

## Transcript of Interview with Norman Baker by Ben Orme

**Interviewee:** Norman Baker

**Interviewer:** Ben Orme

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**Location [Interviewee]:** Cincinnati, OH

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**Transcriber:** Ben Orme

**Summary:** Norman Baker is a UC Emeriti faculty member. He helped create the Linder Honor Plus Program. During the interview, he talked about his accomplishments during his time at UC and the some of the challenges that came with being a senior vice president at a major university.

**Categories:** AAUP, Lindner College of Business, Teaching

**Tags:** Lindner Honors Program, overseas, misconduct, faculty relations, student engagement, co-op program, faculty union

**Ben Orme:** Good morning Mr. Norman. How are you?

**Norman Baker:** I am well. Can you just call Norm. That relaxes, relax me.

**BO:** Why don't you go ahead and tell a little bit about yourself. You know, what you did at UC?

**NB:** OK. Do you want me to just start talking?

**BO:** Yeah.

**NB:** I came to UC in the late seventies, I think. Came as the head, what was then called the Quantitative Analysis Department, now Business Analytics. But, was head of that for five years, went back to faculty for a few. Then in the early eighties, went to the provost office, first as acting Vice Provost, but before I became Vice Provost, they asked me to be Provost. Did that for almost ten years. In the 94, returned to the faculty, had a year leave. Used that year to build the program called Linder Honors Plus Program, an undergraduate honors program in the college of business. Did that until I retired in 2002. I actually stayed around for another five years because the primary donor to the program wanted me to be continuing to be involved until we got the program up and running. So far, I am retired, which I guess officially I stopped going to campus pretty much around 2007, 2008.

**BO:** Oh wow, and what was the Linder's Honor Plus Program

**NB:** What is it?

**BO:** What was the Linder's Honors Plus Program?

**NB:** You are asking me what it is?

**BO:** Yeah, yeah

**NB:** It is an undergraduate honors program. Each gets five-year scholarship, required co-op, cooperative education. Includes an overseas trip. They now do Europe, China, and South America. We initially started in Europe. Students would go out in four to six weeks. They spend

one week with a university in that region studying global business in that part of the world. It's it is actually a full semester. The first part of the semester is where they actually study the global business perspective from the U.S. perspective and when they go overseas they get a chance to see it from a perspective from that part of the world where they are. After the academic program, they meet with companies and we ask companies to provide three things to the students: One, an understanding of what their strategy is for operating the business within their region, and also within world. Two, the opportunity to meet with ex-patriots some of who have come from America working in their area of the world and others who leave that region of the world and come to America cause coming to the United States is actually more difficult than going overseas for reasons we can talk about. And the third thing is please make sure the students have an opportunity to see your company product, you know, either what is you do as a product or a service. If we do fifteen or so companies and think the students get a pretty good understand of what's happening in that region of the world from a business perspective. We were, the program was designed jointly by faculty and business leaders. The business leaders were asked to identify what are the characteristics that make our current business program outstanding, what is it the students should know when by the time they graduate and what the important things to discuss and our faculty committee put together the academics. It's a little over twenty years old now and doing very well.

**BO:** Oh wow, and did some of the students in the Linder Honors Plus Program they work overseas too after they graduated?

**NB:** [Nodding his head yes], We, our hope was that, hope was, I don't if you want comic relief or not. We talked about this, we wanted to attract the best students in the regions to the program. Mr. Linder for the region, that was inside of 275, for us it was like a 100 hundred mile radius, but we never really talked about that. Our hope was that 70 percent of the students would continue to work in the Cincinnati area because we thought it was important for the program to take predominantly students from the region to stay in the region. About, I think we've done pretty well with that. About 30 percent stay and a number of them are with companies like Procter and Gamble, but they are working overseas. They are in Europe, they are in Russia, they are in South America. Others have gone off, in fact, Vandez Jones, just came back, he was one of early graduates. He was running a company in Africa. He was the University of Chicago's College of Business Alumni of the Year last year. He started a company in Africa, it's almost like an uber for farming equipment where they provide short term rentals for farming equipment, it started in Nigeria and now in seven countries. He is now back in the United States working in the Cincinnati area, so students have gone off and have come back. There is some interesting stories with graduates have done. His is one of the most interesting.

**BO:** Oh, wow. What other companies are they involved in overseas, besides Procter and Gamble?

**NB:** I mean, it goes on and on. Are going to leave or, I mean IBM

**BO:** Pretty much everyone.

**NB:** I mean yeah. The students are being recruited all over the country now. Every year, as I said, our goal is 70 percent here, but every year— San Francisco, a couple, a number of companies in San Francisco hire on a regular basis. Charlotte, New York, Chicago, we have alums all over the country and all over the world now.

**BO:** Oh wow.

**NB:** When you figure twenty-five a year for twenty years, it's now all of a sudden four hundred people, five hundred people out there. You can't keep track, I can't keep track all of them. I've been gone too long. Actually, one of the nice things is that Raquel Crawley was one of our early graduates she, accounting major, worked at P&G and then worked in one of the CPA major firms. She is now back running our program for us, which is kind of neat that we have an Alum actually running the program.

**BO:** Oh nice. What are you most passionate about?

**NB:** [Laughing] Now golf. In those days, you know, it depends. When you look at my career, it is very hard for me to answer because, the early part of my career as a teacher and a researcher, in the middle of my career I was building a department and then working at the university level and then finally the honors program. As I mentioned earlier, I went from that to my son-in-law's, we started the company, so you have to me which stage of life you're asking about, when ask about, in fact the thing I'm most proud of is the Honor Plus Program. That has affected more lives positively than anything else I did as far as I know. At least I can see the results of it. You know some of the things as Provost are so removed from the students that you can't see the impact it has on individuals when you are, at, when you are running an undergraduate honors program. Every year, you see amazing things happen where young people who probably wouldn't had opportunities otherwise, not only having opportunities, but then you can follow their careers and see how well they've done. That's the thing I'm certainly mostly proud of because it has so much positive impact on so many lives.

**BO:** Did you like being a provost?

**NB:** [Pause]. I don't think anyone would like that job. I had to, you can imagine the span of control of twenty-three direct reports. I, the word, the relevant word isn't like. I was challenged by it, it was an interesting stage of life where I had to learn a lot more about myself. I had no training what so ever really. My degrees are all in engineering even though I was working in a business college. I had no training to be anything to be like a senior vice president of a major university, so it was a learn as you go kind of thing. So it's challenging. I think we did some good things, but I don't remember a whole lot of times where I would write down 'Wow it was a real joy.' [Laughter]

**BO:** Why did you want to teach at the university?

**NB:** [Sighs] Boy that all happened by mistake. My whole career is a series of you know, unexpected opportunities that I took advantage of. I did, nothing was planned. When I graduated from, from high school, my dad was a house painter. [Laughs]. The year between my junior year in high school and the senior year in high school, end of junior year, my father said, 'dad, son, what do you want to do when you graduate from high school?' I had been working with him for five years. I said, 'oh dad, I thought I would go to work with you and take over the family business. He said that would be wonderful. I spent that summer, ninety-degree temperatures painting the inside of closets with lead-based paint, which was ugly. At the end of the summer, he said, 'son, what do you think you want to do when you graduate?' I said, 'Dad, I am thinking about college' and that was my career counseling, [Laughs] Painting inside of closets, so that is how I ended up in college. I went to Northeastern, where I co-oped. Friend of mine,

who had about the same academic record as I did, had a scholarship offered M.I.T. for his Masters. I said, 'Holy cow, if he can do it, I can'. So I sent out to a number of places. Northwestern offered me scholarship including a stipend to live in on. I had a child by then. Said, 'Would you come out and do your PhD?' It was a government program, the National Defense Education Act, that was trying to build more people graduating in the sciences. I did that. Got to the end of that interview with companies and universities decided that I really wanted to teach. Ended up teaching at Purdue and then went to Georgia Tech, I then and, I started a PhD program in the area at Georgia Tech. Came to Cincinnati when they offered me a chance to build my own department, so that is how that department got started and then after five years I decided they needed somebody who had some new ideas. I thought I used everything I had and that is when I had a chance to go into the Provost Office. So none, none of that was planned. It was a journey of seeing something, an opportunity and taking it. I would like to say it was all planned and I had these goals it be, it's just not true.

**BO:** Did you do any research, outside research besides university?

**NB:** I don't know what you mean by research. I did sponsored research as a faculty member and I did consulting. Depending how you define those terms. I did both of those yeah.

**BO:** OK, what did you hope students took away from your class.

**NB:** Say again please.

**BO:** What did you hope students took away from your classes?

**NB:** I don't understand the question. What did I hope did I take away from my classes?

**BO:** What did you hope students took away from your classes when you taught you know?

**NB:** Oh, hope students took away. Oh, I am sorry

**BO:** You're fine, you're fine.

**NB:** Boy, that is another interesting, see I taught some sections with five hundred students in big auditoriums and I just hope they'd survived. [Laughs] You know, I hope, I hope that—an introductory class to quantitative analysis, what they know call business analytics, and what I hope they would walk away with was an appreciation of how analytical tools could be used and what kind of data could be produced and how business decisions could be based on that data. And that is much as I can hope for, there was no hope for them how to do it in that class size, but they can walk away with the understanding of what was possible, so they can use it with some, some guidance, use it in their business careers. That was as much as I could hope for. Senior in the Masters level, you are hoping you are developing the tools, so they can go out and do the work. At the PhD level, you are hoping to get them to the point where they can add to the tool base, so the field continues to grow. My, my generation was the first generation in that field. We were the first people to really start to try to analyze big data, so there was—you know really those were the you hoping to develop awareness, you know some ability to use and then finally an ability to develop your tools. What changed was depending on what class you were talking about.

**BO:** What was the hiring process when you came to UC?

**NB:** [Laughs] I got a call from an ex-student, Dave Anderson is his name, whose then the head of the, he graduated, got his PhD at Purdue, wanted to be—he basically said ‘they are thinking about building a new department up here, I thought that you would be the perfect the person. I recommended you to the dean. Would you be willing to do it?’ I came up and took a look at what was going on and said under the following conditions I’d be willing to do it. They met those conditions and I came. [Laughs] So—it wasn’t much of a hiring process. They went after me and got me. This way it was the same.

**BO:** What were relationships like among your colleagues?

**NB:** [Coughs] Well—again it’s, I’m sure it an unusual—There were two, well there were three faculty actually there at the time. One did not get tenured, so when I came there were two. I knew one had been my student and the other guy, was you know, somebody I got together, got along pretty easily. As we built the department, I think it was a challenging situation for the faculty because I was pushing them to move out of their comfort level of just teaching and getting them to publishing, and doing, developing sponsored research, which I thought it was essential for the develop of the program. And we were adding one or two faculty every year, so it was a growing faculty. I think the fact that most of them stayed there for a long period of time meant that we did it in a way that helped meet their needs as well and I believe the department grew very well, so I don’t know how to—It was a working, working team. That’s the best way to describe it. That’s what we set out to do. There was no, no one really in charge, it was just a group of guys who work, actually, people, there were a couple of females. It was a just of group that wanted to make it happen. And we did.

**BO:** Ok, how to did you feel about the administration, you know, during your time?

**NB:** [Chuckles and Pauses] Part of it, I was the administration. [Laughs] As a, as a department head and a faculty member, I was grateful for the opportunity to develop the program. Pleased that they honored their commitments from a resource perspective and I think just grateful to let us developing that program without a lot of external, you know, complaints. They did—virtually we were free to develop the way we thought it was proper, which I thought we were very fortunate. You would have to ask somebody else how they felt when I was there [Laughs]

**BO:** I mean, did you like that freedom?

**NB:** Oh yeah, I think it is essential in the university. I think there has to be some understanding what a university is and what it’s about, what its priorities are, where its headed, but beyond that, within the recent, you know, mainly what you can do from the perspective, administrative perspective is set directions. Where are we headed, where do we want to get. Talk about how we get there, and you know, provide the resources if it’s possible to do it. The hardest things to do in a public university, maybe private too, but I don’t know. Hardest thing in a public university is how resource restrictive it is and every time the state takes a budget cut you get hit, and your constantly fighting. When I took over as provost, about forty percent of the revenue stream, stream was subsidy from the state. About 50 percent was tuition. Nine years later when I left, it was down around to twenty five percent subsidy, so there is a fifteen percent cut. It’s—the academic budget at that point in time was between three hundred and four hundred million, it kept growing. When you take a 15 percent cut of three hundred million, its 45 million. And you look at for a while you say to yourself, ‘Son of gun, ninety-seven percent of the academic budget is salaries’, so where do you, where do you get that, those budget cuts, you’ either replace the

funding, or you are taking pretty severe hits on, on people. There is no other alternative when ninety-seven percent of the budget is salary. So, now that wasn't true in places like you know, administrative services where they have trots, and things like that. You look at faculty, you know, look at that budget, it's people. I mean there are small parts of it that are travel, and small parts of it that are equipment, it's predominantly people. So every time there is a budget cut, it hurts, it hurts being people. And that was the hardest thing, by far the hardest.

**BO:** And I guess as a provost, you had to make tough decisions, as far as?

**NB:** You have no choice, and its—I almost said something that you probably don't want to tape. It's not good. [Laughs]

**BO:** Were there incidents or events that were handled in a way that kind of disappointed you at UC? I know you mentioned budget cuts, but?

**NB:** I mean sure. I mean you looking at a thirty-year journey. Lots of things that disappoint you. [Laughs]. Sometimes it's your football team. Other times it's a dean that you really thought would be great and turns out not to be. Other times it's finding the—you know there's been sexual harassment, racial discrimination you have to deal with. I mean, there were some ugly situations over the years, were extremely disappointing, because you just don't believe people can behave that way. And you find out they do and you have to deal with it so.

**BO:** How did you deal with those situations?

**NB:** [Jokes] Very carefully. I had an excellent person—female, who, who, was able to—how can I say this, she, she, she was tough. She could go out in those kind of situations and because I would end being the final decision maker I, I pretty much had to stay out of the issue of what happened. It had to be done by someone else because eventually these cases had to be presented predominately to me and I discussed it with the president, depending on what it was, maybe I'd get the affirmative action people in, I'd get the human resource people to keep people. But, at the end of it, it was going to be my decision. As a group we would sit and discuss it, but ultimately it was my decision, so I can't also be involved in the investigation and I had a person who did those investigations and she was excellent. And I think without her, we would have been a different story. I think we handled most of them well. I look back on it and I see what is happening in today's environment and go back twenty years, thirty years and say what was the environment like back then. You know cases, probably would now refer to the police, you just made darn sure that the person was out of the university and was done in way that the person would never teach again at any other university, but—there no thought at those times—and you got two lawyers sitting there. You know we have our lawyer and the person involved has their lawyer and they weren't even talking about this is something that they should go to the police. If you look today's environment, I would guess, you know, maybe 15 or 20 percent of those cases now would've now been referred to the police. That's how much it has changed. I— every time I read about one these, or hear about one these instances and look at it and say, 'did we really miss it by that much', but then I think back on it where we were and what was being expected. I don't know. I— that's the one thing I spend time thinking about because I don't know, I don't know if we should've gone further on some of those cases or not. Even today, sitting here I can't tell you how to resolve that. I just don't know. I can't differentiate what's happening now and what we were at that point in time.

**BO:** And how did UC respond to your needs, research or money or grants, or even salary?

**NB:** Well, that's a lot of different questions at once. [Jokes] Research, when I took over as provost, I wanted to at least maintain the quality of the undergraduate programs. I thought the undergraduate programs were really in pretty good shape. And our goal was to continue to build them and to maintain them, make sure they, stay, stay good. When you looked in those days, College of Conservatory Music, D.A.A.P. were by the outstanding and engineering, undergraduate engineering. If you took the three ins— which ones could you put nationally, compete nationally those were the three that you could say, 'yup, we compete nationally' on those. Business, education were in a stage where there was hope. You could probably develop them at that point in time. So, there was a goal then of maintaining and developing excellence where we already had it. And then because of resource restrictions, you can't help to build everything, it's just impossible, so the question became 'what else do you try to build?' and my, my goal initially was build a graduate program in engineering, especially in sponsored research. Build the science programs in arts and sciences, especially the research. And build the two key professional programs for the region, which in my mind were business and education. I think we did real well in graduate engineering. I think we did real well in education. I think we did okay. in business until recently. I think the last ten or fifteen years, business has finally gotten to undergraduate where I thought, where I hoped it would be. So there were some successes and some that weren't, but you set those—you set those goals, set those guidelines, and you make sure that the deans understand because you know, you can't have a dean of a college where your saying, 'Look, all I want you to do is hang on the best you can because we don't have enough resources to put everywhere. I am not—we're not going to put it in your college.' And they need to know that and they need to understand that's—that's how it is going to be because you can't bring them in making these promises and then away. So it is much easier to recruit in places we were planning to build, than in the places you weren't. But, we set some priorities, I think we, I think we did a good job of building, building the graduate programs and I think education did, came a long way and I think business is getting there now. But, it's the idea, in my mind at least, to set some, some goals and directions and hire people who can take you there. Sometimes you succeeded and sometimes you didn't. I don't even remember the question. Was that at all relevant. [Laughs]

**BO:** You answered the research one. Was there anything else that they responded to their needs well. Like you know trying, trying to get, you know, sponsors, trying to get technology?

**NB:** Well, that is all wrapped up in the graduate programs. If you're bringing in sponsored research, you are on the frontiers of what is going on. Dean Papadakis, that is another interesting story, Taki came in he, he was tough as nails, very demanding. Boy he built that program and he went off to be President of Drexel. He did a great job for us before he left. He came here from Greece for his Masters here, and earned his PhD at Michigan and he came originally from Greece. When came back on, he came back as a Masters student, it was the first year for fraternities and sororities were back on campus, so the headline of the student newspaper was, 'UC Welcomes Greeks To Campus', he thought it was him. [Laughs] Gave you an idea of what his ego was.

**BO:** How have faculty changed over time?

**NB:** I don't know how to answer that. I, I—you know the last. I've been out for a certain, long enough. I don't know what the faculty are like anymore. In my time period, more emphasis on

graduate programs, more emphasis on, on what they did for research, where or not it was something to hope to get sponsorship for. Things in the past were mainly concerned for undergraduate education were less important, became more important. So, but you need to keep a balance. You can't have you know—I used to tell students all the time the best of the universities in the United States were not necessarily the best places to get your undergraduate degree if you got faculty that is so focused on research and publication. They are probably not paying attention they need to the undergraduate program. You try to recruit people that have a balance and understand the need of an excellent undergraduate program, but also have the ability and interest to build a graduate research and publication. You are looking for that balance. You are not looking for the best scholar that is—going to change the world. You are looking for a person to come in and, and you'd love to have him too, or her, but which you are really looking for people who can contribute across the board.

**BO:** OK, would you say you had that balance at UC?

**NB:** Yeah, I think there were. if I were to summarize a typical department you had a cadre of folks who were primarily undergraduate oriented, you have cadre of folks you are primarily research oriented, and then you have folks who cut across together. It's the idea of the unit has to be in balance, not every individual. So, again you are building a team and in my, my—the view, the right department, when you, an outstanding department and an outstanding teams works together, make sure that all goals are met. It does not mean the individual does it, it means together as a team, anything can happen. And that's how it should be, I believe in academe. Whether it is now or not. I have no idea. I can tell you about the honors, The Linder Honors Program, but beyond that, I am completely out of touch with the university.

**BO:** Have you ever stayed in touch with the university?

**NB:** Other than doing fundraising for the honors program, no.

**BO:** How often do you do the fundraising?

**NB:** Well it is pretty much continual. I mean, it's not every day—it might be regularly with a couple key donors, who become my advisors. I meet on a regular basis whoever is directing the program at that point in time, and we talk about what is happening, and talk about who, who else we can approach to try and get some funding. The key, the key once the program gets going, the key is to have alumni who are willing to contribute. The catholic high schools do that extraordinary well. [Laughs] We are just learning how to do that, but I think that is happening in the honors plus program. I think the alums have been very loyal to the program. They are not making big donation, but you know, you pick up five hundred thousand dollars a year from a number of your students and it adds up.

**BO:** Oh, wow.

**NB:** And you need to have enough maintain that scholarship base,

**BO:** And you think you did pretty job of doing that of keeping the alumni together?

**NB:** I—no [Laughs] I'm not sure—I tried, I mean the first three of four years, you go back, when my description of where it was because I left after about five or six years when the program started, Jeri Ricketts took over and she's the one that—I—she, she was on the faculty committee that developed the academic program. She came in as the academic advisor, I may say it that



way, she was a tenured faculty member, came, she is a tenured faculty member. Came in as the academic advisor, while I was out there building support for the program and then when I left, she took over as director, she did an absolutely outstanding job at building the program, getting students involved, developing the longer term commitments— we, we very much wanted the students to be involved on campus, so when they came in we strongly, my belief, students who do get involved love the university. Students who don't get involved, probably don't and the whole to enjoying your undergrad experience is getting involved. Doing the kinds of things you guys are doing right now. We, we have every year, there is one, one of the students, there is twenty students, twenty-five, one is Mr. Bearcat and one is president of the student—I mean what has happened over time, as the program evolved is the senior, junior senior students, senior students, people who have been in the program for two or three years would take the freshmen under their wing, freshmen, sophomores and encourage them to get involved. And we weren't clever enough to figure that out, but the students figured it out. And so what's happening is this continual commitment of students to give back to the university and community while they are here as undergraduates and then you see it continue and not only they are continuing to give back to the program, but we got students all, alums all over place giving back to the communities and that was one the things we wanted to build and we didn't figure out how to do it, but they did. So yeah, I think that happened, but I don't think it was because of me. I think Dr. Ricketts did an outstanding job. She deserves at least as much credit as I do for the program and in fact, if you can get her, you should. If she has not volunteered, you should look her up. J-E-R-I R-I-C-K-E-T-T-S. Jeri Ricketts, she would give you a little of a different picture of that program and what's done. Now we could go, President Pinto, well a month ago, President Pinto's person called said, 'Could you come in and talk to the president?' I said sure and we had lunch and basically said I want to thank you for developing the Linder Honors Plus Program and we talked about how much visibility it has on the business community and how important it was to the university, and fact I thought it was really neat and I said you really need to bring in Jeri too because she is the one who took it over. I got it started, that's true, I got the funding— she the one that made it, she's the one that developed. I paused because the reason I did is I am absolutely convinced that I could not have built that program if I had not been provost. So, when you asked me, I am glad I was provost, all other things swept aside, yes because it gave me the entrées I needed to Proctor & Gamble, who gave us money to cash to get the program started and Mr. Linder, who gave us an endowment, so we could keep the program going. We needed both gifts because we wanted to give scholarships the first year, so we had to have money to support that and then we needed to have money to continue. Between those two, I got it to give us enough started to make it happen. I don't believe I could have access or creditability, if I had not been provost and had to chance to meet with me and see what was happening at university when I was provost. So, there was a lot things that happened that were completely, I was going to say, outside of my control, and I think they were, but certainly within would happen to meet, they made that happen. It wasn't just a faculty member who decides to do it. It was that cumulative career path that was sitting there what made it happen and I look back on it and I, I am convinced, absolutely convinced, that it wouldn't have existed if I wasn't provost. So you take that, you put together two people who thought it was a great idea to have this kind of program in Cincinnati, it had the resources to make it happen. And then I was blessed to have Jeri on my side developing the academics while I went out and developed the rest of it. Again, a team.

**BO:** I mean, did the honors program have any effect on the city itself, like city of Cincinnati itself you now?

**NB:** I think it's, you got people all over the city that are in positions that they probably would not have been. I mentioned Lavandez earlier. Lavandez came out of Walnut Hills, he did not do particularly well, on the, as nor did I, on the standardized tests. I, I could take standardized tests the rest of my life and never do well. Ok. I just, don't do—well it's a different story. Lavandez didn't, but he, he had been president of student government at Walnut Hills. All kinds of signals about this young man, potential for leadership and my daughter who at the time was working at Proctor & Gamble, I think she's a really good judge of people and I said, 'Karen, can you please go interview this young man for me and see what you think' and she came back with you've got to admit him, and we did. If you look at a standard honors program where you, where you, well your ACT score has to be thirty or above. It wasn't there. His, his undergraduate grade point average was three point something, but what you saw was a young man who just all kinds of potential. So, we didn't build the program in classic honors sense. We're looking for people, you have to be a genius to be a business leader. I'm sorry— you need to have good common sense, you need to know how to work with people. You're not a nuclear physicist. It's a different world. He just had all of the attributes you want. That young man he worked at AC Neilsons Bases went from there, stayed with them when he graduated, went to China to Beijing where he set up their Chinese operations. Set up in three cities. Married a Chinese gal that he met while he was there. He left there to go back to, to go to the University of Chicago, got his MBA and I mentioned earlier, last year he was the Alumni of Year, for grad, the business school at the University of Chicago. Graduated from Chicago went onto Dupont and merges in acquisitions. Then developed with another couple, this pro, this business in Africa with the farming equipment in agricultural equipment. The farmers there can't afford to rent that equipment, so where do you get the money? U.S.A? Foundations? You've got to raise that money from someone interested in making this change happen in Africa. He did that. Gates Foundation. Bill Gates Foundation gave money to make this happen.

**BO:** Oh, wow!

**NB:** He left because his parents are ill and he needs to home to help them. Ok, so he's back here and he is already, when he got back he had offers from all over the place. He was working with one of the major equity financing firms in town. So here is a young man, I believe if he hadn't had that opportunity, probably wouldn't gotten into an undergraduate school somewhere, but I don't think if had the connections, the opportunities do what he did. And I look, he's been an outstanding alum for us. He's done a wonderful job for himself and you look at what he has done and he's made important contributions. If that company could, there are in seven countries now. I think I mentioned this, they started in Nigeria and they added I think six others, might be five, I think it is six. Anyway, it's growing and you look at that and it's going to impact. Now, this is a young man, I don't know if he had those opportunities, but I look back on it and that's what I think the program has done. It has taken people, I would say each class, there is four or five young people that probably wouldn't have had that opportunity, otherwise, but because of that, they went on to do pretty remarkable things.

**BO:** So it definitely has

**NB:** So, yeah I definitely feel awfully good about it and it's neat when the student, like Van. I tell Van Jones is a political commentator, he is still Vandez [Laughs] But anyway, when Van came back in town, I can tell you when of the first he did was call us and say can we have a

lunch and talk and it's that kind of thing that makes my life good. Yeah, I think the program did well.

**BO:** It sound like it, it definitely sounds like it had tremendous impact of peoples' lives. You know, the mock interviews that they had.

**NB:** I think, I think there is— you know, you see some of the young people because of the situations, family situations they had, had these probably had these same kinds of opportunities others. When you see the people coming in out of the less fortunate situations, where money is an issue, where the first— I was the first person to go to college in my family, I know what that is like. The first person to go to college— it's a different, it's a different setting. Having that opportunity to for them makes a big difference.

**BO:** Yeah—how has the campus change since you started at UC?

**NB:** Whew, physically its different. Presidents Day, the whole time, almost the whole time I was provost, when Joe Steger was president, he and the vice president of finance really focused on building the physical ground, physical nature of buildings, the grounds, etc. You know, I fought them half, half, half the time I was fighting them because I wanted those resources for academe. I was, I was on, I did nothing to do with the medical side. One of the first things I requested was, you know, get somebody else to run College of Medicine, College of Nursing, I don't know anything about that. I don't want to know anything about that. Let's get another provost [Laughs], let that person run the campus, and everyone thought I was nuts because I was shrinking the size, but it made no sense for me to be there. They were, they were, I wanted to have some of those resources for the academic side. And I think the, the tension between us made it happen because I kept fighting hard enough for them to get sufficient resources and doing what needed to be done and they kept fighting hard enough to get what they needed for the physical campus. I think together, those two made a big change, so I look at and say continued growth and the excellence of the undergraduate program, areas where the graduate program have really become quite, quite good. And then, the physical campus itself, those are the things I would say are big changes.

**BO:** And how did you feel about those changes you saw?

**NB:** Well, I think overall, it has been very positive. I think—. remember, you are going back to the 1970's. [Laughs] In the 1970's, it was a commuter school. It's pretty much a residential campus now. I'm not saying there aren't any commuters, but it's much, much more likely students are residential. Why is that important? Because that's when they get involved. Coming in and going to class and going home, you are less likely to get involved on what's happening on campus when not living there. Now, I'm not saying your, after the Freshman or Sophomore you have to live off campus, but I mean the first year or so, I think it's pretty important to get on campus, become a part of what's happening there. So yeah, I think it has changed a lot and I think for the better.

**BO:** OK—How have UC's priorities shifted since you started?

**NB:** We talked about that a number of times.

**BO:** Do you think UC is more of research university?

**NB:** I think some of it is. No, no university, I don't if it is Harvard or Stanford, no university is uniformly good everywhere. You have programs that are very good and some that are ok and you some that you look at and say why in the world are we even doing this. The number of those in the last category are much less at a place like Harvard and Stanford than they are at a place like Cincinnati. But you can't look at any campus and say 'Gee, the best City Planning Department is at Harvard. The best Math Department was at Harvard. The best English Department well, is Harvard.' No, it's going to be— non-uniform as well, there different levels of quality. I think the number of programs that are very good at the University of Cincinnati has increased. But, I think there are some that still need to grow, but I'm out of touch. When I left, I know that was true. I think it is still true, from what I see. I don't think we have the resources to build excellence everywhere. I don't want to get into naming any examples because that is to no body's benefit, but I think that is still true.

**BO:** But do you still see UC on the upswing?

**NB:** Oh yeah, absolutely. There is no question. If you go back to where we were in '74 to where we are now, it is a very different university. I think you see it— all the students are there. It is much more of residential campus, not only the amount of sponsored research has gone up, etc. Our, our PhD students are going to the best universities to teach. I've had graduate students going to Virginia, to LSU, to Warton School at Penn. You know, that didn't happen in the ninety's. When the time I left, it started to happen. So we had hit areas where the research was sufficiently strong and, and noticeable. They were out to hire our students to build their programs. I think that's at the graduate level, that's the real test. I've had Masters students going to the best companies, the best companies here recruiting our Masters students, and the best universities recruiting our PhDs. If there are, you are probably something right.

**BO:** I bet you feel really proud of that

**NB:** I'm glad I played a role in that. It, the reality is if you look at engineering, Papadakis. I gave him his head. I hired him and said 'go get 'em. I'll support you the best I can. You've got to make it happen. I can't, I've got twenty-two other places that I have to worry about. If you are really good, I don't have to worry about you know. [Laughing]. I can turn my attention to some place else.' And Lou Castinello, when he was the Dean of Education, same kind of thing. Lou was the first African American Dean I think of College of Education. Wonderful, he went on left us for Georgia. After, after, a while—You can't—it's like a revolution, the person who leads the revolution, probably shouldn't lead the country. [Laughs] You have different traits that you need. Lou and Taki were builders and I think they each did a wonderful job because they were so good, I didn't have to do much. And yeah, I feel like it happened, but I don't take credit certainly far. I think I take credit for people in place and providing the kind of environment which within they could succeed. But you have to give an awful lot of credit to the deans who made it happen. So the thing I'm most proud of is Linders Honors Plus. I, I, when, I've told my kids when, I'm eighty-two years old, I don't know how much longer I got. My wife just bought a car that she'd been leasing and the finance guys were like do you want a ten year extended warranty and I said me or the car. [Laughs] I'll be ninety-two, to get a ten-year warranty that's nuts. It's like do you want a twenty-five roof or a forty-five-year roof. That is easy. But, you know, you just hope it's going to last and you feel good about it. I feel the most, I look at the young people and I can feel it, I can touch it, I can shake their hand, I can give them a hug, I can hear what they are doing. None, that doesn't happen in the other places that I was involved in. So, the thing I'm obviously

most, most proud of is the Honors Plus, and the rest of it, I say yeah, I was in a position where I can help make it happen.

**BO:** That's good.

**NB:** In Honors Plus, I want to continue to say Dr. Ricketts is other half of the key. You know, I provided her the opportunity. She built the academic side of it.

**BO:** We are definitely going to have to interview her.

**NB:** Yeah, again, I hope so. I think she just, I don't know she, I don't know if she is emeriti. I know she is retired. I don't know if she has gone through the emeriti process yet. But you definitely should talk to her. And talk her about her role in it because I think that would be the other half of the story. And it's an important story because the president, one of the things, I don't think I want to mention this or not, one of the things he said to me is that every place he goes people talk about that program. People in the business community talk about that program. So clearly, it has an impact and she deserves at least half the credit.

**BO:** OK— what else would like to talk, tell me about if you hadn't before.

**NB:**[Long Pause], The University of Cincinnati is the first place and only place I worked in faculty union. All the other administrators looked at that union as something that is preventing them from doing what they thought they needed to do. And it wasn't pleasant, believe me. I mean, I took my first vacation in eight years, my wife and I went off for a month. Literally, the first vacation in eight years and we went off for a month and we just did a driving trip. We are from New England originally. We up through Canada came down through New England, just to get away. The whole time I was gone, the faculty union were writing letters about a provost who didn't care enough to stay around campus, you know, my mind totally unfair, their mind. But when I look at it, and I look at what they have done to help make sure faculty get equitable treatment when it comes to salary, that they get fair treatment when it comes to promotions and tenure decisions, I mean the other side of that picture, is equally important having been a faculty member longer than having been an administrator. You know, having seen some of the arbitrariness taking place before if you go back to when the university started, you know, you know, it was pretty much under control of the president. He, he decided what he wanted and he did it and there was— Having that counterbalance, just as the counterbalance between myself and the president when it came to academics versus the physical plant. The counter balance between the faculty and the administration, the faculty union gave them a voice. Wasn't always the voice that should be there because the, the more active faculty in research were not going to be in the union. They are going to be off doing their thing. So, you know, the voice, the voice represented a segment of the faculty that would be easy to ignore otherwise, if you want me to say it that way. I think it was extremely important and I worry about in today's world. I see so much stuff going on, anti-union, anti-this, anti-that, what I consider to be hate politics going on at the national level, I worry about, because you've got to have the people who are in the weakest position, need the strongest representation. [Laughing] and that faculty union provided that. So I guess that would be other thing I would say, I think overall, if you net it all out, the union was a positive thing.

**BO:** Ok—. Yeah that's what Dr. Kretschmer said the union was probably one of the, you know, significant events that happened at UC. That was overall positive.

**NB:** I believe so. You can argue, you can argue the with other side. You definitely can, but I think overall, it was necessary.

**BO:** Well, I think you've answered all of my questions. Is there anything else you want to talk about.

**NB:** Uh, no. I think you've pretty much drained me. I hope I was coherent.

**BO:** You were, were great. Dr. Norman I definitely appreciate it.

**NB:** My pleasure