

EAST ASIAN STUDIES ALUMNI INTERVIEW: JON J. ALEXIOU

His response to
Interview Questions

Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas
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University of Kansas, B.A. 1965

University of Kansas, M.A. 1968

University of Miami, Ph.D. 1982

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I was born in February 1943, in the middle of World War II. My parents had both been born in [Kansas City in 1917](#), children of Greek immigrants. All four of my grandparents emigrated from Greece, individually, in the early years of the twentieth century. My maternal grandparents met and married in Kansas City. My paternal grandparents were already married in Greece when he came to America and within three years had saved enough to bring his wife, my grandmother, and two children (my oldest uncles) to Kansas City. The Greek immigrant community in Kansas City was not large, but it was growing.

My parents were married in 1940. They left Kansas City sometime in late 1941 or early 1942 and moved to Dallas, Texas and then to Indianapolis, Indiana, where I was born. Six weeks after my birth, they moved back to Kansas

City where my father was inducted into the Army Air Corps. His Officer Training Program was held at [Colby College in Waterville, Maine](#). As my father later observed, that was the closest either he or my mother ever came to a college education.

After World War II ended, my father, who had been schooled/trained as a bombardier on [B-29s \(the Superfortress\)](#), signed on to the Air Corps/Air Force Reserves (the Army Air Corps became the U.S. Air Force in 1947). He was recalled to active service for the Korean War and was away from home. Subsequently, my parents bought a house in Johnson County, Kansas in [the J.C. Nichols development of Fairway](#).

Fairway was a middle class development south of Kansas City. I attended Highlands Elementary, Indian Hills Junior High and [Shawnee Mission East High School](#). Kansas City straddles the state line and, I believe my parents moved to “the Kansas side” because of the superior educational opportunities in newly constructed schools that had better funding than urban Kansas City, Missouri.

I don't know if they knew, or how much it mattered to them, and I only found out much later as an adult living in Miami, that the J.C. Nichols

Company had restrictive covenants in their sales documents obligating the purchasers not to sell their homes to African-Americans, Jews and other minorities. Thus, the neighborhood that I grew up in was middle class, white and Christian; as were, in great measure, all the K-12 schools I attended. Of course, the Supreme Court decision [Brown v. Board of Education](#) of Topeka was decided in 1954, when I was already 11 years old and well into elementary school years.

I participated in all the activities of a “normal” child living in those surroundings: neighborhood public swimming pool, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. The neighborhood was filled kids my age (War Babies, ahead of the Baby Boomers). Many of those grade school and high school friends remain close and we meet annually for a “Lost Boys” weekend.

During my formative years, my father’s large family was a core component with Sundays at the [Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Kansas City](#) and Sunday dinners at my paternal grandparents’ home.

In retrospect, one childhood activity began to nurture an early interest in China. At least one summer (possibly two), my mother enrolled me

for art classes at the [Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art](#). I distinctly remember wandering the [Chinese galleries](#) at the Nelson, fascinated by the art collection (the core of which was obtained in China, collected and curated by [Laurence Sickman](#) in the 1920's). One item in particular that intrigued me was a large [panel](#) taken from the interior of a cave at the [Longmen Grottoes](#) in Henan, China—the way the bas-relief was slightly distorted, until it was lit as if the light was coming from a cave's mouth, then the features of the empress and her court were perfectly aligned.

In 2011, I was on a university site visit to China and, at one point of my itinerary I was in the city of [Luoyang, Henan](#). I took a day trip out to the Longmen Grottoes and I was overwhelmed with the beauty and the sheer scope of the caves and the Buddhist sculptures. I was stunned to come across a large information placard that pointedly indicated that a sizeable portion of the sculpture walls from the cave behind the placard was not there because it was in Kansas City, Missouri. I felt that my life had, in some ways, come full-circle.

Growing up in Johnson County, like most of my contemporaries, I had a number of summer jobs,

both during high school and during my college years to earn spending money. I worked as a busboy at a large hotel in downtown Kansas City, as an usher at a local theater, on the production line at a small factory that produced ice cream and popsicles, and the midnight shift at the [Schlitz brewery](#).

While neither of my parents had the opportunity to attend college, education, books and study were always emphasized at home. When time came to select a college, I chose to attend the [University of Kansas](#) (KU) with many of my high school friends. I remember (and I believe this is true) that tuition at [KU in 1961](#) was, for in-state students, \$10 per credit up to 12 credits. Any credits above 12 were without additional charge. Thus, the maximum undergraduate tuition, if my memory is correct, was \$120 per semester. I am sure the cost and the close proximity of Lawrence to Johnson County played an important role in the decision I made with my parents.

I went to KU uncertain as to the discipline I would major in, although I thought I wanted to be an engineer. I have no idea where that idea came from. My first or second semester as a freshman, I

took Advanced Calculus. I quickly discovered that I probably should look for another career goal.

As I worked my way through my undergraduate years, I began to focus more and more on history and political science. I began to take more courses that dealt with China, Japan and Russia. As I entered my junior and senior years, I was drawn toward China particularly.

I was a member of the [Kappa Sigma](#) Fraternity and in my junior and senior years held elective office in the fraternity. I was also deeply involved in campus politics and the political party known, then, as *Vox Populi*.

Those were interesting years as the Sixties began to unfold. One of my fraternity brothers, Mike Miller, was an editor of the student newspaper, the [University Daily Kansan](#), in 1963-1964. I remember that, for some reason, I was sitting with him in the offices of the campus newspaper on November 22, 1963, when the bell on the Teletype machine began to make a “binging” sound...and it seemingly did not stop. Mike immediately ran to the Teletype machine and I followed him. Later, I learned that when an important story was on the wire, the bell would “bing”; if it was a really important story it would “bing” several times. We

read the news coming off the machine that [President Kennedy](#) had been shot in Dallas. Those were memorable years, to say the least.

By my senior year, I was being drawn to further study of China. At some point during my Senior year, I met with Professor [Bob Burton](#) who headed the Asian Studies program and I have always considered him to be my mentor. I had taken at least one course and probably more from him as an undergraduate. He urged me to take up China Studies and “dangled” a deal. If I would enroll as a graduate student in Chinese history, and if I would immediately begin taking Chinese language classes, he would find me a position that would pay my tuition and provide me with some living money. I happily accepted and joined the M.A. program.

Professor Burton was a wonderful teacher and mentor. His background in China, as he described it to us in class and in informal settings, both as a journalist in China and as an English-language secretary to a ranking individual in the Chinese Communist Party, was inspiring. He was such an encouraging man, one always sought to try to live up to his ideals and to emulate, in some way, his life story.

One anecdote, I clearly recall, that Professor Burton told had to do with his time, after World War II, when he was a United Press correspondent in Shanghai and Peking/Beijing. He said that as a reader of newspapers, we should always be wary of unsubstantiated and unsourced news. Because, he indicated, on slow news days, when he didn't have any confirmed hard news to report, he would write stories that led with "It was heard today in Shanghai..." These stories that he wired in represented rumors and over-heard conversations rather than hard news. But, he said, he had at least met his deadline and filed a "story."

I began taking Chinese from Joyce Chen. We were taught the written Chinese of classical tradition, as the "simplified" characters were just beginning to be used in official publications in China and had just begun to be taught in schools in China. I still have my [Wade-Giles Chinese-English Dictionary](#), the Yale University [Dictionary of Spoken Chinese](#) and other learning tools. Joyce Chen was a remarkably good instructor, and, although I had great difficulty mastering the tonality of Mandarin Chinese, I did become fairly adept at reading (with the help of those dictionaries!) and moderately adept at calligraphy.

On the other side of Professor Burton's "deal" was a position teaching in the Eastern Civilization program. I was a Teaching Assistant with a semester salary of \$1,150. In those years, KU had a major Ford Foundation grant; and, with the support of that funding, KU offered a two-semester Eastern Civilization course sequence as an elective alternative to the required two-semester Western Civilization course. I greatly enjoyed my time teaching Eastern Civ to those KU students who made the choice of Eastern over Western Civ. We used the [*Sources of Chinese Tradition*](#) and the [*Sources of Japanese Tradition*](#), both from Columbia University Press. I still have the *Chinese Tradition* Volume I book which was sold by KU Bookstore for \$3.95.

As an aside, the [KU Bookstore](#) and its role in the life of an undergraduate and then graduate student with hardly any spending money is worth comment. Back then, the Bookstore offered that if you kept your receipts from your purchases and turned them in (I don't recall if it was at a specific time or any time during the year), they would "refund" 10% of the total. I (and a couple of friends) realized that most students tossed the receipts in the trash or on the ground. I/we began collecting the receipts and would take a bundle of

receipts in for the 10% refund. The Bookstore knew, of course, that I hadn't personally spent nearly a thousand dollars a semester, but they honored the system and gave me a 10% refund. It certainly helped.

I believe it was between the first and second year of my graduate study that I enrolled in an Intensive Chinese Language Institute during that summer. The only vivid memory I have, sadly, is not of the studies or the program itself, but rather of one day, early in the Summer, standing on the roof of the high rise student housing/dorm, with my fellow Institute students from around the country. As we stood watching a Kansas summer storm blow in, we began to see several small tornadoes swirl out of the clouds. These non-Kansas students asked loudly and nervously, 'are those [tornadoes](#)' and, putting my best stoic Kansas voice, answered with a nonchalant smile: 'yes'. They became agitated, of course, and exited the rooftop. I waited a few seconds to allow them to go down the stairs and then, heart beating fast, I quickly followed them. Thankfully, the tornados must have pulled back into the clouds, because nothing came of it. But, I had, I felt, upheld Kansas "honor."

My second year of my M.A. program, I served as a Teaching Assistant to Dr. [Grant Goodman](#). That was an exciting year. In private, I referred to Dr. [Goodman](#) as “[The Old Man](#),” although in retrospect, he was only 19 years older than I was. Dr. Goodman with his bow ties, his Ph.D. from Michigan, and experiences during World War II and during the American Occupation of Japan, was a force of nature. I sat in on all his classes (since I graded most of his students’ papers). After one class, I asked him why he ‘used such big words in his lecture since many students didn’t get it’ and he responded, “I teach for those who do understand.” That having been said, he was much loved and respected by his students. I also served as a bartender at a number of the evening parties he held entertaining faculty and staff in his home.

During the three years (1965-1968) of study for my M.A. (lengthened because of the language study), I also had to contend with my local [Draft Board](#). The Vietnam War was growing in intensity and controversy in those years. Every year (maybe every semester) I had to get in contact with the Johnson County Draft Board in Olathe to renew my student deferment status. As my studies stretched into the third year, the Clerk of the Draft Board, Grace Myers, was becoming

agitated with me (and, surely, many others). The last thing I remember about her was when I handed in my final deferment request with my KU registration information. She looked at the form, looked at me and with a stern stare, pointed and wagged her finger at me saying, “We’re going to get you!”

As I indicated above, these were interesting times. Those of us in the graduate program began focusing on separate themes, of course. My [Master’s thesis](#) was on the international ties and history between the [Mongolian People’s Republic](#) and the [People’s Republic of China](#). One of my fellow M.A. students chose to study [Chinese Trotskyites](#). I remember having a couple of men in dark suits drop by to “chat” with me. They were FBI agents and were checking up on my colleague, because he had subscribed to several international periodicals and newspapers by and for supporters of Leon Trotsky. Obviously, the Federal Government was worried that a Communist cell with an emphasis on Permanent Revolution was being nurtured in Kansas, the wholesome heart of America. After interviewing a number of his faculty and fellow students, they left him alone...satisfied that he wasn’t fostering a revolutionary movement on [Mount Oread](#).

As another aside, in keeping with the history of KU and its more radical ways, in 1970, two years after I left Lawrence, the University experienced violence and anti-war protests. In April, the Kansas Student Union and Book Store were set [ablaze by a firebomb](#). And, a few days before that fire, my fraternity house, the Kappa Sigma house, was badly damaged by arson.

My Master's thesis was completed in the 1967-68 academic year. Professor [Ed Wickberg](#) was the chairman of my committee and my tutor in researching and writing my study on the PRC and the Mongolian People's Republic, [*The Deterioration of Chinese Influence in the Mongolian People's Republic, May 1957 to December 1960*](#). He worked closely with me in all aspects of this final task of my time at KU, fulfilling the requirement of the History Department and the Graduate School.

My most vivid memory of Dr. Wickberg was at my Thesis Defense. One of the other faculty members on the committee took exception with some element of my work. This was possibly Dr. Herb Ellison, a Soviet specialist who, as it turned out, was in his last year at KU. Whoever it was, he asked me why I had done the research on one aspect in a certain way. I tried to explain my

rationale. He asked again, and again, for a better explanation. At that point, Dr. Wickberg said, in a loud and firm voice, 'he did it that way because I told him to do it that way!' That ended that line of questioning and the thesis was approved.

With the Vietnam War heating up and amid growing public skepticism, many of us began to look for employment after graduation that would bring some sort of deferment from the military draft. I applied to the Central Intelligence Agency for an advertised posting for analysts with a specialization in China. I also applied for a spot on the [China/Asia Desk at Radio Free Europe in Munich](#), and for any number of teaching positions.

I was contacted by the CIA and, after some back and forth of letters and documentation, was invited to Washington for a 2 or 3 days of interviews, tests and a thorough physical examination. I have various memories of my time in Washington for the CIA. I was given airplane tickets and told that there was a reservation for me at a specific hotel. All of this seemingly secret "spy stuff" was exciting for a young man from Kansas. There were a number of other young men (I don't recall any women applicants in my "class") from around the country at the same hotel.

I was told to go outside of the hotel the next morning and a “Bluebird Bus” would stop and pick me (and the others) up. I did as directed, and boarded the bus, sitting silently and nervously, waiting for the next piece of spy craft to unspool before me. At some point on the bus route, in Langley, the bus driver stopped the bus, opened the door, and in a loud voice, yelled, “CIA”. Well, so much for super-secret spy-craft.

During my time at Langley, I was given a battery of intelligence and other skills tests. I had a lie-detector session and, at one point, perhaps to gauge my physiological reaction, someone in the room shouted at me in Chinese. There was also a Chinese language test. And, I was given a rigorous physical examination.

At the end of fairly long, months-long process, I did receive a job offer from the Agency for employment as an analyst, a GS-8 level position with an annual salary of \$7,068. For reasons that I cannot recall, I declined the offer.

The recruiter and the Personnel Office at Radio Free Europe told me that the position on the “China Desk” was mine as soon as the man currently in the position finalized his departure.

For whatever reason, that individual decided to stay in his role.

Of the teaching applications I sent out, the only response I received was from the [South Campus of Miami-Dade Community College](#) in Miami, Florida. Although there were junior colleges in Kansas, I was really unfamiliar with the concept; however, I decided to respond favorably. After a telephone interview, I was invited to an on-campus interview. My father was on a business trip in California and my mother had joined him as they were going to extend the trip into a mini-vacation. I had to borrow money from my aunt and uncle, to make the trip (the cost of which was, of course, later reimbursed to me by the College).

The on-campus interviews with the department chair, faculty and the dean went well. I was given a thorough explanation of the role of community colleges and of Miami-Dade specifically: to provide the first two-years of a college education, at modest cost, to local residents. This was of particular importance since there were no public state universities within 100 miles of Miami.

I was offered a position in the Department of History and Political Science. I accepted. The starting salary offered and accepted was

approximately \$7,200 for the Fall, Winter and Spring semesters.

I flew back to Kansas City to organize my relocation. In August, I drove from Kansas City to Miami and began my teaching position at MDCC. My expectation and plan was that I would stay in that role for two or three years, and then move elsewhere to begin a doctoral program focusing on Modern China.

1968 was the second year the [South Campus](#) had been opened and our faculty offices were in cubicles. As the junior faculty member, I was given an office farthest away from the department chairman and closest to the entry door. But, there was an advantage in that I had a full cork-covered wall on one side of the cubicle, on which I placed a large poster of Chairman Mao visible to everyone. Many of my older, more conservative faculty colleagues were not pleased.

Before I could settle in, however, the Vietnam War and Grace Myers of the Johnson County Draft Board intervened. I had been required to have my physical examination before leaving for Miami. I had passed. Weeks after the beginning of my first Fall Semester at MDCC, I received my induction notice. The department that had welcomed me in

August gave me a going-away party in October. However, the Campus Dean had other ideas.

Dean Fred Shaw was a seasoned academic with ties to the University of Miami and network of friends from his many years in Miami. He took up my cause. After my appeals for a teaching deferment were denied, he wrote to his friend, [Congressman Dante Fascell](#), who was a Democratic congressman from Miami and a rising star in the U.S. House of Representatives which was controlled by the Democratic Party. Later in his career, Fascell chaired the House Foreign Affairs Committee. In 1968, he was already a member of that important Committee. In 1973, Fascell, having grown wary of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam, cosponsored the War Powers Act, meant to require Congressional approval before committing U.S. military forces to an armed conflict.

Dean Shaw's letter to Congressman Fascell essentially said that 'we have finally got someone to explain to our students what is going on in Asia, and you idiots are trying to take him away!' I have always assumed that it was the Congressman who got my draft appeal heard by the National Appeals Board, also known as the Presidential Appeals

Board. In any case, my teaching deferment was approved and I continued my teaching role at Miami-Dade.

Within a year, I was dressing to fulfill the image of the young instructor who was part of the progressive era of the late 1960's: earth shoes, slacks and shirt, longish hair, mustache and muttonchops. The older, more conservative faculty members continued to be less than pleased. In any case, students seemed to appreciate my approach and my teaching style; my classes were always full.

As I began to settle into my new position and new city, I began to integrate into the community. I was asked to write book reviews of new publications relevant to my academic credentials for the main Miami newspaper, the *Miami Herald*. While I arrived knowing very little of the community college concept, I quickly became very supportive of its goals and aspirations of expanding quality educational opportunities to larger segments of the local population.

The idea of leaving after two or three years began to fade. I got married in 1972 and made the decision to stay in Miami, which drew me to the [University of Miami](#). The College and the

University had an agreement by which faculty from the College could take graduate courses at the private University of Miami for half the normal tuition cost, which was an added incentive.

There were good faculty members at the University who had an academic focus on China, particularly a husband and wife duo, Dr. June Teufel Dreyer and Dr. Edward Dryer (she specialized in Modern China and he in Ming China). With their mentoring, I switched focus to International Studies, which was, in their opinion, a better fit for me. It took me several long years, taking classes and researching part-time, to finish my course work and begin my research for my dissertation. During all my time as a doctoral student, I worked full-time at the College, with the exception of a one-semester sabbatical that was granted to complete my research.

The dissertation topic I selected fit the times and the focus of the period. Even with the Fall of Saigon, the departure of the American forces and the formal end of the Vietnam War, China, Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, remained topics that were highly relevant. With the advice of my faculty advisors, (Dr. June Teufel Dryer was my dissertation chair), I selected the relationship

between the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The formal title was "*The Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China Towards the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1975-1979.*"

As with the Master's defense at KU, my public dissertation defense had a couple of interesting elements. At one point, Dr. Leon Goure, the Director of the Center for Soviet Studies at the University, began to question the way I had calculated/reported battlefield casualties during the Sino-Vietnamese border war of 1979. As the conflict of 1979 was the culminating point of my research, his comments stung. I asked him how he would have calculated the casualties and what numbers would he prefer that I use. After some back and forth, we ended the stalemate without requiring any changes to the final dissertation as presented.

At the end of the dissertation defense "ordeal," I was asked to leave the room so that the committee could discuss my candidacy. I left but stayed close enough to the double doors of the room to hear the discussion. There were a couple of complimentary remarks about me and my research, then several of the committee members

began to talk about their upcoming tennis game and other personal points of interest. After about 15 minutes, someone said, "I think we've had him wait long enough, bring him in."

I received my Ph.D. at the University's annual graduation ceremony in the Spring of 1982.

Two years before, in 1980, our son was born.

I began teaching at Miami-Dade Community College's South Campus (later renamed the [Kendall Campus](#)) in 1968. Following the practice of the institution, I received tenure within four years. There was no (and remains no) research/publishing requirement for the granting of tenure at most community colleges that are, essentially, teaching institutions.

I taught Introduction to Asia, and other elective courses in History and the required courses, such as Introduction to the Social Sciences. Expanding my role, with two colleagues, one who had a focus on Art History and one from the English Department, we experimented with a team-taught, multi-discipline Honors Sequence. Early on, there were questions raised by senior administrators as to the appropriateness of 'honors courses' at a community college. However with successful

semesters, the concept was embraced by the South Campus administration. The Honors Sequence grew over the years to involve other faculty and other disciplines. Early in that process, I was named as the Director of Honors. Now, almost 50 years later, the Honors College at [Miami-Dade College](#) is a large, vibrant and integral component of the College's mission.

Within a few years, my colleagues and administrators, asked me to serve as Department Chair of History, Political Science and Economics. Subsequently and within a few more years, I took on the role of Associate Dean of Social Sciences. As Department Chair, I had continued to teach classes (but at a reduced load). As Associate Dean, I had only administrative responsibilities, although I taught an occasional course. During my tenure as Associate Dean, I had the opportunity to participate and provide leadership to the expansion of the mission and reach of community colleges, which had begun with the founding of the Honors Program.

The College had created a [Distinguished Visiting Professor Series](#). As part of that broader initiative, in 1983-1984, I organized and hosted a weeklong symposium dealing with the threat of nuclear war,

which was held in February 1984. [*The Nuclear Dilemma: A Symposium*](#) brought to Miami national and international experts on a broad range of topics. They included individuals who were well known and respected in their various fields. Among them were former U.S. Secretary of Defense [Harold Brown](#), Dr. [Edward Teller](#) (“the Father of the Hydrogen Bomb”), the founder of the [Physicians for Social Responsibility](#), Dr. [Helen Caldicott](#), and Dr, [Robert J. Lifton](#), an internationally renowned expert on the psychological impact of nuclear weapons and nuclear war.

The Symposium was received very positively by the College community and the broader community. The *Miami Herald* extensively covered the various speakers and presentations. The Symposium was the largest and most ambitious academic program the College had ever undertaken.

After receiving my Ph.D. in 1982, and following the widely acclaimed *Nuclear Dilemma Symposium* in 1984, my administrative roles began to expand. I was chosen to be the College-wide Academic Dean, with responsibilities for the College’s

curriculum and coordination of academic program across the five campuses.

Several years later, with departure of the Vice President for Education and, following a search, I was named to that role.

I was the Vice President for Education for ten years. In that role I was responsible for the coordination and direction of the all of the academic and student services at the College's then five campuses. By this time, Miami-Dade was serving more than 100,000 individual (not full-time equivalent, since most community college students take a reduced load because of work and family commitments) students every year.

It was also my responsibility to oversee the development of [educational technology software](#). Miami-Dade was considered a leader in the then growing field of computer-based learning. We had a significant grant from IBM for the development of new technologies and programs.

Also, the Vice President for Education was responsible for the College's extensive programs offering MDCC students' international learning opportunities (Study Abroad) in Europe and Asia.

In these College-wide roles as Dean and Vice President, I served to represent the College in statewide and national organizations. I gave testimony to legislative committees in the state capital, Tallahassee, and to committees of the U.S. Congress.

I was involved with numerous national and international grants. I chaired the National Educational Advisory Committee for the PBS series [*Renaissance Lives: Portraits of an Age*](#). Professor [Theodore Rabb](#) of Princeton University's History Department developed the on-air program and my Committee worked with him on the development of learning resources for faculty use.

It was at a meeting of the leadership team of *Renaissance Lives* that I had, for me, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The leadership team often met in Princeton, and at this particular meeting Ted Rabb was also filming several 1-minute spots to be aired on PBS encouraging viewers to watch *Renaissance Lives*. Following the taping of one spot at Princeton University's Firestone Library, each of us was allowed, one by one, to enter the secure rare manuscript room, wearing white protective gloves, and to sit, view and even turn

the pages of one of only 49 [Gutenberg Bibles](#) in existence. It was a humbling experience for an academic.

I was the College's point-person in a significant [Ford Foundation](#) funded project known as the [Urban Partnership Program](#). The UPP, which is still operational, gathers business and civic leaders, educators, community-based organizations, students and parents to cooperate in developing and funding locally based educational programs in sixteen cities in the United States. Mid-way through my involvement with the UPP, it expanded and became connected with the South African Partnership Program, also funded by the Ford Foundation.

Due to my academic and career background, I was asked to join a team of educators from several colleges and universities who traveled to Malaysia to participate in a multi-day site visit to, and evaluation of, a Malaysian university.

By the mid-1990's, I was named as the Interim President of the comprehensive Kendall (South) Campus, essentially returning to where I had begun my career as a junior faculty member in 1968. The Kendall Campus that I returned to was markedly different, larger and more diverse, than

when I began 28 years before. By the mid-1990's it had grown to 50,000 students, 300 faculty and more than 1,000 staff and part-time instructors on a [185-acre campus](#) with ten or more major educational buildings.

After a national search for several open campus president positions, I was named the President of the [Wolfson Campus](#), the College's comprehensive "flagship" campus in Downtown Miami. The Wolfson Campus houses a broad array of educational and cultural programs, including the nationally acclaimed [Miami Book Fair International](#).

It is also the home of a unique and nationally recognized performing and visual arts institution, known as the [New World School of the Arts](#). This program (visual arts, dance, theater and music) is a cooperative undertaking between the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami-Dade College and the University of Florida. Students can enroll as high school students, receive their diploma, stay with NWSA and earn an Associate's degree from Miami-Dade College and ultimately a BFA/BMA from the University of Florida.

During my four-years as Wolfson Campus President, I was responsible for the creation of a

technology-based stand-alone program and an extensive physical plant known as the [Educational Technology Center of the Americas](#). Subsequently, as technology has evolved and transformed, the ETCOTA has morphed into a multi-disciplinary technology-based teaching and learning center. One of the ETCOTA's heirs is the College's new [Miami Animation and Gaming International Complex \(MAGIC\)](#) degree program.

Following a diagnosis and aggressive treatment for head and neck cancer, I retired from the College in 2001, after 33+ years. Almost immediately, I began to work full-time with [Educational Testing Service](#) (ETS's main campus is in Princeton, NJ) focusing on the needs of higher education for assessment and learning tools. Friends commented that I "failed retirement."

(As an aside, in the years after my retirement, Miami-Dade Community College was given authority by the Florida Legislature to offer baccalaureate degrees in selected programs. Following the rules of the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools \(SACS\)](#), the College officially changed its name to Miami-Dade College.)

In my new role at ETS, I provided insights and understanding of assessment/learning tool needs

to the Higher Education Division and the 800+ members of the Research Division. While working with ETS, I remained resident in Miami, often commuting to Princeton once a month. One of my major responsibilities at ETS was to organize and chair the National Community College Advisory Council. The NCCAC was composed of approximately 20 college presidents/chancellors from around the country and the CEO's of national educational organizations.

Around 2010, I left full-time service with ETS and I formed my own consulting company, [EduVizion Consulting](#), LLC. My major client remained ETS, where I served as Senior Consultant for Community College. Also, I worked with other organizations and foundations, including the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#).

During this latter stage of my career (post Miami-Dade College), I was asked to join the Foundation Board of [Sias International University](#). Sias is located in [Xinzheng, Henan Province](#) in [Central China](#), near the provincial capital of Zhengzhou. Sias offers a bilingual curriculum and its baccalaureate graduates receive both a Chinese diploma and an American diploma. During my tenure on the Board, I undertook one solo site

visit to Sias University, observing the programs and meeting with students, faculty and the lead administrative team. Following the site visit, I had the opportunity to tour China with a couple of Sias students acting as guides and interpreters. Among the sites we visited included a number of museums, Shanghai, Beijing, Xi'an with the [Terra Cotta Army](#); and, [Luoyang](#) and the Longmen Grottoes mentioned previously.

In 2011, I was diagnosed with a new head and neck cancer, which was aggressively treated by radical surgery that, unfortunately, removed my larynx leaving me without the ability to speak.

During my career at Miami-Dade College, I had the opportunity and privilege to work on many and to lead some of the important initiatives and projects that impacted the institution with the largest undergraduate student population in the country. As such, MDC serves as a model for colleges across the nation. Among these initiatives were: the early, groundbreaking use of educational technology in instruction and student services; the development of a multi-disciplinary Honors Program (now Honors College); Miami Book Fair International; the New World School of the Arts; an extensive Study Abroad program; and, the

creation of the Emerging Technology Center of the Americas.

During my career, I have embraced the concept of community colleges and a commitment to offering quality education for broad segments of the population, many of whom otherwise would not have had the opportunity for higher education. Community colleges serve as the first two years of a baccalaureate education, while also providing a career and technical focus for individuals to become educated for immediate employment in the regional economy. Community colleges are an original American concept. In Florida, State law requires that Associate degrees from state community colleges are fully transferrable to the eleven State University System institutions.

My University of Kansas and University of Miami degrees that focused on China are held close to my heart; however, my career in education branched off from the strictly academic track to a broader definition of serving education and the public. One never knows how life's career track will deviate from initial goals, aspirations and expectations.

I consider my half-century of involvement with the community college movement to have been a

personal and professional commitment to the ideal of fostering a better-educated citizenry.



Longmen Grottoes, Luoyang, China (by the author)