Transcripts – KPU Oral – Takashi (Tak) Sato – PHYS faculty member; Chair of Education Council; Chair of Senate

Interviewed by Roger Elmes, Dean Emeritus

Co-Researcher and Technical Expertise – Alice Macpherson

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[Beginning of transcript]

Roger: You can tell about your personal story a bit, so kind of ask, what brought you to, when did you come to Kwantlen and what brought you here? How did you ever get from the Big Island to Kwantlen? Cause you spent a bunch of time right on Mount Mauna Kea {Observatory]? Whichever it is.

Tak: Yeah, well I went there on trips, but I was based at, I went to graduate school at UBC and went there for a couple of years.

Roger: Yeah, okay so if we do that, that kinds of gives people more of a sort of a feel of personal stuff and we haven't got anybody from [the Faculty of] Science. You're the first person we've got from science. So we talk a little bit about your department and maybe the bigger Faculty without getting into a lot of details, but just enough that people get a sense of what some of the challenges were like getting third and fourth year students and transfer arrangements and then we'll get into the ones that you have listed here. So these kind of relate a little bit more to –

Tak: The stuff I sent in?

Roger: Yeah that was more to like your role in Council and then the Senate and the issues you had to deal with in there, that's kind of what you've outlined here.

Tak: Yeah, there's some Science, some Physics stuff here.

Roger: Oh wait- the BSc majors.

Tak: Yeah.

Roger: And then the idea is just sort of like a chat, so we're not trying to do investigative journalism here, anything like that. So, it's kind of focused around your recollections and then maybe a little bit more around the Science side, so that we at least get something about the Faculty of Science into the oral history. Now maybe later I'll be able to track down Brian Carr {Dean of Science and Horticulture] and find him at one of these Tuesday lunches and somewhere on 72nd Ave. and get him tied into some of this and maybe Tom MacMath [PHYS}, we'll he's in your department, wasn't he, Physics?

Tak: Tom's still –

Roger: Yeah, yeah he's been to some of our events and stuff. But anyway, that's kind of the idea and over all of it, what we're trying to do is create something that's a little bit more than just a bunch of paper,

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like Senate minutes, Board minutes, Ed Co minutes etcetera. And also there's not, there's a lot of gaps in what's in the Archives, like physical stuff in the Archives that is just - will be lost if we don't capture some of it.

Tak: Yeah and you know I appreciate that you guys are doing this because I was thinking too it's a lot of stuff that people know, but even the knowledge of who knows this stuff is going to disappear.

Roger: Yeah exactly, yeah so we're going to have to get for example Craig Reagan [A/Director of Facilities] and just talk about all of the properties that we acquired and looked at, and ones we didn't take and all that kind of information too, which would be lost and then about the buildings and that'll be kind of a more detailed thing where he said I'm willing to bring photos and plans and whatever. So, we have to figure out exactly how we're going to do that, anyway so that's kind of the general gist of it is that, so - so far I think I sent you kind of a list of we'd interviewed two presidents, the board chair, first chancellor.

Tak: No, I don't think I got the list of people.

Roger: Okay, well it wasn't really a, we talked about categories, it's a lot of faculty, so far it's been three students, there's about three more who ultimately became faculty who started as students, but became faculty who have agreed to interview, two, three people who served as Deans, but were focused a lot in faculty as well, President of the KFA, one of them, and you know that's kind of the mix of people that we've seen so far. Oh, a couple of VPs, two Presidents as well including Bill Day who was President of Douglas, but actually on the ground here before anything, he ran the referenda in each school district for the Douglas region, what became the Douglas region, to get the college approved and the school, everybody voting to yes we'll support it through the school district's budget, whatever - is how it was started out. So, and then Skip [Triplett – VP and President] who kind of was through the kind of transition from the beginning of Kwantlen college, almost to the beginning of it, and then KUC and then KPU, so he kind of got into all of those. So that's, and then as Alice is wont to remark, there's so many perspectives and we say, "yeah well that's great, that's exactly what we want to capture", it's not like there's a monolithic concept of what Kwantlen is or was or so on. There's many perspectives out there and they're all fascinating. So, it's been, it's been really interesting to do it, because you learn so much more, right. I mean I learn so much more, about all these different areas that - I never knew that, that's really interesting. So yeah, it's really rewarding to do it as well. So are we ready to roll?

Alice: We're rolling.

Tak: Oh, we're rolling, okay.

[0:05:31]

Roger: I think we were rolling

Tak: Out of the way

Roger:- for mentioned position.

Roger: Maybe just if you talk a little bit about, then little bit more about what brought, when you came to Kwantlen, what brought you here, how you got here, any kinds of things you want to add to just give people an idea of who Tak is before, Takashi Sato is, before we get into some of the more detail.

Tak: So, the things I was doing before I came to Kwantlen?

Roger: Mm-hmm

Tak: So, I was in graduate school studying astronomy at UBC and you mentioned going to the Big Island. So, a lot of Canadian astronomy gets done through observatories that are on the Big Island on [Mount] Mauna Kea. So, I was one of those guys that had frequent, what we call them, observing trips. So, you go there for maybe three nights, five nights, sometimes, well one time I had like five nights and then another project right after it and five more nights in a row on the mountain for a couple of weeks. That's unusual, but so I guess that's why you think my Big Island association.

Roger: Yeah.

Tak: I eventually finished graduate school and I think the second time I applied to come work at Kwantlen is the time I got the interview and then I got placed on the inventory. But then right after that I was offered a section. Thinking back to those days, it's kind of, I was looking at the big document you sent me and there's a note about John Pearson's accident, so that's actually related to my coming here. So, when John had been on the faculty here, but when he had his accident then his shop became open and I didn't get that one, but there was a different John, John Sanders had been in our department for a few years at that time, but he was, so he got that regular job that John Pearson vacated and I got the non-regular one that John vacated, John Sanders vacated. And then that grew into a bigger role over time.

Roger: So that was around when?

Tak: That was 1996.

Roger: '96 okay, so right after it was a university college?

Tak: Yeah.

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Roger: Yeah, it had just been about a year then, by ’96 about a year it’d been a university college. So, that put you in the Physics Department?

Tak: Yes.

Roger: And that was about what, four or five people then?

Tak: Oh, no it was pretty big. Let’s see, we had two Johns, two Bob’s -

Roger: [Laughs]

Tak: - and, I think there was about six or seven faculty and four lab instructors and one technician.

Roger: Right, yeah, and that was in Richmond and Surrey.

Tak: Yeah.

Roger: Okay so that’s really kind of where Science more or less was centered most of the time was on Richmond and Surrey campuses. So, it was a significant faculty but when you arrived I guess was offering just first and second year courses?

Tak: Yeah and for Physics, second year is always iffy, it just wasn’t a student demand. But we always said that we do such a good job with the first-year students that they successfully transfer and, as you know, that transfer, the university transfer was what it was all about back then, and still is with many students.

Roger: Yeah it was certainly always an ongoing challenge to hold students and even once it was university college, but there were no degrees in Sciences or Arts and so on until like after 2000. So, there was no opportunity really for them to stay.

Tak: Yes, so at one point you have to send them off and wish them well.

Roger: Yeah [Laughs] yeah, but all the kind of reports that we would get back from UBC and SFU was that Kwantlen students did better than their grade 12 cohort.

Tak: Yeah I remember -

Roger: Because the –

Tak: - those reports.

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Roger: - yeah, because they'd sort of get really close attention from faculty and lab instructors and so on, that they got a lot more out of that first full year of post-secondary science than they would have at university. So, 1996 you hear it's a university college and you're then working in a faculty with a chemistry, physics, biology, and at some point geography, I don't know if geography had switched to Arts by then or not, but there was geology, a bit of geology –

Tak: There were –

Roger: - Ray Cox

Tak: They were in Arts by the time I got here.

Roger: Okay

Tak: Or, I guess Social Sciences

Roger: Yeah, so that was a very interesting group of faculty, I mean you had a bunch of really fascinating guys in that whole Faculty of Science. I mean I shared an office with Jan Verster for a while and Jan was this really brilliant guy in Math who probably exceeded me in capacity for intellectual capacity let's say, but it was very fascinating to see how he worked and how he dealt with things, how his function - and was kind of different from me, but I didn't know whether that was being in the Faculty of Science or just a different whole educational background.

Tak: Yeah, Jan was I guess has those qualities that make him the science teacher.

Roger: Yeah I kind of played with, I went through grade 13 and did all the sciences in Ontario when there was still grade 13's. So, I did all of those, plus I did arts, history, and basically history and languages in high school and then I kind of peeled off away from sciences and into that stream of arts and kind of got divorced from it. Although as soon as they pushed, as soon as I got back into officer training in the Navy, all of the science had to kind of come plowing back in, because for astronomical navigation even, you had to have some basic comprehension or gain it around what that was all about, spherical trigonometry.

Tak: There's a lot of geometry in it.

Roger: Yeah [Laughs] yeah, so it was –

Tak: Did you have to do the tables and –

Roger: Oh, the HO tables? Yeah you had to use those for converting your, you know the stuff you read from the sextant. Anyway, that was kind of how science fit in to my life I guess was in that way as

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an adult. And then of course having to teach young officers about what is this astronomical navigation stuff. It kind of disappears with GPS, but I always think as soon as the, you know all those systems go down one day, people are going to be breaking out rusty sextants and trying to figure out where they are in the middle of the Pacific.

Tak: Yeah, those things work pretty well.

Roger: Yeah, they're pretty straight forward and it's a very old set of scientific methods I suppose in terms of figuring out your position on the Earth, quite a history of it. So, pretty quickly when you were here, I mean I remember you being in the Ed Council pretty early. When did you start as Chair of Ed Co?

Tak: Oh, well I don't remember the year.

Roger: Was that right after Skip [Triplett] was a Chair?

Tak: Oh no, no, no, 'cause it was Skip, then it was Jim –

Roger: Jim Gunson [Math] yeah.

Tak: - and then it was Robin Russell [ESAl/EASL].

Roger: Oh that's right Robin yeah.

Tak: And then it was Dana Goedbloed and when she became the Associate Dean of the Trades she stepped off the Ed Co Chair and I had been on Ed Co I guess coming up at the end of my first year and then I was looking around the room saying, "okay well somebody's going to have to be the Chair", so I was trying to make Newton Wainman [ABE/ACP] be the Chair and then he talked me into it.

Roger: That's great, well it was a good, I mean it was a good experience. I remember talking to you fairly early in that process and –

Tak: Oh yeah, oh my first year I didn't know what I was doing. I was trying to figure out the lay of the land and what the job was.

Roger: Yeah, well you did a good job of it, because you were several terms.

Tak: Well I guess I was there until the Ed Co turned into the Senate and then it still took me two years to fully extricate myself from that process.

Roger: So, looking at some of the things that you were talking about chronologically was the first AUCC application.

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Tak: Oh yeah.

Roger: For the Associations of Universities and Colleges of Canada to become a member of that and why were we interested in doing that, what was the impetus for it?

Tak: Yeah, and I guess I put it on here because there was the first and the second application. So, you know I guess I had a very marginal role in the first application, but my perspective was what if graduates would be graduates from their degrees were not getting recognition that they went to a real university and it turns out they, you know people asked did you go to a certified school and it turns out in Canada there's no certification for what is a university, but the *de-facto* certification is membership at AUCC. So, that was impetus that I understanding we need to be on that list. I think maybe I had a credible application the first time and one of the interesting things as it turned out was David Atkinson was one of the onsite visitors that and then he came back later as President, but just as David was coming back in that role we were putting through our second application and I think even before David started working here officially he was lobbying for us in Ottawa. So, and he was able to make the case that the deficiencies that were pointed out the first time were being addressed, so what's the hold up.

Roger: Yeah, and I guess he was still at Carleton then?

Tak: Yeah, well I guess we had appointed him, but his term hadn't yet started. I remember he was going back and forth. I met him in one of these rooms.

Roger: Oh really? In what was probably the Horticulture, Faculty of Horticulture, or maybe it was Business, because this space has been different things over time.

Tak: Yeah.

Roger: So, the AUCC application was, as you say, it was a very important step forward. But another one of the really important steps forward I think was that, I mean my experience was from 1970 and it was under the Public Schools Act and then there was a Colleges Act and then there was a Colleges and Institutes Act and then kind of got pulled out of that through becoming a university college, cause there was kind of a little thing appended to all of that after university colleges. And then eventually it comes under the special purpose universities with KPU, but I guess the point that I'm kind of getting at is, it was very hierarchical, it was like a top-down structure and the Public Schools Act was totally top-down, even though there was a lot of student at the centre, faculty at the centre, in the kind of underlying philosophy and how people tried to operate in the first few years, but it really was top-down. And that really remained I think, very much intact more or less until the Senates, until the Senate came into play.

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Tak: And that's the point that John Dennison and me, when you go from college to university and you stop becoming the extension of the government and become the autonomous entity.

Roger: And so did you see it, I mean as the Senate then became kind of faculty and people - members of the Senate, which was majority faculty, now had a different kind of role that they could play by virtue of what the legislation provided –

Tak: Yeah, but you know a lot of people were quick to catch onto that kind of difference, but then we still have others who haven't caught on. So, they're in the faculty trenches thinking they're still in a top-down model.

Roger: So how do you see that changing as the place moves before, because the legislative role of the Senate is pretty clear and it's much broader than it was of the educational governing body from faculty-dominated, it changes quite a bit from university college to university.

Tak: Yeah okay, so I guess I was in the thick of it right at the start of the transition, so my role was the Chair of Education Council and part of that, we were going to transform ourselves to the Senate with all these new responsibilities, and I think of it as responsibilities rather than powers and authority. And then part of that we made a lot of the standing committees, some were, some transformed naturally out of things that existed and other things like Academic Planning and Priorities was brand new. So, it was a big deal at the time, we said, "okay so", we said, "how about this for a new structure?", and then we shopped it around for lots of input. Eventually we got something that got adopted by the Senate, and then they asked me stay on as a second Vice Chair and so I was around I think another two years, but my feeling was well here's a new time for Bob and we shouldn't have the same people in the same things. So, I tried to transition myself out of it and I thought was good for the university. They took good care of a lot of emerging things. So, I guess I'm not really answering your question, because all the new stuff went to Dana Cseperes and my job was to work through the old stuff or at least the things that transformed naturally out of the old stuff and then even that phased out of it. So now, I'm still on the Tributes Committee, there's an example where it used to sit - operate out of the Vice President's office, but the formal process wasn't well organized and I don't think there was a set process. So, we got into a thing that looks like the other Senate committees with terms of membership and procedures and calls go out regularly. But I was thinking just the other day that it's been ten years, I should rotate out of that too.

Roger: [Laughs] Well you know what, there's a lot to be said for, I mean I agree with that, I mean when I left [retired], I slammed the door and I just went away for two years, actually longer before I did anything again around here, 'cause I wanted to leave people essentially - it was Rob Adamoski in my case - to leave him - "it's yours", let you take over, because there is a tendency for people to keep identifying

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with previous incumbent in the office. But at the same time, there's something to be gained by having a certain amount of institutional memory on some of these key committees so that it helps to -

Tak: Well we've got all these new guys; they don't want the memories.

Roger: [Laughs] Yeah, but it's part of the history of the place, it's part of how it came to be and so yeah, that's- but I guess what I'm getting at is making change is hard and change is hard on people who have to change in order to facilitate it or make it supported. So, there's always some people are going to adopt it early and maybe even adapt it to their purposes and then there's going to be others who are going to be just kind of pushing it away and others going to be oh well, whatever. So, I guess I'm always wondering around - this institution has gone through a lot of change, huge change over the years and one of the biggest was the last change going into a university. So that's kind of like, how does an institution wrestle with it?

Tak: A lot of people who stepped up to the plate, like I say this to people, they've kind of emerged out of Social Sciences and I think a lot of this evolution is because of the hiring that you have been doing in preparation for that transition. I see it now and I know how planned that was for you, but like Kwantlen owes a lot of what it is today for what you were doing as Dean of Social Science.

Roger: Well I mean it was, if you can see something coming, you say alright well then we better start to get people who are going to be able to walk in the community, the academic community exterior to Kwantlen and to be able to be to make the connections and get CURA's or get Canada Chairs or so on and so forth. So, I mean that was certainly –

Tak: I remember you pushing for that at the time and enabling and so you know we've been talking about a lot of governance, but it's all these other aspects that have had to evolve as well.

Roger: Yeah, but then the governance does become important in keeping an institution moving ahead with a reasonably common purpose, a reasonably common vision for the next five years or whatever plans, strategic plans you're putting out whatever the time frame is. Change is really interesting to manage and it ain't easy.

Tak: And you have to give people time.

Roger: Yeah and I think that is certainly a part of it. So, some of the changes that you lived through were that you looked at TRU governance, so Thompson River's system of governance and how it'd apply at KUC faculty -

Tak: So, I guess that was a fairly obvious change we saw coming and it looks pretty good, this status of university that we've been asking for and it's likely to happen. So, I got the job of trying to figure

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out the groundwork for that. So, we said, what if we got a legislative status that's similar to TRU. So TRU has its own Act, separate from the University College Institute Act, at the time anyway. We looked at the, went to TRU and got greeted by people like Mark Afferton and he showed me around what they do and gave me this fantastic document that described the governance process, the structure that they set up. So, after a two-day visit, came back, well they put me up in their nice new student residence that looks like a hotel, so a big penthouse suite. I

recommend it if you're staying in Kamloops. So, we came back, what was it, I came back and said, "okay well, what would it look like for us to implement something similar?" and then we started looking at the issues. And I think I mentioned the first issue that we thought wasn't just a matter of working through was the what was called the "homeless" or the faculty without a Faculty. So, we were very much aware of this at the very beginning and I think that was the last issue to get resolved if we call it resolved, and Alice [Macpherson] was over there, and she was directly affected by this. It was very emotional for a lot of people and I think it hit a lot of people unaware. But we realized that the discussion early on, okay this is going to be a problem, but we didn't come up with a solution that was going to make everybody happy, it dragged on. Very unfortunate. I think you know what we ultimately did, we proposed doing it early on, it didn't get traction at the time, I think, I don't know, Alice is it better now? Have people moved on?

Alice: [Laughs] There was a second application, it is a Faculty on its own at this point. It did affect sixty-six faculty members I think at the beginning, which is a fair chunk –

Tak: Yeah

Alice: - of our faculty, so yup it exists now. Faculty of Educational Support and Development.

Tak: And there was a lot of legalistic counterarguments that got brought up, even at the beginning and say, "well we could just do it anyway".

Alice: Well if I can throw in something there, when Douglas and Kwantlen first started the librarians chose very specifically to be faculty members as opposed to being outside that structure. So we had, by the time we got to the university, polytechnic university, we had three decades of librarians and a few other miscellaneous bodies as faculty.

Tak: Yeah

Roger: Counsellors -

Alice: Counsellors, absolutely

Roger: - from the start as well, yeah.

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Alice: Yeah, learning strategists in the Learning Centre, and a few of us that kind of floated at various times. I ended up in the Learning Centre, so if you don't mind me throwing that into kind of finish that off. There was a positive response from Senate to becoming a Faculty and then somewhere along the line it fell off the edge of the universe and then we brought it back some years later and it went through.

Roger: Yeah it's there's some, I mean even at the beginning [1970's] there were discussions around what are lab instructors?

Tak: Oh yeah.

Roger: And they eventually, well the GEU actually started before the faculty went to the Labour Relations Board and got certified, so they'd already kind of been in the GEU, the lab instructors, as well as lab techs. There's only at that time one lab tech, but so that was kind of an issue in the mid '70's. Should the lab instructors be in the faculty union or in the staff union? And of course the faculty union got accused of raiding [Laughs] in the process, but they, as you know, they ended up in the GEU.

Tak: But that's still not settled, every once in a while the question comes up.

Roger: Yeah, I can appreciate that.

Tak: So, if we could get a stray away over there.

Alice: [Laughs]

Roger: So did … you visited TRU.

Tak: Yup.

Roger: Did Bob Brown's name come up around the governance stuff that they'd done there?

Tak: Bob Brown no/

Roger: No, okay, cause he'd done quite a bit of work with TRU and before that Cariboo University College, around how they would move into a university, cause he'd been the Dean of Arts at SFU for twenty-five years or something and acting, or at least he was, whatever the title was, he was President for a couple of years in some transitions between people. And then of course he came and worked with the Faculty of Arts and –

Tak: With a BA framework.

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Roger: The BA framework document yeah, but he also I think he kind of was always there for getting advice for ,,, like Judith McGillivray would go out and get "so what do you think? What do you think?" you know, she'd get a lot of people outside and inside Kwantlen, but she'd go out, wasn't afraid to go outside and ask people for their expertise and guidance.

Tak: I guess, I remember with TRU and also Mount Royal, they had opportunity for input into what would become their legislation and I think by the time we were going through that process it was like well there's the TRU model so.

Roger: Yeah, so that was I always think it's great if you can go out and modify a wheel that's already out there, instead of inventing the wheel and use what people have done before you. So,

in ’08 there’s sort of, as you mentioned, Polytechnic and jaws drop, everyone goes in a confusion spiral. Now this is after my time, so you have to educate me more about that, I was gone for two years by then.

Tak: Yeah so, it was the Geoff Plant [MLA and AG of BC] report, what was it called [Campus 2020], it came out, like a hundred recommendations and two of them I think came true. So, one was the free AP, tuition free AP and the other was the regional universities. So, there was about a week, week and a half period I think in April or so where the Premier was going around the province making new universities. Yeah so, it was one day that was our turn and Premier and entourage came and I got to be one of the people in the boardroom where he made a pre-announcement before we went out I think and what we now call the Surrey Main and there was a bigger announcement. So, Gordon Campbell, Senate and from that, it’s to be known as Kwantlen Polytechnic University. So that was my first exposure to it, learn later that Skip had heard it the night before. So you know on the one hand we’re saying, “oh thank you very much”, but on the other hand people are like “oh what’d we just get?”.

Roger: [Laughs]

Tak: And I think that’s a … from there I think it’s a common experience for many of us and people still question well what is a polytechnic university? What goes unnoticed I think by many is that, that’s the day people stopped asking what is a university college? Because until then that was the big question that kept coming up is kind of, you were there probably from day one in this discussion and when I came in it was still very new and people were asking what’s university college. And I got settled into the idea that the definition of university college is whatever it is that we’re doing, and I think of it that way for polytechnic university too. Just do what we do and that’s the definition.

Roger: But I think, I think –

Tak: I just thought it was interesting that that’s what it took for people to stop asking what’s a university college?

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Roger: Well, the first six years were, I think part of the grappling with the term was that there were other university colleges around, and that they were offering all kinds of degrees, but Kwantlen somehow thought that it could only offer applied degrees. So, we went through all the effort to define what applied degrees are, and if they’re going to be applied degrees, then what’s the role of the Arts in it. And that’s where liberal education sort of gets defined and Richard Floyd’s work on that and others, but Richard was doing some stuff, leading stuff with it, which got to a bunch of sometimes interdisciplinary, sometimes just multidisciplinary courses for –

Tak: We have the LBED [Liberal Education] courses.

Roger: Yeah, that’s right, yeah and then I think Judith McGillivray in discussions later with people in the Ministry around 2000ish, ’01 maybe, was told, “well there’s no restriction, we’ve

looked and there's no restriction that says you can only do applied degrees". So that then kind of opened it up and people got started to do … and that's when the BA framework came into play so that majors and minors could be offered in Arts.

Tak: I think something funny happened in the Ministry there, because maybe they lost their oral history, because that's around the same time that they had what was called the New Mandate Degrees for colleges and so they had to be applied. I think that was written down, but you're right ,,, then knows that when the applied restriction came off they got a bunch of wonderful degrees, but I think they still have the applied touch to it.

Roger: Yeah, they do. I think that in my view that's like a benefit -

Tak: Oh yeah.

Roger: - that if you can have, you don't just have to mimic what a university's doing, figure out what's best for your community of students and what's going to work for them. But certainly, there were still some applied degrees. The funny thing was, I remember in Psychology, their applied degree, they gave their students so much background and research skills and actually doing research and applying it and using it, that they all, not all, but anybody who applied to grad school in Psyc got into grad school, because, "oh you guys, they have so many stats and so much research background, that's exactly what you need to do a Master's so come on in". And it was kind of, "woah, what happened it?", because it wasn't the purpose of it. It's kind of [Laughs] interesting. So the Polytechnic was always something to wrestle with and I, just for interest, I did a little kind of look on fifty websites of polytechnics in the UK or former polytechnics and see what they did around what kind of arts programs, how did Arts deal with polytechnic and the same within the US to just, so what is a polytechnic? Because in my mind it didn't, I mean it kind of made sense because you had horticulture and you got a few, the School of Design and somethings that might be polytechnic, but

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they weren't necessarily, because every Polytechnic that I looked at, they were all doing similar, but not always the same things either.

Tak: Yeah.

Roger: They had different programs that another one didn't have. So David Atkinsons ultimatum.

Tak: Yes, before you go to that I just had a thought, what was it? Okay I lost it, so we'll just move on. So, that was, it was during the Vancouver Olympics I think David being here a couple years at that point, a year and a half, and he gathered all the, everybody in Science into the so-called theatre, lecture theatre in Surrey.

Roger: Oh D128 [Laughs]

Tak: Yeah, I was trying to use the new name for the thing, but I always get it confused, yeah, but I was talking about E Building to somebody and he didn't know what I was talking about. Anyway, yeah so we were there and somehow it wasn't just the faculty that got called so all the instructors, all the staff from the Dean's office were there, but without the Dean and so David and Judith walk in and they told us basically, "we're here at your university and you guys don't have any degree programs so that can't stay the way it is, so we need you to come up with some science degrees and more specifically we need one full program proposal in front of Senate within one year". So that is what most people in a room took as the ultimatum, but I thought of it as more of a graceful bankruptcy protection, because the backside of that was, "you can continue to operate as is for now, but we need you to show forward improvement". So, I think until then people were quite content and I think had the idea that we would always continue to operate as a transfer college and it's not going to be a science degree and I think we still have people that rather have things that way then I guess it became clear to them that that wasn't going to be an option. Yeah, so that shocked a lot of people, you look around now we have a selection of sciences degrees, some more interesting than others, I think. The physics degree is fantastic and it's on my list, but I guess it also meant that we now had, we had permission most colleagues to talk about it and get some ideas going. We said well we're start with a Biology program degree, because that's always, everywhere you go it's the one that has the most students and then at that time things like degree framework like the BA had. didn't exist, so that was one of the things that had to be worked on and some departments, well if it's a Biology degree, it's a forerunner, but then you're going to have a science degree framework that would fit for other majors to come along. I think a lot of those with Canadian science degrees are familiar with first year science it's fairly common across the board, take survey courses like Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Math, so I think we envisioned something like that, but there's always the pressure that

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you want to put more stuff from your own major and in order to make room other stuff falls off, so there's I think tensions. So, and the departments without the major wind up striving for legitimacy. I said well okay we survived this round, but I said to my colleagues, "but now we're always going to be on the defensive just to keep our first-year courses and so don't you want to have our own degree?" And I think some of us said, "no" and others, Fergal Callahan in particular, said, "yeah, let's do that", he was relatively new to Kwantlen at the time and he was less constrained by our own practicing. And then he told us about these very applied physics degrees that existed in Ireland where he's from and he called it Instrumentation degrees. To me instrumentation meant that there's scientific equipment that you work on to build elaborate systems or make new better ones and there's a lot of fundamental physics that go in there as well, there's a lot of applied physics. So, I went, "oh that's interesting and I think that's something that we can do with the people we got", and because the other challenge was when you're, you exist for all your existence as a transfer college, you have people assembled based on their ability to teach first year courses, which is very different from a traditional science department, or Physics department, that have this research cluster, this research cluster and those are the expertise that you're brought in for. But with this we found we could transition from one

type to another or acquire this other activity so that's what we did and so going back to the ultimatum we agree that Biology will be the first, but there would be a second wave of degrees to come, so we wanted to be in that second wave. So yeah, Fergal and I managed to get a trip together to Ireland, we visited some institutes there that were a lot like us, in fact in Waterford right now, there is a Waterford Institute of Technology and so they have a degree that they survey the students, came up with this term Physics and Modern Technology and then we said, "oh we really like that, can we use it?" and then they said "yes". So they targeted some of the applied stuff toward the industry that exists for them locally and then so we then copied one-for-one, because you know we have our local industries, because it was interesting actually when they asked us what's your local industry and we didn't have one dominating industry, whereas they have pharmaceutical, they have industry in that region. And then yeah tomorrow we're having a Skype meeting about potential collaborations between us and Waterford and exchange systems so if you have some exchange agreement, standing that makes it easy for them, for the faculty and students to go back and forth. So that's happening, but the beauty of this physics degree is that it's something we're very uniquely positioned to do. You know the old saying that you go to UBC to get a degree and you go to BCIT to get a job, skills for a job. So, that's a six-year journey, but we can give you the degree and the skills in four years. We have this fantastic curriculum, that we look at it and our own experience wasn't nearly as good as this, we didn't get looked after by faculty nearly as well so it's something that we're very proud of.

Roger: So, would you characterize it as a polytechnic degree?

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Tak: Lots of people do, so without knowing what polytechnic really means, it kind of fits people's comfort zone about what it might mean. It's a very technical element, but there's an academic element too.

Roger: Yeah, well it's quite, I mean before you were here I think probably all of the technology programs that were at the Newton campus, that they'd all gone or they really more or less disappeared, but there, that was kind of an embryo almost of polytechnic, but it was pre-mature I think in terms of being able to recruit the students with the skills necessary, because it was pretty significant requirements for students going into it, like there were –

Tak: Oh yeah,

Roger: - tough courses.

Tak: - you have to have Grade 12 Math.

Roger: So, it was kind of a precursor and then it kind of folded into science sort of, but then you know it was always challenges with recruitment and filling classes and so on. I think it was just ahead of its time in terms of what the community needed or knew that it needed, maybe they needed it, but they didn't know that they needed it.

Tak: Well they needed the graduates for it, so the graduates had trouble finding meaningful work out of it, they would find work before they graduate.

Roger: That's true, yeah [Laughs] that's how we lost some students. So it's quite interesting, to look at how all of this stuff sort of evolves and how it fits together and how a Faculty says, "okay well let's get on with creating degrees", and it's interesting that as you describe it there was sort of a bankruptcy prevention or an ultimatum that, "it's time, it's your turn, it's now your place, it's yours, you have to do it as well", and that it was hierarchical in that sense that two top administrators sort of came into the room and said "thwack, thwack, here it is, go with it".

Tak: Yeah.

Roger: Which is fine, I mean that's okay, however it gets started, but then as you say, there were still tensions in doing even once that was in place to say, "here's your direction", there are still going to be tensions in the change between people who embrace it and people who really don't want it and people who are just sort of like, "well, okay I'll work with it", yeah.

Tak: Yeah, and you know those tensions dissipate over time and I think yeah, you know if it's not a common goal then it's more accepted as reality, a new reality and then we have others who were

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spearheading new directions. And by and large those people have .. are doing it in such a way that everyone embraces what they're doing so even if we're not directly contributing to it, we're happy that it's going on.

Roger: Yeah, one of the big challenges for Science has always been capital, capital you know for buying equipment, keeping stuff up-to-date, etcetera. I know that ultimately in my time we dealt with it by saying, "okay Brian Carr, you're going to chair the sort of the Dean's capital budgeting committee, because yours are going to be the bigger basket of expenditures and Hort's going to need some and Design will need some and Psyc you know, so on will need some, but the bulk of it's going to be in your bailiwick so we're going to mandate you to go out and bring back the proposal that can go forward as here all the Dean's, all the Faculties accept that this is the capital demand for this time", Trades too was another area. But none-the-less it strikes me that in a polytechnic, to be a real strong polytechnic, you're going to need even more demand for capital expenditure and especially in hard sciences.

Roger: Yeah, then again there's a lot of other things that doesn't have to have the capital price tag associated with it and you know so in my own field as astronomers, as observational astronomers you need to have access to observatories, but most of the kind of work gets done now not on the campus rooftop observatory, it's national facilities that are funded through an entirely different channel and so long as you are a qualified scientist you can apply for time on at the observatory. So you need money, but you don't have to set up the capital yourself and I talked to a colleague in Biology, you know a lot of his work is going in the field counting

birds. So, it's not too intensive for capital, but you still need the environment where this is embraced and you can find a time to do it.

Roger: I remember one of the early research grants, internal research grants, was to you.

Tak: I'm on the list I noticed.

Roger: [Laughs] It was, as I recall, it was really to sort of create this huge computation power by –

Tak: No, that was my CFI grant, my application which was approved but not funding –

Roger: So that was the Canada Foundation for Innovation, was that what it was?

Tak: Yeah.

Roger: Yeah

Tak: Yeah, not that they're unrelated, but yeah, my research grant was to go in this database that existed, because the Canadian Observatory Consortium had made the observations that they had

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made available to anybody that knew what to do with them. So, you just needed some basic computing resources to go through it. The CFI proposal was much bigger and in order to get it together and the Kwantlen gets twenty percent of the contribution, they latched it on to innovation that was going to E Building at the time. So that was going to be the big one where, the one where you had to pay for upgrades at the observatory, but then we have a pipeline for the data, that was going to be looking for star forming regions in interstellar medium. So that proposal went quite far with CFI, so the scientific merit got approved, but then they looked at what Kwantlen University College was and they said that I won't be able to carry through with the project in terms of operating funds and time allocation, but we didn't have the infrastructure to interact with granting agencies so the message somehow got to Barb Melnyck's {EA to VP Academic] office and that kind of just lost, well she was on vacation or something so I never heard what happened to it. And then I asked CFI what's going on with my application, I got in trouble for contacting them, but you know those are the days right that we didn't have the infrastructure

Roger: You know that's right.

Tak: - even to work with the granting agencies.

Roger: Yup, I mean it was sort of a corner of my desk for one period as Acting Dean of Research and Scholarship – whatever we call it, just to get it sited somewhere, but that was, it was a corner of a desk, it was no real support and then Leslee Birch came on board and that

provided some kind of focal point for an office and then eventually a dean with VP of Research but at simultaneously, I mean Canada Foundation for Innovation, a number of CEGEP's were getting funding through that and I'm sort of sitting there scratching my head and saying, "what's going on?", well it was the [Quebec] provincial government was saying, "we want our CEGEP's to be involved in this, so here we're going to provide you with the money to establish yourself and be competitive to set up those things that you had to be competitive," time [Laughs] and a bit of money, whatever it takes to put a particular project together. So, they were way ahead of us and basically as you know the CEGEP's are sort of Grade 12 and 13, finished Grade 11 and you go to a CEGEP. So I thought, "well God, if they can put it together what's…", so you're right, it was in a sense it was premature because the province had never really, and I don't think they still have to this day accepted that this now special purpose universities should have some kind of significant research component to them. I mean yeah they sort of say okay, but they don't really provide the things that an institution needs to be able to do it.

Tak: We've come a long way. So I talk to the people who are new to Kwantlen and they point out the shortcomings and I say yes that's true, but my first year I thought oh it'd be good to get some summer students here, we'll apply for those NSERC USRA's and in those days you have to apply for everything on a form. So, I picked up the phone and said okay who has the NSERC forms? The

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reply I got was what's an NSERC? So, those days are behind us and change is slow, but it's happening.

Roger: Tak, I want to thank you very much, it has been educational, I mean it's amazing, you know, I think, you know a lot of stuff and you've sort of interacted with people over the years, but you didn't see all the things that were going on and how they had to deal with things and make things move forward, move aside, whatever might be. So that's an example again, so thank you very, very much.

Tak: If you've got a minute before we shut that off, can I just review my notes?

Roger: Please.

Tak: So my notes I just wrote in my -

Roger: Oh the timelines [document circulated to all interviewees]

Tak: Yeah and you know it was fun because there's a lot of things in here that have my name on it or didn't, I made some corrections. I read the President PhD degree form and I thought oh that must be about his doctorate and then it turned out to be something else. That was just before I came. Oh yeah, so there's an interesting one where in '96 there's a Kwantlen Classic Golf Tournament in August which, the week before it was when I got hired, the week before the classes started and I walk in and I won the tournament.

Roger: [Laughs]

Alice: [Laughs] That's a good thing we could have in our history.

Tak: Cause the unemployment that I was coming out of had me more physically active and I was in the best shape of my life.

Roger: [Laughs]

Alice: [Laughs]

Tak: So, I thought that was very, oh yeah and 19, sorry 2016, Grace mentioned KPU pilot's first semester-long remote science labs in Canada. Okay so that's my work and I got mentioned there as well. Yeah, and I guess maybe that is it, except for little corrections.

Roger: Oh yeah if you can send me an email about those two, because some of those I just took the timelines that are, were or are, on the website and I've just expanded them, enhanced them as we go

[1:09:49]

Tak: I can give you that.

Roger: - okay great, as we get more information, 'cause I think it's very important to recognize that somebody like you doing remote science labs, we want to access science labs, I think it's important to recognize that somebody, it's not just this appeared out of nowhere, somebody actually [Laughs] worked on it and -

Tak: Oh yeah –

Roger: - this is somebody.

Tak: - that's been in the works for ten years.

Roger: Yeah that's excellent, great, thank you very, very much, really appreciate it and especially making a run around campus to find this and everything else.

[End of transcript]