Interview #1
President Hushang Bahar
Tompkins Cortland Community College
April 1, 1986
Board Room

David Fuller: President Bahar, you are the founding President of Tompkins Cortland Community College and you were right there at the beginning, the genesis as we talked about it. I think maybe this would be a nice time to talk about the origins of this College.

President Bahar: Alright. [Last I knew I was the Founding President, I looked in] the files last night to see whether I really was or not, but I am.

The College was founded here, but not that easily. We had quite a bit of problem in the community trying to get the college going. Many of the people, very heavily Cornell oriented, Ithaca College oriented were quite against having a community college in this area. As a matter of fact, this college came into existence probably about 20 years after many of the other community colleges had already existed in New York. There was that much resistance here in the community for it. At the time when this came about, I was at Ithaca College, as you know Dave, we were working
together up there, and I was directing the Extension Services of the graduate program of Ithaca College. I had been asked time and again by many people whether there was a need for a community college. Several people in the community had known that I had come from Corning Community College and, therefore, they wanted to know if there was a need for it. I was very strongly for a community college having had an opportunity to work in a community college, help build one and so on at Corning. So we went on into really doing a great deal of grass roots work, although I wasn't fully involved in it. The people who were really involved in it were a lady by the name of Helen Hoeffer, who has passed away since, and she was an extremely active person. She had retired from Cornell University, Home Economics School. At that time it wasn't Human Ecology, it was Home Economics. And a man by the name of Ron Space who became Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and stayed the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for an extended period of time and very capably served. A fellow by the name of Robert Sprole from Tompkins County who was and is the Founding President of Therm, Inc., and its present Chairman of the Board. These three people and some of the people on the Tompkins County Board of Representatives were the people who thought that maybe a community college was necessary. Now independently in Cortland there were people who wanted to have a community college, but they couldn't afford it. As a matter of fact, I have to tell you right now today, 20
years later almost, they still can't afford it. We're having a problem getting money from them. If it weren't for Tompkins County being willing to really go over the demographic boundaries — by that I mean, Cortland gravitating towards Syracuse, Tompkins gravitating towards Binghamton, like gravitational pulls; nevertheless, Tompkins County wanting to go over that gravitational pull and getting involved with Cortland, if it weren't for that, Cortland would not have had a chance to have a community college, even today. Tioga County was also very interested in this community college and getting involved, but Tompkins County had already gotten itself pretty much committed to Cortland County at that time, and at that time in the state of New York, there was no way, at least as far as I know, that you could have had a three-county community college. The Board of Trustees of the State University and a man by the name of Marty Mattarano, who was Vice Chancellor of Community Colleges those days, they had felt that they probably were going to put together a community college between Tioga and Chenango, which never came to pass. So they didn't encourage Tioga County coming as part of this partnership and as a result Tioga County remained without a community college and so did Chenango County and we began to serve Tioga County as we are now today and Chenango County is being served by Broome in the southern end and Morrisville in the northern end. So that these counties are being served nevertheless.
Now the moving force in Cortland was a man by the name of Frank Taylor, who was at that time, Chairman of the County Board of Legislators as they used to call them at that time. They are still the same County Board of Legislators; they've reorganized into a more weighted voting system in Cortland there now. He was the moving force and he felt very strongly, although a very devout and conservative Republican. He had very strong feelings about the people who couldn't afford going to College in this community. He was representative from Cortlandville, the town of Cortlandville, and a very strong, outspoken individual about poverty in Cortland County. And the forthcoming poverty that he was really very concerned about which has really been devastating in Cortland County since Frank's death, many of the industry have left there. Now Frank began to do some political work in trying to get Tompkins and Cortland Counties brought together into a unanimous vote. Even though everybody tried, we didn't get a unanimous vote in Tompkins, Cortland Counties for initiation and founding, or rather registration and chartering of this college. We didn't get a unanimous vote, but we got enough votes from both counties to put the college together and they merged into the same basis that we've been on since its founding, Cortland has evolved; Cortland County pays us both on the population basis and on the valuation.
O.K. This was the first vote and the community college came in existence. The Board of Trustees were founded and were asked to come and serve the college and Ron Space became the Chairman. The College really was then born in 1967 instead of 1968, a few months before I was employed - although I was in the background, as sort of a consultant to the organization. I was at Ithaca College, but some of the people I was working with such as Bob Sprole, in Continuing Education Program, Manpower Development training programs and acts that we used to have in those days and Ithaca College was quite involved in those days. Bob Sprole was, as I mentioned, a member of the Board of Trustees of the College as well, and it was because of him that I was sort of a man in the background in advising the counties and the Board as to what a community college was. Really nobody knew what a community college was. Mattarano had come out here and told them about it, but truly you can't educate a community, a group of people, totally laymen, living in a very heavy Cornell-oriented community and hoping that they would know very much readily about community colleges, it would have been a very beautiful task. So I remained in the background.

David Fuller: You have given us an opportunity to go in a slightly different direction. You have given us the steps and some of the people involved in getting it going. But
there is that concept to the community college. What it does in the community that is different from what we already had and you suggested there that its different from those highly academic institutions such as Cornell and Ithaca College. Maybe you could tell us a little bit about the concepts of the community college and what they do for the community that fills in and gives us the full component of education in the community.

President Bahar: The resistance to the community college at that time was that we have already Cornell here, we have already Ithaca College here and we have already Cortland State here. The question that I asked, and the Trustees eventually began to ask was, Do you really have/Is Cornell a Ithaca-Tompkins County College? Is it dedicated to serve the people of Tompkins or Cortland counties exclusively? Is Ithaca College really the College of Ithaca? Just because its name is Ithaca, does it mean that its exclusively designed to serve the people of Tompkins and Cortland counties? Should a student come from New York and a student come from Tompkins County, both equally capable of entering Ithaca College and Cornell University, one has money and the other doesn't, which one will get to Cornell or Ithaca College? The one that has money. Should the student from Tompkins County not have money, regardless of how outstanding a student he or she may be, the doors of Cornell and Ithaca College at that time were pretty much closed to them because
we didn't have these substantial federal grants and state aids to send the students to school. We just had the G.I. bills those days. So when I asked that question in one of the meetings earlier days as to do we really have Cornell and do we really have Ithaca College, do we really have Cortland State - you remember Cortland State also was a kind of college that admitted students by admission, they had to be above 80 some points in high school and had to have SAT's in such a number and so on. They were not letting anybody in school. So they were rather exclusive for a group of people although Cornell, although Ithaca State, rather Cortland State was a public school. So we had a large number of people in Tompkins and Cortland Counties who needed higher education, were capable of receiving higher education, preferably capable of being college trained, and yet they couldn't get to school simply because they didn't have the money, they didn't have the time, they were employed, they were family people - there were thousands of these people who were being deprived and they couldn't go to Cornell, they couldn't go to Ithaca College or Cortland State. None of these, accept Ithaca College, had any program that could really help these people on a part-time basis. Cornell had something called Extramural Studies, but it was not really dealing with what we had to do, it wasn't solving our problems, it was extremely expensive anyway. Ithaca College was also very expensive, but at least we had a little bit of program, Cortland had nothing. And so, as a
result, these people, industrial people, working people of Tompkins and Cortland Counties who were in the industry and night-shift, day-shift, all kinds, they were not getting a chance to go to school. All right. So we felt that, after I asked that question that getting two identical students, which one would get in, people began to think about the fact that a community college was different. It was a institution of higher learning designed exclusively, at least on a priority basis, the priority would be given to the students coming from the community and going to school there, and that it was a college that its doors were open to all people, at all times. And that the college was not particularly a liberal arts school, that it was called and it's still known as a comprehensive college where you offered a variety of programs, of technologies, short-term and long-term, day and night, weekends and otherwise, summer, winter and fall and it was the very idea, the very essence of the idea upon which America was founded. This country wasn't founded for the elite. This country was founded for masses of human beings to come from, wherever they could come, bring their illnesses and sicknesses and poverties and we will cure it. We will have something for you here in this fantastic land of ours. And so, that very idea, is the very idea of the community college, of trying to deal with people who have been left out because of the many, many factors and dynamics, they've been left behind. Somehow, somewhere we have to serve them. The invention of
community college in America is probably one of the most important social inventions that America has ever come upon. It brought the college to the community, to the doorsteps of the people. It really made community colleges becoming the curb service, filling stations of knowledge for everybody. It was that type of an attitude - that's very, very Americana, very, very democratic, very, very acceptable, very supportive of masses of human beings - that appealed to me and always has appealed to me and this is why I began to build my career in the community college. And so, that's how the community college was founded here and we brought it into existence. The Board of Trustees then had an ad all over the country and I was invited to participate in that application. I was selected, I was very, very fortunate to be, and here we are, 18, 19 years later and the college is a thriving, substantial, wealthy little school.

Nancy Craft: I remember we used the phrase "shopping mall" in one of our early planning sessions for people to come in and pick things.

President Bahar: Courses they wanted. You remember we built this building to look like a shopping mall. As you've noticed, it is modifiable, very, very flexible building. You can use this building for whatever you want. God forbid if some day comes that there is no need anymore for a
community college. I doubt very much if that day will ever come, but should it, this could be a shopping mall, this could be a hospital, this could be anything. So that's what a community college is all about, Dave and Nancy. A place where people can come and buy what they want, what they need, when they need it. As we get involved in the later times, and I'll bring it to your attention again, we'll discuss it, I'm sure. We have been chastized and criticized because...[sound of metal falling] somebody is tearing up the College.

Nancy Craft: You said it was a flexible building. They are changing a room in there.

President Bahar: Not that flexible.

We have been really criticized for not being able to turn over to the counties and the state of New York or whoever, a mortality rate, a drop-out rate. All of these terminologies, none of them fit a community college system. We have people who come in here, they can't make it, they go out, but they come back. Is this a drop-out rate when a person comes to College and all he or she needs is one course to enhance and boost him up in the community and his or job or whatever it is that he/she wants to do. He/she takes the course, succeeds in the course, uses the course for whatever background, business or industry or for
whatever he or she may need, go out there and get promoted and never come back to the college again. Is that success or failure? Nobody else does this. Nobody else considers it. Now we do consider that. When people come in here and stay a semester and leave and you'll never see them again; and they have gone, because they came and they got what they wanted, they were satisfied, they were successful, it helped them do what they wanted to do with their life. They went and did it. Now are we successful or are we a failure? So somebody says, "Now didn't that student come back to school next semester?" Well, if you can pull people away from their traditional thinking, traditional collegiate thinking, that a college is a place where somebody enters in year one, and year four leave that college with a diploma, that is a college. We have had some of our faculty referring to it as "we are not a real college," and they have meant it or said it really rather cynically. I wish they didn't, but nevertheless, this is true, we are not a real college if we say in a true form. We are not a real college, we are everything. We are a college, we're a high school, we're training school, we're a vocational school, we're technical program, we're sophisticated program, we're graduate school, we're post-graduate school, we're everything at the same time. But we are not a true college, as a real college, as some narrow-minded individual would think about us being. A college is a place defined when a person starts year one and year four graduates from there with baccalaureate degree.
That's a true or real college. Well, we are not that at all and I hope to God [will] never be that kind of a place. We don't really know, frankly, we don't really care, who comes here and how long they stay. We have programs that will tell a student or individual "if you are to receive an Associate Degree, you will begin here and you will end here, you will take these prescribed courses. You succeed in them and we'll give you an Associate Degree." But does that mean that if a student came here and stayed one semester, got what he or she wanted and left here, and didn't go through the prescribed courses, didn't get an Associate degree, that the college is a failure or the student is a failure? We've got to be able to erase that from the minds of the people. Until such time that we have erased that from our minds, we are still going to be locked into the traditions of the past and we are never going to get anywhere. I've tried to do that. Most of the faculty here, I would have to say, and the staff, most of the faculty, staff, students, parents, everybody, most people, most of the time have put that little thing away. The cliches are gone and now I think that we are a community college that can send the people that we have served. Nobody has been after my hide since I really attacked them very strongly on this issue of saying "what is the mortality rate of the college." We don't have any mortality rates at this college. And I'm not willing to submit to this kind of statistical nonsense and hogwash. I hope that you people in the future, as time goes on, refuse
to submit to that kind of statistical hogwash. A community college can't have any mortality rates. I don't know. People come in here, and they fail in the program or problem or course, leave and are rejuvenated when they come back here and start all over again and succeed in that same course. Was that student a failure or successful? Naturally, he was a success, not a failure because he was rejuvenated, he was revitalized, he was reincarnated. If you can do for this for human beings, you are succeeding. What is the value of a record of mortality of a four-year institution that says, "Ah, but only one-third of all the students who attend this institution graduate?" Is this the record of success, is this something you trumpet about all over the world? That hah-hah, I've destroyed three-fourths of the people who came to my doors.

Nancy Craft: The revolving door.

President Bahar: Is this something that's right, is this something to take a banner and take a flag and brag about and stick your chest out - I've destroyed three-fourths of the people who came to my doors? You could do that if you were Atilla the Hun, but this is not Atilla the Hun times. We can brag about the fact that, although we really don't know, most people who come in here and/or come in here again and again, are successful. We can say that. We can say that very proudly. So the difference you can see between
the community college and the traditional college is in that word.

Nancy Craft: Perhaps the changing nature of our student body, the fact that we do have more adults and more people coming in on a part-time basis is the very evidence of that. How have the students changed over the period of time from your viewpoint?

President Bahar: They've changed substantially because...
Again, this is something that society's pressure has changed, not because we, the Academicians, would want to change. In our minds, the college student was 18 years old to 21 years old. We are still refusing, in America, to grant access to graduate students to play soccer, play football in our varsity teams. Why? Because the only time you play football in our college, baby, is when you are a Freshman, Sophomore, Junior or Senior. Once you graduate you're dead. You cannot from then on be an athlete, and our team will no longer use you. Hogwash! 18-21, what does that mean? Well, we've broken through those barriers tremendously here, at least in this college. We have a, what is it, 27, 28-year old average. About 27 or 28 is the average age of the student. As a matter of fact, when I came back from Africa, I heard it was 31, but I think it is younger than that. About 27, 28, average age of our students. These are employed people. These are people who
work. These are married people. These are taxpayers. These are the people who come in here and harvest the fruit of the taxes that they've paid. I had the opportunity to ask in a Chamber of Commerce meeting where there were several hundred people, major captains of our society, business and industry out there in Ithaca and Tompkins County about a couple of months ago, I asked them one of the questions they didn't expect from me. I asked them in that dinner "if you are happy with your tax dollars spent at Tompkins Cortland Community College and if you think that we are really serving you for the monies that you're paying us, that you're getting your dollars worth at Tompkins Cortland Community College, give me a show of hands?" We had a standing ovation. This is the way the people in the community feel about this college. I don't believe, I honestly don't believe, and I'm saying it for the record, that the President of Cornell University was at the same meeting and asked the same question, he would get a standing ovation, the really substantial, tumultuous clapping that we got. Georgia MacNeil was there. I pointed at her and I said, "remember, see what the people think of your college." That's the way people think of it. I don't believe that if Mr. Clerk appeared (I don't call him Clark, I call him Clerk) was here to (I have a bad accent, I can't get over it, I can't get over that accent). If he had asked that question at the Chamber of Commerce meeting, in Cortland State in Cortland County, would get that kind of... A
community college is a very substantial kind of school. It has really been helping the people here locally. And that's what a community college is all about. For the grassroot, for the man in the street and I'm hoping it would remain that way. I'm hoping that you people as faculties and staff of the college will not try to emulate those in the universities and the elitist ways of behavior. I certainly hope that you would let them emulate you and become organizations such as a community college instead of us becoming colleges and organizations such as Cornell. We're not Cornell, and I hope never will become one.

David Fuller: With that approach, are there specific things that you see that the college has done that make it so accessible or fulfill that goal?

President Bahar: The college hasn't done those particularly. This College President and several of the old-timers who are no longer with us, we did do a great deal of work for making the college a Full Opportunity Program. This used to be called, if you remember, FOP college. There were colleges who didn't believe in Full Opportunity Program. By Full Opportunity Program we meant when we pushed it for legislation, by Full Opportunity Program we meant that, we have a door which is open to all people who want to come in there. Unfortunately, some of those laws at the national level are changing. But having had a high school degree or
not would not have been an important issue. What we wanted
to do was that we would serve all of those at the level they
are, we serve them. If there are any gaps in our community,
we close it, and whoever had the knowledge and information
gap at the level within which we are chartered to serve,
then we will serve. Several presidents of colleges - Bill
Dywer, who is in Massachusetts now, who was President, at
that time, of Orange County Community College; Bill Perry,
President of Orange County Community College; myself; Bob
McLaughlin, President of Herkimer Community College; others,
several other rather substantial ones - we got together and
pushed for legislation in the state of New York to provide
us with a backing, legislative and legal backing so that we
could go to our counties and say "the doors to our colleges
are open and that masses could come in." So what we did
was, we went to the state of New York and came home with a
the formula that all of the Full Opportunity Colleges, FOP
colleges, would be granted a 40 percent support of their
budgets by the State of New York, once you sign up for it.
Well, it was all done in good faith and we did it, and the
State of New York formulated that law. However, with that
law, there was another formula of funding of community
colleges which we will talk about a little later maybe not
today, and that was known as the "Engler formula" which
negated pretty much what we had done and had gone to a great
deal of hard work trying to get that FOP law passed. So
once the FOP law was passed, we came to our colleges, to our
communities and we went to our legislators and they had to legislate the college as an FOP college; in other words, accept whoever comes to college and so on. No sooner we had had that Full Opportunity Program signed and legislated both locally and in the state that the "Engler formula" came to totally negate it. Except for one year we have never received since that day, 40 percent support from the State of New York. They have reneged on that and they continue to renege on that. We haven't been able to get the state of New York to really fulfill its obligation, legal obligation that they really had signed. A sad, sad state of affairs. So you see we didn't do that. I didn't do that locally. We forced, we brought about a legislation to force that issue and it did. Now we are a full FOP college and we haven't suffered from it.

David Fuller: Are there any real turning points that you can recall in the college history, critical moments?

President Bahar: Many critical moments, I think. Every day, I came up here...it's a critical moment again.

Nancy Craft: What's going to be today's crisis?

President Bahar: I remember I entered the college last Friday and I thought it was a critical moment when people, including Moody, "why are we working on Good Friday, Hu Bahar? Why aren't you going to do something about it?"

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I mean, that could be a critical moment. A critical moment is really what is in peoples' minds and how people feel about an issue at a time and a space which becomes critical to them. But for an institution of higher learning like this, the critical moments could be positive or negative, I would have to say. I think the most important critical moment in the life of the College was its founding. When it was founded, that was a critical moment. I'll tell you how it worked. That critical moment was probably the most critical. We had to put a college together in a moth-eaten, dilapidated old building, in Groton, New York. Outside of my office, typewriters were being repaired. Above us was a computer room for SCM and trucks would roll in and roll out and typewriters would come in and come out of that place and there was a sheet, bedsheet that separated the College from the rest of the world. I mean literally a bedsheet. We were to build a college which was functioning, which was operating fully, which had a library in place which was relevant and pertinent, which had laboratories which were relevant and pertinent and functioning and operating and we had to have a faculty, a staff. We had to have tools and machinery, such as typewriters and one thing or the other, desks and tables, and furniture so that we could get the students, and above all, we had to have a student body that Fall, Fall of 1968. Mind you, I came to work in February, from February 15 of 1968, although I was hired in January,
and something had to happen and the State had to approve it. But February 15, 1968 and September 1, 1968 weren't too far apart and so we had to have a functioning college in a place, where I just, as I mentioned, a bedsheets, literally a bedsheet separated the college from the industry. So we had to do a lot of work between February 15 and September 1, and then we had not only a college, a full library, a full laboratory, equipment, facilities, drugs to chemicals, and even lizards, gas, whatever, dead cats that somebody wanted over there; I think it was Ron Alexander who wanted it. Then we had everything at that time to get the business going, you see. So, that Fall we had that and then we had to bring the State of New York, that Fall or was it that Spring, I don't remember which one, I think it was the Spring, the Education Department, to accredit us and register our programs so that we could get to work. No, it was that Fall. So we brought the, asked the State of New York, evaluation team to come on campus. They came and we were registered, and were fully accredited to operate. Now that was a critical moment in our lives, and we went on and we operated there. As a matter of fact, at that time we even had a Continuing Education program. Tom Mecca was in charge of it. We had that program quite successfully and we had a substantial number of people come in. We had centers even. We were a fully operational and a full-fledged institution of higher learning in about six months, from the existance, the founding of the college.
All right. There were other many, many critical moments here. One of the critical moments that I could easily remember is that we went to the federal government and received permission to have $6 million dollars worth of funds from them, from three different grants. They approved it and we had the permission from the state of New York to go ahead and get the plans put together so that we could get the state funding coming forth which was to be half of that, half of the $6 million. No, it equalled the $6 million, matching funds, where Tompkins County would be putting some $1,200,000, $1,400,000. Cortland was supposed to put in $700,000. The balance was supposed to come from the State of New York to make the $6 million to match the Feds $6 million dollars and we build our building. O.K. Or 7, really $7 million dollars - seven from the Feds and seven from the State and counties. Everything was set and finally Mr. Rockefeller, just before we were ready to let things go to bid, Rockefeller said we don't have any money, and we're not going to build any more community colleges.

There were eight community colleges, their plans pending and here we were. We went to the Feds and the Feds said, "sorry, we're not going to give you a dime." We said, "give us some monies to get started." They said no; that was a matching fund and if you can't get your matching fund, you can't get the $7 million. Oh Boy. That's a critical moment and an turnaround at that.
Nancy Craft: I remember that one.

President Bahar: So what we did was that we started putting people together here. The champion of our cause, at that time, was a lady whom I admire, respect and love very dearly, is Connie Cook, who was our state legislator at the time. Connie said we've got to do something about this thing. So we said, okay. I remember Connie and I getting in some of these private, putt-putt airplanes, and never thinking that we'd make it to Albany, because that was all that was available to get us there. And we went out there to do politicing. But the most important was that we got in a plane and Tom Barden of Cortland got his airplane, his company's airplane, and we put several of the big whigs of the BOCES, industry, businesses, and so on together in his airplane and went to Albany to see Rockefeller and plead our case to him. He didn't want to meet us; and he knew that we were not a particularly friendly crowd and he didn't want to meet us. He sent a man by the name Wickwire to meet us, who was his secretary and Wickwire is one of the Wickwire family from Cortland. So upon our persistence and insistence, and hollering and hooting and clawing and clamoring, Rockefeller finally decided to see us and he said he can't do anything about it; he just didn't have the money.
O.K. back to the drawing board. What we did was that we tried to design a new legislation. Back to politics again that way. So we designed a new legislation and this college championed it, eight other colleges benefited by it. They did not get involved, they were not involved any percent, not even zero percent involvement of those colleges, and we did it ourselves here. Connie Cook, the gang in Cortland and Tompkins, this college, yours truly, our Trustees and we did it individually and everybody else. So we wrote, according to Connie Cook's recommendations and suggestions, we wrote the legislation, which empowered the Dormitory Authority to loan the money to the state of New York to build the community colleges. Dormitory Authority had the money. The state didn't have it. But, who is the Dormitory Authority, it is the state of New York. So what we told Rockefeller was, why are you playing games? There is money in there, use it. He said, "the laws say you can't use the Dormitory Authority's money, it is only for Dormitory. We said, change the laws. Well, I can't change the laws by myself. So we give you a law to change it. Would you veto it and he said no I won't veto it if there is such a law. So we got a law put through. Connie Cook sponsored it, and I believe Senator Smith sponsored it from the Senate side. And Senator Smith, by the way, has been a great friend to the community college from the very beginning and continues to be. So, between these two, we shuttled back and forth, shuttle diplomacy, you want to call it, we had been doing
that to Albany regularly. We finally got the legislation through and Rockefeller signed it and the state borrowed $7 million, or whatever their share was, from the Dormitory Authority, hocked our tuition for several years in lieu of payment of the state to Dormitory Authority. These are political games. So, I knew it would never be. But, nevertheless, it cost us an awful lot of manpower trying to do the bookwork for this. In other words, every dime that we collected from tuition, we couldn't spend a dime of it, until such time that we got a letter of clearance from Dormitory Authority saying that the State of New York did make their payment for that year, to that semester to Dormitory Authority. They would allow us to go ahead and use the tuition then. Otherwise, if the state hadn't paid them, the tuition from this College would go Dormitory Authority to pay the state's payment. See how complicated it was. So we solved that problem and we got the bill through and the community college was founded and we built here.

The next critical moment was moving here from Groton to this campus. But those were very old happy moments. But we have had some very, very close calls here on this campus, very, very, close.
We've had several close calls with the counties. We had rather some nasty exchanges from time to time, unhappy exchanges from time to time with the people. For instance, when we fought very hard to get the land next door. Manley Thaler was willing to give it to us, but some members of the Tompkins County Board felt that Manley Thaler was going to get rich off giving the land to us. Now how he was going to get rich off giving the land to us, I don't know. But they felt that he was going to get rich off of it. Therefore, they said that there's something crooked about it and we are not going to get the land. Here we were trying to get a valuable piece of land next door to the college that... We should have bought that thing in the early days of the purchase of this property anyway. But it didn't work that way. So Manley Thaler and yours truly got dragged in front of the Ethics Committee of the Tompkins County Board and we had our tails smacked publicly for doing, for getting that land, for him giving that land to the college and me accepting it. It's amazing how things change, isn't it. So the land was given to the College and it's all paid for by Howell Foundation and their grants to the College of $90,000 grant, that the land was accepted fully by us. Now that was one critical moment. Very serious one. A rather dark cloud that came upon us.

As a matter of fact, a member of our community was very angry, a very, very influential person in Tompkins County
who was also a member of the Foundation Board. Was very angry as the result of the whole situation and felt that that land should not have been accepted by the College because there were some dirty things attached to it, which I wanted to have tell us what they were. It was because of that individual, whose name will go unmentioned, that the Tompkins County dragged us in front of the Ethics Committee of the Board and found nothing in there that was worth even giving us all the embarrassment.

Now time went on and those people in Tompkins County who were totally against, because I wanted to build dormitories on that land two, three years ago, four, five years ago, I had seen the need for it and I wanted to do that. We had Nigerian students, that we lost that contract because we didn't have housing. With USAID we had a contract with the Nigerian government to send Nigerian students here for training - hotel technology, business and so on. And these people were walking in $20^\circ$ to $30^\circ$ below zero in the winter. Coming from Nigeria walking from downtown Dryden all the way up to the college and we lost that bid because we didn't have any housing. If we were going to go into the international program, in businesses, we needed dormitories. And also we lost an awful lot of our out-of-country students because we didn't have housing. There's no adequate housing in Dryden. There's no adequate housing anywhere nearby. People have to live in Ithaca and Cortland and then there's
no way for them to get to college. So you really are not
serving the people then, so we needed some kind of housing.
Well, everybody was against it, and especially when I
mentioned I would like to see dormitories built on that
Foundation land. I almost got driven out of town because of
it. A critical moment. When I returned from Africa, a
member of the Board of Legislators, the Legislative Board,
Board of Representatives of Tompkins County, the person who
had been always, totally angry against building any
dormitories, he also was the individual who was totally and
absolutely angry for having even gotten that land - He
called me and said why in the world don't you go build
dormitories on that property, for heavens sake, Bahar, how
long are you going to wait for them? So, critical moments -
it takes an awful lot of patience to have to live with that
kind of nonsense. So, we're here, and dormitories, another
critical moment in the life of the college. Dormitories are
being built over there for 185 students coming this Fall.
It will grow and it will be bigger. There will be several
more phases of it and you're going to have international
students.

I don't know, David, there are so many critical stories in
here to be told. I suppose the unionization of the faculty
is one of the critical moments in the history of this
college. I don't want to evaluate it because I don't know.
I haven't seen the difference, really, between the days that
I was here myself before unionization and post- and pre-
unionization. I don't see it. I get along pretty well with
staff. I suppose because the staff is people who have come
because of me and I brought them, and so forth, we are
friends. But unionization when I wasn't here, evidently it
was very bitter and an angry exchange, and very adversarial,
people suffered. I think the faculty and the staff all
suffered. I think the College suffered, the students
suffered, everybody suffered in the community because of
that adversarial situation.

David Fuller: You were in Africa when that happened.

President Bahar: I was in Africa during those two years. There
was no union until I left and when I left it came about. I
think the whole thing was badly handled from the very
beginning, both by the union and the staff at the college.
The accumulated pressures on both sides, the feelings that
unions are bad. Just because the union is there doesn't
necessarily mean that it's bad or good. A good union, a bad
union, is what you make of it. People in the union are
the... You know it's somebody saying a pistol is a dangerous
weapon. It becomes dangerous when we use it. Put it at
your head and pull the trigger and it becomes very
dangerous. If you leave it alone, it won't be. Unions are
as American as apple pie. But when the union came in here,
I think some things changed and it has taken me two years to
bring the college's morale back to the level that I felt was comfortable when I left here. The College is back there right now, I think. People trust each other again, people talk to each other again on campus. They're not shying away from each other. We have had, we have been negotiating a faculty contract, we hope a multi-year contract, since November. You haven't seen a single negative word said about it to anyone. And we have been negotiating hard, negotiating heavy, negotiating for lots and lots of things. We are changing some of the items of the contract. They want some of the contract changed, the union, but it's been a team. If you have ever seen the way we set down and work, we don't have an adversarial position. People sit together and work as a bunch of professionals. We, this time, even invited the counties in it. The county commissioners of personnel are involved in these negotiations. And yet we have no problems. We don't have any fights, nobody has thrown anything at each other, you don't see any pickets out there and people are working together. I have vowed that if there were pickets, I will go out there and picket with them. I have vowed that I would do so, and I have said that. Not because it is right or wrong, but because if the situation got to a point where they have to picket, it wouldn't be because of us. It would be because the counties didn't want to do anything about what our recommendations were. It may come to that, I don't know, I hope not. I doubt it. But if I am here, and the faculty pickets, that's
the contract that I have helped build, put together and I'll be out there picketing with the faculty. So, it's going to be that kind of a situation. Now that's the kind of a relationship there used to be, and that's the kind of situation that's back. Again, we went to Albany this year and lobbied with the union. So we have a lot of respect back in this college among the professional groups. We don't have people throwing mud at each other and saying nasty things at each other. You cannot stop all of the back biting. There are small people in every organization and every group and we've got some very, very small people among us here. Unfortunately, any organization has people that members of the organization don't fully agree with the organization. And so they have to air and vent their feelings or be allowed; there are ventilators around here so you can vent it. A water-cooler ventilation is just the best place, so they go vent it, and let them. But nevertheless, the College as a whole, as you witness it, is a very comfortable place in which to work this year. People have said that to me, the students have said that to me, the union members and leadership have said that to me, so I don't think that I'm wrong and I hope so. That was a very critical moment in the college's life. And I certainly think that probably, in a way it asserted the faculty and I think the faculty needed to be asserted. We haven't had a situation in here in quite awhile, and as a matter of fact, I definitely don't think that Dr. Burnham was a very strong
advocate of the faculty and the faculty needed that advocacy, strong advocacy. I was a strong advocate of faculty always because I'm a teacher and I have been. I know how important the faculty at a college is, without which can't really do very much teaching.

David Fuller: I remember, a long time ago when I was Chairman of the Social Science Department and you were teaching there. And I had to go evaluate you as a teacher. You insisted on going through all of the same processes.

President Bahar: That's the way it should be. I mean, if I'm going to teach, I want to know whether the Chairman of my department is happy with my teaching or not. Otherwise, what kind of teaching would that be if, just because I'm president, should I have some shabby teaching going on in my class and consider that good teaching and nobody dare talk about it.

All right. The teaching is an important issue to me. Very, extremely important and so I think that you need, the faculty need a strong advocate, very, very strong advocate. The President of the College should be the strong advocate of the faculty even though the Dean may or may not be. But, that's where the advocacy should come from - the Dean, and then the President. But the faculty, all of the staff
should have advocates. There is no reason that there should be no advocacy among the administrative executive group for the staff of the college. We ought to go out there and defend the staff if we want the staff to do a good job. If we want the staff to give the shirt off their back to the cause of the college, which is teaching and running this institution, I think we ought to go out there and be their mouthpiece. We've got to be out there and say good things about them, strengthen them, and make the communities... and not do it in a nonsense or a ridiculous, or an exaggerated way. Tell the people how good your staff are and be willing to prove it. I have no shyness about me to tell the Tompkins and Cortland Counties legislators, the Board of Trustees, or the people anywhere that the staff of this College is second to none anywhere. Show me another college that has a staff any better than we do. They might have just as good a staff, but not any better than we have. I'd like to see it. So, you've got to do that. Therefore, these irritations and these critical moments and hard points will be erased once people get together and talk about what they can do together to work and to get the things going.

Look at this year. The College, during the past two years, since we came back from an almost torn down college. We had grievances and arbitrations coming out of our ears. I came in here with a flood of it. We have taken those; one case only went to arbitration, which shouldn't have, but the rest
of them we handled very nicely among ourselves by sitting down talking about it and solving it. We haven't had any grievances or any problems in the past six to nine months at all. During these years we've put together not only a good organization, new programs that are coming forth. We've got dormitories that we are building, we've got an international program on its way. As a matter of fact, soon I will announce, as soon as I get the report, that 14-18 Central American students will be coming to our campus this next Fall and this is through a Kissinger program with the George Washington University. They called us and they told us this is what's going to happen because the Congress of the United States is supporting Tompkins Cortland Community College as one of the major colleges to receive international students. What do you guy's want. You have a good organization going. The budget of the College is in good shape. We burned the mortgage. The College doesn't have a debt, not a dime worth of debt. And I feel the student body has grown this past two years. We are about 5-6 percent above last year, and we are one of the two community colleges in New York state that had a plus in enrollment and not a minus. This plus is not because we've had outside students coming in, its because we have increased our own local attendance. And so you see the College is again well known and well accepted, and well respected by the community and so it's being supported.
Those are all critical moments that we've gone through and you'll have some more. Another critical moment is that I'm leaving. You're going to have a new individual. Now that's something you have to cope with; the College will have to live with that.

Another critical moment is when I left and went to Africa and Mr. Libby came in here. That was quite a critical moment in our lives here. Things happened. Things didn't go the way they should have gone. I can't really put all the blame on Doug Libby, simply because a man who knows that he wasn't going to be here any more than a couple of years couldn't really make major decisions. But I do blame the individual for not making any decisions at all. You've got to make some decisions and some decisions were not made.

Critical moment, another moment was that we got accredited after five years. After the first five years we were fully accredited by Middle States, then five years later we were fully accredited for ten years. You're going to get reaccredited next year in 1987 and I have no problem, no doubt that you will go through it with flying colors. The College is in sound shape.

Nancy Craft: What the question of transportation, the busses a factor? Getting the routes set up. How did that affect our students and enrollment?
President Bahar: Yes, it did. That was another program that we worked very hard on and tried to get it. I don't know how many of you were involved in trying to get that grant, big grant developed and the relationship with Tompkins County and Tomtran situation. Do you recall, there is a picture around here that when the first Tomtran bus drove up here with the legislators and yours truly to see what was going on and how it was working out. This was going to be the turnaround for that. Of course, the genesis of that was the Greyhound bus which we put together. It didn't prove to be too profitable because they really didn't have the kind of a service that students needed. I was in Africa when Tomtran went into action, but we worked very hard in getting that legislation going, by the way, both locally and the statewide. We haven't been able to talk Cortland into it yet. Somehow, things just don't jell very easily in Cortland. I don't know why. I haven't been able to get anything going there yet. The enthusiasm and the dynamism that exists in Tompkins County somehow, somewhat is lesser in Cortland. I'm a sociologist, but I haven't concentrated really heavily to find out why, what are those dynamics. Cortland has gone through many crises, over their financial crises, probably that's caused part of it. But we have managed with Tioga Transport to get Cortland at least involved with this. I think it will remain pretty much connected to the College here and will remain connected until such time as they have
a good transportation going. Sooner or later there will be one. As soon as we can get some more business and industry in Cortland, which is imperative for Cortland to survive as a community.

Nancy Craft: How has the growth and change of the College, as it has actually happened, matched or not matched your original hopes and plans?

President Bahar: That's substantial. I think we should pick that up as a whole issue and talk about it the next time we meet.

David Fuller: I thought a minute ago we had a nice upturn in the conversation here and maybe this was a good place to stop.

Nancy Craft: Very good. Thank you, Sir.

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