CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Christopher Callahan

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

2013

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Christopher Callahan conducted by Myron A. Farber on April 22, 2013 and April 23, 2013. This interview is part of the Carnegie Corporation of New York Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

3PM | Session #1

Interviewee: Christopher Callahan | Location: Phoenix, AZ

Interviewer: Myron Farber | Date: April 22, 2013

Q: This is Myron Farber on April 22, 2013, interviewing Christopher Callahan at the [Walter] Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication in Phoenix for the Carnegie Corporation of New York Oral History [Project] conducted by Columbia University. Do you mind if I call you Chris?

Callahan: Please.

Q: Easier. Easier. You know, I noticed some comment by Susan [R.] King—who you'll know from the Carnegie [Corporation] is now going to [University of] North Carolina, I think as a dean [of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication]—that when she encountered all these happy faculty faces out here in Phoenix at your school, she was told that, "Why not? The sun always shines here." And I think that we should note that we're doing this interview in something like 96-degree weather here. The sun is completely shining. There are no clouds in the sky. And I suppose everybody is still happy. [Laughter]

Callahan: Yes but we don't bring guests out in the middle of summer.

Q: [Laughter] Is that right? The other day, as you know, Chris, [Allen] Al [H.] Neuharth died. And Neuharth, who was the former chairman of Gannett [Company] and created *USA Today*. The *Arizona Republic* down the street is a Gannett paper.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Is that the largest paper in Arizona?

Callahan: It is. It is the statewide paper.

Q: Is it the only statewide paper?

Callahan: Yes and I believe it is either the tenth or twelfth largest daily newspaper in the country now.

Q: So, Neuharth died. And he was a scrappy guy but what he did was pretty controversial. What would you say his legacy is?

Callahan: Well, I think it's multiple. While I think there are a lot of folks in our world who are highly critical of some of the things that Mr. Neuharth did, I think he brought some innovation that remains today. That's really important. I think the notion of newspapers not having to look boring—they can be compelling, they can be to visually draw readers in. I think that's important. And while you certainly see it much more in a paper like *USA Today*, I think some of those

design concepts have filtered through all newspapers, even papers like the *New York Times*. So I think that's an important element. I think the notion of graphic information, sort of how you take data and present it in interesting, compelling ways to help tell that story—I think that is largely due to his influence or certainly under his leadership—

Q: Right.

Callahan: —at Gannett. I think those are truly important contributions to journalism that have added a journalism—that made it richer and have improved storytelling.

Q: I must say though, that once, I ordinarily didn't cover trials at the *Times* but the *Times* sent me to cover General [William Childs] Westmoreland's trial against CBS [Broadcasting, Inc.] because the *Times* had a sort of symbiotic relation to CBS and they wanted to know what was going on there. Anyway, there were a lot of reporters there and one of them was from *USA Today*. It was an extremely complicated thing. In effect, they were re-fighting the Vietnam War or the 1960s part of the Vietnam War in this courtroom and it was fairly arduous for somebody who hadn't been to Vietnam, even somebody who had, to follow. And there was a *USA Today* reporter and you would see his story the next day and it was like three, four paragraphs and it was jaw-dropping in a way because—

Callahan: And much to his frustration, I'm sure.

Q: Yes. Yes, to his frustration, too.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Right. But what the public would have gotten out of that, I don't know. Neuharth had an editor at one time named John [C.] Quinn and this is what he's quoted in the *New York Times* of Neuharth as saying—and I don't know whether he said this when he was working there—but he said that *USA [Today*], "brought new depth to the meaning of the word shallow." [Laughs] But still in all, I think what you said a moment ago is true. And there have been people who, since he died the other day, have been crediting him with just the kinds of things you're talking about. And that's clearly his legacy, I think.

Callahan: I think also—and again, you could make legitimate criticism about it. But I think the whole notion of the museum and this monument to the First Amendment—a monument to what we have spent our lives doing, which didn't exist—I think he was certainly a driving force behind that. You could argue whether or not the resources were used in the right way and all that but I think just the idea to have a museum devoted to news and the First Amendment [at Gannett House], that's very powerful.

Q: Now, you are the dean of the Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, is that correct?

Callahan: That's right.

Q: And you're also a university vice provost?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: We're in the downtown campus here.

Callahan: That's right.

Q: Where is the main campus of Arizona State University [ASU]?

Callahan: As President [Michael M.] Crow will always correct everybody, "We don't have a main campus. We have four. We have an original campus and we have three other sites." But I'll tell you briefly, Myron, that ASU is set up differently than most schools. The University of Maryland has a system but they are distinct universities. Here there is one Arizona State University. It happens to be in four physically different locations, all within the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. So the Tempe campus, which is the largest and original campus, is about eight miles. The distance is about the same as College Park is to Washington, D.C.

Q: Oh, I see—right, right.

Callahan: If that helps.

Q: Right, right. Actually my grandson was playing in a baseball tournament here a couple of weeks ago—must have been in Tempe. Some advanced little league something or other. Do you also still teach?

Callahan: Oh, personally?

Q: Yes.

Callahan: Yes. Well, that's a good question. I think my colleagues who I co-teach the class with, would question that.

Q: [Laughs]

Callahan: But I'm down as an instructor of record for our freshman History and Principles of Journalism class. The three deans—my two associate deans and myself—co-teach it. It's fair to say the associate deans take the lead on that but I come in to make cameo appearances.

Q: Okay. And you are also author of *A Journalist's Guide to the Internet.*

Callahan: Yes. When such a phrase didn't seem as—

Q: Well, I was going to ask you, it's now on its third edition, isn't it?

Callahan: That's right.

Q: And when was the first edition?

Callahan: Boy, I want to say around 2000. At the time, it seemed like a good idea, where there really was need where we had this great wealth of information and journalists really, by and large, didn't know how to quickly access it.

Q: For sure.

Callahan: Measuring, that's what that book was about.

Q: Right. Well, can we stipulate for history purposes here that every journalist should buy a copy?

Callahan: [Laughs]

Q: Would you agree with that?

Callahan: In all honesty, I would like to think that no journalist would have to anymore. [Laughter] But for that generation, it was important.

Q: Okay [Laughter]. You're a New Yorker.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Born where?

Callahan: Born in Brooklyn. I grew up in my younger years in Queens and then moved to Long Island when I was about twelve.

Q: Right, right, right.

Callahan: My daddy was a New York City policeman for thirty-five years.

Q: Oh, really.

Callahan: Walked a beat in Bedford-Stuyvesant and other places.

Q: Right.

Callahan: Remains a tough hombre today.

Q: Good. Good. I think we need them.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Right. And tell me where you went to college.

Callahan: Boston University [BU] for undergraduate work in journalism, where I wrote my paper on you in my sophomore year—just had to add that. And then I went to work for the Associated Press and then went back to school to do what I'd like to think of as a young mid-career program at the [John F.] Kennedy School [of Government at Harvard University].

Q: Well, why did you choose journalism when you did?

Callahan: I was affected—and this is going to sound like a cliché—but because of my age and when I grew up, I was deeply affected by two incredibly important moments in our history—the Vietnam War and Watergate.

Q: Right.

Callahan: I watched the Vietnam War every night sitting in my parents' living room, watching Walter [Leland Cronkite, Jr.] explain this scary and far-off war. Then Watergate occurred. I think both of those things, looking back on it, really helped form my passion for trying to find the truth, for lack of a better description. I think people go into journalism typically for one or two reasons—hopefully for both but I think there's a draw for one or the other—the Writer with a capital "W" and the reporter. And I always considered myself the reporter wanting to go out and uncover truths.

Q: Well, did you get a job at the AP [Associated Press] right after college?

Callahan: Yes

Q: Well, was that an easy thing to do then?

Callahan: At the time they had these wonderful opportunities for young reporters, aspiring reporters, right out of school and there were these full-time but temporary positions. My passion was always politics so I had the opportunity go to the Concord, New Hampshire bureau to help out in their legislative session. Then I went from there to the—well, I was there for like three months—and then I went to the Augusta, Maine bureau—seemingly going further north, which I did think was possible.

Q: That's right. [Laughs]

Callahan: It evolved from there. But it's a wonderful way—and certainly was at the time—to start off in the AP. For what I wanted to do, which was basically be a Washington correspondent, it was fantastic.

Q: Right, right. And did you find it easy adapting to the kind of thing the AP wanted?

Callahan: I really liked it and—

Q: It's fast moving, though, isn't it?

Callahan: It so interesting because, in many ways, it's what the news is today. What I mean by that is at the AP there's always been a premium on speed.

Q: Right.

Callahan: In a way that even at multiple-edition newspapers you never had. So when is your deadline? Now.

Q: Right.

Callahan: At any given time and that exhilaration especially on a big story, especially on a big story—there's nothing more exciting. While at the same time trying to balance off—I want to be the first one to get it correctly and trying to balance that off. You see that playing out today, where virtually every reporter out there in the world today is a wire service reporter, in terms of how they relate to deadlines.

Q: Right. Did you ever make a mistake that caused you some grief?

Callahan: Yes. The AP had a wonderful policy that at the time I thought was just stupid, in addition to being draconian and that was, if you had to write a correction—a corrective, as we

used to call it in AP jargon—and if you made a mistake, you had to sit down and write a letter, a "Dear Lou" letter to [Louis] Lou [D.] Boccardi, who of course was the long-time president, of the Associated Press. This is how it had to read, "Dear Lou, on day X, I wrote this. That was incorrect. It was really this. Period. Sincerely." You signed it and you sent it. Now, as a young reporter—I was a twenty-two, twenty-three-year-old reporter—I said this is ridiculous. I have to explain why. This really wasn't my fault, of course.

Q: Right, of course.

Callahan: I mean, I got bad information from a source. I need to explain this. The point that was driven home that I honestly did not understand at the time was it doesn't matter why you got it wrong. The only thing that matters is you got it wrong. And today, you diminished our news organization. That took me a long time to get the logic behind that. But boy, it resonates today. What we try to teach here, that's quite central to what we try to teach.

Q: At that time, was the UPI [United Press International] active?

Callahan: Yes, highly competitive. In fact, we used to get reports every day—so the top twelve stories or so—and it would measure X number of newspapers. It would say, okay, here's the story for today—AP seven, UPI five. And it would go through it like a scorecard. So when you had one of the top twelve stories—and at the time I remember particularly working in Providence, Rhode Island, which is just one of the most spectacular places for news on the planet.

Q: Certainly for mob news.

Callahan: All kinds of just awful, horrible, fabulous stories. It was just wonderful. At the time, I was in the news bureau. It was a four-person bureau. The bureau chief was a guy named [David] Dave [L.] Pyle, who went on to be the Minneapolis Bureau chief. He actually got sick for a while, so it wound up being just three of us. I was the oldest one at twenty-four years old. The second guy was a guy named [Mitchell] Mitch Zuckoff, who is coming out with his seventh book tomorrow, actually. He's a bestselling author. He's fantastic. The third one was a twenty-two year-old kid named John King.

Q: Oh, really?

Callahan: Who now of course is at the AP.

Q: Right, CNN.

Callahan: At CNN, I'm sorry. And just a fantastic, fantastic experience.

Q: Well then, so you were casting your seeds all over New England. Did you ever get to Washington?

Callahan: Yes. I did. Actually I got there in two different iterations. I went, being impatient—I was sort of the quintessential impatient young man at the time—after doing my two brief stints at the AP. I was still twenty-two but wasn't in Washington yet. I took a job at an outfit called States News Service. And States News Service was a wonderful journalistic but terrible financial idea, where essentially you went and did regional reporting. And the gentleman who founded it and ran it for many years, Leland Schwartz, would get client newspapers. And he would come in and I was the Connecticut reporter for a while and writing for the *New Haven Register* and the like. So we did that for about eighteen months. Went back to the AP, then eventually came back to the AP in D.C. a few years later.

Q: When did you stop being a reporter?

Callahan: Well, I'd like to think I haven't. I say that not really—

Q: I withdraw the question. [Laughs]

Callahan: I really mean that seriously because so much of what I do—any success that I've had in this job, I attribute directly to any sort of reporting skills that I may have developed over time. Because I think, like you—obviously, you need to be a great reporter to be a great journalist. But it's so applicable to so many other things in life—the ability to find important information, to analyze and to synthesize it. But in terms of being paid as a reporter, that was when I left for the Kennedy School, which would have been about 1990.

Q: Right, right.

Callahan: So, it's been a while.

Q: Right. And were you married at the time?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Right, right. So it was a financial decision largely.

Callahan: Nope. No, not at all—the way I got into it, I actually went to the Kennedy School for two main reasons. One is because I spent so much time on my journalism as an undergraduate, I felt like I never truly experienced the academic side of university life. And the second was, I thought that studying at the Kennedy School for a year would really help inform my political reporting. And my intent was to go back.

Q: Oh, I see.

Callahan: Yes that was the intent all along.

Q: I see. What happened?

Callahan: Well, when I was there in Cambridge, quite frankly to make some extra money, I started teaching as an adjunct professor across the river at BU. And I was actually quite a lot more stimulated by it than I thought I would be. So when I came back, when I was about to finish up at the Kennedy School, I was looking at other opportunities in newsrooms around the country. But a job opened at the University of Maryland they were just creating, which was to create a real newsroom staffed by students, run by an editor in Annapolis covering the state house. I started talking to them about that and my wife and I talked about it and we decided that would be a good sort of experiment for a year. That was in 1990 and the experiment continues. But that's how I got into the academic side.

Q: Well, is that how you began an association with the University of Maryland?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: I must say I'm a University of Maryland graduate myself.

Callahan: I know.

Q: Right. But I haven't been back there in many years. It was a relatively small place. I don't think—I'm not even sure there was a campus other than College Park at that time.

Callahan: Is that right?

Q: I think so. I have a lot of fond memories of that place. But when they started this operation in Annapolis, did they have a journalism school?

Callahan: Yes. The journalism school was long established, run by a guy named Reese Cleghorn, who was actually in Atlanta and Charlotte, Detroit and other places.

Q: Right, right, right.

Callahan: But this was really one of the first operations. It is what we call the teaching hospital model.

Q: Right.

Callahan: To take advanced students to work with a full-time faculty member who's doing nothing but the care and feeding of those students and then actually producing a product that's going to be distributed to professional news organizations.

Q: Right. So your career at the University of Maryland began that way. And where did it lead from there?

Callahan: I was in Annapolis for a year and then I helped open the Washington operation of the same idea. I did that for a couple years and then got into the leadership side of the academy and became an assistant dean under Reese and then eventually associate dean under my friend

[Thomas] Tom Kunkel. And was there for, all together, I was there for a long time before coming up.

Q: Later, [Eugene] Gene [L.] Roberts was running that show, wasn't he?

Callahan: Gene actually, Gene was a professor there. He never was—because he's much smarter than that—so he never became a dean but was a marvelous professor for many years.

Q: Actually, I can't see him wanting the deanship or the deanship responsibilities, the administrative responsibilities, whatever. No.

Callahan: He was offered many deanships around the country and he laughed at everybody.

Q: Yes, yes, yes. He was at the *Times* when I was there, as was someone else who is associated with the South coverage, Claude [Fox] Sitton. These were great reporters. In any case, you rose to become associate dean there, is that correct?

Callahan: That's right.

Q: And you were editing the *American Journalism Review*?

Callahan: I was a senior editor, which really meant I got to write every once in a while and helped advise Rem Rieder, the editor.

Q: Okay. And then there comes a time when, was it 2005 you came here?

Callahan: That's right.

Q: How'd that open up?

Callahan: Well, it was interesting. The Cronkite School had been around for a long time but it was a school within another college and I don't want to bore us with the academic minutia of all this but that actually matters in the academy. So for many years it was sort of a solid program but not with a great national reputation. And when President Crow came here from Columbia in 2002, one of his first decisions was, well, Cronkite School, I mean, it's a great name. It's a pretty good school. We need to make this an independent school. So he started moving down that track. So I came in to be the first dean of what was a newly independent school.

Q: Well, how did it acquire the name Cronkite?

Callahan: It's very interesting because people assume, "Oh, he must have gone to school here or he must have lived here," and actually neither of those are true. Back in the early 1980s, there was a small group of media leaders in the valley.

Q: In the valley?

Callahan: The greater Phoenix metropolitan area, which is commonly called the Valley of the Sun, as we call it. I've been here too long, in the greater metropolitan area.

Q: I mean, the Valley—

Callahan: Yes, no I—

Q: That's outside Los Angeles. That's where the Valley girls grew up or something.

Callahan: It's funny though but that is accepted. That's interesting.

Q: Okay.

Callahan: And I have been here too long.

Q: So, you've got a valley—you've got a valley here, too. Right. Okay.

Callahan: So the folks who owned the major media outlets—and this was back in the day when certainly TV stations were largely owned by families—now they're all owned by corporations but they were owned by individual families. One of the families was the Chauncey family. And [Thomas] Tom [W.] Chauncey, who was the owner of the CBS affiliate here for many years, was very, very close friends with Walter. He had been the chairman of the affiliates board at CBS, which in that world is a very big deal. Walter and Tom got to be good friends. Their families

would vacation together. And they were very, very close. So Mr. Chauncey was one of the folks in this group ad when they got together to say, how can we help what, at the time, was a small and, fair to say, struggling journalism program. It was a department. One of the things they came up with was, "Wow, if we can affiliate with a great journalist—have a great journalist that we can build around—that would be a great jump start." And of course, in the early 1980s, it did not take long to get to Walter's name. In fact, he was the first name they got to—and with Mr. Chauncey's relationship, [it was] a little more complicated than a phone call but not exceedingly. And Walter agreed to do that. The relationship grew greatly over time. Walter actually came out at least once a year, if not more and would spend a lot of time with the students. It was really very touching to see, particularly towards the end of his life.

Q: The only experience I had with Cronkite myself was, I was in a phone booth at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington talking to New York about what I thought was very important information, when all of a sudden, to my horror, I discovered that right in the next phone booth—there was only glass separating—was Walter Cronkite. And I thought, my God, suppose he hears what I'm saying. [Laughter] I think the sweat broke out at that time. That's as close as I came to him.

But by the way, in terms of media markets, Phoenix is pretty large, isn't it?

Callahan: It is the twelfth largest media market in the country.

Q: Right, right. So the name was associated with the school. The school expanded, fair to say, far beyond what it had been.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: And Michael Crow deserves some credit for that?

Callahan: I would argue he deserves all the credit for it. Although I would probably take the Cronkite School in—there was an era before that and that was from 1984, when the name went on the masthead. For that probably about ten or twelve years, it really transformed from what was a very small and really struggling program to a good solid journalism program. And the person who gets the credit for that is a gentleman named [Douglas] Doug [A.] Anderson, who is now the dean of the College of Communications at Penn State [Pennsylvania State University].

Q: But Crow who, as we pointed out, came from Columbia—I don't think he was associated at Columbia with the J. School [Graduate School of Journalism] at all.

Callahan: No. He was not. I mean, he was obviously—

Q: He was a, what was he? He was a provost [Executive Vice Provost] or he was a—

Callahan: He was one of the provosts and in charge of special initiatives and innovations but he always—journalism is really important to him and he has a keen understanding of what journalism education should be. The one story he tells about the Columbia journalism school faculty is that we went and had a conversation with them very early on about the importance of

the internet. And he claims, as the story goes, that he was told, "Don't worry about it. It's just going to be a fad." [Laughter]

Q: Actually, that brings to mind the fact that a few days ago on April 1, Steve Coll, the incoming dean of the Columbia journalism school was interviewed by the *Columbia* [*Daily*] *Spectator*, the student newspaper and he—no actually, this may have actually been a column by David Carr in the *Times*. But in any the case, what he said was, "I think the great digital journalism of our age has yet to be created. The cohort that is at Columbia now is the one that will be making the journalism that is going to shape our democracy." Now, is that an April Fools' joke? I mean, here we are in Phoenix and he's saying that the cohort that is at Columbia is going to be the one making the journalism, when everybody knows it's happening here already in Phoenix. But in any case, you can excuse Coll because he—

Callahan: He's being a good dean already. [Laughter]

Q: That's right. That sounds like a lot of propaganda. But in any event, just if you will, when you got here in 2005, describe for me—this building wasn't here, right?

Callahan: No, in fact, we were in Tempe sharing a very small, old and insufficient facility.

Q: Okay. Just flash back in your mind, if you can. What did you think needed to be done here when you came?

Callahan: Well, when I started talking to Michael about this job he asked that question, "So, what would you do?" I told him what I think journalism education should be here and quite frankly everywhere. Which is it should be professional. It should be intermixed more intricately to the rest of a university in interdisciplinary ways. And it should be producing great journalists and great journalism in this, what we sort of off-hand refer to as this teaching hospital model. I gave him some specifics of some things we would do and I think he really liked that vision, in part because it fit so well into his vision of what an American university should be, which is different than a traditional American university. Michael's vision for higher education, I think, is highly differentiated from what most university presidents believe the academy should be about.

Q: Somewhere you remarked that when you came, you had too many students and too few faculty—

Callahan: Uh-huh. Yes.

Q: Too many students? That sounds like heresy.

Callahan: What I should've said—I know what I did say—what I should have said is—

Q: [Laughs]

Callahan: —too many students compared to the number of faculty. Those are two and those need to be a balance in some way, shape or form. You have two levers to do that, too—there's two

variables. You could either reduce the student body dramatically or increase the faculty dramatically or do both at the same time. We did the latter. So we reduced the number of students and increased the number of faculty to get to a place where I was much more comfortable with.

Q: And did you find the faculty that were on hand when you came completely in sync with your ideas or resistant at all?

Callahan: I hope this doesn't sound flip but I've never met a faculty that's completely in sync with what to have for lunch. So I think that's not the goal. I think, by and large, faculty members were excited about where we wanted to go, were excited about this notion of a new kind of journalism school, highly professional. And yes, I would say largely.

Q: Had the capabilities to do what you wanted to do?

Callahan: At the time, no.

Q: But you recruited faculty.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: The snaring whom you wanted? And how do you do that?

Callahan: Well, you have great support from your university president. That's a starting point. And I say that—it sounds like I'm sucking up, which in part I am—but it has the added advantage of being true. Where he's not only willing to put resources into the school, which he did in a very significant way—in a way that quite frankly no university president during our time here has done in terms of support of a journalism school. But then willing to put his own reputation on the line, willing to make a phone call and willing to be welcoming to the kinds of folks we brought in. And I'll use [Leonard] Len Downie [Jr.] as an example. When Len stepped down from the *Washington Post*—I don't think this an exaggeration to say—he could have gone to any university in the country.

Q: Yes.

Callahan: All of our main competitors—and I will say all of our main competitors—had hard offers on the table for Len to join their faculty at the same time that we were talking to him.

Q: Just before you came here—and by the way, clarify this for me. We speak about journalism here—there are undergraduates, there were people working for master's degrees I suppose and, since 2011, you got a doctoral program here, I think. But laying aside the doctoral program for a minute, which must be fairly small—

Callahan: Yes.

Q: —when we speak of journalism students here, are we talking about basically undergraduates or are we talking about basically—I mean, Columbia journalism school, for example, is a graduate program.

Callahan: Right. That's right.

Q: So what are we talking about?

Callahan: Ours looks like most of the journalism schools, which is overwhelming majority undergraduate, with a smaller set of full-time master students. So all together we have about 1,400 students—at any given time, probably fifty or so graduate students and the rest undergrad.

Q: Are the undergraduates in a liberal arts program majoring in journalism?

Callahan: Their degree is a Bachelor of Arts in journalism from the Cronkite School and the majority of their classes are taken outside the Cronkite School—

Q: Okay.

Callahan: —in the liberal arts.

Q: I don't want to go off on too esoteric a tangent but just the other day, the school put out a press release about a difference now in what people are going to take or can take or something? Do you know what I'm referring to?

Callahan: Yes. This is—

Q: And some students on the web responding were a little unhappy, thinking, well, you're cutting down on liberal arts classes.

Callahan: Actually the responses I heard were from alums who said, "You're cutting down on liberal arts classes now?" In other words, after I've left. Those were the responses I've heard. I will blow this up for myself later and read these because this is—

Q: Right, right but—

Callahan: —far too—

Q: But you have in your time made a point of emphasizing the need for a solid education that includes journalism for sure but that is solid in other terms as well.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: What you're doing now doesn't undermine that?

Callahan: No. And there's two different things going on here. One is—and I'm not sure if this was captured in this article—but two different changes. One is fairly minor. One is for two classes—where previously they had to be outside the journalism school and they were upper-level electives—they can now take those in one of our mass communication courses, not our hands-on writing, reporting, editing courses but more conceptual courses. Which are in fact, in effect, liberal arts courses. And it's only affecting two courses. So I think that's important but sort of secondary to the larger change.

The larger change goes to our accrediting body. For many years, the accrediting body said that you had to have eighty credits of the 120 credits outside of journalism. But of those eighty, sixty-five had to be very specifically in your college of liberal arts and sciences. The problem with that is it then prevented students from doing things like taking a double major in the business school, in computer engineering, in some of the areas that are, you could argue, more important ten years ago but are tremendously important today. So what we've done and this is really the bigger change, is we've said—and the accrediting council said—well, we're getting rid of that sixty-five requirement. And because most universities have a general studies liberal arts requirement, we're letting that carry the day. We're letting that dictate what and how many liberal arts courses they have to have. They're still taking the same amount or largely the same amount of courses outside of journalism but instead of saying you have to take sixty-five credits specifically within the college of liberal arts studies, you only have to take the amount that the university dictates for all students, which in our case is fifty-one. And what that does is that gives students the ability to now double major in places outside of both journalism and liberal arts.

Q: Okay. But are we talking only undergraduates there?

Callahan: This is all undergraduate, yes.

Q: Only undergraduate.

Callahan: Because graduate students—and this is fairly typical—most journalism masters programs are very, very condensed and basically students are only taking journalism courses on the graduate level because presumably they've taken an undergraduate degree in something completely different.

Q: Right. And the graduate students, their program here for a master's degree—is that a one-year program?

Callahan: Fifteen months.

Q: Fifteen months. What's it cost?

Callahan: I should know this off the top of my head and I do not.

Q: Well, I saw a figure the other day. This figure came from Michael Wolff, who used to write for *Vanity Fair*. I don't know who he's working for now but he was being critical about Steve

Coll's appointment. In his piece, he mentioned that the cost at Columbia J. School now was $51,000. And if you include fees, it went up to something like $58,000. Is that possible?

Callahan: For an Ivy League, private institution, absolutely.

Q: Right. And—

Callahan: Now what he fails to—and what most people who write about higher education who don't understand it fail to mention—and I think this is really unfair to Steve and my friends at Columbia is, well, how much does the average student actually pay? Because the financial aid packages at a private Ivy League institution are usually very, very high. So the average of actually how many dollars they're paying that year is, obviously—I don't know the exact numbers but it's much, much, much smaller than that. So it's a little unfair.

Q: Okay. Let me mention a couple of things that happened in 2004, just before you got here. While you were still at the University of Maryland—I believe you led a study or were involved in a study of some kind on the racial diversity of the Washington press corps, is that correct?

Callahan: That's right.

Q: What did you find?

Callahan: It was incredibly depressing, is what we found—the short answer. We did this for UNITY [Journalists for Diversity], the journalists of color group. It wasn't a survey, it was a census. We looked at every Washington reporter, every Washington journalist. Not the local journalists but the bureaus.

Q: Right.

Callahan: People covering the federal government.

Q: Right.

Callahan: And we looked at their racial makeup. And what we found is, this is where—we focused on newspapers—this is where the newspaper industry wanted to be in terms of racial diversity: up here. This is where the overall industry was: significantly lower. And the Washington Bureau was even lower than that. That was a disturbing finding. Probably what was more disturbing was the lack of transparency of many Washington Bureau chiefs, who had very bad records on the racial makeup of their newsroom and simply said, "We're not going to give you that information." Now, of course we got it because it's a finite group. I think it was an important look but it was depressing. And I'll just add this that I think our focus on diversity in the news, quite frankly, has diminished over the last half-dozen years. I think it's diminished dramatically.

Q: The focus or the facts?

Callahan: Both. I think—

Q: Really?

Callahan: Yes. I think—and I'm not talking about necessarily the makeup of the news product. I'm talking about the makeup of the newsroom. I think the amount of resources, the amount of time that was spent on diversifying newsrooms, I think that has dropped dramatically.
In fact, when you talk to folks, newsroom leaders, it used to be number one—part of the conversation. When they're recruiting students, it used to be incredibly important. Now it's much less so and I understand there are reasons for that and we're going through this revolutionary period.

But the fact of the matter is, ASNE [American Society of News Editors] in 1978 said our goal was to make America's newsrooms look like America and if you actually chart this out, which I have done, over the years, what they've done—this is the best interpretation—is tread water. So it started off with, I think, newsrooms in 1978 at four percent people of color and the country was like at twelve percent or something like that. And that gap has remained exactly the same. So while we've made incremental progress within newsrooms, the country continues to grow more and more diverse. In fact, that gap, if anything, is wider now than it was in 1978. And it's a real problem.

Q: Do you include Latinos in that?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Is it fair to say that since we began with him, that Al Neuharth should be credited with having made a major attempt to diversify his newspapers.

Callahan: I think so. I think Gannett always has had—

Q: And for women as well.

Callahan: Yes. No, I think that's exactly right. Yes.

Q: Yes. The other thing I want to mention about 2004 was that for whatever reason, the Carnegie Corporation began to focus on the conditions of journalism education in this country. And they, Vartan Gregorian, who can be very persuasive, yoked in the McKinsey & Company Consulting Firm to do a pro bono study, what have you and all, about the situation. And the following year, I think it was around that time, 2005, Carnegie—I think the [John S. and James L.] Knight Foundation was involved even at that time—created an initiative regarding journalism education that entailed four or five schools. I think there were four journalism schools and the [Joan] Shorenstein Center [on the Press, Politics and Public Policy] at the Kennedy School in Boston, which is, we should say, not a journalism school but focuses on the press. And this was just when you were coming here. Had you heard anything about that? Was it of interest to you at that time?

Callahan: Yes and yes. When I was at the University of Maryland—and Maryland as you know was the second wave of Carnegie-Knight [Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education] schools that came on board—there was a lot of contact with the folks at College Park and Carnegie and Knight about what this should look like and how it might evolve. So I was certainly highly aware of it and excited about the possibilities for it.

Q: Had Maryland sought to be part of the original group, which was Columbia, [University of California] Berkeley, Northwestern [University] and University of Southern California?

Callahan: I think everybody sought to be part of the original group.

Q: Oh, really?

Callahan: Now—and I shouldn't say that because I don't know before it was announced, how well known it was that it was going to be just these five schools. And so I don't know. I know certainly as soon as it was announced, there were a lot of voices from other universities saying, why not us. And Maryland was certainly one of those.

Q: Right. And when did the Cronkite School become associated with that initiative?

Callahan: We were in the third of three schools. So it was the original five schools that you mentioned and then a few years later Maryland, [University of] Missouri and Syracuse

[University] were added. And then a few years after that the Cronkite School, University of Nebraska and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill were added.

Q: Okay. As you understood it, this initiative, as announced, advocated working on three fronts. Do you recall what they were?

Callahan: Yes. One was the one that we're still driving now, which is the News21.

Q: I want to get to that for sure.

Callahan: Another was—[laughs]—you got me—journalism education, generally, particularly as it relates to interdisciplinary work.

Q: Curriculum enrichment, they call it.

Callahan: Curriculum enrichment, yes. And the third was to be a voice for journalism. It was to see if this group of universities with these leading journalism programs could actually impact policy and change.

Q: Right. Now, the first one—let me save the News21 for last. The News21 is an idea that the Knight Foundation I think had a particular interest in. But the first one, the curriculum enrichment idea of integrating somehow the journalism schools with the assets of the larger university, how has that played out here? What did you do to demonstrate involvement in that?

Callahan: I think it's played out at the Carnegie-Knight schools and other schools, quite frankly, to greater or lesser degrees.

Q: For sure.

Callahan: But all along the same lines. I think in a very broad but significant way it elevated the status of journalism on campus. When I say that out loud, I mean, really. What does that really mean?

Q: Right.

Callahan: Well, in a university environment, it's terribly important. It's important because it opens doors to other academic units on campus. It opens, potentially, other resource opportunities on campus. While it's very vague to say that, it results in some very, very tangible things.

Q: Like give me an example.

Callahan: So in the last couple of weeks, we continue to do this working with different schools. Well, now we're in the process of setting up very specific dual-degree programs with the School of Business, the School of Engineering, our School of Sustainability—which is the first of its kind in the world—and those schools are considered, quite frankly, some of the elite schools at

Arizona State. Would that have happened without what Carnegie put into motion? Maybe but I'm doubtful. I'm doubtful because there's that relationship with what Vartan was doing and working with and it's so important, working directly with the university presidents. I can't stress that enough. That, to me, was the great masterstroke of the Carnegie-Knight initiatives. On Vartan's insistence, the university presidents are going to not only have a high awareness of this but they're going to pay in.

Q: That's right.

Callahan: They are bought into this.

Q: He actually went to see them, I think.

Callahan: Personally and said this is what I'm going to do for you and this is what you're going to do for them. I'm sure now, of course, Vartan put it in a much, much more sophisticated way. But in essence, I'm pretty sure that's what most university presidents heard. And that is enormously, enormously valuable. So it's not only opening up these doors around campus but in the case of some universities—and I'll be honest with you, not the case here because President Crow had a very sophisticated understanding of the importance of journalism—but a lot of university presidents didn't. I think, having Vartan Gregorian of the Carnegie Corporation that involved directly with the importance of journalism education very much elevated the entire game.

Q: Well, did you also create something here that had its impetus in this? Maybe it didn't. If it didn't, just correct me—that had to do with a Latino specialization?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Tell me about that. And that was pretty unique, was it not?

Callahan: Very much so and what we did—and we continue to do this today but certainly at the very beginning—we tried to look at the Cronkite School and say, well, what are the natural assets here? What do we do well? How can we take advantage of not only the resources we have in place but where we are, geographically? And it's not exactly a great leap to say, wow, you're in the middle of Arizona. Issues involving the fastest growing population in the country should be pretty important. You have unique expertise here in the region and on campus to take advantage of that. So when we started working with Carnegie, we said this is going to be our model and we think that if we build this model, we can replicate it in other disciplines but this makes the most sense for us. We have a very powerful what we call Transborder Studies School, which focuses on Latino issues and borders issues.

Q: ASU does.

Callahan: Yes, yes, run by a gentleman named Carlos [Velez-]Ibanez on the Tempe campus. So we had that university resource, which was incredibly powerful. We had this incredible location and all the stories that were surrounding us. What we needed is to bring in a professor on the

journalism side, on the Cronkite side, that can drive that, that can create those relationships and really help lead what was going to be a new program.

We were lucky enough to recruit Rick Rodriguez, who was the long-time editor of the *Sacramento Bee* and the first Latino head of ASNE and considered, I think—I'm biased because he's a colleague and a great friend but I think it's fair to say—one of the great Latino journalists of our time, to help craft this initiative and to help lead it. And that's what we've done, I think, with great success, where we're bringing in students, small groups of students. Not only teaching them journalism but giving them this outside expertise in the culture, the history, the legal issues, the societal issues surrounding Latino communities. Rick continues to—and this is long after the Carnegie grant ran out—continues to do one of the most powerful things that we do here, which is Rick and his students go to a border every spring and do a major reporting project. In the fall semester, they're immersed. They're doing, as Susan King always used to say, "the deep dive" on the content of what they were going to cover in the spring. Then during a ten-day chunk of time during March, they will go to whatever border that happens to be and do a major reporting project on it, finish that up during the semester, distribute it. We're very proud that work, Rick's work in particular. The folks at the Robert F. Kennedy [Center for Justice & Human Rights] foundation do the RFK awards [The Robert F. Kennedy High School and University Journalism Award], as you know. They do one college award every year and Rick's students have won that three of the last four years.

Q: You've also won a number of other awards, have you now? I mean this school—

Callahan: Yes.

Q: —in terms of intercollegiate competition?

Callahan: Yes. But that one I always think is so striking because there's only one of them. It speaks, I think, to the power of this particular program, which I can say definitively the program itself would not exist without the Carnegie-Knight initiative. Period. It just wouldn't have happened. But more importantly, what that's led to now is us replicating that idea of a deep connection with a terrific resource at some other part of campus to combine into a new program, a dual-degree program, whatever it happens to be. We're taking that model now and replicating it in other places. And that is all, in my mind, triggered by Carnegie.

Q: What is the Latino population of Arizona? Have you any idea?

Callahan: It is more than twenty-five percent.

Q: And of this university as a whole?

Callahan: Almost exactly the same.

Q: And of the Cronkite School?

Callahan: About the same—probably a little lower.

Q: That high?

Callahan: Yes. Our students of color population usually hovers between twenty-five and thirty percent and the majority of that is Latino.

Q: Right. When you say these students go on reporting projects, didn't the university stop them from going into Mexico in recent times because of the violence down there?

Callahan: Not the university—me.

Q: Oh, you did.

Callahan: Yes—a very, a very painful decision. Rick and I and he would tell you—I know he will tell you—he disagreed because that made it a better story. And he's absolutely right. He's absolutely right. But at the end of the day, I need to sleep at night and the notion of sending students in harm's way—now, I mean, quite frankly, you send a student anywhere and anything can happen. There's always some risk involved. But I felt once they were on the State Department watch advisory, then we needed to be much more careful.

Q: Okay. Now, with regard to—

Callahan: I will add though, that we're in conversations now with another news organization talking about the creation of a joint Mexico City bureau.

Q: Oh, okay. With regard to that, to another element of the troika, the deans' [Carnegie-Knight] Task Force—

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Was the idea that they were going to meet once a year or something like that, indefinitely? And did they? Did you ever go to them? And also, didn't Dr. Gregorian come here, actually come here once?

Callahan: Oh, yes.

Q: Had you met him before that?

Callahan: Yes. Yes, through the Carnegie-Knight initiative. And he actually asked me to come up at one point to do a presentation to the Carnegie board.

Q: Right.

Callahan: He's close with President Crow and when we had one of our Carnegie-Knight deans' meetings here, we rotated around. Then Vartan came and spent a couple days with us, which was great.

Q: But have you—tell me about the deans' Task Force. What's it added up to?

Callahan: It's—

Q: It's not always the same deans, right?

Callahan: Well, yes. That's exactly right. It's a rotating cast, which may say something about how good these jobs are. But—

Q: [Laughs]

Callahan: The idea was for us to meet at least once a year. We've done that. To have deep conversations about issues that are important to journalism—we do that. They're very stimulating. I think they're very helpful. If the question is, now how do you measure the impact this group has had? A, it's hard to measure and B, I would probably have to say its impact has been—certainly the impact of that leg of the triad has been the smallest.

Q: Are these deans from the twelve schools?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Right. Now, in 2010, appearing at a forum—might have been in Stanford, I'm not sure—Alberto Ibargüen, am I pronouncing it—

Callahan: Ibargüen.

Q: Ibargüen.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: —who was at that time president of the Knight Foundation, is he still president?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: He said the following, speaking about this deans part of the troika: "It seems to me that it is the great underutilized aspect of this kind of project. Somehow it hasn't worked. The deans have information, they have a voice, they have access to the industry, they have access to the students and the faculty. And somehow this hasn't actually delivered things that are really important." Well, I mean, considering that they're shelling out a lot of the money, that doesn't sound too good.

Callahan: I think Alberto's absolutely right. I don't think it's—I'm not sure if he was referencing internal change. I think the internal change has been—

Q: I think he's talking about the—

Callahan: But externally, it's sort of how we affect the journalism world—

Q: That's right.

Callahan: —the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] and that sort of thing.

Q: That's right.

Callahan: Yes, I think he's one hundred percent right. I think it's been limited. I think—I'm not sure how much capacity there is for twelve deans and maybe Alberto's just giving us more credit than we deserve. And let me give you one example. I was at a journalism funders meeting a couple of years ago. The main journalism funders including Knight and Carnegie get together every year and talk about issues—not unlike the Carnegie-Knight deans. And one of the things they talked about was how do you get university presidents to get it?

How do you get university presidents on board in the way that President Crow and President [Lee C.] Bollinger are—a real deep understanding of journalism education?

Q: Who was the second president you mentioned?

Callahan: Bollinger of Columbia.

Q: Oh, Bollinger, right.

Callahan: And how do you do that? I'm sorry. Now I lost my train of thought.

Q: Well, how do you get all these deans to have some input?

Callahan: That's right. At this meeting, we were talking about that. And there was discussion about, well, maybe the deans should do this and deans should do that and I said, quite frankly, university presidents or, I would argue, the FCC arena—the impact that a group of deans could have is pretty darn limited. The impact that a group of funders have can be pretty great. What came out of that conversation was a letter, which I'm sure you've seen at one point, which is from, I think, six of the major journalism funders—an open letter to university presidents saying pretty explicitly, this is what journalism education should be and if you're interested in us, you need to start having these sorts of conversations. I think that sort of statement from that group is infinitely more impactful on the American academic system than a group of deans saying this is what you should be doing.

Q: It's interesting you should say this. When I first came to the *Times* in 1966 with virtually no background, I was covering higher education and it brought me into contact with a lot of

university presidents and what have you and at that time, when university presidents—forget the deans—when university presidents spoke, people paid attention to it. And in fact, it was considered to be a role of university presidents in American society to address societal issues. That has sort of faded away.

I don't think people ascribe that the president of the University of Chicago and Stanford [University] and Columbia and Arizona State University issue a statement. I don't think people pay attention to it in the way that was given at that time. Maybe that's because there were fewer voices in the whole colloquy and that they stood out more. But when James [B.] Conant was president of Harvard, if he said something—made a major speech—people thought, my God we'd better pay attention to this. [Laughter] That's right.

Let me turn to what—even when it was conceived before Arizona State University got involved and certainly in subsequent years—what has been probably the highest priority of both the Carnegie and especially the Knight Foundation and that is what came to be known as News21. Let me quote something that Gregorian himself wrote in February 10, 2010, regarding the whole initiative: "Our shared goal was to develop a new cohort of well-educated journalists who are analytical thinkers and adept communicators, as at home in the virtual universe as they are in the day-to-day world of what has become a news cycle that knows no global borders and never sleeps. These institutions have dedicated themselves to being on the cusp of change in terms of journalism education, adding both deep subject matter learning and cutting edge technology training to the agenda for their students." So the call was really for change, as a catalyst for change.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: And nothing exemplified that more out of this whole initiative than News21. Tell me, go back if you can and tell me how this News21 got started as far as you knew, even before Cronkite School was involved and how it developed and how it came to be that the Cronkite School became the leader in this whole thing.

Callahan: I think—and part of this, we really go back in time to 2004, 2005, when it was first starting—because I think we're on year eight now, eight or nine. Well, back then, the digital curriculum at these schools was largely nonexistent. There was not a culture of how do you create news in an interactive, multimedia environment, multiple platforms. Didn't exist. So that was one central element that was missing from the journalism education. The other and I think equally important part, was this notion of developing deep content expertise on a story that you're talking about. Because News21 in my mind has always been designed to combine those two things together—two completely different things. They have nothing to do with each other—but arguably equally important.

At the time, so back in 2004, 2005, you had journalism schools that had very little digital sophistication in terms of the curriculum and they were largely isolated in their universities, where they didn't have these partnerships. They weren't reaching out to different academic units. So now, we fast-forward eight, nine years later, almost a decade later. Well, how has that changed? It's changed 180 degrees on both fronts. Where now I think you would see—again, to

varying degrees among the schools—but by and large if you looked at them as a whole—highly sophisticated, digital, multimedia curricula across the board, combined with these disciplinary partnerships reaching out all around campus. Now would we have developed a multimedia curriculum over time? Sure. Would it be where it is today if it was not for News21? I don't think so. Would our multidisciplinary projects be where they are today if not for News21? I'm absolutely convinced not.

And the impact, to me—because Vartan and Alberto talk about the individual students who are going out—these students who have these tools that other students don't have and that's absolutely true. But I think the real power of News21 is the modeling that these schools have been able to do for other journalism schools.

Q: Well, let's talk specifically about News21.

Callahan: Okay.

Q: How does it work?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Who takes part and bring it up to date because—

Callahan: So how does it work today or how did it work?

Q: Well, how does—literally how did it work in the beginning and how does it work today and including the fact that it has these fellows that it draws from around the country. Give me that.

Callahan: Sure. If I could—because I think it'll make more sense—let me describe what it is today and let me describe the huge difference from what it was. So what it is today—and I think what everybody would say is that it is the premier journalism educational initiative out there that most schools, most students aspire to be part of. So what does it look like structurally? Well, if you look at a year—and it really is. I do think of it as a year-long program, as it is.

Q: Are these masters or undergraduates?

Callahan: Both.

Q: Okay.

Callahan: So in the fall semester, there is a discussion about what is the topic going to be and this is always such an interesting conversation because you want a topic that is powerful enough, that's going to be compelling, It's going to be important. You want it broad enough where X number of students are going to be really busy reporting on this but narrow enough to still get it done within time constraints that you have—because unlike most newsrooms, there is truly a beginning, a middle and an end to this project. And when the end comes, when it's the end of

August, we need to be done. So probably the most difficult part about this project is defining the scope of it. So that's what we do in the fall semester.

Q: We being?

Callahan: We being—now it is mostly—it's Len Downie, [Jacqueline] Jacquee Petchel and the other people, the other professors who are involved in leading this initiative.

Q: Where are the students?

Callahan: Well, we're getting input from the students who are just completing News21 but it's not for them. They're finishing it. And being on a one-year cycle, it's really for the next students who don't have a sense.

Q: Okay. But you're choosing a topic.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: In 2010 you chose traffic safety, in 2011 food safety and in 2012 voting rights.

Callahan: Exactly.

Q: Okay. All right. So you decide on a topic

Callahan: That's the fall semester. Spring semester is a single seminar taught. Has been taught and it continues to be taught by Len Downie with students who want to be part of the Summer News21. But the seminar is an absolutely critical part of this and if it was up to some students—and I'll be honest with you—what some students just say is, "Ah, we don't really need the seminar. Let's jump into the good stuff. Let's just jump into the reporting." We think that seminar is absolutely foundational to that reporting.

So we're taking a group of students who by definition probably know very little about this topic and we do a deep dive into this for fifteen weeks. We're drawing on experts from around the country and reading—having sort of a typical graduate-level seminar on topic X. But it's not a journalism class per se. They're thinking like journalists but it's really—they're backgrounding the story. And if a reporter had the luxury of taking three months to background a story, and essentially that's what that is—reading everything that has been written about this topic, talking to people who are thought leaders on the topic, looking at all the past journalism written about this topic—really, really diving down into it. That's what we do in the spring semester. Physically it's the Cronkite students up there on the third floor with all the other students, beaming in electronically, if you will.

Q: You see, that's not clear. Where are these other students?

Callahan: Yes. They are physically—this a synchronous class. So in order to participate, to be considered to participate in the summer in News21, you have to either sign up for the course

credit—you don't have to, you can if you want—but what's most important is you must "attend" every class and do all of the work. And the students who aren't at ASU we bring in electronically. So there's a big screen and then you'll see each one. And they can talk. They have to buzz in so it's not a free for all—but all of them [are there]. So it's a completely synchronous conversation.

Q: Where are they? Where are these others?

Callahan: All over the country at all their different schools.

Q: They've signed up and you've agreed to have them?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: On any given year, how many schools might be contributing students?

Callahan: Twelve to fifteen.

Q: Okay. And how many students altogether in a typical year of News21?

Callahan: I'll have to go and look that up for you. I want to say we had twenty-four last year, which was probably more than usual.

Q: And are they called fellows?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: And they could be undergraduates or graduates?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Okay.

Callahan: But they have been selected by their institution and vetted by us. They have been nominated for this.

Q: Okay. And so there is this seminar, conducted here at ASU by Len Downie and contributed to by the students around the country also. And then let's pick up—the seminar ends.

Callahan: Yes. And then from the seminar and now especially towards the end of the seminar, at that point they start saying, "Hmm, what kinds of stories do we see developing here?"

Q: On this subject?

Callahan: Yes. Then they take that and go into this space in the summer. So the students come and they come—I think this year they'll be here in the middle to end of May. They're here for ten weeks.

Q: On stipend?

Callahan: Yes, and they actually get a very generous stipend. Plus we have travel allowances for them, where they typically crisscross the country—in some case out of the country, depending on wherever the story takes them—and work on all different dimensions of this large project. At that point working with a lead editor, which now is Jacquee Petchel, who was at the *Miami Herald*, *Houston Chronicle*, as an investigative editor. We bring in a second editor, a content editor. We have a multimedia editor. We have a web developer. We have a data person. So it's this whole team of faculty working with these students who are in and out all summer. If a student ever asks, is this full-time? Is this eight hours a day? The answer's always the same. Yes, it's full time. No, it's nowhere near eight hours a day—consider this 24/7. You're living and breathing this.

Q: Right.

Callahan: If you're looking for an eight-hour day, I can say, "There's a whole bunch of interesting places I can send you to. This isn't one of them."

Q: Right.

Callahan: So at the end, they produce a multiple—a truly interactive, journalistic product that's heavily edited, heavily. I mean everything is really vetted in a high-level way. Each story I think gets four touches, including significant editing by Len. And then in the interim—and I should have backed up a little—we create partnerships to let our key partners know what's coming. They get that material before we send it out to the general population.

Q: Your key partners being?

Callahan: So we reach out to a couple of key news organizations, where we want to, quite frankly, maximize distribution. So in the past few years, we've had two main partners—NBC News and what was MSNBC.com, which is one of the most highly trafficked websites, and the *Washington Post*. And in our mind, that gets sort of—for lack of a better description, one gets you the eyeballs the other gets you the potential influence of these stories.

Q: Now, by the way, the twenty-some fellows in a given year, they divide up the subject? In other words, they're not falling over each other on the same aspect, are they?

Callahan: There are discussions throughout the spring semester, and certainly by the time the summer starts, everybody has very clear assignments. In some cases, these two or three students are going to work together on this general area—in some cases, one student. In some cases, a student might focus more on the visual aspects of it. Some students will focus more on the text

aspects. But everybody is working towards this sort of common goal of creating this very robust website and these multimedia stories. And their assignments are, at that point, quite clear.

Q: Well, there is a News21 website of its own, is there not?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: How has it done in terms of hits? Have you any idea?

Callahan: I can get you the numbers.

Q: The numbers don't matter.

Callahan: Fairly well but not—I mean, the real numbers are through our partners because they have a built-in audience, where we're putting up a very large product.

Q: But is it well enough known that there is a News21 website?

Callahan: Yes. News21.com.

Q: Inside Carnegie, let me quote something here. "From the beginning, News21 attempted two ambitious goals. First, to produce work—print, multimedia, broadcast, television, radio—so intrinsically strong, well-reported and engaging as to be distributed across a number of

traditional platforms. Second, to 'push' boundaries in narrative style presentation and web-centric delivery." Now have you succeeded in that second part?

Callahan: I think so. Do we need to be doing more of that? Yes. Yes. I don't think there is any question about that. But if you go to the site, there are elements within the site that are not what you would find on a typical news website. Now there are pluses and minuses to that. I mean, because it's something that is really kind of out there, it may get less attention. It may get fewer hits, may get fewer eyeballs on it. And because they're experimenting—by definition, if you're experimenting, sometimes the experiment doesn't work. Sometimes it's that you've tried to tell a story in a different way and it wasn't effective. But that in and of itself, in my mind, is very helpful in the learning process as we try to develop more ways to tell stories.

Q: Well, I have been to the website. I thought it was pretty impressive. But is it possible that, in creating forward-thinking innovation, you're going to limit the outlets that are going to be able to make use of that in their traditional forms?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: I mean, have you ever heard anybody—

Callahan: Yes, yes, yes. There are some for the more and that's a great point. For the dimensions of the project that are very heavy multimedia, very different, there are news organizations that simply can't get that. They don't have the resources to incorporate that into their website. They

might link to it and just take it to our website but, in some ways, they don't have the level of technological sophistication to take that product in. Yes. That's absolutely true.

Q: Right, right. All right.

Callahan: I just wanted, if I could, to go back to one element because I said I was going to start off with how it exists today and then tell you the big difference from how it started off.

Q: Right.

Callahan: The biggest difference and one of the elements that we haven't talked about is this notion of teamwork—is this notion of not only students working together but universities working together. And students from different universities—from competing universities—working together. And the first iterations of News21 essentially were very good school projects—each school had its own. There was not one national project. Each school had its own website. Each school had its own News21 project. And it wasn't necessarily connected in any way. I mean, it was physically connected but it wasn't conceptually connected—everybody did their own thing.

Q: Different subjects?

Callahan: Yes. Oh, yes, in many cases. In fact, in all cases—different subjects.

Q: Right.

Callahan: Which was fine but that looked to some more analogous to—if you went to any of these schools and did a terrific school-based project, that's what it would look like. It didn't take the power that you can have, that you can harness, by putting all these universities together—by putting all these smart students together. And at one point, I want to say after year five or six, Eric Newton, specifically and Susan King—Eric Newton from the Knight Foundation, Susan from Carnegie—said, this is supposed to be a unified project. And we did an experiment. Transportation Safety project was the experiment. Carnegie and Knight said, "Fine. Everybody can still do their own project but send one person to Cronkite. And we're going to do one national project and see what that looks like." And that was the watershed point. That was when everything changed.

Q: That was around when?

Callahan: That was three years ago, four years ago.

Q: Now at that time—maybe it was later—didn't the Knight Foundation in particular make a large financial commitment to the future of News21? Or was that later?

Callahan: That was later. That was what I believe led to where we are today because that was an experiment.

Q: Well, what am I talking about?

Callahan: So for the first five years are we—

Q: I sometimes wake up in the middle of the night and say, what am I talking about?

Callahan: [Laughs] So for those first five years, we did these very—not traditional—but these very segmented projects. Year six—I believe that's right—the foundation said fine, everybody can do their project but we're going to do one national project to see what that looks like. Once we did that, and it was at such a different level on all dimensions than all the other projects we had done, Knight and Carnegie said, "This is what we want it to be in the future." So then at that point, discussions started with, what does News21 look like from this point forward? And that is when both Carnegie and Knight came back and crafted a very different-looking News21, which was a single newsroom, a single national project, with a lot of schools helping.

Q: Well—and I was under the impression that Carnegie's financial contribution is over.

Callahan: Yes, now it is. It wasn't—there was a bridge year in which they were contributing significantly, too.

Q: Okay. But the Knight Foundation's contribution continues.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: In some form of endowment?

Callahan: Yes. There was a—let me get these numbers correct—there was an endowment that was set up specifically for News21 with a minimum of ten-year commitment.

Q: Right.

Callahan: But part of that, and through our conversations with the Knight Foundation—again, it comes back to the university's commitment also. And President Crow said, "Well, this is really important to us. We think it's really important to journalism education." So he said, "Well, we'll match. We'll put in university resources." And in fact, the University wound up more than matching what Knight had put in, which has given us the ability now to continue News21. And, well, continue it with this national concept—with editors, with bringing in students from other schools. And now the model is—

Q: Indefinitely?

Callahan: A minimum of ten years.

Q: Ten years beginning around—

Callahan: Last year.

Q: Okay. Now you had an opportunity—can I assume that some of the students—some of the fellows who took part in the 2010 or 2011 program, the national program—that they have gone out into what my mother used to call the "real world"—but I never bought. Is that possible that they have gone out and looked for jobs?

Callahan: It is possible. And one of the very tangible measures of News21 is the job placement rate. And it's near one hundred percent for students who wanted to continue in journalism and almost the overwhelming majority of these students have continued in journalism, all across the country, doing lots of different things. I know we have students from a year or two ago—we have one who is a lead editor at WashingtonPost.com. She's twenty-three years old. We have a web tools developer at NPR [National Public Radio]. And we have somebody else at the *Chicago Tribune*. These are large, large significant news organizations. And certainly other schools have similar success stories.

Q: Okay. Alright. Let us continue tomorrow then.

Callahan: Okay.

Q: That good enough for you?

Callahan: Fantastic.

[END OF SESSION]

3PM | Session #2 (video)

Interviewee: Christopher Callahan | Location: Phoenix, AZ

Interviewer: Myron Farber | Date: April 23, 2013

Q: Dean Callahan, when we were talking yesterday, I think I neglected to ask a little bit about this building. This building was constructed, finished in 2008?

Callahan: That's right.

Q: Where we are now? The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication in the downtown campus. This has been described elsewhere as a state-of-the-art place. What makes it that?

Callahan: Part of it, we were extremely fortunate when we were able to construct this. So we started the design process in 2006, 2007. And we moved in 2008. That was when digital technology and HD [high definition] technology was already in place. So we were able to create and design the technical infrastructure of the building around those technologies—which was a huge advantage—where a lot of existing facilities had to convert to digital and to HD. So that was an enormous advantage. We worked with spectacular architects in California, Steven Ehrlich and Associates. And what we were able to do with Steven and his group is really to design what we hope to be a journalism school not for today but for the future. The main design element—not terribly dramatic—is essentially flexibility. There's a lot of openness. You don't see a lot of

walls. We wanted spaces where you would be able to reconfigure very easily as programs change, as the field changed. So that was really the main design theory behind the building.

Q: And some of the activity here, apart from what we were discussing yesterday, includes something called the Cronkite News Service—Cronkite NewsWatch. What are these?

Callahan: Yes. These are all intensive, full-immersion professional programs that are really the signature of the school. It's how we designed the new curriculum. It goes to this notion of what we offhandedly call the teaching hospital model of journalism education. So the space we're in now is Cronkite NewsWatch, where the students who are here are taking this experience for credit. It looks, on your transcript, like a class. But that is the only resemblance to a class. It's a newsroom experience where they are here full-time, reporting, writing, editing, producing. And at the end of the day, are airing live a half-hour, public affairs newscast each night—each weekday night—that goes across Arizona on PBS [Public Broadcasting Service], reaching more than a million households.

Q: And is that the same as the news service?

Callahan: No, the news service, which is based both downstairs and in Washington, is a multimedia news service where we're providing content for newspapers, websites, TV stations, about public policy stories around Arizona. So we're actually—we're the largest state-house bureau in the state of Arizona. We're the only Arizona news organization with a presence in

Washington, D.C. But the model is the same, which is high-level professional journalists hired to the full-time faculty to oversee this immersive professional experience.

Q: And also here, you have a—is it part of this school, the Center for Business Journalism?

Callahan: That's correct. The Donald W. Reynolds National Center for Business Journalism.

Q: Was that something you brought in?

Callahan: That's right. Yes.

Q: What does it do?

Callahan: Well, it does two main things. One is—and the original function was exclusively the education and training of professional journalists to improve business and economics reporting. And done through a lot of different ways—going on-site to different newsrooms to do training, bringing in folks here to do training, doing a lot of virtual online webinars and the like. And then we've expanded that to the curriculum. So now we have both undergraduate and graduate specializations through the Center on Business and Economics.

Q: And is there a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program?

Callahan: That's right. That's part of the [U.S.] State Department. There are actually seventeen Humphrey fellowship programs around the country of all different disciplines. There happen to be two in journalism—one at the University of Maryland, College Park and the other one here at the Cronkite School. So we bring in journalists—mid-career journalists from developing countries mostly—and somewhere between ten and twelve young journalists each year who will spend the entire year here with us studying and doing professional experiences and learning both about U.S.-style journalism and American culture.

Q: Are they destined for something like diplomatic service in the country they come from or journalism?

Callahan: Journalism. And the idea is these are folks designated or identified as young and up-and-coming leaders in their various newsrooms around the country with the hope that they can go back with these new skill-sets and journalism values and help infuse those throughout their news organizations.

Q: Now, the school board is for journalism and mass communication. What is the mass communication part?

Callahan: The easiest way to describe that is that those are courses taught largely for non-journalism majors—so the rest of the student body—to teach them a little bit about how mass media systems work. So they're not courses about how to do journalism. They're more courses

about how to consume journalism, how to analyze it and how to understand how the different media, economic, political, et cetera, systems work within the larger country.

Q: Right. But you've made a point elsewhere, I think, that the journalism program here doesn't include certain things that one might expect to be included.

Callahan: Such as?

Q: Well, such as, "We don't teach advertising or sales," you once said.

Callahan: Yes, that's right.

Q: "We made a media analysis major into a minor only. We no longer have a major in broadcast production. We don't teach film classes and offer a limited range of communication classes." Is that—are those kinds of things taught at journalism schools elsewhere generally speaking?

Callahan: They are taught at some, not all. And I think if you look at different journalism schools, there are different configurations. The reason why we do what we do here is very simple. We want to take a set of things and try to teach that better than anybody in the world. And while it would be nice to say you can take everything in the communications world and teach it at the highest levels, I think that's very difficult.

So what we try to do is really focus on what we think we can do best. And obviously for the major, we made a very intentional decision to focus on the journalism profession. And it seems sort of self-evident—well, it's a journalism school. Of course you focus on the journalism profession. But many journalism schools—and I would argue most journalism schools—the students, the majority of students at those schools aren't studying journalism and aren't preparing for journalism—

Q: Aren't?

Callahan: Are not studying journalism and are not preparing for a career in journalism. The Cronkite School, along with some other excellent schools, are focusing largely on the journalism end of mass communication.

Q: Yesterday, we were discussing News21. And I'd like to ask more things about that. First of all, how do you measure success in the program?

Callahan: I think there are a number of different measures of success. Some are very direct. Some direct measures would be, where do students go right after News21? That's a very clear measure. What kind of organizations are they going to? And what sort of positions are they having in those organizations? Down the road, I think maybe an even more important measure of success will be, what's their second job? Two or three years from now, what's their third job? And as we measure that as we go along. So I think that's an important measure. Another very direct measure is, who's looking at these stories? Where are they we are they being distributed?

How many people are looking them? So that's a very measurable direct impact that you can measure easily. And then also, what sort of conversations? We talk a lot about trying to build a conversation around news stories and trying to generate interest not just in a one-way communication model but in an interactive way and having—trying to start conversations around some of these important issues. So I think another measure is, well, what sort of interaction are you having? Are people simply reading it and then walking away? Or they reading it and are they commenting? Are they looking for more information? So I think all of those are very direct measures of how successful the program can be.

Q: Would it be the useful or valuable to have it as a year-round operation that doesn't stop in August? And can that be done? Could that be done?

Callahan: Could be done. And we talk a lot about this in all these because News21 is very much in this teaching hospital model that we talk about. One of the biggest gaps that we have is around the school year. So all these programs—News21 and Cronkite NewsWatch, Cronkite News Service—essentially go dark at some point during the year. It's certainly the case for News21. We lead up to this fantastic project and then it's over in August. We are starting now—actually starting this year—we're starting to address that. I don't think we're addressing it fully but we're starting to address it. So for instance, with our new executive editor, what she's going to do after this project is over is she's going to teach an in-depth investigative class here in the fall semester doing follow-ups on the summer project. So that will help sort of extend the work of that News21 project.

Q: But just for Arizona—

Callahan: That's right. That's right.

Q: So just the students here?

Callahan: That's correct. So but is—I mean to answer your question, is there a way to fully develop it where you would have a national program twelve months a year? Yes, quite frankly, it's a matter of resources. But certainly, the student interest is there and the university interest is up.

Q: Actually, the last year was on voter rights—the topic, as you pointed out yesterday. You made quite a splash, didn't you, with some investigation as part of what you did in regard to how much voter fraud there really was in the United States.

Callahan: For the first time—and this is one of the great powers of News21, where we have a lot of feet on the ground. We can do a comprehensive review in a way that very few organizations can do today. So when you have twenty-four reporters for an extended period of time there's an awful lot you can do with that. And what the team did last summer was they fanned out around the country and they did a fully comprehensive review documenting how much voter fraud there has been. And of course what they found was precious few, and indeed, these thirty-seven different states have enacted some sort of voting rights laws or restrictions to solve a problem—to address a problem that by and large doesn't exist.

Q: Well, that kind of work is itself a measure of success, is it not?

Callahan: Very much so.

Q: Right. And seeing that way, I think in some of the national media, for sure. But do I understand that, at one point, one of the topics—at least one student went as far as South Korea?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: What was that?

Callahan: I should remember the precise story and honestly, I don't. But one of the great advances of News21 is, in addition to the fabulous experience they have and they actually also get a very nice stipend for the summer, we also give them travel allowances in ways that very few news organizations can do anymore. So we've never had a case where a student has found a story and said to us, I really need to go to this state or this country to pursue this story and we did not send them. So there's been that—there's been a fantastic opportunity for these students to truly follow the story wherever it takes them.

Q: Now correct me if I'm wrong—before 2011, there was no national center for this News21 program?

Callahan: Not exactly. There was no national project. News21 has always been administratively based somewhere. Originally in Berkeley—University of California, Berkeley—and then it moved to the Cronkite School. But to your point, there was no umbrella national project until the Transportation Safety Project of three years ago.

Q: Alright. Now is that when you took over as the—when this school took over as the national project center?

Callahan: No. We had—we were running it, I think, at least a few years before that.

Q: And as we discussed yesterday, you've gotten a real commitment from the Knight Foundation for this—

Callahan: Yes. That's right.

Q: —for a period of time?

Callahan: That's right.

Q: And into the future.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Now, was that role here thrust upon you or did you seek it out or did it just happen?

Callahan: Maybe parts of all three. I think with any sort of truly innovative project—and I think News21 was a real innovation. It had never been done before. Never been tried before.
So part of it is you have to start it and see how it evolves—or see how it should evolve. And I think one of the things we started learning was there was an awful lot of great benefits to the program. The one detriment—the one thing that we didn't see happening that the Carnegie Corporation and the Knight Foundation had hoped for was for the schools to be working much more closely together and for the students of those schools to be working much more closely together. And that was what eventually led to this notion of a full-scale national project. Which, of course, turned out to be much more powerful journalistically than the individual school projects, even though they were quite good.

Q: Right. Right. And another thing that we passed over very quickly yesterday has to do with spring seminar—the experts that you bring in to hone in on the subject before students actually go anywhere. Can you give you an example of that?

Callahan: Sure. And it's what my friend, Susan King, always calls the "deep dive"—"the deep intellectual dive." Before you actually start doing your reporting, we're going to immerse ourselves in the topic. And of course, as reporters, that's something we always want to do and sometimes don't have the luxury of time to do. Well, in this program, it is structurally designed where students will spend fifteen weeks—essentially the entire spring semester—doing nothing but that. So the way it works operationally is the topic is already picked. The professor—in this

case, Len Downie, who is the longtime executive editor of the *Washington Post*—creates the seminar, as you would in any course, except that the difficulty that Len has—or the challenge that Len has—of course, he has to create a new seminar every year.

Q: He's up to it.

Callahan: He really is. And that part of it, I think, is one of the most powerful parts of the entire experience. So whatever the topic is, he will design a curriculum, design a syllabus around that topic with deep readings in all the different areas. And then, bring in experts. And when I say bring in, sometimes that's bringing them in physically. Very often, it's bringing them in virtually over a satellite feed or Skype or what have you.

Q: Bringing them in virtually from wherever they're regularly students.

Callahan: Exactly. And then they meet once a week in what looks to be a fairly traditional graduate-level seminar, with the two differences being you actually have students from around the country all participating synchronously in this experience. And then of course, the work product from this and the knowledge from this is then going to be applied very quickly thereafter—the summer for the actual News21 project.

Q: But the experts—the experts that contribute to this seminar, are they just from Arizona State University?

Callahan: Oh, no. No, they are from—every once in a while we'll have somebody from ASU. But by and large, it is folks from around the country. I mean, they are sometimes from universities but very often, they are from think tanks. They are from the government. They are from wherever the expertise happens to be.

Q: Okay. What is this year's subject?

Callahan: We're doing veterans. It's interesting because one of the things we talked about yesterday was, I think, the most challenging part of this is picking up the right project that is going to be compelling but that you're going to be able to add new information to. That is broad enough where a lot of students can really, really dig down deep into it for an entire summer. But narrow enough where you could actually finish it by the end of the summer.

So I think kind of calibrating the scope is the most difficult part of this. So veterans, that sounds very, very broad. And it is. What they're doing, they are going through the process of how we structure that. What kinds of stories are we going to do that we can do within the time frame that we have, that are going to be powerful and that haven't been done before? And that's really the challenge. But of course, having folks like Len driving that process is the great advantage.

Q: It is certainly a worthy subject. And a lot of—there's a big void around that subject—I mean, every politician in the country loves to get up and say, let's honor the veterans. They honor the veterans. But then what actually—how is that actually worked out?

Callahan: That's right. And much of the reporting, as you know, is wonderful. But a lot of it tends to be anecdotal. And one of the things we have the ability to do at News21 is certainly due to some wonderful anecdotal reporting. But then really do deep, serious journalism. And certainly a lot of what we did last summer was data-driven. And we have the great advantage of having [Stephen] Steve [K.] Doig, who's a Pulitzer-winning computers in reporting expert from the *Miami Herald*, who's our Knight chair and journalist—and Steve is part of the News21 team. And he drives the data part of the News21 project.

Q: Even though the students' work ends in projects, the results are available on the News21 website and in other publications that make use of the work? Isn't that correct?

Callahan: Absolutely.

Q: It isn't as if the work disappears.

Callahan: No. And in fact, like you would do for any big project, we time it. Typically for—I believe, for both transportation safety and food safety, we timed it around Labor Day and that week because that's a good news week. But for voting rights, we timed it around the conventions for obvious reasons.

Q: Now when Joseph Pulitzer decided to give money to Columbia University Journalism School in the early 1900s, Horace White, who was well-known, the former editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, said that this was a cockamamie idea. I don't think he used the word cockamamie. He

probably just said terrible. And no one needed it. And there wasn't ever going to be a decent school—a chair in editing, as he put it, or something like that.

And then in the 1920s, [Abbott Joseph] A.J. Liebling famously wrote that his experience with Columbia Journalism School convinced him that it had "all the intellectual status of the training school for future employees of the A&P [supermarket]." And then, the other day—and this was in the *Columbia Spectator* interview—Steve Coll, the incoming Dean of the Columbia Journalism School, was quoted in the Columbia Spectator as saying—this is just the other day, "Frankly, if you went to an Ivy League school as an undergraduate and got a great internship, you can skip over journalism school." So my question to you is, are journalism schools needed?

I mean, here's the incoming dean—of course, he mentions Ivy League school. I guess he forgot the Big Ten or elsewhere. [Laughter] But maybe he's not familiar with them. But you see, there's—all along, ever since their beginnings, the question has arisen whether they're really needed. What say you?

Callahan: Can somebody go out and do a liberal arts degree of any sort, work hard, do some internship and become an outstanding journalist? Absolutely. That could have happened fifty years ago and it did. That's happening today. No question about it. Is there a place for high quality journalism schools to be educating the large numbers—the next cohort of great journalists? Yes. I really believe that. And I think it's more important today than it was thirty, forty, fifty years ago, for exactly some of the things that we just talked about. I mentioned the data-driven journalism. Well, forty, fifty years ago, it was a lot easier to pick things up in the

newsroom by being there. You go on the night cop's beat. You learn from an editor. You move on. The level of journalism today—the kinds of skills and values that a great journalist needs to bring to the table, I think, are much more complex, much more nuanced than they've ever been before. And I think those are the kinds of things that you can learn systemically in a great journalism school, like Columbia or Cronkite. So I very much believe there's a place for that. I will add that the folks—and you still hear this today—you don't really need a journalism school. Most people, when they're giving advice about how to be a journalist to a young person, very well-meaningly but almost—and this is true almost of every person I've ever heard—essentially say, "Do what I did." So if they went to, for instance, a great Ivy League school and studied history, did a couple of internships and then had a wonderful career, they said, "That's your path." And if they went to a great journalism school and went that route, that's essentially what they recommend.

Q: Well, today, there's a lot of talk about the virtues of being an entrepreneurial journalist and that the need for specialization—one hears that time and again—that apart from how the industry has changed, the world has changed for the journalist himself or herself. And you've got to have what John Harris at Politico called an "entrepreneurial itch." Can you pick up that kind of thing in journalism school? Can you pick it up anywhere?

Callahan: Can you teach entrepreneurship?

Q: Yes.

Callahan: And I think you can. Are great entrepreneurs born and not made? Probably. But I think when we talk about entrepreneurship I think sometimes we define it too narrowly. We think of the person who's going to go out and create the next Google. And sure, that's certainly an entrepreneur. But I think in a journalism setting, it's much, much more than that. I think—and what we try to do here, we actually started the first journalism entrepreneurship course ever taught in the country. And we've been doing it for six years now.

We talk to students about, sure, you might go off and start your own startup company in some new media product. And that's great. But more likely, you're going to take the mindset of being an entrepreneur—how entrepreneurs think and how they are always thinking about what's the next big thing or what's the next small thing—and take that knowledge into traditional newsrooms where they can help be change agents within traditional newsrooms.

And I'll tell you, Myron, the opportunity there is so great. When I came out of journalism school, I was twenty-two years old. I went to the AP and I absolutely loved it. But if I was in a seven-person bureau, I was the seventh person. And so I'd sit in the back of the room and be seen and not heard and do what you're told. And there's nothing wrong with that. But today, our students who are going into these large news organizations, they have the ability to actually have a seat at the table. Because the industry is changing so much and because news leaders understand that they need new ideas. And they specifically need new ideas from these digital natives who are coming out of school. There's a huge opportunity. And for that young person who's twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four years old to go into these traditional news organizations and be able to

come up with innovative ideas—entrepreneurial ideas—within that news organization—is enormously beneficial, I think, for the future of the industry.

Q: And better equipped technically.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Better equipped technically. The other day, a news organization called InsideClimate News won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting. Now, they have three reporters—web-based. They have three reporters. They beat out the *Boston Globe* and the *Washington Post* for the prize. And they actually operate in different places—these three people, they operate—actually, I think it may have gone up to seven now. But they operate in different places. Here it is—"a full staff of just seven and a nonprofit business model exemplifies a new breed of news organization that depends on donations," et cetera. One of the things they do that helped win them the Pulitzer Prize—although I don't know how important this part was—let me read you from the *New York Times* itself. "InsideClimate News was the first to report on the *New York Times*' decision last winter to close its small environmental desk and assign its reporters and editors to other departments. While the *Times* said it was not shirking from coverage of climate change and other issues and has continued to publish articles about those issues, the move made some people in journalism and environmental circles uneasy."

Now, this is the *Times* that is closing its desk. This is InsideClimate News on the web that's winning the Pulitzer. But it has an operating budget—an annual budget of roughly $550 million,

four fifths of which goes to staff. The rest pays for travel, internet services and other expenses. It sounds like News21. It's focused on the environment and it isn't the only—what, maybe two or three web-based organizations that have won the Pulitzer Prize in recent years. And perhaps that's a sign of the times, a sign of the future, these kind of organization.

Callahan: I think it's a sign of the changes that are actually quite positive. But the part that I would emphasize is, I think for too long, we've had the same economic model in journalism for decades that worked spectacularly well. And everybody got really, really—did very well, financially, in addition to producing journalism. And that financial model has—I won't say collapsed but has certainly diminished dramatically. And what we're seeing with these kinds of news organizations is not, as some people will say, "The *New York Times* will be gone and all you have is these small, little nonprofits." I don't think that's true at all. What I think is true is that these organizations will now become a permanent part of a new news ecosystem that will include traditional reservations like the *New York Times* in different forms. But I think they will still be there, along with some of these smaller nonprofits, along with some large nonprofits. And along with, quite frankly, I think a growing number of university-produced journalism.

Q: Apropos of what you say and in fairness to the *Times* itself, the *Times* also won a Pulitzer at the same time as InsideClimate News did. And what it won for, in terms of feature writing, was its coverage of an avalanche in Tunnel Creek in the Washington Cascades. And what is interesting about this, the entry that won, is that it had—as Pulitzer people said itself—it was "enhanced"—this article is 17,000 words—was "enhanced by its deft integration of multimedia elements, including extensive video, animation and graphics." And that's exactly—

Callahan: And I think "enhanced" is an understatement for that particular project.

Q: Exactly.

Callahan: I mean, that was a spectacular job of using all sorts of multimedia to tell a story in ways that words have been—would not have gone to that degree.

Q: But journalists—can you imagine journalists knowing how to write a business plan? Or how to do spreadsheets? Loving numbers, as well as how to just edit and, say, up with an idea. I mean, are those required skills?

Callahan: I can because all those are required here. Everything you just mentioned is required. And could I have imagined it ten years ago? No, absolutely not—but I think those are—and again, being a journalist today is arguably more exciting but far more complex and far more nuanced. And again, I think, then all the more reason to have serious, professional journalism schools to be able to educate students in those skills and values, in addition to providing them a significant liberal arts education.

Q: You know, some people like to use the term "accountability journalism." Or as Alex Jones up at Harvard likes to say, "the iron core of journalism." And in days gone by, that's when one would have been talking about the *Times* and the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and those fundamental organizations. If they had a justification, what was it?

I mean, it was, in terms of the larger public mission, a watchdog on government? Would you say that? I mean, is that just myth? Or is that reality?

Callahan: Oh, I think that's absolutely true. I would say not just government but sort of institutional powers. And that could be large corporations, lobbyists and the like.

Q: Now, do you think that—one of my favorite quotes is from Jeremy Bentham, the eighteenth century English reformer: "Without publicity, all other checks are insufficient. In comparison to publicity all other checks are a small, small amount." And in my own experience, I think that's basically true. What enormous amount of things can happen in the shadows? But in terms of what has happened in the industry in the last decade certainly is—and I'm not sure—some people refer to the—here I go—the news business as an industry. And some people refer to it as a profession. What do you use? Or do you use them interchangeably? It doesn't matter to you?

Callahan: I think it's both, that it depends on who's viewing it. I think if you're the person running the enterprise, running the business—then it is very much an industry. I think if you are the on-the-line editors and reporters it's a profession. And I would go as far to say as a calling. But I think that's always been the case.

Q: Well, in the last decade or so, the news industry or profession or business—call it what you will—has contracted substantially. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism reported the other day that in 2012, "estimates for newspaper newsroom cutbacks in 2012 put the industry down thirty percent since its peak in 2000. And in African American news

media"—it cited the *Chicago Defender* and other newspapers having also suffered the cross between cable channels—"coverage of live events fell thirty percent in 2007 to 2012." And there are other similarly grim statistics, if that's how you want to characterize it. According to Outsell, an information industry research group, newspaper revenue has fallen by more than forty percent since 2007. The point being that we have clearly a contraction. To what do you proscribe this contraction? What has happened?

Callahan: I think the economy has exacerbated something that was happening no matter what. What was happening was—and I'll focus on the newspaper industry in particular. This was an industry that, for decades, had an economic model where they had fantastic profit margins. And they didn't have to change anything and they didn't. And they also put—I would ask you to try to think of another major American industry that has put less into research and development than the American newspaper industry over that period of time. I've thought about this and I cannot. I cannot.

I think because of that—I hope this doesn't sound flip but—this was an industry that was fat and happy for a very long time. Thirty percent, forty percent profit margins that worked really well. And very little put back into where the industry was going. Well, what changed? Well, the internet changed. The digital revolution changed. And the economic model of classified ads—which we had a monopoly on—all of a sudden, we no longer had a monopoly on. And that went away very, very quickly.

So what we saw in a very brief period of time was this dramatic change in economic model, speeded up by—at the same time, coincidentally—a downturn in the overall economy, which I think speeded up what was going to happen anyway. So now what I think we're faced with is an industry that is truly looking at different ways, different models. And a lot of them aren't going to work. Some of them haven't worked already. Some of them are going to work. And I think that out of this will come a new media ecosystem that will be stronger than ever before. It won't look like it did before. It won't look like it did before.

And the folks who—Pew is measuring what was and how its declined. And I'm not sure if it does a very good job of giving a much broader view of all of these different systems and how they're developing and what might happen five, ten years from now. I'm actually very optimistic about where we're going to be ten years from now. I think it's still going to be a very difficult period of time. And it's not going to be—in my mind, it's not going to be a new magic economic system that is—now, we're just going to replace the old one. But it's going to be a series. It's going to be all these things that we've talked about. All adding to a much more nuanced, a much more complex news organism. But one I think that can be as powerful and, in some ways, better than it's ever been before. But very, very, very different—

Q: Well, apropos of what we're discussing about the kind of award the *Times* won the other day with John Branch's article ["Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek"], can you see the old-time major news organizations surviving, but surviving more along the lines of what he did in that article or what they did in that article and creating a new world for the article? Or is it—if

you were projecting ahead, you would think that, well, yes, there'll come a time when there won't be a *Washington Post* or a *New York Times* or a—

Callahan: No. I think there will be. Those organizations, they'll look very differently. And I think that sort of work you will see not only more of but you'll see things that you and I couldn't imagine two years ago. I couldn't imagine—so how did I consume my news today? Now, I'm old, so I still get my newspapers. I get my two newspapers on my driveway and I always pick them up before I go to work. But the reality of it is I read my newspapers before I get out of bed. My alarm clock goes off and I turn over and I grab my iPad and I get on the *New York Times* and I get on the *Arizona Republic* and I get on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and I consume the news in that fashion. I wouldn't have dreamed that I would be doing that three, four years ago. I'm still getting the news from what I would consider very traditional news organizations. They're just coming in a very different form.

Q: Well, are there enough of you to support an institution like the *New York Times*?

Callahan: I think so.

Q: And you think there will be—

Callahan: I think—so I think the *New York Times* is unique. I think there are some, as we've seen certainly over the last few years. There are some great news organizations that will die. And that makes me sad as a newsperson. But as a news consumer, I'm less concerned about that and I'm

much more concerned about what's replacing it. What's in place now? You mentioned ProPublica as an example. Well, I don't think that kind of journalism is talked enough about. Well, that didn't exist half a dozen years ago. And if you look at the quality of that journalism, it is spectacular. Well, all of a sudden, that—in my mind—is filling a very important role in this new system. It's not quite as neat as it was before. It's not quite as linear as it was before. But it has the potential of being very powerful and really serving the democracy in ways that it desperately needs. Because journalism, at the end of the day, is an absolute cornerstone of who we are as people.

Q: In the immediate aftermath of the Boston Marathon [bombings] the other day—the explosion there—the news media were all over it. And they were all over in a hurry. As an old AP reporter, you'll understand that. And one of the people who came under some criticism was your former colleague at Providence, John King, now at CNN, for having reported prematurely that there had been an arrest in the case. But he wasn't the only one that made that mistake. A number of news organizations did. And there must have been tremendous pressure on them to come up with news. Television is on—they're on—in the aftermath of an event like that, they're on all over the place, all the networks, all everything. And they're speaking on television. And they've got to say something. And there's someone behind the scenes saying, have you got something new to report? So that's a lot of pressure.

Callahan: Tremendous pressure.

Q: So afterward, David Carr, the media critic at the *Times*, he wrote in the *Times*, "If legacy media"—meaning institutions, the old-time institutions, "were falling short, the new order did not look all that promising either. A crowd-sourced witchhunt took place on Reddit, identifying innocents as suspects, and Twitter was alive with both misinformation and outrage at the mistakes." Now, it goes on to say that maybe what's needed is a village common, where a reliable provider of news held the microphone. He thought that maybe CNN could have filled that role but it didn't on that occasion. But you'll notice, though, that it wasn't just the legacy media that had a lot of mistakes. It was the digital media. Is there any reason to be critical of such things like crowdsourcing? What's the fair way to look at it?

Callahan: Well, I think that's a great question. But let's just return to the legacy media for a second and the appropriate criticism that CNN, the *Boston Globe*, Fox News received. And I'll preface this by saying John King is a good friend of mine. But I will also say that, as objectively as I can say, he's the best reporter I've ever known. What was the reaction by the news media and by the public to CNN's error? Was it dismissive? Was it ignored? Or was it talked about and dissected for days and days and days? I would argue it was the latter, that we focused heavily on this mistake and we talked about it, and we talked about how it happened. We talked about the circumstances and the environment that leads to this sort of a problem. What that tells me, as an old news guy, is that that's unusual. If it happened all the time, we wouldn't be talking about it. We wouldn't be writing about this mistake if it was common. It was clearly uncommon—uncommon in the extreme.

So I would say, while this was clearly an error, that it is in part illustrates that, in general, breaking news—the quality of breaking news is still pretty darn good. Because you don't see—I mean, you certainly have cases of this. But you don't see it on an every-day basis. And why was CNN such the focus of this, when other news organizations had the same stories? Because everyone turns to CNN. Everybody goes to CNN to watch for a breaking news story. So I'm not—now, has the pressure increased over time, the twenty-four hour news cycle and the pressure to get the news out? Absolutely. Did they succumb to that pressure? Yes, I believe so. I also think—and I haven't heard people talk about this—the sources of information are under exactly the same kind of pressure. Because, as a great investigative reporter, why do people talk to you? Sure, because you were a great reporter and you got them to talk to you. But also because they got something out of it, whether or not that was something tangible, of benefit to them or just that they wanted to be in the mix. They wanted to be the one providing that news. Well, what's happening with social media—the speeding up of the news cycle—I think is affecting sources just as much as it is affecting journalists.

There's no question in my mind that for, independently, CNN and the Associated Press and the *Boston Globe*, to all be coming—probably with different sources—to the same bad story tells me those sources were pushing out something. They weren't doing it purposely. But they were acting in a way that maybe they wouldn't have acted five years ago. So I think that this entire dynamic is not just changing how we deal with news but, actually, how our sources are also dealing.

Q: Yes, that's interesting. On the other hand, it's also true that the legacy organizations in a situation like that—not just CNN—are following social media second by second.

Callahan: Absolutely.

Q: And with competition being—the whole idea of competitive pressure and being first, they see something on social media, they think, my god, they got it right.

Callahan: Absolutely—absolutely right.

Q: Not necessarily the case.

Callahan: But while there are great benefits, though, of social media when used for good rather than evil—when used well—the ability to report out a story, the ability to tell a story in a more comprehensive way with more voices, gives you the ability and the tools to do that in ways that we couldn't do before. But there are—to your point—there are great, great dangers in it. And I think this is illustrative of that.

Q: Do you ever talk with students here about digital media practitioners like, for example, SCOTUSblog [Supreme Court of the United States], which covers the Supreme Court? I hate to mention this but, I think it was just before or just as the Supreme Court was issuing its Affordable Care Act—the Obamacare decision—Jeffrey [Ross] Toobin of CNN was on the air saying that they had killed the legislation—a mistake certainly of greater consequence than

anything that happened with the Boston Marathon misreporting. But seconds later—maybe a minute or two—SCOTUSblog on the web had it right and continued to have it right and explaining it all day long and what happened to it. Another example of that kind of thing—do you recall the whole business about Lance Armstrong? And what was it—drugs he was taking? Well, that wasn't broken by legacy media—that was broken by some web organization, newyorkvelocity.org or something of that sort. I mean, they're performing—

Callahan: And it gets back to one of your earlier points about this notion of specialty journalism and sort of having a deep, deep knowledge of a fairly narrow slice so of society. But that you could do all kinds of reporting that a general assignment reporter or a general news organization can't do. And I think you're seeing more and more of them and I think those are excellent examples of that.

Q: What about the consumer in this? The consumer today of news has been called by, I think, Tom Rosenstiel, an online "serial hunter-gatherer of news." What about that? Is the consumer—forget the news media organization itself—has the consumer changed in terms of its habits or interests in the news? Or what it expects from the news?

Callahan: I think it depends on what consumer you're talking about. And I'll use two as an example—my father and my son. So my father, sitting on Long Island, he consumes news exactly the same way as he always did. Which means he goes to his driveway in the morning, he picks up *Newsday* and he sits down at the kitchen table and he reads it. And his overall view of that is there are fewer pages today than there used to be. And that makes him mad. And that is

his news. His news consumption has not changed at all. So in his world, what he is getting has diminished.

My twenty-one-year-old son, on the other hand, consumes news in the other end of the spectrum. So he will be sitting on the couch, watching some sort of sports event. He'll have his laptop computer up, looking at some other website. He has his phone where he's texting people about this. He's doing three, four things at the same time, which gives me a headache just to look at what he's doing. He loves that. And he is getting information exactly how he wants to. And seems to be, from what I can tell, quite efficient at it. So I think when you talk about how has this affected the news consumer, and is this a good thing or a bad thing, I think it depends on what end of the spectrum—I use those two as extremes—but what end of the spectrum that you're on.

Q: But your son, does he read a newspaper? Or does he look at a newspaper, a hard copy? Or does he look at it online? Or does he need not bother with it at all?

Callahan: Yes. Everything that he does is online—everything and more and more, on his phone, as opposed to even a computer.

Q: The other night, I saw Walt Mossberg of the *Wall Street Journal* on television on *Charlie Rose*. And one of the first things out of his mouth was, "Everybody's moving to mobile." Everybody is moving to mobile. And at one point, Charlie Rose was so surprised that he actually said, "Well, you mean, people are going to throw away their PCs [personal computers]?" And

Mossberg had to, I think, assuage Charlie Rose and said, “Well, no they’re not going to throw them away.” But his point is that everybody is moving to mobile. Have you noticed that?

Callahan: Certainly. The numbers indicate that mobile is increasing dramatically. But it’s a function of technology. It’s a function of, now I can use the phone and it downloads a lot faster than it did two years ago. So I’m more likely to use it now. But to me—and in my case, in particular as a news consumer—whether or not I have a hard copy or whether or not I’m on my computer or an iPod or on my phone, I’m going to the same sources of information. And I think that’s a critical part of all of this. The distribution system is changed. But where you’re going for news, where the news consumer is going for news is not necessarily changing by the platform. It goes back to the fact that it’s about the content.

Now, you could use—and we’ve seen some great examples of multiple platforms and multimedia use to help tell a story. But at the end of the day, it’s about the “quality” of the content. And when I say quality in quotes—what I view as quality, what you view as quality are very different things. But that to me, at the end of the day, is what’s most important. So the notion that more and more news consumers are going mobile—yes, that’s true. I don’t find that particularly terrible or great.

Q: Right. Let me—I mentioned InsideClimate News a few minutes ago. They are a foundation-supported organization, by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. And there are other examples of that. I think ProPublica is certainly foundation-supported. The GlobalPost, I think, is foundation-supported. What Joel Brinkley sometimes calls the rich uncle financial model. But what is your

impression of how important philanthropy has been to digital journalism? And could you also comment on the fact that the Ford Foundation last year gave $1 million to the *Los Angeles Times* to focus on local immigrant communities. And the *Washington Post* got a renewable $500,000 grant from the Ford Foundation last June to hire four new reporters to work on money, politics and government, which one would have thought—

Callahan: We were doing that. [Laughs]

Q: So both for the legacy and for—

Callahan: Sure. And let's put Ford off for a second because I do think that's somewhat of an aberration. I think I can explain why. In general, the importance of philanthropy in these new nonprofit startups that we've seen in recent years is they've driven it. And they've been incredibly important. What I think is interesting is what's going to happen in the future. And I think what you're going to see—because largely what you've seen is the Carnegies and the Knights and these other large national foundations funding ProPublica and significant national organizations. And that's terrific. And that's powerful. But I think the model, and what I can see happening—and you've seen it in some communities but I think this is going to grow over time––are local philanthropists, local foundations, community foundations—local individuals supporting accountability journalism in digital forms in their own communities. So if I look at—you take any city or town in America, and there are always going to be a group of wonderful philanthropists who are passionate about their community. They want to make their community better. Well, how do they do that? Well, they do that through investments. And what do they

invest in? They invest in the arts. Local museums. They invest in the library. They invest in critical parts of the culture of that community. What's more critical than an organization that holds all those powers accountable to the people? I'm not sure if we made that case as well as we should have at this point. But I think it will take root in every community in the country, where I think you will find, ten years from now, local philanthropists investing in great local accountability journalism in all sorts of different forms. And I think that's appropriate. I think that's smart. I think that's a great investment for somebody who is passionate about their community.

Q: That's interesting. But do you think that outfits like ProPublica, InsideClimate News, et cetera, could have come about without foundation support?

Callahan: No. I would say, without philanthropic support, whether or not it's from a foundation or an individual. But no, I don't. No, I think they absolutely—I think they should be credited for that because I think without the philanthropy, none of those would have existed. I believe that. Certainly News21 is a perfect example of that. Would not have existed.

Q: Yes, but on the one hand, you have foundations, for example, supporting journalism education. Here, we're talking about the other end, the output, the—

Callahan: Right, although News21 is very much the education and the output.

Q: Right, yes. But—

Callahan: But to your point, absolutely. But again, is that output of what are they looking at? I said Ford is sort of an aberration and would come back to that because what most other philanthropies are doing are supporting entities—nonprofits—like they do for a whole bunch of different nonprofits that are incredibly helpful to that community, however you define the community. No different than giving to the zoo or the symphony or the library. No different.

Q: And you think that can be done in a nonpartisan way? Is that important? I mean, if you're giving to the opera or the symphony, they're going to give a—you're not telling them, you're not even suggesting that they play the music a certain way. But how about playing the news a certain way? Would there be a danger of that?

Callahan: Actually, I'm not convinced that the philanthropy for things like that is—but your point's well-taken. Your point's well-taken and certainly, that's a concern. And I think like all great journalists, whoever is leading these organizations has to be very cognizant of that. I think, to date, most have been. I think most philanthropists have been—they understand their role in that. That's something you always have to be on guard about but I don't see it as an insurmountable obstacle.

Q: The other day, the *New York Times* had on its front page an article, "Conservative Koch Brothers Turning to Focus to Newspapers." And the article basically was saying that the Koch brothers [David H. Koch and Charles G. Koch]—heavy financiers of conservative causes in the Republican party, of Republican candidates, were considering buying the Tribune Company,

which includes the *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Baltimore Su*n, *Hartford Courant*, *Orlando Sentinel*. And I suspect that what provoked The *Times* was the fact that here was a—here were brothers, a new organization that are very much committed to a particular line of political thinking. But as you look back on journalism, there were always those kinds of politics, weren't there?

Callahan: Of course. [Laughs] That was how the newspaper industry was—that's the foundation of it. And it's a great point. And that's why I was laughing at you as were starting saying this. Because of course that's exactly how—the only thing that's changed is we went from individual ownership through many people who were very politically motivated in some way, shape or form, which to corporate ownership—which at the time, we derided for all the problems that corporate ownership comes. Now coming back to this individual ownership but it seems to me sort of a full circle. And there are problems with any of those ownership models. I think we just have a wonderful sense of revisionist history where it seems to be the last one was always better than what we're in or what's coming.

Q: I've forgotten what Pulitzer's politics were but Hearst certainly, for god's sakes—Hearst, for example. They had an agenda.

Callahan: [Laughs] They all did.

Q: That's right. It may not have been the agenda you liked.

Callahan: It didn't lack clarity. [Laughter]

Q: But you were going to say something more, I think, about the idea that the Ford Foundation should be giving this kind of hundred, thousands, millions of dollars to the [Inaudible] publisher to do what everyone thought they were doing.

Callahan: That's right. Well, at the end of the day, Ford Foundation should invest in whatever the Ford Foundation thinks is appropriate. So I'm not going to sit here and say they are wrong. I will say, I have a hard time trying to ascertain the long-term impact of giving a grant to the *Washington Post* or the *LA Times* to do important reporting. But the kind of reporting that the two of us would probably have thought they were doing already, or should be doing already—and should be doing at a high level, where these other investments in nonprofits, in these startups, in these community journalism, I could see how that can—not necessarily will—but how that could lead to very good things down the road. I'm not sure where this leads to. I mean, I certainly see how it helps the company financially. But it's helping a for-profit company financially. At the end of the day, I just—again, there might be a logic behind that that I'm not seeing, and certainly, the kind of journalism that those grants will generate is important journalism. It just seems to me—I don't see long-term benefit. That's—

Q: John Thornton is the software investor who started *Texas Tribune* down there, which I think has been quite successful. And one of the issues all along has been whether these startups can build a sustainable business model. He favors public donations to support these startups. Is that

realistic? I mean it worked for him, in part. But of course, he's thrown in a lot of his own money. But is that plausible?

Callahan: I think that could be part of the financial equation. I think if you try to build a news organization based exclusively on that, I think that would be problematic. But *Texas Tribune* is a perfect example. So they're getting money from public contributions—fantastic. They're getting money that they're putting in. They're getting money. They're still getting foundation money, as far as I know. And they also have come up with some very smart revenue-raising measures—event-driven—which are sort of separate from the news but they are getting revenue from events that they're putting on. So the economic model they've created for themselves is very complex and it's not just based on one revenue stream. I think that's what's important. So can public support be a part of an overall strategy? I don't see why not.

Q: Well, your colleague here, Len Downie, and Michael Schudson, formerly of University of California, San Diego, now at Columbia—wrote a report in 2009 called "The Reconstruction of American Journalism." Among other things, it touched on quite a debate because it was suggesting that there was a greater role for the government to play in the financing of journalism. I know that at one forum, the head of the Knight Foundation, Alberto—

Callahan: Ibargüen.

Q: He said that he was opposed to it. And Paul Steiger, who used to be at the *Wall Street Journal* and is now running ProPublica, I think—said that, well, that it was okay, perhaps, if it didn't affect content. Do you recall reading the Downie-Schudson report?

Callahan: I have.

Q: And particularly, this issue about the government. What's your own take on that?

Callahan: I think it depends largely on what we mean by government support. So the critics of Len's report will say, "Oh, we can never go down this road." Well, I hate to break the news but the government supports journalism today and has for years. They support it in a very direct way through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. They support it through these, I would argue, archaic state laws about having to print legal notices in your local newspaper. I mean, think about that. If that's not—quite frankly, if that's not a subsidy, I'm not sure if I know what is. So of course, the government is already supporting news organizations in some way, shape or form. The question is, is there a greater role? Can there be a greater role? And I think there can be. But of course, you need to be very careful about that. One thing I would love to see is more support of the journalism part of public media through Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

But I think there are other ways, other things that can be done, including what I would think of as a very simple step. And that is this: simply being able to expedite some of these requests to make some of these new startups and granting them 501(c)(3) status at the IRS [Internal Revenue Service]. And that has been a huge issue because that has been a roadblock. So many of these

news organizations that are clearly nonprofit have not been able to get their 501(c)(3) status. And that has been a detriment in their progress.

Q: How realistic is the prospect of further government involvement?

Callahan: Oh, not at all.

Q: Just as you consider what goes on in Congress.

Callahan: Not at all—zero. Ask me a sort of percentage of chance of this happening in our lifetime? Zero. Yes. If the question was, do I think it should happen? Yes. Do I think it will happen? No.

Q: But clearly, you see a substantial role—to the extent that it can afford it—in philanthropy.

Callahan: Absolutely.

Q: Both in terms of education and in terms of output?

Callahan: Yes, although, to me, I tie education to output. So supporting the university-generated news in the same way as you would support a local news nonprofit.

Q: Well, you were saying—you were speaking a few minutes ago about the local news. In 2011, the FCC issued a report. This is the report that I believe you referred to yesterday when you said the thirteen deans wrote to the FCC—the FCC report on local news in 2011. "It is a confusing time." This is the FCC. "Breathtaking media abundance lives side by side with serious shortages in"—they mean in-depth professional accountability—"local reporting. Communities benefit tremendously from many innovations brought, by the internet, simultaneously suffering the dislocations caused by the seismic change in media markets. Our conclusion? The gaps are quite important but they are fixable." Now, that's the FCC. And actually, Carnegie Corporation and Knight Foundation, I believe, gave $20,000 grants to each of the twelve schools in the News21 program initiative to do an FCC report roadshow in the spring of 2012 to report on how journalism could be improved in local areas. Did that happen?

Callahan: Yes. I can tell you sort of what we did here. We actually did—we received two grants from Carnegie and Knight. One was to take a slice of the report and expand on it dramatically. I can tell you about that in a second. But I think something else that we did—we were the site of the FCC hearing on the [Steven] Waldman Report. So right down the hall here, we had about four hundred students, faculty members and the public in an all-day FCC hearing that really looked in great detail at Steve's report, which I thought was very valuable and actually got distributed widely. It was picked up on variety of PBS stations. So we did that.

But then also, our slice of the report was—if I remember correctly—it was Len Downie looking at the issue that I was just talking about, this notion of the obstacles that are facing local startups

in getting 501(c)(3) status and why that was taking so long. What the obstacles were. What were some of the politics behind it? And what needed to be done to move that forward.

Q: But one of the points I think they were making was that local newspapers, some of which have died or shrunk—that they're part of an ecosystem, as you put it—it's a food chain. And when they die, it affects the television coverage and the radio coverage, who—and I think is true, always been—nationally—are dependent upon the legwork, the hard work that the newspapers do.

Callahan: Absolutely.

Q: What was your conclusion with respect to what the FCC report? Are they right that it's fixable?

Callahan: It's certainly fixable because there are solutions—many of which Waldman outlined. One of the political realities that will allow it to be fixable—that that's a much larger question. I mean, a lot of what Steve laid out, it was—I think he very smartly identified many of the obstacles and pathways to solutions. Is there interest enough in Washington and in other places to actually move forward on that? That's—well, you tell me. You've seen what's happened since the Waldman report came out, which is arguably very little.

Q: Well—you've been here since 2005?

Callahan: Right.

Q: Does the *Arizona Republic*, for example, look pretty much the same as it did?

Callahan: It looks different. And the *Republic*, I think, has done a good job of trying different experiments. That's one of the things that they've been doing for the last few years—which I have applauded, which I think is fantastic. Now certainly, the number of their staff has decreased without question. The revenue that they have—the resources they have to put into news is less than it was when I first came to town. That's a given. But what have they done to compensate? What have they done to do things differently? Really, a whole series of things. One is that their digital presence is really outstanding and has been, I think, a leader among local newspapers. So that's something they focused heavily on, which is, I think, terribly important—looking at mobile and other distribution systems. Creating community conversations—all of those things. Of course, the *Republic* is owned by Gannett [Company, Inc.]. The NBC affiliate is also owned by Gannett. They moved the TV station, Channel 12, and merged it with 12 News. So now it's still an experiment. But they are merging those newsrooms. Will that work? I think aspects of it are going to work really well. Other things, they're going to try and fail and learn from. But I think they're trying to do different things.

Something that I've just been fascinated by is that they've taken this notion of accountability journalism and said, we can make this a financial asset. So if you look at the deep stories that the *Republic* does—I would say it's fair to say they're probably doing less spot news than they were seven or eight years ago. But their investigative stuff, I think, is better. And they're making it

more prominent. So pretty much every Sunday, you are getting a serious piece of accountability journalism on important issues, where I think a lot of America major metropolitan dailies, you're not getting that. So they're trying different things. Some haven't worked. Some have worked. But just the notion that they're trying to move forward, I think, is a very good sign.

Q: The great divide, I suppose, was when [Albert] Al [A.] Gore [Jr.] invented the internet. I saw an obituary recently of a man who supposedly did.

[Laughter]

Q: And a quick look at it did not disclose the name Al Gore.

Callahan: [Laughs]

Q: When you started out as a reporter, was there the internet?

Callahan: There was not. There was—there were barely—what were they? VTRs? VRTs? They were the word processors. They weren't computers. So it was quite primitive.

Q: So you're still active in this field. Whatever pleasure and pain it has caused you, it surely must have been a learning experience over the last twenty-five, thirty years.

Callahan: Absolutely. I still think it's the best job you can have.

Q: Well, you don't want the university to hear that, do you?

Callahan: [Laughs]

Q: I mean, Michael Crow? That's right. You've got it too good. Is there—among the journalism schools that you're familiar with—you came from Maryland to here?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: Among those that you're familiar with and have become even more familiar with as part of this Carnegie-Knight initiative, are they all active in promoting digital journalism to their students?

Callahan: To different degrees—they're all doing it but to different degrees. It would be unfair to say they're all doing it at extremely high levels. But they're all doing it. And they're doing it certainly, on average, to a much higher degree than the typical journalism school—and I think that's attributable to the Carnegie-Knight initiative.

Q: Right, you know Clay Shirky—he's at NYU [New York University], I believe.

Callahan: Yes.

Q: He is a big proponent of the digital journalism but had to concede—it was some discussion not long ago—he said, "Who's going to go down to City Hall? That's tough." And what he meant was you've got to have a body, a physical, real body that's going to go down to City Hall, no matter what you're going to talk about in terms of digital journalism. And in terms of what you do online. That somebody's got to go down to City Hall. You actually wrote this in 2011: "The fundamentals of great reporting and writing are always more important than cool, new tools." True?

Callahan: True. Because you can't use the new tools unless you understand the values of news behind them. So I can have the best computer in the world and the best digital tools in the world but if I don't know the—it's asking the right question. If I don't know the right question to ask of that, then I'm not going to have the kind of story that I need to have. So I think the starting point absolutely is that those very important traditional values of great reporting, great writing.

Q: And there's no question in your mind that the students here understand that that's what you're getting at here?

Callahan: Yes.

Q: That that's as important as the technology.

Callahan: Yes. I think we have to reinforce that on a regular basis—but yes.

Q: Well, it must be kind of head-turning to see all this fabulous technology that you've got here.

Callahan: That's right. Well, part of it is how we structure the curriculum also. So the very first course that students take here as eighteen-year-old freshmen is a course called the History and Principles of Journalism. And that course is exactly what it sounds like. So through the structure of the curriculum, we're actually trying to explain to them what is foundational and what gets added on.

Q: Let me leave the final word to your great benefactor—one of your great benefactors, Vartan Gregorian, who said—wrote, I think, in 2010 that, "Everybody loves technology. But the instrument is not going to do your thinking. You've still got to get an education. You still have to read. You still have to learn and be curious."

Callahan: One hundred percent.

Q: Well, that's what's on my mind, unless you want to add anything.

Callahan: No. This has been a great honor. Thank you so much.

Q: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]