

## Robert Suzuki, Track 4

Tape 2, Side B

JB: We began this discussion nearly two hours ago now, by talking about your priorities when you arrived five years ago. But it's now 1990. Which of those priorities do you feel have either been realized or are well along the road to realization, and which are still in the process of being worked out?

RS: Well, of course, when I began, I just mentioned a couple of the priorities that I had in mind when I first came here. We didn't talk about a number of the other priorities that developed shortly after I arrived. One of which was to enhance the resource base for this university, through our (??) management efforts, through our capital outlay budget preparation efforts, through various other strategies we pursued in order to increase the resource base for this campus. I think that that was a very important agenda for us to pursue, and I think we have seen the fruits of those efforts already. I think that agenda is well on its way to completion, and we will realize fully the fruits of those efforts within the next five years. So, I've been quite satisfied with the progress that we've made on that particular priority that we've identified. The research agenda I think I would've liked to have seen more progress, particularly in terms of the accompanying external funding that the university is receiving. I think it should've been higher than it is. I would've like to have seen it double what it is right now. But there are some factors beyond our control, such as the instability in the Research Office, which prevented us from achieving that particular objective fully. But nevertheless, I'm satisfied with the increased interest of the faculty in research. I think we're well on our way to activating a significant number of faculty in that area and having faculty feel reasonably good about the support they're getting there. It's certainly no sufficient yet, but I think that that support will increase over the years, and I think that I'm reasonably happy that the faculty will continue in these efforts. I think that the other areas that we identified were pedagogical research and instructional development. We have developed a long range strategy for that. As I say, I think that effort's going to pay off big in another five to ten years. We are only beginning to see some results from that, but that's really a long term process we started about two years ago. So, I think I'm reasonably happy that we are achieving a number of our objectives there, and making reasonable progress on our agenda for that area. Another issue related to research, John, is the whole RTP [retention, tenure, and promotion] process on campus. I was not particularly happy with the standards being applied for retention, tenure, and promotion cases on this campus, and two years ago, I had to take the rather drastic action of turning down some six cases that were recommended by PP and R [Personnel, Planning, and Review]. Many of these were very early promotion cases, cases in which faculty had only been in rank for two to three years. In other cases, you had faculty who had been in rank for a long time, but had not met the minimum requirements for research and publication. Cases where you had faculty being recommended who had

finally published, well not really published, had presented a paper at a conference. A paper that most of us, I think, could've knocked out in a weekend, and that was perceived to be meeting the minimum requirements for research publication. I turned down those six cases, received considerable flack for that, but I'm happy that as a consequence, PP and R has gotten much more rigorous in their assessment of cases. In fact, last year it was rather interesting because PP and R was very rigorous in the cases that were reviewed by them, and were quite upset when I reversed a case they had turned down by a seven-to-seven tie vote. They voted to deny tenure to a young female faculty member. I reviewed that case, and found that this faculty member had, in fact, published quite a few articles and was considered the outstanding teacher in the department. And so, I began to wonder what was going on. I interviewed all the reviewing bodies, including the department chair, and could not understand why PP and R had taken this position. Well, part of the answer—and I never found the full answer—part of the answer was that the department chair had written a very negative letter about this faculty member about two or three years before. That was in the file. The department chair however subsequently had turned around 180 degrees and was in fact the strongest supporter of this faculty member. But his memo in the file had been used by at least two of the reviewing bodies as the primary basis for denying tenure.

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JB: The original letter?

RS: Yeah. And, during the summer, two additional papers that she had submitted for publication came in. I read those, and I was quite impressed with them. So, I went against the PP and R's recommendation to deny tenure and awarded tenure. While I was called on the carpet before PP and R the following fall to explain why, on the one hand, I had taken this position that they ought to be more rigorous one year, and then turn around the next year and do the opposite. And I explained to them the process I had gone through, and I think, for the most part, PP and R understood. But I was happy about that incident, because it indicated that PP and R was indeed taking my admonitions to heart and were indeed reviewing these cases more rigorously. At the same time, I didn't want them to apply some kind of publish or perish standards of a research institution to these cases. So, I think we've made good progress on that front. Our ed equity efforts, I think we have a long ways to go there in terms of actually reaching our objectives. The bottom line, for me, is whether we are retaining and graduating substantially larger numbers of underrepresented minorities. We have not done that yet. But I am pleased that we are well on our way in that effort, and I'm particularly pleased, I think, with the integration of this priority throughout the university. I think that, I sense that many faculty understand that this is a priority for the university, and are genuinely trying to assist in making it a priority, and I feel good about that. I think while there are still a lot of doubting Thomases out there, I think that there are large numbers of faculty who have really made a commitment to this. While I could go on and on, John, I mean—we've laid out a rather large agenda, I think, for this campus over the past five years. If I were to do anything over again, I probably would

not have promoted as many initiatives and have pushed as large an agenda at one time as we have over the past five years. I think, in some ways it may have overwhelmed the campus. It may have also confused people. And if I've learned anything from the past five years, it's that we should probably pursue a limited and manageable number of initiatives at any one time, and pursue those as strongly as we can, and to see that they're well established and well on their way before raising others. The other thing that I probably would do if I had to do it all over again, is to not only limit the number of initiatives, but spend a hell of a lot more time with the faculty talking about them.

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JB: One of the things that terrorizes the oral historian, or at least me, as an oral historian, is that I may not have asked the most important question. It happened to me just the other day. The most obvious question was unasked, and so at the end of each interview I ask if there is such a question that you would've liked or have expected me to ask of which I didn't raise? Does one come to mind?

RS: I can't, off the top of my head, think of any such question, John. I thought your questions were very good, very probing. Raised some of the more significant issues, at least from my perspective. I can think of probably a dozen other questions, but none that would be of the type that you're talking about, so I think you did a splendid job.

JB: Let's leave it an open pipeline, in case any does come to mind.

RS: Sure.

JB: And I hope I can follow up too, if something does arise.

RS: (Both talking) —of course, of course.

[END OF INTERVIEW]