

Interview with Dr.W.E. Vandement, President of Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Michigan, March 13, 1997. Interview conducted in his office in the Cohodas building.

Russell Magnahi:RM

William E. Vandement:WEV

RM: Good morning President Vandement. We are continuing our series of interviews. We started with your background and this morning we would like to get into the start of the administration as on a temporary basis back in 1991. Could you tell us a little about your coming to Northern as President and what you found when you got here?

WEV:It was an interesting experience because set it other times we were expected to be here for only one year and Margi had been here once and I had been here twice and the weather was beautiful, late May early June. It really was like paradise. But it was a short notice so we essentially packed our suitcases and a couple of extra suitcases and came out for a year and in a retrospect I expected that year to be a care taker year someone who is trying to make certain that things did not get too far out of control plus just keep things going while the search was on. Pretty soon I found out that I had to work a little harder, face a few things and sometimes make decisions that probably would not be made by an interim president. Interim presidents usually do not make decision that has long-range impact but has short range impact, I guess the first thing I faced was the new state budget. At the time of my appointment, the state had not passed its appropriation bill? so the university really did not know what kind of funds it would have to operate on the following year and amidst all that was the budget which was one million short of the 50 to 60 million dollar budget and so it did not look too serious. As it turned out with the state procreation? we were short 2.3 million dollar in July to cope with and we were already into the fiscal year which makes it more difficult to make savings when you are in the year than if you had time to plan. So we had to do some rapid budget reduction and we had to raise tuition a considerable amount and we were receiving some questions out of the local press and why are you raising tuition at a rate that is higher than inflation so that was somewhat difficult. Actually I stumbled into something with a newspaper reporter I simply laid out the fact and the facts were we had negotiated apparently the prior fall the contracts with the faculty that called for a major salary increase actually for four years. Of course there is direct relationship of expenditures to those kinds of salary expenditures to the financial pressure on the university since personnel constitute about 80% of our budget. So I said well we have to pay for our faculty and that is by the way justified because university had fallen behind the faculty salary contract. Immediately comes out in the newspaper that president blames the faculty for the tuition increase and that actually opened my discussion with the faculty. Of course the AAUP leadership was quite exercised with me then we had some serious talks because it might not allow to speak the truth and ignore the

cause and effect relationships between a salary increase, tuition increase and budget deficits. I had to speak out and not gloss things and may be they should have the course to check with me what I had said before acting to as characterizing. We actually went through a frenzied activity to get the budget under control. We did raise the tuition by 9:00% that year which was a fairly hefty amount. All of you keep in mind that we are the lowest priced university in MI put a perspective on that. So we did have that to go through.

RM: So this had to be done which had to be done during summer months when the students were not on-campus?

WEV: That is right. The decisions were not made when students were still here . They did not know what to expect when they would come back. But we had very little warning. There is another thing about the tuition that I have public and press understand are the rates of inflation. For our general fund, state procreation accounts for nearly 70% of our general fund operation and the student tuition part accounts for 28-29% of it. This is 9th grade algebra you have to take the ratio of 28 to 70. Now if inflation increases 3%, state procreation increase 3% and the tuition could be raised 3% and everything breaks evenly but if that part which is more than 2/3 of the budget defaults on the increases you still have to meet the inflation. You have to use the 28% to cover the shortfall to cover the larger part of your funds so it triples. If the state provides nothing to you and you need to meet the 3% increase which is a reasonable kind of increase in expenditure it means that basically you'd have to increase the tuition 9% to cover the other share. The only illustration I find is if there are three people at a party and they order pizza and if the cost of the pizza is ten dollars, each owe a little more than three dollars and if two people do not contribute their share then the third person would have to pay the whole ten dollars. So we made major cuts in the budget at the same time and all of a sudden it occurred there had been a university wide symposium back in February of '91, about the purposes and priorities of the university. It was called the "Strategic Planning" conference and it was stressed particularly by faculty members and student leadership as well. What ever we did, had to be consistent with the results of strategic planning sessions that had been held and I gather that there had been a considerable amount of divisiveness in the university at that time in February and I think that is why the conference was held to bring unity in the university and what interested me when I read the report of that conference was to reduce the bloated administration and remove bureaucracy, lessen bureaucracy in the university. That did not seem strategic direction to me. Strategic direction usually involves a program objective of some sort, we are going to stress undergraduate research or we are going to something with our public service, and here I found the top priority was to reduce a bloated administration and so it was clear in our budget reduction activities that we were not able to go simply across the board. I had everybody take a little piece out. We were going to have to major cuts in the administrative area in order to satisfy the no. one priority that apparently many people

in the university really had and so that what we really did and at the same time we had 3.2 million dollar budget reduction. My memory remembers correctly we had to cut about 1.6 million dollars and we covered the remaining by tuition increases. We were more under moral obligation to begin to shifting more funds into the academic programs and so therefore the cuts that we made were more than 1.6 million dollars because we cut enough beyond the 1.6 so we could reallocate into the academic programs. So it was an interesting period of time and I think it was very difficult for members of the administration and I felt that we had to follow that mandate to reallocate funds to the academic programs but at the same time the whole process created morale problems within the administration. It was as though one had to be ashamed working in the administration. It carried a stigma somehow which was really very disturbing and that which we had to cope well as well and I recall I had to make a lot of speeches and declarations and I was proud to be an administrator that administration served some very worthwhile purposes and we should not hang our heads because we were administrators. But it was a popular sport to pick on an administrator and I think the faculty had young people at their command every day in their classes and there was a lot of trashing of the administration going on in the classrooms and the students were being forced to choose between a faculty and the administration and their loyalties.

RM: Do you think that this problem predated your liable? and budgetary problems?

WEV: Oh, yes. Back in February, the priority committee gathering had specifically pointed the finger at a bloated, insensitive administration, talked about bureaucracy and bloated administration. I even heard that there was an investigation whether the administration had better toilet paper in the Cohodas building. That was symbolic of the nonsense that can occur.

RM: From my experience that actually happened, there was an investigation.

WEV: That was what I had heard. Why should it be important the quality of the toilet paper in a building why people even pay attention to that. That indicated that something needed to be corrected. And I gather then I began to learn when I talked to the faculty that union leadership, they would make references to 20-25 years old grudges. It almost seemed like half field McCoy feuding? and perhaps people have even forgotten why they were feuding. That I would expect to be treated with civility and respect would not take ? or something and faculty member might say well I being unreasonable you have not had the 20 years of abuse and apparently the yolks and burden the faculty felt and apparently some of our faculty members had been harboring this for a long- long time.

RM: Did you find, from your previous experience that this was common problem within the university community between the faculty and the administration or was this a special problem at Northern?

WEV: It is a fairly common problem across higher education but it was more pronounced at Northern than I had experienced at any other

institution. I came out of the faculty rank and I recall as a faculty member, by large as faculty members back at the ?institution we simply regarded the administration as irrelevant but harmless. We thought that it was a shame that they did not have the same recalling as we had. So we felt a little sorry for them but we were not hostile toward them. Generally, we said that they were nice people and they are trying hard what ever they do. We were not necessarily hostile.

RM: This what you have been discussing was going on July through early part of 1992?

WEV: Yes. It did . There was an occasion in which AAUP newsletter contained some statements about the administration excesses and things like that which were very questionable. Basically, it was just an intellectual dishonesty sort of thing politician engage in when they conduct political campaigns in the press and that by putting a twist on something by purposely misinterpreting some information which cast dispersion on your opponent. I know when I saw that I became very upset so immediately I called the AAUP president and I want to meet your executive committee to talk about how we get along with each other, work with each other and fortunately president responded and within a day or so I had a meeting with the executive committee and I really, in retrospect, I have not thought about that I would handle in that way but on the other hand it cleared the air and we actually started talking with each other and actually that was a bone of contention, the point that I was very angry seemed to open up the line of communication between AAUP leadership and myself and consequently that helped in opening up lines of communication with the faculty more generally. Usually, restrains apply in situations like this I was not restrained and someone said to me that you took that so personally. Well I said that I am a person and I guess when I admitted that I was a person, perhaps they took pity on me and began to talk more seriously. That did help through the first year and I was fairly impulsive when somebody did something that I thought was intellectually dishonest and was disruptive to the university operating as a community, if people were divisive. I would likely pick-up the phone and shoo them out for it, or with the Northwind they demanded a meeting with the editorial staff to go and talk about know nothing about journalism and I was almost preoccupied with the people who were divisive and nonconstructing in those days. I am little bit more sane and tolerant nowadays than I was before.

RM: So this was kind of good indication the way things deteriorated up to your rivals ?

WEV: Well it was a tradition, I can't say that they were deteriorated. I don't want to go back and talk about this administration and that administration. It was a part of history that what I was talking about many instances 20-25 years would question faculty. What in the world would anybody do something terrible I honestly could not get to the bottom of it. But it was a culture so did almost what the president or administration did was regarded less strange and suspicion in some orders.

RM: How would you, it would be kind of interesting to get your perspective in terms of some six years later how do you think that has changed that attitude of the faculty and students toward the administration? Do you think you started and sort of how do you perceive the change today?

WEV: I am probably to suspect. I feel a great deal better about the people are working together. There are pockets in the university where that is not the case but I guess that I know from the distance that I operate what I know that we can take actions that do not seem to create the outcry that they did before. I believe things have improved. But it is very difficult for me to make any cause and effect judgements about what has happened, I feel very close to the faculty probably I know the majority of them by name and I try to do have as much with them as I can. But I think we are operating more as a community than before.

RM: What were some of the other problems that you encountered?

WEV: In terms of chronology first was the budget and then it was the dome problem. When I came in the summer of '91 the finishing touches were put on the dome, and when acting vice-president Mike Roy came to me and said Mr. President we have to face a decision pretty quickly, what to do about the dome. I said what to do about it. It is a 21 million dollar structure and I know we needed our science building and I knew we needed our heating system repaired and other things and the dome is what we got and it is there. He said the problem is that the estimate is that it would cost 900-950 thousand dollar a year to operate it and in particular they were concerned about the utilities, the consumption of heat and gas, and the legislature which had in the past had provided money to operate buildings when they were constructed from state funds and they were going through some changes. So that out of that 900 thousand dollar, state appropriation was 520 thousand dollars to operate it. That made it appear that the dome itself was already very controversial item on campus with faculty and students, that it was extravagant, unnecessary, wasteful. ? be faced having it subsidized its operation after it is built it will be a constant ? because it was bleeding off funds that should be going into the classrooms and into the instruction purposes. And so that was we had the option perhaps we would just say we do not have the money to operate so we won't open it but of course that would not work and we had looking over our shoulders the university's primary benefactor representative Jacobetti who had fought hard to get that dome and Jacobetti was looking over my shoulder how I was going to solve this problem. By the way Jake dropped in o the first day at my job and disappeared in my office, obviously wanted to look me over. He wanted to see what kind of a person would be at the helm for a while. We later got to be very good friends, I AM very happy to say that but he was little suspicious at first. So again it was a divisive issue I struggled to figure out what to do about it. I finally came up with a steel financial curtain concept. I introduced that concept. We had to take that 500 thousand dollars, we will put that money in a separate account and we in fact we will do all of the dome's budgeting and financial transaction in an isolated account. So there is no possibility of flow of funds in

one way or another so it had to work both ways so the university general fund going into the operation other than that appropriated specifically for the dome. That meant we had tall order and people operating the dome with that 520 thousand dollar that we had that included the dome staff and supplies as well as the utilities. So we opened the dome in the fall, major ribbon cutting ceremony, Jacobetti and I was there, golden and green ribbon. The dome was actually filled during the first football game and our concept was we would set aside a certain amount of money to pay for minimal heating during the winter and then we would operate it with the remaining revenues as long as we could do that, and if we ran out of money we would shut it down and use the reserved operating money to recool just to 50 degrees and simply not operate it. Those were the conditions when we opened the dome. The dome had to generate revenues to operate and we were fortunate Ken ? had been operating other recreational facilities but it never had the ? of business like this. He became the director and manager of the dome and showed incredible creativity in running it and so knowing that if he was to keep it open he would have to generate income. He went out and started selling advertising, he began to go out to look for events so before long the thing became a hub of activity due to his entrepreneurial ability.

RM: Originally, when the dome was opened the faculty made fun because there would be only five events. It included the graduation ceremony and five football games and that is it.

WEV: And actually if you look at it closely in terms of university use of the dome it is available for student recreation and intramural they do use. We do have other facilities too. We have no shortage for recreational facilities on campus. We have Hedgecock, PEIF. In a way it is kind of ? for that and students do use it and you are right I mean to this day the university's real use of it is to host five football games and two commencements but then it is a community resource and now it has become a regional hub. It is people's park during the winter, people walk around it I think 1200 walkers a week, day care center they have to keep them under control. Every once in a while during spring or fall school buses are parked around it and there would be hordes of school children playing there because the weather is bad outside and the school would have taken the children for a field trip and the intent was to eat picnic lunch outside but they ended up using the dome for their picnic.

RM: Could you comment on the naming of the dome?

WEV: There had been a committee established to name the dome and also the PEIF building and committees came up with several recommendation to me and I chose the one that seemed to me the most appropriate name and passed on to the board and asked their approval and that was Superior Dome. I forgot what other names, one was the Yooper Dome. It was called the Yooper dome informally and still some downstate people call it Yooper dome. It was kind of a interesting thing. There was a great hostility downstate because Northern was considered as getting favored treatment because of Mr. Jacobetti's position on the appropriations committee to get such a

presumed? and of course they did not understand the we got that in lieu of something else. At the same time our faculty felt abused by having to accept the dome here instead of academic building. The people downstate regarded us as spoiled children who ? us in luxurious facility so it was an absurd situation and it took a while for the governor to appear in the bill you know to acknowledge it. When he would be in Marquette, his driver would not drive him down on Presque Isle for about two years and finally ? Michigan's Legal Cities Municipalities convention in the dome. One half of it was like for planary session and was like a giant ballroom in a hotels, the other side was for vendors and then we had meeting rooms and the governor accepted the invitation to open the convention with a speech and I was able to introduce him to the dome. That was a major breakthrough. IAM not sure if he knew the meeting was in the dome when he agreed to give the speech. But he was quite gracious about because we gave him a big Superior Dome sweatshirt which probably displayed but he still calls it the uper dome. That did break the ice. He has been back since and he recognizes what we are and what we are doing with the building and it has significant economic impact in the area. It is difficult to get lodging and restroom to the people to admit that because that might imply that they should be investing in the university and they would rather just accept the income and revenue that comes without them investing and make us do the investing. So my strongest endorsement comes from Father C?of the cathedral here. He said "I don't need to read the papers know when you have a big event" said "my collections go up five hundred dollars every week in the cathedral when you have a major event in the dome". So I know the economic impact that we can have.

Continuation of Vandemen interview, April 3rd, 1997, Marquette, MI.  
RM: Good morning President Vendemen. We will continue our interview from last time. Do you have some final statements to make about some items from last interview, you mentioning something about how you perceive the campus today?

WEV: Yes, I have thought after our prior interview in terms of the lewd? and ? the hostility basically between the faculty and the administration. The thing that I noticed is that the faculty generally is willing to give the administration the benefit of the doubt on matters so that when we try to do something we are not immidieatly confronted with well what the idiots are up to now, well let's give it some thought and there is less rushing to judgements and that is a big help when you are trying to get things done. Because I remember when I first came here everything that I tried to do was met with lot of uproar and I was propertied to do things that I had no intention of doing and I used to paraphrase Richard Nixon's statement over and over again " I am not an idiot, I am not an idiot". I would tell my staff that I would have to give another one of my" IAM not an idiot" speeches again. But now they are willing to hear us out and that makes a much better university.

RM: That gives you a little space.

WEV: That's right.

RM: In the year of 1991, the first year of your tenure, what was the next major problem that confronted you?

WEV: Well, the next issue after the budget reduction, I AM trying to establish a little more collegial atmosphere and getting through the dome was really the old building which was located just to the south of the Cohodas building, actually about 20-25 feet away very close to the building. It was Longyear Hall and JD Pierce building. After coming back from the session where we had to ? I turned to one of my board members and I said if we have any cemeteries wanted me to move and I was here for only a year and board members were looking to me for things to be done. That would spare the primitive ?president that was coming next year some difficulty. Well those two old buildings had been sitting idle for 16-17 years I think they were vacated in 1974 or 1975 and they had just been sitting there that whole time and I found it strange when I came here for the interview, they were isolated with broken windows, the stone off of one side of Longyear, the Longyear Hall was falling off. It was dangerous and they had to put a fence around it. One of the board members said why don't you do something about the building and so I got into it with the staff and the estimate to renovate the Longyear Hall, which was the oldest building on campus, was about 8 million dollars. It was a pretty healthy chunk of money that was required. We clearly were not going to come up with that. But basically what we had to do was to take all the stone off, demolish the structure, rebuild a structure and put the stones back in. There were some people did not understand that building looked like a stone building but actually it was a stone facing on the building. The structure itself was only a rubble wall and that meant that they would simply put a form up some kind of mortar and throw in some pieces of stone and wood ? along the wall and faced it with stone and they were concerned about the strength of the structure itself. So getting into all that I began to question the architectural? of the building. My vintage point although it was an building it really had no distinct architectural style. It did not represent anything as far as I could tell and I even I had some consultation with a former colleague of mine at Ohio State who was an architect and worked for me there and actually been responsible for restoring and renovating 20-25 old buildings at Ohio State. Very well experienced and quite a student of architectural history and in his view it was also that no no it was of no architectural significance, even though it was of historical significance. So I announced that it was our intention , I believe it was in late Fall of 1991, it was our intention to demolish the building unless someone could come up with the funds to renovate it and it determine? also that we had no use of JDPierce building it was not as old I think it 30's vintage architecture. We did not need the space, campus had plenty of space to operate and so there was no use of the JD Pierce building. And so we announced that we were going to demolish that as well. As you know quite an ? resulted from that announcement. Lot of community people were involved, some alumni got involved and protested tearing the building down. So we went from town meetings to silent vigils, all sorts of things, very emotional processions and all of that. After few months I talked to my staff if it was really

necessary to tear the whole building down then rebuild it. Is it possible that parts of its structure is bad we could get by for less. We had another set of consultants come in architectural consultants and after two months of studying they said we could fix that up for 2.8 million dollars. We were heading into something that appear to be little more reasonable and so we said we'll try to raise money for it. The local people said that yes we are going to help you raise money to save that building. They said all you have to do is send letters out to your alumni and dollars would come pouring in. So our concern was that we had other needs in the university, shouldn't we be using the money from fund raising for that building when we had other pressing needs. So we went to our national alumni board and the alumni board would sponsor a fund raising drive for Longyear Hall and got very little interest frankly. Most members of the board said well it would be nice if we could save it but it is not all that important. In the end the alumni board became split on the matter with a little minority wanted fund raising while the majority thought that there are other things that the campus needed and so in the end, I think, fifteen thousand dollars was raised. That was really the extent of it. There had been some earlier money put into the structure by the Longyear family but they were also willing the money to be used toward the demolition if that was the wise thing to do. And one of our board member, Gill Ziegler, put in about 15 thousand dollars. So all the money that was raised barely matched the money that he had put in. So time was running out on us and that thing was still there and this went on for about a year and a half and I have had my former colleague from Ohio State come up and start probing the building a bit. He could only advise me personally because otherwise he would obviously be regarded as my servant doing my bidding to the public so the public would not have any credibility although he was the only person around. He was the only person I knew who had the experience in renovating old structures, he probed around and took samples of the riddled wall and basically told me he said I wouldn't touch that building with a 10 foot probe. You don't know what you are getting into and he said your consultant who came by and told you you could renovate with 2.8 million dollar he does not know what he is talking about. He said you cannot tell until you tear the stones off what the condition of that structural wall is. I think we still pursued we hoped that something could be done with that 2.8 million dollars. We finally declared the fund raising activity to be a failure and said therefore we were gonna have to go with the destruction of Longyear we had already tore down JD Pierce, some uproar about that but not a lot really. And so then the activity increased and the state historical officer got into the act, also and tried to threaten us about the federal funding. If we torn down which turned out to be baseless. But the some of the local people located a historical architect presumably had develop a other areas, presumably had renovate the rickory in Chicago. We found out that not to be internally the case. He was involved in Traverse city in reclaiming and renovating on behalf of the old state hospital and so those people said well would you be willing to talk to him. Of course we would be pleased to talk to him, and he came up and pronounced the

building fit, something that could be quite easily fixed up and would be very useful or we could rent it to the hospital. As turned out to be that the hospital was overbuilt, it does not need anymore space. But I talked to the members of the board and Gill Ziegler acted helpful and he actually got a check on this architect through his connections and found out that not everything was true and Mr. Ziegler was pushing for decision, said we could not hang on this for ever. So Mr. Ziegler at my side met the architect and presented him with the proposal that he could have the building for a dollar and I would actually give him the dollar to buy it with but there is one condition that you put up a performance bond of 2.8 million dollars and you can fix it up and you can rent it or do whatever you want. But we want to be assured that the project is going to be complete. Our fear of course, was that he would start it and if he did not have the financial background and leave us the half finished skeleton and we would have to finish it. People thought that it was unfair. Sometimes requiring a performance bond we should operate it with little faith and turned out to be said we simply cannot. He came to town talked to the city and forming a separate authority for the building. So the city would have the same responsibility. Well the city was not going to do that either they thought the university should be responsible for it and they were urging us to restore it. They would not put the shoulder to it. And in the end we finally demolished the building and in ? in the demolition we did find that the original study, which said you have to take all the stones off, rebuild the structure and put the stones back was the right one. And my friends advice was the proper advice because the mortar throughout the building had turned to powder. I still have a couple of pieces of that powder that you can look at and you can see that it does fall apart in your hands and that was the structure. And sometimes faith protects you from yourself I would hate to think but I would probably have, if somebody would have come up with the 2.8 million dollars, I would have gone along with the superficial fixing up of the building. Could very well have left to my successor or successors with a very unsafe building and that eventually would have been tore down anyway. Actually, what we did was to take the stones down one by one form the front side where all the detail is all are numbered in the back, the stones would have been safe to but they could have reassembled in any order. In essence we took the stone off, we saved it and if anyone wasn't to build the structure around can put the stone around and some of the internal features recall that did have a fine marble staircase and a tiled entryway in the building and then 11 or 12 foot doors interior wooden doors as well.

Continuation on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997.

WEV: We did save all of that so the building could be reconstructed if someone came forward with the funds and really wanted to do it. A post script on the historical architect, he was involved in renovating the old mental hospital in Traverse city there agin he was not bringing any money to the project and he managed to get the local people put money in and create an authority for it. As it

turned out the project went bankrupt. It was found that he did not have the resource to follow through and he was accused of mal? with the money which was available and in the end the local hospital needed a section of land from the state hospital property the county could just have given it to the hospital. It was a community hospital and in the end in order to bail out the project from bankruptcy the community hospital had to buy the land for 2 million dollars to help pay off the people to the project owed money, the lenders waiting in line to collect their bills they got to share the 2 million dollars that the hospital had to cough up for land that could have been available for nothing. It was quite a disastrous experience down there. Since that time, much of the feeling has died down with the project. I think most people realize that we simply could not, simply were unable to save that building. They found it difficult to believe that I had great feeling for doing that and they did not realize that in my history, when I was a financial vice-president for Ohio State, we created a master plan to renovate and save old buildings on campus, beautiful old campus around the ? Many buildings have architectural significance there They probably could not believe that I was associated with something like that. It was sensitive to history and preservation. But by and large members of the community continued to speak to my wife they would not speak to me . She had to deal with that on day to day basis, they were not overly hostile toward her.

RM: There was one other major or I don't know you want to talk about it about the hockey rings.

WEV: That was when I walked in through the door. That was back in the summer of '91. That was actually the first "crisis". Yes that was when our hockey team won the first division of national championship back in march of 1991, prior to my arrival and when I got to campus there was some furor and some news paper article reporting that in the aftermath of that campus officials have gone in the binge of celebrating and had diverted funds from the bookstore profits which normally are shared with the student activities. This when the bookstore shows the excess of revenues over the expenditure then that money is split . Half the money goes to student activities and the other half goes into a reserve fund to help maintain the bookstore to meet construction needs and things like that. Apparently, people had diverted the money from the student activities to purchase rings commemorating the national championship. It is customary for players and coaches on the team to have championship rings and this incidence it occurs usually in big universities with large division 1s and big athletic programs. They get souvenirs which is also helpful to the athletic team. And of course that what really would have been done here. Rings would have been given to the board of control members and to just some boosters in town who followed the team closely. They were portrayed almost on going on an orgies of purchasing and distributing spoils to everyone. The student groups were outraged and the news paper was questioning the propriety of that sort of thing so in the end I had to make a judgement, it was really not anything that resolved anything. That was not very productive was said that probably it did reflect a poor judgement on part of some of those people who

were involved on making those decisions. People had to keep in mind what kind of school we were. We were not some big time athletic power we were not used to these things, money spent like water on things and therefore the judgement was bad. I thought everyone ought to be forgiving. One could understand the exuberance of the moment when big thing like that happens. So we worked our way through that and it took a great deal of time and emotion to try to diffuse the both sides of the emotions. People would receive the rings who thought they were entitled them. The question was do you get them back in the end. Some of the people paid price for them. Our athletic director was regarded as the victim in the whole thing and paid for his ring. He refused to accept it as free although he obviously did it with great irritation. He was not pleased to do it and felt that he had been sandbagged. It was just another example how when there is a tension in one division. The small event blown out of proportion, from my vantage view it was a tempest in a teapot but it was one that generated high emotions at the time.

RM: Was there any final figure that was involved?

WEV: I think it was probably 10-12 thousand dollars.

RM: So in terms of university budget it was very....

WEV: It was very tiny thing. I think about perhaps 20 rings they were five hundred dollar rings, they were handsome rings. Actually what we did was to write a new policy covering behavior after winning national championships, the code of conduct in which we indicated that only the athletic department was to pay for the rings and only the team members and the coaches were to receive the rings ,no other championship rings. And we have had occasions fortunately two times two years ago policies women's volleyball team two time national champions we probably have those policies in place.

RM: To my knowledge I don't remember anything even being mentioned about the rings.

WEV: Team members and the coaches got rings and it was a strain on the athletic budget. They were rational about taking the money out of the bookstore profits, it made sense because when the hockey team won the national championship, the bookstore was selling t-shirts, and sweatshirts and ? and there was a case to be made there was a more profit there so therefore it was legitimate to divert some profit toward those rings but you know we are not big time athletic institution so we cannot behave like that. We do have rules now.

RM: So the policy is now that the money has to come from the athletic budget?

WEV: That is right, so there is a price of success for athletics. In other words our volleyball programs has cost us more money in last 3-4 years that would have been other wise if it had not been successful by being more successful we spent more money on it but we spent the money happily.

RM: Continuation of the interview with President Vandement, Marquette, MI, April 21st 1997.

RM: Today we want to focus on the fiscal situation during those years.

WEV: I think we have talked about the initial years when I came here and how we had to put together the budget after the fiscal year had begun about 2.3 million dollar short, we did have the increase in state appropriation for that year but actually our salary contract were in such a competition that we had a very heavy pressure on the university budget. The university had negotiated a multi year contract with the AAUP and there was an attempt being made to move up and standing with a series of comparison institutions peer institutions so the first year was 9% increase followed by 8% then 7.5% and then 7% increase over a four year period. So that was a pretty hefty burden over the university and I may have mentioned that I did not get into it with the faculty so ? to make reference that was driving tuition increases and budget cuts that later I was free to tell the truth anyway and infact that factor was driving the deficit. What we had during my stay here I have dealt with 6 and I am on my 7th budget now and for five of those years there had to be a significant budget reduction. Actually for those four years the state was under some financial distress? and could not provide any increases for inflation so basically what we had was a flat budget for those years and we still had to meet those inflation and cost of increases and then we had the problem with the closure of the KI Sawyer air force base that came along around '93or '94 and we went into an enrollment tailspin and lost 1300 students over a three year period but the bulk of it happened in 93-94, 94-95, and still some loss in 95-96 due to the fact that the freshmen base had been undercut as well. All totaled in that time we faced over nine million dollars in budget reduction that would have amount in over 15% what we had started with. We had a flat budget from the state for four years which we did not have any inflation increase and then with the loss in enrollment we had loss in revenues so that also contributed about 1.5 million dollar in budget cuts that we had to make. It was kind of interesting from the state's perspective. We were losing enrollment therefore our appropriation per student appeared to go sky high; at the same we kind of ? because of the loss of enrollment. We looked wealthier in Lansing while we were cutting our budgets here. The 9 million would be 15 % over that time that we had to absorb in addition to that one of the strategic planning sessions held back in February of '91 called for the reallocation of funds from the administration into the academic instructional programs. So not only we had to make budget for the shortfalls revenues , we also had to make cuts above and beyond that to reallocate money to the academic side in order to satisfy this craving for dealing with the presumably bloated bureaucratic administration. It required that we tackle staffing in the administration quite seriously, between 75% and 80% of the university's expenditure are compensation. We are labor-intensive organization. So most of the cuts were made to be permanent cuts they had to be cut in personnel. We simply could not take out of

the supplies and services, we had to downsize and so we did it heavily on the administrative side. Among other things, we reduced the no. of divisions and division heads that we had from 7 to 4 when I came here there were 7 people who either had the title of vice-president or may have had a title of director but were being paid like a vice president so we reduced those divisions. Personnel human resources was one we merged that into finance and administration, we also abolished the assistance to the president which had athletic and public safety and which also had some political outreach activity involved in it and then we merged the development fund into the vice president for university relations formerly had been those two kinds of divisions.

RM: Were these the reductions that centered around retirements in most cases?

WEV: They, no one was a retirement position of the vice-president that came along through the retirement program and the person from the human resources took another job and we simply did not replace it and the third one we reassigned and downgraded in the development vice-president of development who was given a reduced assignment of planned giving and major?. So on that one was an internal reassignment of that person.

RM: The other question, what role did you play in this decision making. I guess the other question is how much of your previous experience on the books you wrote and the articles on the university finances, were you able to tackle into that the knowledge to deal with that problem?

WEV: That was a help having had the prior experience. Our focus was reducing the recurring and one time expenses, those expenditures must be made year after year so our heavy focus was making those base budget cuts. In terms of university's cash position our cash position was strong enough to allow us time to phase into these changes so in part one I had to rely on past experiences that I had in making a clear distinction between one time and recurring expenses and so we did rather judiciously we mixed and matched in order to drive down the recurring expenses and in some instances we did allow that for one time expenses by using some cash to phase down those things. It was useful.

RM: So you had to be creative.

WEV: That is right. We had to be creative without severe disruption to the university while we were doing it. We had a program of early retirement we did allow some flexibility to phase out the elimination of positions so people whose job were eliminated would have time to get out in the market and look for another job, it all did not come down with pink slips and two weeks later people were gone. We did face things with which was more humane and less disruptive to the university. In that process also we did reduce more of the positions that would be called administrative and they were senior positions so we made reduction 28%-30% in those positions. WE only made 2.25%-2.5% reduction in the faculty, even though the workload went down but we retained the instructional capacity and at the moment we have underutilization

of that capacity because we thought very important to project that capacity we would need that if that university would need to grow again we had to grow again in order to keep its level to get the state funding, regain all the students that we had lost when the air force base was closed. So I think in total we may have lost about 12 faculty positions may be not even that .

RM: It was most due to the retirements?

WEV: Yes. we never retrenched with the faculty the way we did with other groups because we did eliminate a fair no. of positions before there were any people in those positions. We did not really do that with the faculty.

RM: Was there any concern or this enrolment problem came out all of a sudden out of the blue state cutting all funds, did this happen at once or was it possible problem from your perspective?

WEV: From our perspective we did not have a lot of notice about it and we did not have a good estimate of the base closing quite frankly. So and we were in a way low prior to the base closing. Our freshmen class it is simply being expanding on its own year by year and our enrollment was also expanding year by year and the I suppose we were not doing anything particular to stimulate anything. We assumed that it was natural that it would continue so I think we probably could have looked better perhaps gained a may be as much as a year in trying to ? it ? but I think only about a year and stretching year ? because if you are filling out the enrollments once it is dropped down it dramatically takes four or five years of freshmen enrollment to reach that kind of maturity in order to bring the enrollment back up. It may be that we were a year further behind that we may have been there was no way that we had enough warning to not have?. One of the things I think it was interesting was ? which we did was investing more in the marketing in doing things that were really were considered off bounds earlier in the whole discussion about administration having too much administration. To have introduced the concept of having a marketing budget back in '91 would have been considered heresy so that would just have been another find employment for the administration but I think we had to set the stage for the expenditures that we had to make. While we were going through the budget reductions we were always active in planning to deal with some of the facilities the university had. So that was going on side by side in dealing with budget cuts and the reallocation to the academic side. By the way we did not meet our target we did not cut enough out of our administrative side of the budget to pour about the 7 hundred thousand dollars total budget to the academic side for some enrichment. It was suppose to go toward enrichment, most of it got shot by inflation but it really did not help spare the academic side of its problems. We were some improvement of the facilities and we were having difficulty making people understand that while we were thinking of cutting positions here in the administration we could spend that money on construction projects on the other hand and so it was rather interesting to get the concept across that we had to invest for the future and also that you had to allow those portions of the university that

generated revenues you have to improve the conditions to continue to generate revenues. So they could expand their revenue generating parts in particular the two major project that came to mind was the renovation of the university center which was a fairly major investment about 8 million dollars and then the second phase of the dome. UC came along earlier but it is a subsupporting operation it really has to be a modern facility if it has to continue attracting businesses and so we undertook and I think it turned out to be a very good renovation. The atrium, the open effect that is created in there was very good and now we have meeting spaces for the student organizations created at the one end of the building and virtually all campus organizations have a home there they can call around and work from there. So I think that was a very good investment.

RM: So that was a part of your presidency?

WEV: Yes, that was in the planning stage and when I came in there was decision had to be made whether we were going to go for it or not and it appeared to me that the financial plan that they put together was sufficient, it was adequate to go through it. And at the same time we established an invisible program to refurbish the residence halls one by one so every year there would be summer projects to modernize by replacing the old furniture. If you look at the lounge areas the public areas of the residence halls fairly nicely? now and that also has been in a systematic program. With phase 2 of the dome I almost thought we were in a lock and hard place. The dome itself after I had been here for a couple of years was operating in a fairly healthy manner and we were gearing up for the next capital budget and we thought it might come up the road sometime soon. Our no. one priority was to redo the heating systems and also provide a new services building where we would put all services like public safety, the trades people, the automobile and vehicle where all that could be housed in one location. And that was a 20 million dollar project that was desperately needed but on Mr. Jacobetti's list first always came up the dome, phase two of the dome did not have locker rooms did not have meeting rooms and also an elevated track for running, suspended from the roof of the dome and there were lot of things which made a 13 million project. And I met at length one day with Mr. Jacobetti, it was a three hour luncheon. I had to screw up my courage and everybody was pushing me that you have to reach an understanding with him that heating project was no. one and the phase 2 of the dome must go down on the list. Actually West Science was no. two and after that possibly the dome and everybody was telling me and I talked to him he said I have got it Mr. president, I have got. It is the heating system no.1 and I said yes. But after having that discussion about two months later words come back from Lansing that Jake wants Phase two of the dome. I hear him talking to the legislature that way. So then I got together with him Mr. Chairman it is the heating system and then the West Science building and then the ph.2. It kept backsliding on me. Frankly, I was concerned that something might happen to our priorities. So actually we developed a scheme now to? Phase 2 of the dome largely financed the dome's own revenues as a defensive measure to protect all those other projects.

and so then when I announced to the chairman that we were going to undertake this renovation to base this locker room and meeting rooms he did not have to worry about that it is not his burden anymore. He was veery pleased with that bu in part taking that time we had to do it sooner or later and it was clear that there was enough revenue coming out of the dome to give us the confidence it could meet its own mortgage payments and it enhanced income generating ability Frankly it was at the time to protect the other projects in the state budget and not allow our priorities to get messed up by an unfinished dome. we had to say that the dome was finished and the state had no more responsibility to finish it.

RM: Could you comment from your perspective how difficult or may be not so difficult was to deal with Mr. Jacobetti when you were interacting with him Was he a very force ful personality forcing his ideas he was difficult to change?

WEV: No, once I got acquainted with him and once he got comfortable with him the interchange was really quite natural. No, he had strong views on matters but he also had great respect for the autonomy of the university and I know there must have been a lot of people at his doorstep who wanted jobs for their relatives Periodically I would get inquiries about the position that was open but he never put pressure on me . SO I found him a very strong advocate when he went for something for us but dealing with him I found him reasonable. Every now and then if he wanted something you had reach an understanding because we ought do to this.

RM: So this godfather image of him was more symbolic than a reality he did not...

WEV: he was not with me or the university he was not a domineering person he was very forceful on the floor of the house and the committee sessions and the negotiating sessions.

RM: For those people ...

WEV: Yes for those people he was very warm human being. I, Edgar Harden did a great favor, shortly after I arrived, by arranging lunch meeting for Jake and I. So the three of us would get together. I think at that point Jake got comfortable with prior to that we talk in a much simple way it was not much of a dialogue. We would make a little monologue he would make some monologue and I would little monologue after that lunch when we left he was going back with the former president Harden he hit the door of the car and said we'll see you later Billy. I knew when he called me Billy he and I were going to be friends. That was during my first year we and a good relationship. Almost from the beginning I felt quite comfortable in calling him on any matter and he would call me . I found a very good relationship.

RM: you were talking about the facilities and. the dome ...

WEV: and what we did at the dome we did have to borrow money for that project and at the same time we undertook that project we also a major project was Gries Hall conversion. We converted Gires resident hall into faculty office and we added first covered walkway to the building. That walkway between the UC and the Gries

hall. The idea was thre the UC was just finished and we undertook the Gries Hall and so we could really create a complex which and its own identity which would encourage interaction of faculty and students. The linking those two together by a walkway would generate kind of chemistry.. I think that has happened that building houses about third of our faculty about 100people in this hall. This WS our first major step. Most of those people came out of the first floor of the library. Temporary offices this was our major step to decently house our faculty out of those temporary offices. We had thought that we must move forward on handling that faculty office situation it was like a serious problems working conditions were not good and I believe that it was contributing to the low morale of the faculty we housed in those what I called the rabbit? On the first floor of the library.

RM: could you comment your impression of the physical layout of the campus when you got here and I think possibly got you to develop Gries Hall how did you view the layout of the campus in terms of was it pulling the students together or was you flowing them into odd directions?

WEV: well it reminded me of southern California campus. It would have appropriately served the students in that kind of environment and I could see that there were aspirations for building the campus for larger enrollment that is a it was a campus that was spread and it would have bee n filled if there would have been 15-16 thousand students. With the no. of students we had my impression was that the physical facility combined with the climate led to bulkinization of ghettos pockets scattered here and there people probably rarely saw each other had very little to do with each other so we had little group in west science almost no faculty around classrooms the Jamrich hall no faculty around; another little group was Thomas fine arts ans McClintock area small group of faculty over there, another cluster was the library area in the Mageers moved out to Magers. So my impression was that there were pockets of faculty settlements, and those faculty settlements others that in the science building where the labs and offices were close together the faculty was remote to area where student would be and so there was some kind of pressure of the students common in the library area when I came and there was vote taken to assess the commons out there we appeared somewhat fragmented and the geographical layout was contributing that to that problem. I mean the faculty at Magers hall it is long cold walk in the dead of winter so I was told I was ridicule when I suggested walkways but I did not have the impression of the happy Yooper whopping in the snow I mean unless they got a snowmobile or skis on or anything like that in the normal course of business they stay pretty close to the warmth the heat of indoors. So when they come in to work settle in and we are not moving around the campus. I thought we ought to do something about the length of the campus. It is still my dream that eventually student would walk down through the backdoor of the library, where student computer have been established that hallway and the n go though the tunnel to WS and the new WS will be expanded so we will be able t move directly over to the Jamrich Hall lecture rooms, go trough that lecture hall and

walk through the covered walkway over to the west side of Mclintock Thomas fine arts and ? Come to the lobby of the Robert forest theater. In a wheel chair indoors that is the dream that I have. Actually after WS is completed the only gap in the path I have described is that one between Jamrich hall lecture building and Mclintock do ti all indoors in a wheelchair. By the way people who had opposed the walkway have not seen people in a wheelchair trying to make around the campus this is not a friendly environment especially in the wintertime.