

Williams College Oral History Project Interview with Ralph Bradburd

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Interviewer Length: 41 pages

Ralph Bradburd (b. 1948) teaches economics at Williams, a position he took in 1976, at first as a visitor to replace Bill Gates, and then as a full-time professor.

In his interview with Charles Alberti, Bradburd discusses some of his colleagues, including Henry Bruton, John Sheehan, Earl McFarland, Joe Kershaw, Steve Lewis, Gordon Winston, and political scientist Fred Greene, with whom he first taught Political Economy. Bradburd goes into some detail about the political science department and how it has changed over the years, stating that this, in part, explains the diminishing numbers of Political Economy majors. Bradburd talks about his own research interests and the articles he published; the department's struggles to get and retain talented faculty when economists can make much better money working in industry; the tenured faculty in the department at the time of the interview and how the department is so much stronger now that there are economists in the upper administration; and about how the economics department and curriculum have changed in his 25 years on the faculty.

Bradburd mentions the presidents under whom he has served, saying that he agreed with some of Frank Oakley's decisions, but not all of them; that Hank Payne had a tough act to follow but that placing Peter Murphy in the Dean's role was the best thing he did as president; and that he and his friends on the faculty believe the theater project and parking garage were a waste of money. He then describes in some detail his fondness for Morty Shapiro as president and ends his interview with a discussion of where he thinks the College should go, including admissions policies and fund raising plans.

The transcript of this interview and the accompanying audio file (if available) may be accessed only in the Archives/Chapin Reading Room.