

S. Caroline Kerr '05  
Dartmouth College Oral History Program  
SpeakOut  
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[CAROLINE W.]

CASEY: It is 1:39 p.m. on January 28, 2019. My name is Caroline [W.] Casey and I am here with S. Caroline Kerr in the Ticknor Room in Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.

So, Caroline, to get started, I just wanted to ask you where you're from.

KERR: Yeah. So I grew up primarily in Ann Arbor, Michigan. My parents were on the faculty at [the University of] Michigan. They were—they're actors and directors, so I actually toured with them for a great deal of time when I was a young kid, and then they took teaching jobs at the university, and they were actually deciding between Dartmouth and the University of Michigan, but they ended up there, so I grew up a lot in Ann Arbor and ended up coming here for college.

CASEY: So when you were—do you have any siblings?

KERR: I do. I've got two older siblings and a younger sibling. All went kind of elsewhere for their college experiences. I'd had two older cousins that had come to Dartmouth, and that's really how Dartmouth landed on my radar screen. My cousin [Rosalie E.] "Rosi" Kerr is a Class of 1997. She's actually director of sustainability at the college now.

CASEY: Oh, wow.

KERR: But she is why I got interested in Dartmouth and fell in love with the place just as a—actually as a middle school student—

CASEY: Really!

KERR: —before I even got into high school.

CASEY: So were you—obviously thinking about college. Did you have a good childhood? Did you like Ann Arbor?

KERR: Yeah, Ann Arbor was a great place to grow up. It's a very cool city. Neither one of my parents are Midwesterners, so any time we were not truly in school, they picked us up, and they had a place I upstate New York, so we would come back to—it's about an hour north of Albany, near the Vermont border. That's where my dad's family is from. So we'd be there. My mom's family is from England. A lot are still there.

So it was a great city. I think the overall kind of mentality of being a Midwesterner and identifying that way was not something that resonated. It was sort of like, *Great! School's out! Let's get outta here!*

But I had a great experience growing up, a really wonderful family, and I did a program called The Mountain School in high school, so I spent junior year—spring of my junior year at The Mountain School, which is in Vershire, Vermont. Milton Academy runs it and owns it. And that was just an incredible experience. Rosi had actually done that as well, so sort of following in her footsteps. So that was my junior year.

I came out. Kind of realized that I was gay then and came out to my family then. Just—they're really supportive and wonderful. So I came to Dartmouth out, and that was an important part of my kind of transition to college, was to sort of start my identity in college life that way, as a—and making it something that was just known from the start, so I didn't have a process, I guess, of coming out to people who had already gotten to know me. I wanted that kind of coming out process to be on the front end.

CASEY: Yeah. So what was that like coming out in Ann Arbor? What reactions did you get?

KERR: Yeah. I mean, Ann Arbor is a very liberal place. And I went to a great little, independent school. It was fine. It was sort of one of those things where there was a pretty active Gay-Straight Alliance, sort of, anyway, so it was in the school. And I think there was a combination of—you know, I was

coming out to friends who—they either sort of already suspected or knew, or others where I didn't, but it was kind of assumed, or it just wasn't a big deal was made out of it.

I remember one—one conversation and interaction with a really good friend, who was a year ahead of me, when I came back, and I was dating, then, someone that I had met at The Mountain School. And he had met her, and he really pushed me. We were out once at this really old, kind of classic place to get burgers in Ann Arbor, and he really said, like, "I just want you to actually tell me that you're, you know, whatever you are."

And I remember being kind of annoyed and then realizing that for him it was a matter of sort of respect for the friendship, that I actually say to him, like, "Hey, Andrew, I've had this realization, you know, and pulling you in."

But otherwise it was fine, and I was honestly only back for a year, I'd sort of been this odd kid who'd gone away and done this semester program anyway. Yeah. But it's been positive. And then, as my life has sort of gone on and have gotten married and had kids, and I don't get back to Michigan as often as I would—I would like. Some of my work life takes me back there, but—so people have kind of kept up or gotten in the know through social media, the Facebook and stuff. And people are just nothing but wonderfully supportive, even the—the pretty conservative folks who I know align very differently than I do politically but are just like, "Your family is beautiful" and love seeing the photos.

CASEY: That's great.

KERR: So I'm really lucky. I've had a really positive experience.

CASEY: Yeah. And so what year was that?

KERR: Yeah. So I graduated and came to Dartmouth in 2001. Actually, on my Dartmouth Outing Club Trip, [the] September 11<sup>th</sup> [attacks] happened right at the end. So we got off our trip, and we were picked up by Lodge Cru, and they were just in tears and trying to explain and make sense of what was going on and letting us know. And all of that trip section—students were given the option if they either had

family that was in New York, if they needed to go home, they could do that. Or they could choose to go on to the [Moosilauke Ravine] Lodge. They had counselors available.

But the evening went on as it was intended to, but it was pretty informative and telling for me in my Dartmouth experience to have it start that way. And one of my first classes at Dartmouth was a multicultural education class that Pana Rhodes [archivist note: spelling uncertain], and he put it to us: “How would you talk with a group of students, given what’s going on in the world today?”

And I ended up being one of the first [William Jewett] Tucker [Foundation] post-9/11 fellows, so I went down to New York City and worked at P.S. 126 a year later, so my sophomore winter.

CASEY: Wow. So what was—what did it mean to be a Tucker fellow?

KERR: Yeah. So we went down. There were two of us. And the grant had come to place students in one of the public schools that had really been affected, because it was near the World Trade Center site. It served a primarily very low-income and immigrant population. So we went in and worked as classroom assistants across different classes, but there were also plenty of times when the teacher was not in that day, and so I ended up being the lead in the classroom.

CASEY: Wow.

KERR: But there, you know, being nineteen years old, and Dartmouth made that all possible. And living alone in New York.

And it was actually while I was there that I had really my first interaction with DGALA [Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association] and the alumni of Dartmouth, who knew that I was in New York, knew that I was doing it alone, and they had just a series of breakfasts and dinners, and they just hosted gatherings, in part to get together but also because they wanted me to really make sure I felt as though I had a support system and family in New York.

So that was my first, I think, really person aha moment with how engaged Dartmouth alums are, but also DGALA as an organization. And then I continued to sort of have interactions with alums and ended up joining the DGALA board pretty much within six months of graduating. I think I was the youngest board member.

CASEY: So how did that initial connection with DGALA start?

KERR: Yeah, I'm trying to remember who first put me in touch. It might have been—[Pamela S.] “Pam” Misener was the—working in the Office of Pluralism and Leadership [OPAL], and she was the adviser to LGBT students. And I think she probably put me in touch with some of the New Yorkers who were there. I don't know how the initial connection happened, but I think it was that way.

CASEY: Yeah.

KERR: And in my first year—I mean, again, going back to that idea of I wanted to be out from the start, I went and sought out Pam and introduced myself. I got involved with what was then the Dartmouth Rainbow Alliance [DRA], pretty early on. I was a rower on the women's crew [Dartmouth Women's Rowing] team. I did DOC [Dartmouth Outing Club] trips. I had a lot of different involvements.

And at that point in time, so 2001, 2002, the DRA had really—was sort of sitting on the shoulders of, I would say, a pretty small set of really dedicated students.

CASEY: The DRA is the Dartmouth Rainbow Alliance. Okay.

KERR: Yeah, Dartmouth Rainbow Alliance, who were really kind of keeping it alive. And I think there were those of us who were athletes or involved with other parts of campus, where gender and sexuality was part of our identities but it wasn't the primary. And I had a moment of feeling like, *There should be more kind of mixing and intersection, and the leadership of the DRA should be more representative of students on campus.* So actually ran—so if you're going to say that, you know, go live it. So ran for an office or position and then ended up leading the DRA for a bit. So formally got

involved. And I was an intern in the OPAL office, working with Pam for stretches as well, as an undergrad.

CASEY: Yeah. So I will definitely want to talk more about that—

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: But before we get too deep into what you did at Dartmouth, can you tell me a little bit about what it was like when you first got to Dartmouth? You know, contrast from growing up, how it worked, how you met people.

KERR: Yeah. I guess the difference—so some—it was far more similar to my Mountain School experience. The Mountain School is forty-five students. Many of them draw from really top prep schools across the country, so in terms of being in a very concentrated academic environment in a rural location, that was very familiar and it was very much that was why I was here.

From my high school, it was pretty different in that even though I went to this great independent school, there was a whole range of levels of motivation amongst my peers. So to suddenly be in a place where people were really motivated kind of took me aback. And just the sense of Dartmouth running 24/7 and student organizations and groups meeting, and also just being in a bigger social scene. I mean, being a kid who had realized that she was gay and was actually—had dated someone but had broken up shortly before college, and to be in a social scene where things were—felt even more progressive and bigger—was a little bit like arriving and just having all sorts of freedom.

And there was plenty of, like, lousy decisions that I made in my social life [chuckles] in those first years or two, just as a result of that. And I think in some ways, a lot of gay students have that experience, of you're suddenly in a slightly bigger place and you're almost playing catch-up to what peers have had as their social norm.

CASEY: Mm-hm.

KERR: But it was a really great campus. I mean, there—there were pockets of I think very conservative thought, but for the most

part, I felt really welcomed and safe all across campus. And as I said, I was rowing, and I just had a great team.

CASEY: You had a great—like, coming out on your team or being out—

KERR: Yeah, not—

CASEY: Not a problem.

KERR: Like, it wasn't a big deal. There were other gay athletes. And so that just wasn't—wasn't a big a deal at all. And—and they had such a warm welcoming way of kind of pulling me into life at the college that I really feel lucky that I had a varsity sport to come into in that way.

CASEY: Yeah. So could you kind of situate, like, the broader climate regarding to, like LGBT life when you came to college?

KERR: Yeah. Yeah. Yup.

CASEY: What you knew, what you'd seen.

KERR: Yeah. So there had been some. I mean, Ellen [L. DeGeneres]'s kind of coming-out episode. All of that had happened. There were some gay characters in the media, but not many, and there were the—I can remember in high school—then, it was either Blockbuster [LLC]; here it was Videostop in Hanover. We actually were renting VHS [video home system] tapes and trying to go through, you know, sections where, like, there were even gay characters or things.

*And If These Walls Could Talk 2*, that Ellen DeGeneres is in. I remember renting that with friends or my girlfriend at the time, just hungry for representations of not just queer people but actually women and women with families, because family was so important to me. I knew I wanted to have kids. I knew that was possible. But just really hungry for greater depictions of role models.

So I felt like a lot was going on. You know, my parents being actors, they had a lot of gay friends. Even my grandfather, who was an actor in England and then in the Untied States

with a—with a career that spanned from the fifties all the way up into the 2000s—he had gay friends, you know, from the forties and fifties. Totally different era. But my parents had lived through the AIDS [acquired immunodeficiency syndrome] epidemic and friends dying that were very close to them.

So I—I felt—the world was certainly changing, and I think it had—I think 2000 was really also a kind of watershed moment for Dartmouth and its own politics and campus engagement and also students transitioning from being active on campus to staying very active as alums. I think before that, for students who felt like they were operating on the periphery and whatever that meant in their individual lives, they needed a break from Dartmouth before reengaging.

And I'm lucky that I think I was at the beginning of this sort of upswing of seeking, you know, that Dartmouth family from the moment we arrived to staying engaged through today. And it wasn't perfect. There was plenty of stuff that did not—was not right or that people felt needed to change. But that sense of being engaged and staying engaged had really—had changed already.

CASEY: Sorry to clarify—

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: What are your parents' names?

KERR: Yeah. So my dad is Philip Kerr, and my mother is Sarah-Jane Kerr, or she acts under Sarah-Jane Gwillim. My dad's a Harvard [University] alum.

CASEY: Okay.

KERR: But they were both thrilled—knew that Dartmouth was where I wanted to be.

CASEY: Uh-huh.

KERR: They were thrilled.



CASEY: And what did you like about Dartmouth? I know you had connections.

KERR: Yeah, it was just the right size. So I was a very outdoorsy person. I liked the size. I was looking primarily at liberal arts colleges, so Dartmouth was sort of a super-size, liberal arts college in that sense, and it was just in a place that I wanted to be rowing. I was an athlete all through high school, but I'd picked up rowing kind of later on, but excited that it was going to be possible and had been recruited for crew.

So it was just all the things felt right, and then being back on campus almost yearly with Rosi, just visiting her. She—we'd be at some family gathering, and my parents were just, like, "Just go up! Just go hang out with Rosi." And I could see how important it was to her.

I think very early on, too, there was the sense of—Dartmouth students and alums seemed to be these just highly capable people. Whether that's out in the woods or whether that's starting an organization and running it, they're just people that seemed grounded and thoughtful and skilled but really capable. And that appealed to me, and I wanted that.

CASEY: Yeah. And then when you got here, you obviously became very involved.

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: How did that work? Were you kind of, like, involved in a lot of separate things?

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: Or did you connect a lot?

KERR: Some of it overlapped. So I—again, having gone to a smaller independent school, I'd had the luxury of being able to be involved in a bunch of different stuff and hold leadership roles there. So getting to campus—and I was—you know, I was rowing, I was doing stuff with OPAL and the Dartmouth Rainbow Alliance. I ended up becoming an [Dartmouth] Undergraduate Advisor. Did a lot with 1972 Society, which was looking at the sort of social scene and interactions

between women on campus post co-education. I coached youth basketball for Hanover.

So it was all stuff that it just felt like there was so much to do, but similar to the high school experience, you could do it all. As I got later into my college career, there were things that—it really kind of came into focus around things that were particularly meaningful. I ended up working in [the Dartmouth College Office of] Undergraduate Admissions, as a senior interviewer, and running Dimensions [of Dartmouth], and that really opened up a career path and interests for me.

And then being a trip leader/trainer for trips and just having this moment of thinking about how one prepares trip leaders but also having the last part of training be on Gilman Island and sitting around and hearing twenty-five trip leaders talk about not just what Dartmouth meant for them but sort of more importantly, what they wanted it to be for the next generation.

I—I felt like most of my involvements were starting to migrate into this sense of stewardship of the institution, so alumni interv- —senior interviewing and alumni interviewing, of helping to select the next generation of students, training trip leader/trainers, to welcome them.

A group of friends and I had—had created what I think is still an annual event called Speak Out. Actually, it overlaps. But it's giving voice to stories around sexual assault and sexual abuse and gender-based violence on campus. And that was not through any formal organization. In fact, it was intentionally meant to just be a community event and storytelling.

But all of that came together. And Palaeopitus [a senior society] was also really important to me. I was part of Palaeop, which was really active at that point in getting together weekly with a group of students who were just from all different corners of campus.

It—those, in their own way, were kind of a culminating experience for me at Dartmouth, and a sense of stewardship I think was a theme that then followed me into the alumnae

engagement and getting involved and feeling like there's a role for alums and this desire to stay involved—

CASEY: Definitely.

KERR: —with the institution. And I was working here, so, you know, it was kind of like Dartmouth from all angles.

CASEY: You were working here?

KERR: Yeah. So I worked in the Admissions Office. I transitioned into working in Admissions the summer after I graduated.

CASEY: Gotcha.

KERR: Worked for two years in Admissions, left for a year to go help grow a college counseling program in and around Detroit [Michigan] and then came back and worked three more years.

CASEY: Yeah. So it seems like you had a really good experience. Um, how—Did you see other people, like, LGBT people, having—weren't—like, how did that—how was your relationship with, like, other people in the community?

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: Did you see people of different [unintelligible]?

KERR: Yeah. I mean, certainly—and I think I—I never ended up joining a Greek-letter organization. I hung out at Sigma Delt[a] a lot. I ended up hanging out in the houses. But I didn't really join. I didn't feel that I needed to join. I know from friends who, for whatever—a whole variety of reasons, ended up joining and did not have positive experiences, either because they felt like they were in fraternities or primarily male spaces and felt threatened and really unsafe there, or friends who just felt like the sort of definitions and expectations from their own sorority really didn't match with who they were and how they wanted to live, and the process of de-pledging was something [chuckles] that was so onerous that they had to work really hard.

And I think of one friend in particular, who really saw it through, because she wanted to make a statement about it. I would say it was—I felt less like—moments that didn't feel as positive felt like they were incident-based—like, *The [Dartmouth] Review* had a particularly disgusting, you know, article or a cover or something on it, and it was sort of around that versus entrenched climate.

I think there are pockets of Dartmouth's climate that really are tough for people. But I didn't—it felt to me like *I can go spend some time in those spaces if I want to. I don't need to.* And so felt like it was really kind of my Dartmouth that I had carved out for myself and felt pretty supported in that.

But, you know, that's being—I was just lucky, I think, in that the teams and friends, my own gender identity and how I presented—like, I was—I could pass in a variety of different settings if I wanted to, and so I was in—and I'm white. So it was a position of luxury, I think, in a lot of—a lot of ways, though a lot of the work that I ended up getting involved in as a student and then when I worked for Undergraduate Admissions, a lot of what I did was—was chairing and coordinating Dartmouth's outreach efforts.

That was to first-generation students, students of color, and then a real project of mine was carving out a space for LGBT students, so making it possible for students to self-identity as LGBT or allied on the application. We then ran an outreach committee and got this partnership going between OPAL and students and alums.

So I feel like, in some ways, the positions of power and luxury that I do have—it feels really important for me to spend some of that time and space carving out more for those who have less in their kind of toolbox to carve out power, sort of, for themselves.

And I think my Dartmouth alum experience has been a lot of helping people figure out how to get off the—the kind of sidelines and feel like they can have ownership over a very mainstream Dartmouth experience and have Dartmouth feel like it's a place that's theirs, and is as much theirs as peers who they see kind of loving every minute of Dartmouth. And for them, they didn't love every minute of Dartmouth, but

they still loved enough of it that they wanted to stay connected.

I think there's—there's some power and some magic about the place that even when people have atrocious experiences as undergrads, they stay connected in some way. And there was one alum in particular, and we were—I was president of DGALA the LGBT alumni association at that point and chairing the fundraising committee for Triangle House. There was an alum—and it coincided when we opened Triangle House with an all-class reunion for DGALA, and there was an alum who came to that.

And he hadn't been back in something like thirty-five years, and he had been outed while he was an undergrad. I think he was a student in the sixties. He was outed by—and floormates beat him so badly that he was seriously—serious internal injuries. And in his closet in his dorm room for a couple of days—he doesn't even remember a lot of it—before he was found, hospitalized.

He hadn't been back to campus since, but the fact that he had just even an inkling or desire to reengage with Dartmouth—obviously was very excited by Triangle House, and that was something that he supported—to me was such a powerful statement about—there's something about the place and the connection to it that people want—you know, want to stay connected and want to make it theirs, even if that's an evolving relationship over time.

And I—I found that really powerful, and a lot of my alumni engagement has been helping figure out ways to get those members of the Dartmouth community plugged back in.

CASEY: Yeah. And who was that?—if you don't mind sharing.

KERR: I can't—I actually can't remember his name.

CASEY: Okay.

KERR: I think I can remember a first name but probably *won't* share it because it's such an intense story—

CASEY: Yeah, definitely.

KERR: —and very much his to share. He shared it in a group setting, but it wasn't—it wasn't a public forum by any means.

CASEY: Definitely, absolutely.

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: And so what has that been like, helping people reconnect with the college?

KERR: Yeah. I really loved it. I mean, I think I've reached a point where my alum experiences are very different. They are just as important to me as my undergrad experiences. In really different ways. You're doing kind of different growing between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, but—but getting involved with [the Dartmouth] Alumni Council and—so the Club and Affiliated Group Officers Weekend and the communities executive council—they're all sorts of sort of formal ways of—of leading that, which I enjoyed.

But it was Dartmouth putting new and interesting people in my path that was so cool. And getting to work with a much more intergenerational subset of Dartmouth alums—I really loved that, from different sectors, who had very different walks of life and professional life.

But this—this notion of we can do things that help make Dartmouth better for students—and Triangle House was very much in response to that. I remember an early meeting that I'd attended with a group of students with President [Jim Yong] Kim, in which they were making the case and really saying, “We need a hou- —like, we need a space that cannot be just a living space but a space where events could be hosted. We want to interact with alums there.” And he was very committed to making it happen.

And watching that and knowing how important that would be to *some* alumni—some alumni were very against the idea of a house, but—but seeing opportunities for there to be a connection between current Dartmouth students and Dartmouth of today and alums has been really meaningful.

But even in my own life—like, we moved—we moved from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Coral Gables, Florida, just outside of Miami, and I needed—I needed a nanny or a lead on a nanny or child care. I needed a mechanic who could help me work on a car that had been in snow. You know, and I completely turned to Dartmouth, and that sense of kind of Dartmouth family and Dartmouth network I've really have just loved. And live it in a lot of ways.

So I'm married. My wife Darcy is a graduate of the [Dartmouth] Medical School. We met while she was in med school here, and I was working in Undergrad Admissions. And we were married in August of 2009, and Nancy [A. G.] Vogele, who's an '85, performed the ceremony here. Marriage equality hadn't actually quite gone through. It got—it went through in New Hampshire after we'd gotten engaged.

But we decided—so we did—we had a justice of the peace marry us in Northampton, Massachusetts. We just crossed the line, had a lovely, small ceremony in the Smith Botanic Gardens [sic; Botanic Garden of Smith College] and then came back up and had a full kind of family and friends wedding that Nancy performed at the Dartmouth Outing Club House on campus. We were supposed to be on the BEMA, but it poured rain, so we crammed 137 people into—into the DOC House.

So I'm married *to* a Dartmouth alum *by* a Dartmouth alum, and we've got these three little kids now, who are three and a half and ten-month-old twins. And our donor is a great friend, who's a Dartmouth classmate of mine, who I also worked with. So they're very—they're very kind of modern family, but Dartmouth babies, like, through and through. So Dartmouth has really, you know, seeped into personal and professional life as well as school life for me in a way that I recognize as pretty unusual, but I think the common thread is that it just keeps putting really interesting people in my path.

CASEY: That's incredible.

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: Sorry, I've lost my train of thought.

KERR: That's all right.

CASEY: So, how—okay, so you've spoken a lot about how you think there's something really special about Dartmouth.

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: Do you have any thoughts on what that is or why that is, how that works?

KERR: Yeah. So—I mean, I actually think the current work that's been done by senior leaders of the college and the Board of Trustees [of Dartmouth College] around identifying these kind of pillars and what makes Dartmouth distinctive—so it's been branding, if you really want to call it that, but I—but I absolutely think that it has distilled some key aspects that *do* contribute to that Dartmouth magic so that that really profound sense of place—I think the place that we're in matters, and the fact that there are parts of campus, you know, that have been handed off generation to generation for a couple hundred years. It's meaningful to be in a place.

I remember walking on campus and, you know, you feel those grooves on library steps and just that sense of *I'm treading in paths that have been walked for a long time*. And I think there's something particularly empowering for folks who are queer in some way, to feel like, *Wow! Like, I'm here, putting my own spin on this place*.

And I think the people that it's populated—I think it attracts pretty adventuresome—you know, we talk about adventuresome spirit now when we talk about the place, but that—that sense of being really capable and going out there and seeking adventure and wanting to go out into the world. We talk about base camp to the world. All of that rings true. And then relationship with faculty.

So I think those combinations of things just make it a very intensely personal place. I think it's—I think it's hard to come through here and feel like—even if that's not necessarily a thoroughly positive thing—to come through and feel like it hasn't been personal to you. It's highly personalized to each



student. I think that's some of what ignites that sense of: It's Dartmouth kind of family and family for life, and allows people to be resilient in the face of—the place has got to change in these ways, but I'm—you know, I'm kind of all in in seeing it change versus just disengaging and leaving it.

I took a lot of classes with Michael [A.] Bronski, who taught in the women and gender studies department as well as Jewish studies, and I took six-plus classes from him. I took the first class I think spring of my first year on campus, but I ended up taking six classes. So it was sociology modified with Women and Gender Studies [now Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies], and then an ed- —education and human development minor. But I joke it was really kind of sociology modified with Bronski.

CASEY: [Chuckles.]

KERR: I just loved his classes. He's a terrific thinker and professor, but—but it also—you know, he's still—I just got an e-mail from him a couple of weeks ago that was, like, "Hey, I haven't heard from you in a while. How are you doing? You know, I want to see the kiddos"—and developing those kinds of relationships with the faculty I think is really meaningful.

CASEY: Yeah. So what was your—could you elaborate a little bit more on your academic experience?

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: What classes you took.

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: Or what you learned.

KERR: I wouldn't say I bounced around. I took a lot. I didn't settle on sociology as the major until right at the end of my sophomore year. I was really interested in how groups and systems of people and institutions interact, so sociology was the right spot for that. And then Women and Gender Studies, both as a field but because there were a couple of professors in particular I wanted to work with there, so really dived in with those.

But I loved—I took a couple of design classes with [Daniel J.] “Dan” Kotlowitz—they were lighting design and a general design class that I just loved. They were hands-on. In the Hop [the Hopkins Center for the Arts]. And I took both some sociology classes, and then I was taking some—I can’t remember what department it ended up being because it was cross—cross listed, but a class that ultimately ended—led me to take a Native American Studies class in my junior—end of junior year, beginning of senior year.

I’d come from a really progressive little independent school for elementary school, where we actually studied indigenous peoples in great depth, so it was a personal interest, and then to come back and study it at a college level—and it was—there was a big focus on ethnography and social geographies of what we were studying, and I got really interested in thinking about how do you apply that to a place like Dartmouth, with its own founding.

So took this class because the professor had come and given a guest lecture, and then—and it was Shoshana—I’m blanking on Shoshana’s last name. She’s a Dartmouth alum and Native American Studies professor, but she was phenomenal. And so she came and guest lectured, and I got a friend to take the class with me. We loved the class that she taught, and then convinced her to let us take us take a—do an independent study my senior spring, I think it was, where we made a film.

So we were not [chuckles]—we were not NAS majors, we had not made films before, so there were all sorts of—it was very Dartmouth in that we had, like, zero practical kind of skills and background and experience coming into it, but we were really psyched on examining it. And she was terrific.

So we made this film that looked at the social geographies on campus in Dartmouth’s history and founding of a Native institution and what that meant for what had been marginalized groups then later on. And that was a really incredible experience. So this notion of kind of crafting and digging into topics for soci- —I didn’t end up writing a thesis; I ended up doing a senior seminar with Kathryn [J.] Lively, who’s now the interim dean of the college, and looking at

the—it was all framed around C. Wright Mills’s *The Sociological Imagination: The Intersection of History and Biography*.

And I ended up digging kind of back further into my own experiences and family experiences of being in the theater and AIDS crisis and thinking about my own identity and coming from that.

So it was a lot of freedom, a good amount of structure but a lot of freedom, and—I’d love to do more with film because I’ve said that a couple of times. I’ve made a film for Bronski’s class. I was fascinated by it and fortunate enough to have enough flexibility to kind of pursue that as a medium for exploring some of the ideas.

CASEY: And what was that film about?

KERR: Bronski class we did a couple of—that one was pretty early on, so I think it was the end of my—it sometime in my sophomore year. I can’t remember at what point, because I had taken a couple of classes from him, and then I think it was around sophomore summer, maybe, so it would have been summer of 2002 or 2003 that we were filming this.

And it was really looking at the evolution of basically women who dated other women on campus, and that is a space and—and informed in part by the—my sense that I just described of coming in, of feeling like, you know, there was a group that was kind of carrying the flag, literally, and a presence on campus. And then all these other women, who identify in a lot of different ways, but basically the commonality is they were dating other women, but they either didn’t identify that way or they weren’t active. And we just sort of wanted to look at what—what is it about social dynamic there, but also how the institution changed.

Because I remember—I remember applying to Dartmouth, and my college counselor, as great and progressive as *she* was, had said to me, like, “Wow! You really want to go to Dartmouth. That’s a really tough place to be a woman.” So even she felt that in 2001.

That just kind of *wasn't* my experience, so I wanted to get at this intersection of why are these groups still somewhat isolated and yet the place is far more progressive than—than I think the reputation it has in certain circles. So we looked at that as a film and did a lot of interviews. Yeah.

CASEY: What did you find?

KERR: We found—I mean, as with any early, like, college work, I feel like a good part of it was like naval gazing, in a sense. Like, you know, here we were, like, women dating other women. We were kind of curious how that space had come about. So some of it was really, like, just relishing and celebrating the—our own space that we were in.

But I think the interesting thread for me was this notion of the work that had been done by groups like the Dartmouth Rainbow Alliance and the alums and that there was this central group that really carved out a space that then others benefited from, and how it had been grown that athletes were feeling comfortable enough to be on their teams or dating their teammates and that then there was an academic space for Women and Gender Studies.

But this notion of needing there to be kind of a point on the front edge of progress and that really that had sat on the shoulders of a few, and the desire, then, to how do you then spread that? So I think about it now in more organizational terms because I work in nonprofits and education institutions of how you scale up social progress. And so that, that, I think is what we really ended up looking at eventually, though all the filming of friends and interviews with friends.

CASEY: Yeah.

Another thing you touched on was being a woman at Dartmouth—

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: —and what your college counselor said. Can you speak to the, like, gender dynamics on campus?

KERR: Yeah, so—yeah, so my counselor had made that comment. My grandmother, who—she died several years ago at ninety-nine, so my grandmother, who was in her late eighties, I guess, at that point when—when I arrived—she was, like, “Oh, Dartmouth!” And even though I had had these cousins who had gone there as well, she was, like, “Dartmouth!” She was just, like,—I just remember that “Dartmouth men—the reputation was they’d just been—they’d spent a little too much time in the woods. Like, are you sure that that’s the place you want to be in?” And I was like, “No, I’m having a great experience.”

Gender dynamics. So, cousins I’d had who’d gone here—I had one cousin who’d gone here in the late seventies, was gay. I don’t think he was out at the time. And then Rosi, who’s a ’97, and her cousin Philip [H. Kerr, Class of 1992]—her brother Philip, my cousin Philip, who was a ’93 [sic; ’92].

CASEY: And what’s Rosi’s full name?

KERR: She’s [Rosalie E.] “Rosi” Kerr.

CASEY: Okay.

KERR: As well. Yeah. They’d had really positive experiences. I think having main- —very mainstream activities, like crew and sports, was a foothold into pretty comfortable gender dynamics in that sense and that it gave—it gave very positive, all female, like, team—literally team and family that wasn’t organized around a house. And I think that made things easier, and when I think about the friends or experiences of friends who really didn’t have that team and felt like they were then funneling right into the Greek system in part to find that sense of community and family and sisterhood, and then slamming into this wall of being, like, “These are fucked up gender dynamics” [chuckles] between houses and the way social spaces are controlled.

So it was—I don’t know. It felt like I was here at a period where it was sort of clear that things weren’t perfect, but it was also—like, good work was being done, but it didn’t feel like it was at a crisis point in any way. It was sort of this time of I guess relative balance around we knew what work had to be done, and it was kind of getting done, where I hear

about the experiences of early alums, who were, like,—I knew what was wrong. There was no way—you know, our numbers were too small or there was too much forceful pushback to actually make any progress. And I came after that, lucky to have kind of come on the shoulders of those who were fighting those kinds of battles.

I think, actually, some of the things that, you know, did creep up around sexual assault—and the group of us that formed Speak Out—it was a core group of four or five of us. And four—I guess it was five, ultimately, with that group. Four of us were queer women. Not all of those women would identify in that way anymore, including one of my ex-girlfriends, who's no longer gay.

But sexual assault and recognizing gender dynamics in that—some of it through a queer lens, but it was—it was much more about sexual assault on campus and some of that happening on campus and some during off-campus programs. And that—that, I think, continues.

And when I think about my current trustee role and the work that the college is engaged in right now, within the context of ongoing litigation, with a lawsuit that's currently under way, but—but also this Campus [Culture and] Climate Initiative. And I've been part of a group that's been working on that, that feels like that's the really pervasive, slippery, tough stuff, and that's—that, to me, is sort of the—and there's a lot baked into that around gender and sexuality, but that—that feels like the bigger kind of issues that it had grown into, whereas my sense of immediate past generations of Dartmouth students, it was much more about kind of this male-female dichotomy and men, through Greek houses, having more power.

I still think that's an issue, but it—I think we understand it as far more complicated and nuanced than at least how it was described to me by the generations that had immediately come before me.

CASEY:

And so then what kind of—how was the work that you did surrounding sexual assault and sexual violence, like, received at the time?

KERR: Yeah. I was—so at the time,—the initial idea—so it was a conversation in Collis, and—over dinner. And we just thought: We want to give voice to this. Everyone—everyone seems to know someone who has a story of assault, and it's either for them—they're the survivor—or there's someone who is a loved one, like a partner, a friend of someone who's had that experience.

How do we give voice to that? Because it felt like there was a lot of programming going on, but there wasn't a space that just gave voice to stories. And we very intentionally didn't want to affiliate it with any particular group or organization. So we did our own fundraising. Like, we didn't want to take sponsorship. And we did it in Collis Common Ground.

And survivors could either read their own stories or submit them and have them read by someone else. And the response was overwhelmingly positive. Collis Common Ground, the space, was just packed. And it was students and faculty who showed up and—and—it must have been in the middle of college, so I think there were two or three years of it while I was here, and then it got, you know, handed off.

And it was just an overwhelmingly positive—and I think because it was unaffiliated with really anything, it allowed students to feel like this is just—it's a human experience, an expression of classmates and friends, that you really got students that I think others would have been surprised to be there: male athletes—I mean, others who thought would be, like, *I'm not sure that this is the right space for me*, but both because we invited them into it to share the story of being, you know, the boyfriend of someone who is a survivor, or others, it really—it—it was powerful, overwhelmingly positive—in its—in its response on campus. Yeah.

CASEY: And so was there a lot of other work surrounding, like, sexual violence at the time?

KERR: Yeah, there was—so the formal relationship with WISE [a Lebanon, New Hampshire-based victims' advocacy and crisis services organization] hadn't happened yet, but the SAP[-G Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergraduates]—there was a lot around sexual assault awareness and

programming and resources that was happening. That, I wasn't as involved with in terms of formal training. You know, I'd done some as an undergraduate advisor and in some of the other roles that I had as a—as a DOC trips leader. But we partnered with friends who were really doing that.

So there was a lot—I mean, a lot of really incredible work that I think has now been amplified, built on and actually kind of formalized in a lot of ways at the college now. I think we need to grow it even more. It's still under-resourced. But that was really happening.

But this notion of breaking through—I mean, I think there's a little bit of a common thread there between—right? I came in and recognized—I felt like DRA was sort of an isolated group. How do you create spaces, not literal spaces but spaces where voices and stories and identities, common people just feel like they're occupying it, not through a group or organization but just as a Dartmouth person.

And that's what I'm really interested in doing, is creating those moments where people feel like they can do that. And then once that has happened, then how do you sustain it over time? And is it groups like DGALA, or it a group like Speak Out being its own thing that helps make that happen? And I think that's probably the core interest. They're bringing people together that way and then sustaining it over time.

CASEY: Yeah. So what is it like now, to have the platform that you do—

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: —on the board?

KERR: Yeah. So I—I'd stayed really involved as an alum. Had led DGALA, had served in Alumni Council, had had a lot of formal leadership roles as well as led a lot of ad hoc initiatives, so I'd stayed really active and not just—again, I felt like I was getting a lot out of it, probably getting out of it more than I felt like I was contributing.

And then in 2015, I was living in Cambridge [Massachusetts], and [William W.] “Bill” Helman [IV, Class of



1980], who was the chair of the board then—he would come through town pretty regularly. He lived in Cambridge and used to live really close to where we were living. So we'd get breakfast pretty regularly, and he—he wrote me once and said, like, "Hey, let's go meet up at Hi-Rise and let's go grab an egg muffin."

And I was seven months pregnant at that point with our first son, William [Kerr], and I knew that we were moving to Florida, because my wife Darcy was done with her residency and the fellowships that she'd done at Mass General [Massachusetts General Hospital], and we were going to work with a mentor of hers who was in the University of Miami Hospital system.

So I'd waddle up the hill, super pregnant, and Bill was there, and he was, like, "Wow! It's true! You've got a lot goin' on!" I was like, "Yeah, I'm very pregnant." And we were chatting about things. We were chatting about Women of Dartmouth, because I was part of the group that got Women of Dartmouth started.

And we were maybe ten minutes into this and he was like, "So, we'd really like you to join the board." I was, like, "Wow!" And it was just not what I was expecting at all. Anyway, you know, he said, "Take some time to think about it if you need to." I said, "Naw, that,—that, I really *don't* need to think about at all. I'm honored." And absolutely it's gonna get a little harder with the kid and a move from, you know, Cambridge, being able to drive two hours up to campus to be in Florida, where it was going to be much more travel. But it felt like a huge honor, and then very quickly it became clear, you know, the sense of responsibility that comes with it.

The board was being very intentional in trying to diversify the trustees. So I was—I think I'm the second-youngest alum to serve as a trustee. I think there was a woman who served in the early eighties or late seventies, who was—I was about ten years out at that point, but was maybe a little bit younger. So they were looking for a younger perspective. You know, I'd worked in higher ed professionally, had done my master's at Harvard in higher ed administration, had stayed involved as an alum, so it—it was clear to me what skills and experience I thought I could bring.

But I was really impressed by the move that the school was making in trying to bring in younger alums or alums that didn't have an undergraduate affiliation. We now have a trustee who—he has no affiliation with Dartmouth. Just to broaden the perspectives.

And it was pretty amazing, feeling welcomed into that group of *really* talented people who'd had these incredible careers, were running big companies, big organizations and shared this common thread of caring about the place and caring about it because it meant so much to them personally as a pretty unique experience.

I feel like I've tried to be very selective in picking projects and involvements that really matter to me, so I served on the Student Affairs Committee, and I serve on the Advancement Committee, so that works with development and alumni relations—again, trying to I think open the door even more to bring people off the sidelines. But it feels important to—to weigh in pretty selectively on that.

I read a piece in grad school which actually Monica [Claman] Higgins, Class of 1986, Tuck 1990], who's a Dartmouth alumna and was one of my favorite professors in grad school, has students do a reading that's about this notion of being a tempered radical, and that resonated for me It's like I really wanted to see progress and change, but I wanted to do it from a—from a place where I kept everyone at the table engaged, and you couldn't kind of dismiss the progress that was being suggested.

And I felt like that—I've had a lot of people respond positively to that, both on the board, students, their ideas and progress that we're trying to push through at the institution when I think about things like Moving Dartmouth Forward and Inclusive Excellence and now the Campus Culture and Climate Initiative that really—if you take a step back, and I think there's all sorts of both support and criticism and folks who were, like, "It's just—it's either just talk" or "It's just being PC [politically correct]."

But you really look at that, and it is an earnest effort to address some of the issues that I think are things that

institutions of higher ed but other places really struggle with. And it feels really good to be part of a leadership team that is very committed to seeing that through and putting these kinds of ideas on the table and recognizing that this is not an end point; this is about making cultural change, where you recognize it is a constant state of evolution. We're never going to arrive at a point where we feel like, "You know, this is it. Perfect community."

But instead, how do you put in place systems that allow for change and allow us to take stock regularly of how are we doing? How is this community doing in terms of thriving or not? Or are members of our community feeling safe and as though they're bringing their full selves to it? That's just been very cool.

And I'm about halfway through, so I'm in year four right now. I think every trustee talks about just the learning curve. Even knowing the place and having had the benefit of being a student, an active alum and having worked here, you're learning a lot, and there's some tough stuff that we wrestle with, both campus issues, complexities around a budget that's related to it. It's a funny business model. So there's a lot about it that I feel like I'm really learning. But it's been tremendously positive and really feels good to come on board and feel as though that perspective is wanted and welcomed and intentionally placed.

But I do still regularly have moments where folks are, like, "You're *how* old?"

CASEY: Mm-hm.

KERR: "You graduated *when*?" So I've had a lot of—a lot of luck and a lot of opportunity to kind of play up in those moments when we're arriving at things or having an opportunity to engage in some work, or sit at a table a lot earlier in—in life and career. It's going to be hard to think about when I—when I do step off the board what kind of comes next? Because it's hard to think about something that could beat or be as meaningful as the experience, and a lot of alums talk about that.

CASEY: Definitely. What changes have you seen or been involved in since—kind of like observed since you graduated—

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: —from Dartmouth, or involved in, or was proud of?

KERR: Yeah. So the—the presence of Triangle House—that feels really important and meaningful, not because I thought personally that it was going to be some, like, be all, end all. But I think just the notion of an institution could respond to what was very clearly student sentiment of “we want a space.” How one then uses that spaces and evolves over time, and who has control of it—that’s ongoing, and that’s for each current generation to figure out.

But the notion that the institution would respond and then there is that—that physical representation of space on campus and that it was an effort between the administration but also Dartmouth alums. Very cool.

It was also really meaningful for me in my time leading DGALA—the work that we did both around scholarships through the Dartmouth College Fund—so at that point, it was for every \$30,000 that was raised for financial aid, a DGALA scholar would be named. So it was a student who—and we were actually, because of the work I’d done at Admissions, we were able to identify students who had self-identified as LGBTQA [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual] and said—we were able to match them up with—with scholarship.

And Sylvia [R.] Racca [Dartmouth Graduate School Class of 2013], who’s the executive director of the Dartmouth College Fund—she had started this already. I came on board. We really put a lot of effort and energy into it, and we had something like eight DGALA scholars for a couple of years in a row. It’s just an incredible fundraising feat. And Sylvia and I actually co-wrote a—an article. It’s a chapter in a book for the professional organization, around advancement and fundraising, really looking at how do you effectively fundraise and support, because I think a lot of institutions haven’t figured out how you, in a truly meaningful way, mobilize on a fundraising front at a queer community.

So that, and the—and the connection between alums supporting financially for students, and then also the Bourne Fund, which was named for [Rosita L.] “Rose” Bourne [Class of 2003], who’s a student who was—I can’t remember her year, exactly. She would have been 2000—it was in existence before—before I was a student and then certainly before I’d gotten involved.

But the Fund had been established with the help of Pam Misener and the DGALA leadership at the time, and it was meant to be an emergency fund, and it was there, that if a student needed it, so if a student came out and was financially cut off from—from parents, that fund would step in and help ensure that the student had housing, clothes, but had enough money to—to continue on and finish the Dartmouth education.

And we ended up using—having to activate the fund a couple of times when I was leading DGALA. And both in seeing how important the fund was to the students that it helped but also how quickly alums mobilized to help a current student, and not just DGALA alums. There are a couple of moments where I’d be presenting about it or—or would make mention on a panel at Alumni Council or some forum that *really* covered a full range of Dartmouth alumni.

And inevitably, I would have alums from the fifties—I don’t think there was anyone older than that, but I can think of a couple of alums from the fifties, who came up to me afterward and said, “I am so moved, and that is so Dartmouth to me.” And they’re, like, you know, “I’m a crusty old white guy, and I’m not gay. I don’t have any gay kids. But I’m just so moved, and it feels so Dartmouth to me.” That they would personally write checks to support it.

CASEY: Wow.

KERR: And some of that that I did—you know, making things real in very human terms in a way that was meaningful and moving to alums across generations, probably some of those alums who probably had an issue with women even coming here, was just very cool.

CASEY: Yeah.

KERR: So that—that evolution of how the broader Dartmouth community has found ways to support its current students and future alumni has been some of the most meaningful stuff. And that's painting it all very positive pictures. I don't—you know, I'm still in touch with students now, and I understand that it's not an easy thing I think for anyway, but for some more than other, to be a queer student at Dartmouth now. I don't—I don't believe that that's the case, but—but recognizing just how much has changed and—and the number of people from very different experiences and different places in life have wanted to be part of that. That, to me,—I'm, like, that's cool. That's what makes me hopeful for things, and that's what I think sustains a place like Dartmouth to keep being a place or an institution and a community that people want in on, even when, you know, they've had bad experiences along the way. Yeah.

CASEY: So something that you mentioned—

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: —and I didn't get a chance to touch on was allowing students to self-identify—

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: —in their applications.

KERR: Yeah.

CASEY: What was that process?

KERR: Yeah. Yeah. So that was probably around 2007, give or take. It's amazing how quickly one's memory kind of like fades into general sense, but I can sort of place—it must have been around 2007. I was working the Admissions Office, and there had been a movement by Campus Pride, which is an organization that Shane [L.] Windmeyer was leading. And they had run a campus climate index and had written a book that identified different resources on campuses. And there was this kind of grassroots movement to try to make it possible for students to self-identify.

And work had been done with lobbying the Common Application to add an option—the Common Application actually took a vote at that time and decided they *didn't* want to add it as an identity box, which was really frustrating because there was a lot of—we—I was working with Shane and Dartmouth, and then I had a colleague at Penn [University of Pennsylvania]. So it was really these three organizations. We really lobbied hard, had gotten others on board. For us on campus, it really was an issue of access.

So students saying, “I want more information. I want resources.” If you think about the Office of Pluralism and Leadership, and Pam Misener was, like, “I can't even figure out who are the students I'm supposed to be helping.” You know, my counterparts who work with black and African-American students—students can choose to self-identify a race an ethnicity box. I can't do that.

So I felt like there was a really strong case for it. Common App passed on it at that point. When I worked in Admissions. It was under two deans, Karl [M.] Furstenberg and Maria Laskaris [Class of 1984], who's a—she's a Dartmouth alumna. Terrific professionals, who I think were really sort of visionary in how they ran parts of the process.

And Dartmouth had a supplement to the Common Application. At that point, we made the decision to put it on that box. And then it was interesting to dig into it, of not just giving students an option to identify their own sexual orientation but it felt important, both for the students' safety—and this was responding a lot to what our student advisory group that we put together—said, “Look, I would probably not share it with my parents, but if they saw it for some reason, for it to be—have the allied identity in there is kind of important. It kind of gives me some cover.”

And other students, who said, “Look, I—I am, like, a total, hard-core ally, and I lead my student—my high school's Gay-Straight Alliance. Like, I'm not queer, but, you know, I would really want to be active in that community and get plugged in.”

Led us to create an option where students could self-identify with the LGBTQA community. And then we were always really careful—again, in response to student input—of putting disclaimers on any messages that were sent out. That’s said, “If you’ve received this in error,”—so that students felt like they had a safe option, in case a parent or a guardian or a counselor or someone came across it, that they weren’t out, too.

CASEY: Yeah.

KERR: It was pretty cool. Other things have changed since then, but it was—it was really important. A lot of the students that were involved with that then have become really active leaders in the alumni community, are off doing really cool social justice work now. And I think those experiences early on, of feeling you actually can enact change that has a national—

So Dartmouth and Penn were really leading. A lot of other institutions then followed suit. And *The New York Times*—a lot of press picked up on it, because I think it was that—thinking about broader national climate that I—that sense of being able to identify or self-identify and actually be counted.

CASEY: Yeah.

KERR: And the nation realizing this is not just students or people down the line; there are high school students who were, like, —“I’m so beyond it”—like, “I’d come out in middle school. I want there to be resources. I don’t want to miss some portion of my high school or college experience because I can’t be connected with the resources that I want or the community that I want.”

CASEY: Yeah. Definitely.

No, we’ve covered a lot of ground.

KERR: I know. We’ve covered a lot. I don’t know if—

CASEY: I don’t know. Is there anything else huge—how did you get—first become, like, have a leadership position with DGALA?



KERR:

So one of the—David [M.] Eichman [Class of 1982], who’s a past president of DGALA, and David has won alumni awards. He’s an incredibly loyal Dartmouth alum, very vocal. He and I had—had worked on some projects together while I was an undergrad, and so when I graduated and there was a spot opening up on the DGALA board, David reached out to me and said, “You should really”—you know, “You should consider running.”

He was in town. He had I think had taken me out for coffee. And I thought about it. And there was another—I think Sarah [E.] Burgamy [pronounced BUR\_guh-me], who’s a Class of 2000, was on the board, and [Susanne M.] “Susie” Kandel, who’s also a 2000, was on the board at that point.

But there was a five-year age gap, and early on, those five years feel pretty significant. I was, like, *I don’t know. I’d be really young on there.* And David was very encouraging, and I got plugged in, and then it really—it felt—you know, once one makes the decision to join a group and then you’ve had that first moment of those leadership meetings—and this is true of anything: DGALA board, Dartmouth Board of Trustees. Whatever it is, you have that first moment of engaging with the group and getting a sense of what the culture is like.

And I was immediately, like, *Oh, yeah, this is great. And I can make—make some things happen with connections between alums and students, and alums and Admissions and the administration* because of the position I had at the college and the fact that I was still in Hanover. I thought, *I can really be of service to the organization.*

So that was good. And then sort of one thing leads to the other, and that has been Dartmouth through and through for me, is once you’re sort of plugged into this network, the opportunities to get engaged and lead alumni work, and then also just professional work.

So I went from working for Dartmouth to going to grad school at Harvard. And while I was there, getting—I guess a bit earlier than that, but there was a woman who was a co-founder of the Joyce Ivy Foundation, which is a nonprofit that I led for six years, that helps really high-achieving, lower-

income young women from the middle of the country look at places like Dartmouth. So it gives academic scholarships for these students to go do summer programs.

And Elisa [A.] Ostafin is a Dartmouth '78, and she co-founded it with [Michael S.] "Mike" Pritula [pronounced prih-TOO-luh], who she'd grown up with in Ann Arbor. Mike is a Princeton alum. And I was back in Michigan for a bit, helping grow this college counseling program. And Elisa had said to Mike, "Oh, there's this Dartmouth alumna who's back, and she does admissions stuff. You should talk to her."

So that led into doing projects in graduate school with Mike and the foundation, and then—and then leading it as CEO for those six years. So it was really sort of Dartmouth connections layering on top and putting neat people and opportunities in my past that has felt like it—when the work intersects one way or another, it just kind of naturally builds on itself.

And I've been lucky that higher education and some of the social justice work and nonprofit work—it all kind of overlaps, so it's not as though I was off in—I don't know—banking or whatever and needed to kind of jump back into my Dartmouth role; it was sort of each—each way I turned, it overlapped, and that made it a lot easier to juggle a fuller plate at Dartmouth engagements, because it was helping me in other areas of life as well, so it was sort of building.

CASEY: Mm-hm.

KERR: Yeah. Pretty cool. I've got my reunion, my fifteenth reunion coming up this June, and it feels like a different phase of life that we're all sort of entering into, some of it around leadership and people who've built and founded their own companies or are leading things are now serving on boards, and certainly family life at the ten-year reunion, it was—it was amazing the number of little—little kiddos who were running around.

And with—I think I had the fifteen-year coming up. It's both really neat to think about connecting with classmates and thinking about some of the impact we've having as a class from a leadership level, both—we've endowed a scholarship

for entrepreneurship. We're the youngest class to have done that. We—we launched and ran this '05-'15 mentoring program that has now spread into other classes. And—and so we're serving on boards, and we're leading things.

But also we've got families in tow, and I'm—I'm really excited—I'm doing it in any formal way, though I'm sitting on the DGALA board of advisers now, but I think this next wave is going to be how do we better serve Dartmouth and DGALA families and that next generation. There's already lots of Dartmouth alums from prior generations, who've got kids that are of college age or beyond. They're there. But I think we're now, just because of the way that politics and marriage equality has—has passed in this country, that you've got all these little DGALA rug rats that are running around, that I'm really excited for that phase of how can the institution serve queer families as they're making decisions about family, growing families, wills—I mean, all sorts of stuff like that that feels like that's the next kind of wave of what's coming up and a way in which Dartmouth can continue to be really relevant for alums as their lives grow and change.

CASEY: Yeah. What's it been like to move your family up here and have your—

KERR: Yeah, it's crazy. It was definitely a really big move. But it's—it's so neat to be back here. You know, I have—I have moments, walking across campus, where I'm suddenly—because when I—when I walk across campus now, having stayed involved with Dartmouth and living and working here in different ways, it—it actually rarely feels like the place that it was for me as an undergrad. I just have all these other memories that are layered on top of it.

But occasionally I'll have moments where I'm just, like, suddenly struck by a moment from undergrad. And I'm having more of those now that I'm here, walking across campus, which is both really cool and recognizing that my family will get to grow up here.

And I did a lot with youth when I was here. You know, I nannied for a family. Michael [F.] Wagner, who's the CFO for the college—I've nannied for his family, and his kids are now college students and high school students, and they're

godparents to my kids, and we actually live in the same neighborhood, and so there's a lot of full circleness about it. And in a lot of ways, it's felt like Dartmouth—I consider Dartmouth a place that I've grown up, just as much as the actual places where I grew up as a kid.

So it's really neat to be raising family and having my kids experience, you know, the bonfire. My three-and-a-half-year-old, William—when we go by the [Dartmouth] Green, he'll say, like, “There's the Baker[-Berry Library]”—

CASEY: [Chuckles.]

KERR: —or “There's the Hanover Inn,”—

CASEY: [Chuckles.]

KERR: —which—he thinks we used to live at the Hanover Inn, because I would travel up to board meetings, and I was nursing, so I would—I had William. He traveled with me, and I would step out of board meetings and be breast feeding—

CASEY: [Chuckles.]

KERR: —in all sorts of different parts of campus, and various ways—and the Hanover Inn and the Dartmouth community was really welcoming in celebrating those Dartmouth babies. So that's really cool. I think there's part of me that's probably a little bit sad in that I think it is unlikely that my kids might go to Dartmouth. Having grown up here, I had great friends at Dartmouth who grew up in the area and went to Dartmouth and had a good experience, but it just seems like it gets a little less likely if this is the place you grew up, but I just hope they find cool communities. And I'm excited to see the place through their eyes as kids growing up and knowing the place, as opposed to just arriving here as an—as an eighteen-year-old.

CASEY: Yeah.

KERR: We'll see. And I'm excited to get reconnected with Dartmouth students again, being here more regularly and just being able to show up and participate in events, somewhat in a formal trustee or alum capacity, but also just

as a community member and hopefully have them get to know my kids, and kids knowing them, and maybe, to some extent, being at least one, you know, possibility model out there that I—that I can remember wanting to see, sort of just examples of what life might be like down the line—

CASEY: Yeah.

KERR: —as a college student. So I would be thrilled to do that and have the current generation of Dartmouth students have a hand in raising and influencing how our kids approach the world.

CASEY: Yeah, definitely.

KERR: Yeah. pretty cool.

CASEY: Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

KERR: I don't think so. Yeah, I think we've covered—we've really covered a lot. It's such a cool project, and I—Brendan [M.] Connell [Jr., Class of 1987], who I think was really a terrific instigator in getting it going, I have great respect for. Brendan and I served as president and vice president of DGALA for a long time, and I think Brendan's been just right in that within each phase of leadership, there are particular points of focus, and I think during my tenure we spent a lot of time focused on the undergraduate experience, and Brendan has done this incredible job of creating spaces and bringing, you know, voices and chances to capture some of those voices of alums.

CASEY: Yeah.

KERR: So it feels very cool to get to participate in the project.

CASEY: Great. Well, thank you so much.

KERR: Yeah. Thank you for doing it!

CASEY: It was such an honor to get to interview you!

KERR: Good. Yeah, it's great to get to meet *you*.

[End of interview.]