

What prompted your decision to leave W&L?

It's been ten years here ... It's kind of a natural institutional cycle where you develop a plan and raise money and implement your good ideas. And we've done that pretty well for a decade.

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There's always more you can do. It's not that there's not more to do. But I feel really good about what we got done. And at the time it felt roughly right for me and W&L. And Claremont McKenna's a great opportunity.

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There's no precise time. Like, you don't go into it thinking, 'I'll serve exactly eight years or 12 years or ten years.'

Why Claremont McKenna?

Well, what I really love is a great liberal arts education. Small, residential, you know, a first-rate liberal arts education. I've basically spent my life at two schools so far, Williams College and then W&L ... There are very few schools of that caliber in this country and Claremont McKenna is one of them.

Have you ever lived out West?

I have not, but my wife has family out there. And so that there's some personal appeal there. Her parents are in southern California, and her brother and sister are. So my family's kind of on both coasts, so we can't be near everybody. But we do have some family out there.

In the email, you highlighted the diversity gains, need-blind admissions, all of these accomplishments that have happened over the course of your tenure here. Which would you say you're the proudest of?

I'm going to go with need-blind admissions, which I led with in my message because that's really about creating opportunity for great students who couldn't afford to be here otherwise ... It feels really good to know that for many, many, many years to come, the best students will get to come to W&L, whether their family has a lot of money or not. And that's a wonderful thing for them. And it's a great thing for the school because the school is better when the students are better.

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In my inauguration address ... I identified that as a goal. And so it feels great to accomplish it. And we only accomplished it last year. So also the hardest [accomplishment] in that it basically just required raising a lot of money. And last year we finally landed the largest gift in the history of the school to make that real. So it took a while, but it feels great.

Ten years from now, what do you hope people will say you brought to this university?

At its heart, the core of the university is its students and its teachers. And so I hope that people say that while I was here, through my efforts to raise money, which helps provide financial aid and helps add faculty positions, that we were able to enhance the quality, the diversity, the community in ways that will be sustainable for a long time.

For your successor: What guidance would you give to them about the climate that they're inheriting here at the university?

Whoever my successor is will be a really lucky person ... I mean, that's how I feel about it. I feel like I was super lucky to land here. And one way I thought about it was [that] W&L was already a great place before I got here, and that's what attracted me. But also ... it's [the] kind of place that is always trying to get even better. And I wouldn't have wanted to come here if it wasn't great. And I wouldn't have wanted to come here if it didn't want to get better, because then there wouldn't really have been any point

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I hope that I've left it at least as good as I found it. And the person who comes here will inherit a wonderful community of students and teachers and staff who work really hard and love the place. And alumni love it to death. And so those are the things that any president should want, because it puts you in a great starting spot. And then it'll be up to whoever that person is to figure out what are the most important things to do next.

Was this decision fully yours?

It was totally mine. I definitely could have stayed. But you don't want to stay in anything too long, you know. I think it's good to go out on top.

When did you first get the sense that it might be time to think about leaving?

I don't know that there was a particular moment where a light bulb went off. I had a mentor at Williams, one of my most important mentors, who was Morty Shapiro, who was the president of

Williams when I was a faculty member ... He was a fabulous president of Williams. And after nine years in that job, he left to be the president of Northwestern University. And I learned a lot from watching him and from talking to him.

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I guess I've learned from him about the natural institutional cycle. And this being roughly a decade was pretty healthy for an institution to get a fresh perspective and a fresh set of eyes. And so I think that's always been in the back of my mind since I started.

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Partly it's a matter of feeling like, 'Have we accomplished the things that we set out to accomplish?' And largely we have. And then also partly it's about, 'Is there another opportunity that comes along?'"

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And so for me, those two things sort of coincided when the Claremont McKenna opportunity arose ... The summer and fall is when they were running their search, and they invited me to be a candidate. And that just kind of coincided with getting to about ten years at W&L ... It was sort of more of a coincidence.

Was Claremont McKenna specifically the only place that you were looking to go?

Honestly, it's the only job I've even looked at.

One of the things you said in your email was about ... hoping W&L continued to make progress after you're gone. What are some specific things that you hope to see in the future?

Things that we have already identified as important projects include substantial expansion, renovation of the Science Center ... One thing that's important to think about is that when we do facilities projects, it's about trying to make academics and student life better. It's all about the people ultimately. So the science center ... hasn't been touched in more than 30 years, and we have 80 or 90% more science majors than we did 30 years ago. And so it just needs more space and it needs better space. And that's a really important but complicated and large and expensive project.

So that's on tap. Museum of Institutional History is on tap. The new admissions and financial aid center, we'll actually start. So that's going to go where Early-Fielding is on the corner of Washington [Street] and Lee Avenue ... we'll start taking Early-Fielding down this summer. So that project is not just on tap, it's about to get underway.

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And [we] also intend to add some additional housing on campus. Not to require fourth-year housing ... but just provide options for students. As we know, there are some students who would like to live on campus

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But, I mean, one of the really important things about getting a new president is that person will arrive here ... and that person will work with the board and the community to figure out, 'Well, what can we do?'

Will you play any role in selecting your successor?

I won't, no. And that's entirely appropriate. They shouldn't care what I think.

Is there anything specifically that you would like to get done before your time here ends?

I think the short answer is no. Honestly, I just kind of want to enjoy every minute of it. I mean, I really do love it here ... I've taught every year that I've been here, and I'm teaching this winter term. And I'm really looking forward to that. One more class of W&L students.

So there's not a big thing that I want to accomplish. I want to do a good job until I'm done. So I'll do my best for seven more months and just soak it up.

Is it in the agreement that you're going to be able to teach [at Claremont McKenna] too?

Yes. Certainly I could teach out there ... It's all about how do I allocate my time and what I need to do. But I love to teach and would like to keep teaching out there.

How would you describe your relationship with the board?

I think it's good. I mean, the W&L board is really talented, and they love this place. And it's one of the most important relationships the president has ... We wouldn't have accomplished all the

things that we have accomplished if the board and I didn't work well together. So I feel really good about it.

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Really the most important job the board has, I think, is selecting the president. And they know that ... Hopefully you don't do it very often. If you do it very often you haven't done it right. And so ideally, you know, what they're trying to do is find the person they think is the best fit to lead this place for the next ten years. And they will take that really seriously.

Is there anything we didn't ask you that you feel like we should have? Or something that you want to leave us with?

I want the students to know how much I truly love you guys. I mean, W&L students are fantastic and a huge part of why I came here ... Spending time with W&L students is really the best part of the job. And so I hope you can all feel that.