their need the highest percentage of grant to those who are the very best and the most qualified. But you also have to be cognizant of when you bring in the lower part of that pool that has need, you want to make sure that you cap the amount of loan and work that those students receive. And part of my job was I created a work study program. We didn't have one before.

**Birkner:** One of the complexities of your job in the 1980s it strikes me, is that Glassick makes a judgment, the institution makes a judgment, he doesn't make it by himself, I'm sure the board



is deeply consulted, but he makes a decision that instead of making the case that Gettysburg College is a “better bargain by being cheaper than our peer schools,” he ratchets up the tuition at Gettysburg College substantially in the 80s so that we go from being a relatively modest priced liberal arts college to being an expensive liberal arts college. That’s got to complicate your job on the admissions and financial aid end? Because there’s just so much endowed financial aid that you have.

**Ciolino:** Yes, but actually in that case Del Gustafson and I both were strong supporters of increasing tuition. And the reason for that was the whole issue of positioning. In our society, bargain means cheap and cheap means--

**Birkner:** Lesser quality.

**Ciolino:** Exactly. And what we wanted to do was to be able to position ourselves to be exactly what we were. We were a good private liberal arts institution. And we wanted to be seen that way by the market and in order to be perceived that way we had to be priced somewhere within a reasonable proximity of the cost of those institutions that were considered the very, very best. Pricing, all the literature that was available at that time and today, pricing is one of the issues that has to be considered in this positioning scheme. Otherwise if it’s a tossup between Dickinson, F&M and Gettysburg and Gettysburg is lower in cost by two or three thousand dollars, somehow Gettysburg must not be as good because they don’t have the money to do the things that the other two can do. And so we had to work with how society perceives cost and so we had to create cost to be where we wanted it to be to be perceived the way [audio cuts out for a few seconds] —there’s some elasticity but you have to look at it in





terms of the marketplace and going from being way below to costing more than some of the other highly competitive institutions was the difference. One of the things here is that Gettysburg College traditionally kept its tuition a bit lower and room and board a little higher, pardon me, room and board lower and tuition a little higher.

**Birkner:** In the 80s?

**Ciolino:** In the 80s. And we had to get to a point where we began balancing that so that instead of increasing tuition at greater rates, perhaps room and board could go up a little bit more so that our tuition costs would fall just a little behind some of those that one might consider the very elite.

**Birkner:** But when you get right down to it, the costs are still right up there, the total costs.

**Ciolino:** Sure.

**Birkner:** Right up there in the mid-30s by the year 2000.

**Ciolino:** But we did slow it down to an increase not to exceed 1% of CPI, which was a big difference. But see, many years later you'd do what you should've done ahead of the time. When we had double-digit inflation in the 1970s, our costs didn't go up by double digits. Somewhere along the line, you have to catch up.

**Birkner:** Of course, we're also in a stagflation economy in the 70s. Whereas by the 80s, by '82, '83, we're coming out of that and we're starting a boom period. And that makes possible these double digit increases in tuition. On the issue of admissions one of the knocks about Gettysburg College has been that we're too white-bred a school. Obviously Glassick was looking



at the issue of diversity from many different angles. What kinds of messages was he sending to your division about how we diversify the place? Now one of the ways is obviously going to New England, but tell me a bit about ethnic and other diversities.

**Ciolino:** He was very strong support of increasing diversity, increasing African American students, Hispanic students, Asians as well as religious diversification. He would raise what I would consider to be the right questions: Why do we not have more African American students? What is it about our program? Are we not recruiting in the right places? Why don't we have more Jewish students? And don't tell me it's because we're Lutheran, because look at Muhlenberg. It has to do with places of worship and so forth, and sensitivities. We did a number of studies during that time on each of these issues and incorporated the results of the studies in the market plan. For example, while we felt that underrepresented minorities and students of other ethnic backgrounds and religious backgrounds, we could get them to Baltimore from anywhere in the world, we had no way of getting them from Baltimore to Gettysburg. There was no Fast Transit, there was no public transportation. And so it was during that time that recommendations were made that we start a transportation department. How are we going to get people to a synagogue for worship if we can't get them here from Baltimore? We actually had a rabbi who was chaplain for Hillel and for some time and I don't know what happened with that situation. We will provide transportation to synagogues in York or Harrisburg. I'm not sure the requests have been forthcoming. I'm not sure the status of that at this point.



**Birkner:** Again I want to focus on the 80s. What was your perception, what is your memory of how we succeeded or failed or did a little of both in recruiting more minority students?

**Ciolino:** We tried so many different ways. We used the student search. We used the Lutheran connection. I personally visited several Lutheran churches in Baltimore, Washington and spoke with minority students. What I quickly discovered was that we were not perceived the way we wanted to be or the way we really were.

**Birkner:** Which was what?

**Ciolino:** Well, for example, a minister in Baltimore said he had five students he was going to recommend colleges to, three of them were sort of shy and reserved and women. He was going to recommend them to Susquehanna University. But there were two young men that had just gotten out of prison who they felt were hardened enough to come to Gettysburg College.

**Birkner:** Bet that one caught you up short.

**Ciolino:** I was shocked. They were minor offenses, but still they served three months each. That was not the perception that we had of ourselves. And we talked about that. And he did recommend two of the women to Gettysburg College and one of them did come here. So that there were those issues that had to be dealt with. The other had to do simply with preparing the campus. We were not prepared to deal with some of the needs and interests of some of the underrepresented minority students. Until we could deal with those issues, it would almost be unfair to bring the students here because they wouldn't be happy, wouldn't be the right fit.



And so we made many attempts. It was during that time that the recommendation was made to have a black student union, which was the Intercultural Advancement facility that we now have. And we were able to deal with that. Once we had that, our successes improved but not to the point that we really wanted. This year we reached that goal.

**Birkner:** I guess this is a case where you have to dig fairly long and hard to get some product out of the ground. This seems like we're starting to get some momentum in terms of a more diverse campus and still have a ways to go, obviously. But if what I heard about admissions this year is true, having thirty freshmen who are minorities is excellent.

**Ciolino:** Brings us back to the early, late 60s, early 70s.

**Birkner:** In the late 60s we had no great numbers of blacks on campus as I remember it. Maybe there were seven or eight in my class.

**Ciolino:** In 1972 we had about 55 total enrolled at the college.

**Birkner:** So maybe there were more than I realized, those were just the kids I knew. So there were efforts made. Sal, as you look back on Glassick, what were his strengths or weaknesses as president?

**Ciolino:** I'm not sure. I think, I think sometimes he relied on people beyond their ability to be relied on. I think he was a good judge of character. I think he surrounded himself with people that were hardworking and dedicated. But sometimes people had their own agenda and they used his name to achieve their own agenda. I don't know if that's a fault, I think it's a problem something every leader experiences at one point or another.





**Birkner:** Well of course the most controversial character on the campus during the Glassick years was William Van Arsdale. Perhaps he fits your generalization that sometimes he relied on people beyond on what they should be relied on. I don't know if that is who you are referring to. Certainly it is the perception on some people that Van Arsdale was going off the reservation and that Glassick was not controlling him.

**Ciolino:** Well, knowing Glassick, I would have to say that he was weak in the attempts. But if you have a person that has ten balls in the air and successfully catches seven out of ten, is that success? And I think that's how Charlie Glassick perceived some of these situations. And with all the renovations that were going on, all the activities (summer activities, summer conferences), all of these school year activities, the potential demographic shift, the limit on the money available-- You know, with Van Arsdale, they achieved quite a bit, with the guidance and direction of Charlie Glassick.

**Birkner:** He wheeled and dealed, that's for sure. We do have that beautiful renovation of the fourth floor of Glatfelter Hall to point to, among other things.

**Ciolino:** Absolutely.

**Birkner:** And we do have more space in the western side of our campus to accommodate future growth and including those very nice dorms that have been built in the Haaland years.

**Ciolino:** But also the energy plant. Remember? The campus got all dug up for the new steam pipes and cooling pipes. We ran conduits throughout the entire campus for communication purposes, which we still use today; we took out the copper, put in the fiber. All of those things



that prepared us for the future in that way were achieved during those years. And it was with the same maintenance staff working ungodly hours that is was achieved, including the mandates to remove asbestos and then of course they changed their minds and said just painted over it once we've removed it. So there were a lot of things that happened during that period of time that we dealt with, I think.

**Birkner:** I would also think the purchase of buildings that were on the borders of the campus.

**Ciolino:** Yes--We bought some properties, absolutely. We renovated the dining hall. We renovated Weidensall. Almost every building on campus was touched in some way.

**Birkner:** And one of the things I'm discovering in the papers and I haven't gone into this as deeply as I like, it seems that Glassick worked very hard to find money from outside donors, whether they were foundations or individuals, to make possible these renovations. It was not free. You can't do it out of the plant fund and expect to do a major renovation of every building over the course of eight or nine years. So he did find usually modest sources of funding in the form of gifts and grants. But they were what made it possible to accomplish these things.

**Ciolino:** As you mentioned earlier, we did not raise all the money we needed for the library. We just barely completed the library. But we had to renovate the old library. So Schmucker and Brua all, the money had to be raised. I'd say, every single building on campus was touched in some way, except Pennsylvania Hall, during that period of time.



**Birkner:** I think you're right. I don't know about the dorms, because I just don't know enough about it. But, you know, a lot of renovations were going on in the academic buildings. Maybe the White House didn't get much, although they got a little bit of a facelift at one point, right?

**Ciolino:** Yeah, they did. They put in some carpeting.

**Birkner:** Overall, then, what we're talking about here, it sounds to me, your description is a presidency of achievement, that you're saying the seven out of ten balls in the air is in fact success. That's how I read you.

**Ciolino:** I think so. You can never catch all ten. And I think this was, if I had to characterize this presidency, it was the characterization that he liked many ideas and each idea would be a ball and they're all going up. And they're all being flipped around and some of them would be supported with funding and some wouldn't and those would be the ones that counted. I think he was short with people who were not creative.

**Birkner:** One thing he said to me that I found interesting, because he tended to look at the more smiling aspects of his own presidency when talking to me. I asked him "how do you deal with dysfunctional departments or dysfunctional programs?" He said, "I don't waste my time with them." He said, "I go to the programs where people are rolling in the right direction and need help." He said, "I'm not going to waste my time because I don't think I can make a dysfunctional department functional but I can help somebody else who's doing their job be better at it or I can provide them with a facility to do more than they're doing and that's where I'm going to put my energy." You were shaking your head again yes so I guess [you recognize this point]. -



**Ciolino:** One of his phrases used to be “everybody supports a winner.” So if a department’s doing well, give ‘em support, encourage it. And the others will fall by the wayside eventually. They’ll just disappear.

**Birkner:** I think he learned this most especially while he was Provost at the University of Richmond, because he gave the impression that that’s where this came to, this insight came to him, that why waste your time over and over again, dealing with intractable problems when there are other areas that are crying out for your attention and you can make something happen.

**Ciolino:** Yep, I agree.

**Birkner:** And obviously that’s not a win-win situation but it is a sensible enough approach to the situation.

**Ciolino:** Absolutely. Especially in an environment where the department, and at the time you might remember the department might be dysfunctional but it was probably [not fixable]. What can you do?

**Birkner:** What can you do? And I guess the, you know, this is a little off the track of what we were talking about, but he had [Provost David] Potts devise this three year and out policy which is one way of keeping the tenure thing from going over 80%, I guess, which is really kind of a danger point. It makes you seem like you have an ossified faculty; you need to bring in fresh blood every so often.

**Ciolino:** Absolutely.





**Birkner:** I think we've covered what I want to cover, Sal, if that's OK.

End of Transcript

