

Interview with Robert Goodrich April 23, 2007

Georgeann Jukuri: Will you please state your name, birth date and position here at Northern?

Robert Goodrich: Robert Goodrich, I am an Associate Professor of History and director of the Honor's program, born on the 20th of June, 1965.

GJ: Okay, What is the Junior Faculty?

RG: Well the Junior Faculty is simply a name that refers to anybody who hasn't been here very long. Starting out faculty, usually coming in as term positions or adjunct or if they're tenure track, they usually come in as assistant professors. Although in theory you could come in at any level, they could hire you as an associate or even a full, although we don't do that here very much. So it's simply the less senior faculty, by definition. The organization though that I work with, that I founded was the Junior Faculty Interdisciplinary Colloquium, JFIC for short. And that I founded in the fall of 2001, when I first moved up here. I was a new, starting out assistant professor at NMU and I saw that there wasn't any possibility to socialize in a organized way with my colleagues outside my department so I and some others started that group.

GJ: Okay Who is considered part of the Junior Faculty Group?

RG: It's really anybody. Anybody who wants to be considered it. The term itself is not a formal term. It is simply more a question of status rather than a legal standing. So anyone who wants to be considered Junior Faculty can be considered Junior Faculty. And inside the group itself, we started out the first year, in 2001, inviting everybody who had been hired that year, there were some 20 hires. And then within a semester we realized there was more interest than that, because people kept bringing friends. So we started to branch out pretty much to anybody who had come or asked to be on the list. And then every year since then what we did is we opened it up to the next incoming class of new professors. So each year the group got larger and larger and larger so that this year we actually switched the name of it formally to the All Faculty Interdisciplinary Colloquium, AFIC, to really show that anybody can show up. And in fact that was one of our goals. After we had a group that was well enough established at integrating junior faculty into the social life of the university and Marquette, we really wanted to have a mentorship program, and informal mentoring program where you could interact with your senior professors, and that's what this sort of grew into, hence the changing the name to the All Faculty Interdisciplinary Colloquium.

GJ: Okay What do you do as part of this group?

RG: It's a high-faluting name. In reality, the main thing that it does is sets up a social venue for meeting other professors during which time then you talk quite seriously, what we call shop-talk. You talk about the problems in your departments, other departments, you use each other as resources, getting to know each other, because you can't really call upon someone to help you if you don't know them. So that was the main goal; get a social setting where you can then talk about pedagogy, and what it is to be a professor. The way that we do that is every Friday, after payday, so every two weeks, we have a happy hour. From 4-6 or 5-7 at one of the local bars, it hops around. It started out we always went to Upfront and Company, in the last few years we've been bouncing around a bit. And then in addition to the regular pay day happy hours we have a series of socials. Usually a Halloween party, a Christmas party, a Mardi Gras party, and a Kentucky Derby party. And then during the summer we'll often have a before school starts a cookout or something like that.

GJ: Okay, how many members are there as of now?

RG: Well, how do you define membership? That's the tricky thing. Because in theory, now that we opened it up, we send out the invitations to these events to everyone who is a professor on campus. So we send it out through email to the AAUP list, so everybody who is a member of the Association of University Professors, as well as anybody who is an adjunct, as well as anybody who works at the Jacobetti Center, they are in a different union. So members...there are no dues, so membership is open to all those groups and their friends if they want to bring them. And I guess more important is how many show up on a regular happy hour, 20. There's a core and then there's people who filter around the edges more or less frequently. And the parties, well the parties can be 40, 50, 60 plus depending on the party.

GJ: How has it changed over the years? I guess you kind of already answered that but...

RG: Yeah, I think the big change has been that, the surprising thing is that it's still around. It just started up as a happy hour but people seem to look forward to it as a chance to get together and talk. And I can honestly say that anyone who goes there with any regularity I have gotten to know quite well. So in that sense, it's served a very useful purpose, since there is no space on campus to do that. There is no faculty club, and I know that's something many of us would like to see. When they renovate Lee hall for example, I think that would be a great space to have a faculty clubhouse, and then we'd just move the venue there. And they are talking about doing that. So the main change has been to see how the colloquium has opened up to everyone, it's no longer just junior faculty, it's become something much broader, and how over the years now that people like myself are associate professors we've been able to that as a good resource and a networking resource to build relationships across campus. And the fact that

you're even interviewing me means that there's some notion that this exists, it's kind of institutionalized itself in a way.

GJ: Do you think there are any people who are opposed to this idea?

RG: Opposed to happy hour? Uhm, perhaps some who may not care for the fact that it does occur in a bar, and they may be opposed to drinking, but you know, most people like that say well it's your choice and if they want to come, they are more than welcome and you don't have to drink, usually people are ordering food too and drinking tea, whatever. I think there was some misunderstanding at first, and maybe that still lingers that it was political. Because there are some generational divides on campus and some of those are about professional expectations, some of them are about relationships to the union, about general approach and stances on a number of issues. And many of the junior faculty tend to, but this is by no means all, or necessarily even a majority, but some of the more vocal junior faculty members tend to be more progressive, you might say, or they don't see that just because it has been done this way is the reason why it needs to stay this way. And so they would also socialize together, and these people would also overlap in their arguments at union meetings or departmental meetings, and I think some people wrongly saw this as a political group that had a certain progressive political stance. It does not. There is a lot of common ground amongst those people, as junior faculty members, since most of them tend to be associate or assistant, rather than full. And there are always differences based on those years of experiences, the income that you make, etc. and for some reason there is that notion that there is a political overtone to it, and for that reason I have heard some people say that well, maybe this shouldn't happen for that reason. Also some felt, are you excluding the senior faculty? Well, no. We never did, we just felt that the senior faculty already had their social connections. So when we started we said what we need is something specific, because the senior faculty were not inviting the junior faculty over to their houses for dinner on a regular basis. The point was that you could set up a community because most of the junior faculty are not from the area, they come from different states. So if they know nobody, how are they going to get to know someone? If you are a senior faculty member here, you may have been here 20 years, and your family is here, your friends are here, you don't *need* another club, necessarily. So there was some sentiment that maybe we were excluding and I think the fact that we opened it up to everyone once the junior faculty was established, the colloquium was established as integrating junior faculty now it was always so that anyone could come, but now it's completely open. So I don't know if somebody has a concern with it. Those are the only ones that I've heard just a little about. But you know, hey, if you don't want to come, it's a happy hour, don't come.

GJ: I don't have any more questions, but do you have any more comments about it?

RG: Uhm, no, just say it started in 2001 in the fall, and I built it based upon my experience at my past school, at Augustana college where we had created something very similar to help junior faculty get to know each other across the disciplines. That there are several other people that have been important towards building it; Kia Jane Richmond out of English who came in the same year that I did was always side by side working with me the whole way through. Bob Quinn out of Economics was there from the very start. Again, people who came in with my same year. And then since last year, Mitch Klett of Education. He and Kia right now are the ones who are sending out the emails and doing the main social coordinating. So other than that...

GJ: Thank you.

RG: You're welcome.