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# When Assessment is Surveillance

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**Bucknell: Occupied**

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**JT:** Good evening and welcome to Bucknell: Occupied, here on 90.5 WVBU Lewisburg. This is DJ Anaris, and I am in the studio tonight with Steve Jordan, a Professor from the Bucknell biology department. So welcome to the studio, Steve.

**SJ:** Hi there and thanks for having me.

**JT:** Thanks for coming in. So we have a very engaging topic tonight, it is the topic of surveillance and assessment. Specifically on the University campus, and even more specifically with respect to faculty. So we're thinking through some recent events on campus concerning the way in which faculty here are evaluated the way that factors into decisions made about their retention and promotion and ways that surveillance is kind of baked into that system. So we'll sort of break that apart and particularly for those of you who are tuned in tonight who may not be part of the University campus, and may wonder why all of this matters so much. So for people like you, those of you who listen, but are not faculty or acquainted with the review procedures in place. Basically once a faculty member is hired on the tenure track, they go through several rounds of review in which they are assessed for the kinds of scholarship they've produced, the ways that they've contributed to their larger academic community. The way their teaching has played out here on the campus, and then the kinds of service that they've done. So typically that assessment's done every two years and the third time around is the tenure assessment in which a faculty member is either promoted to associate with a more or less permanent position here, or in fact fired at that particular.

**SJ:** Basically fired. Fired with a smile, though because they let people stay a full year after getting the bad news. Actually a little more than a full year after getting the bad news.

[CROSSTALK]

**JT:** Is that true? More than a full year?

**SJ:** Well, I suppose that for tenure you'd find out in March, right, or February.

**JT:** Yeah, you usually find out in February.

**SJ:** You'd stay until the following May, so... 14 months. Which is really generous and, frankly, a bit tricky in terms of the institution's needs, because some of those folks are very upset, and justifiably so.

**JT:** Right.

**SJ:** And can actually do damage during that time.

**JT:** Yeah. So to just really start with the basics, Steve, like what's the point of reviewing faculty? Right. Like why is this even a practice that happens on a university campus?

**SJ:** So I'm not a scholar of this, I'll say that to start with.

**JT:** Fair enough.

**SJ:** I haven't studied it, and I haven't spent a lot of time thinking professionally or systematically or carefully about it, but I have a lot of impressions after sixteen years here.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** About it, and I think that there's a notion that quality needs to be controlled, and high-quality and high standards need to be supported, and enforced through carrots or sticks.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And I suppose the review process is... in my mind it's sort of on that basic sort of human level of... what's that hierarchy of needs. You know...

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** It's like eating and sleeping sort of level motivation to make us good at our job or to convince us to be good players in the system that we're part of. And I think a lot of it is driven from the Board of Trustees.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** of Bucknell. Who come from many times out of a corporate world where, you know, a catch phrase like you're fired is seen as a badge of honor or machismo or courage or something. And... it doesn't play out very well when you have sort of lifetime employees, people with tenure, who it's very hard to ever fire after they get tenure.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** The system is pretty black-and-white in a way that... Where I see a lot of need for shades of gray that aren't as present as they could be.

**JT:** MmHm. And what are the kinds of data typically used to assess faculty?

**SJ:** You know, for years -- I love my department -- and for years every paragraph -- most paragraphs -- in the departmental review of faculty starts with "Students say that this course is XYZ, students say..." And when I served on that committee I pushed really hard to evaluate faculty teaching using other metrics like their statement of how teaching is going or look at their syllabus or assignments that they give. And to look to student's comments sort

of as a last resort or a last piece of evidence, to assess the quality of teaching. To be totally blunt about it, I don't know that we have very good ways of assessing teaching on campus.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** I mean, to me the ultimate metric of teaching effectiveness would be learning. So we sort of need pre and post tests or something like that. What... I mean, what do you think?

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** How do we assess how good teaching is?

**JT:** Right, yeah, I mean, currently. You know, just to give people a sense, right. Currently, we think about like student evaluations.

**SJ:** Yeah. Yeah.

**JT:** Right? And that's a whole tricky area that we can talk about.

**SJ:** That's what I was talking about a second ago "students say..."

**JT:** Exactly. "Students say" and the way in which students are asked what it is thatthey think and the way in which students respond is very much, sort of, deriving just as much from their experience in the course as it is from their preoccupations and preconceptions about the professor.

**SJ:** Yeah, not only their experience in the course, but their experience in the last ten days of the course, their experience on their most recent graded assignment, their personal feeling, their level of mental and physical health during the final weeks of the semester, before they fill out an evaluation of teaching.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** All those things affect quality scores that they give to teachers, as does the fact that they're anonymous, and so these students now have grown up entirely in a culture of anonymous Internet reviews.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And they're very comfortable absolutely flaying people anonymously.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** And so sometimes the comments just aren't that useful if they're angry about their grade or angry about the way that you dress or angry about your politics.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** You know, they can completely miss the substance of the teaching experience they've had.

**JT:** Yeah, I mean, from your knowledge, are our teaching evaluations correlated at all with quality of instruction and learning outcomes or the degree to which students actually progressed in a course?

**SJ:** I suppose there might be a loose correlation, like if you did an R-squared like a regression, you'd have an R-squared of like point three or something. I don't... I don't... I haven't looked at the data. But I do know that there are many many ways that they are biased and misleading. Bias against against women.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Bias against faculty of color. Bia- you know, if I as a white man act as a certain way in the classroom, and a woman acts that same way we would be evaluated differently.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Usually in ways that would not be fair to her. So... You know, I think evaluations are useful for capturing gross outliers, you know, people who are really phoning it in or doing horrible things in the classroom or... But to me the question that becomes interesting then is "what are the... we hired these people after many of our colleagues at Bucknell were hired from pools of candidates that entered the hundreds. So 130, 150, even 200 people apply for job, and we hire one of them.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And so we've established that these are high-caliber scholars and citizens and people compassionate, fine, conscientious, smart. So if someone is having a rough time, and we see that through a teaching evaluation, the more interesting question to me than "how can we punish them through cutting their pay or making them feel insecure in their job" is "how can we support them and help them through what may be a rough patch?" A tough period of their life and what support can we offer them?

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** I changed the subject there a little bit.

**JT:** No, no, you're good, you're good. I mean, I think we've done a good job of sketching out how there's for faculty who receive tenure, right? And remain on campus after that point. There's really kind of two worlds of assessment that they inhabit, right? The first one is the pre-tenure world of assessment, right, which is is grueling in its own kind of ways but but is building up to this this very rewarding position. But then there's the world that you're talking about, right? Which is the world of assessment that continues following tenure, which is quite grueling, but which has few if any rewards attached to it.

**SJ:** Wow, that's a good. I mean, yeah, I mean... last year I went up for and got a promotion to full professor, which is the final promotion I'll receive in my career, hopefully. I don't have

any intention of going for anything. And that was nice, it felt like a real vote of confidence to have the institution tell me I was worthy of that title and position and that trust.

**JT:** Congratulations, by the way.

**SJ:** And there was a raise with that, so the stakes were low low low low and then super high and now low low low low, forever.

**JT:** Yeah.

**SJ:** You know, I'll be... whatever evaluation happens for the rest of my career will be the question between a 2% raise and a 2.5% raise.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** Probably. Not always, but it gets pretty arcane to talk about when it wouldn't be.

**JT:** Yeah.

**SJ:** But what I was talking about might even apply more to people who haven't gotten tenure yet. You know, it's very stressful to have... A lot of our colleagues have young families.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** The administration likes to say that Lewisburg is a cheap place to live, a low-cost of living, sure it is compared to Palo Alto or compared to Manhattan, but it's not compared to Milton or compared to Mifflinburg. To raise a child in Lewisburg, where taxes are higher, where there's a premium on the trades that we get at our homes, like, I know the plumbers and electricians, I've seen them do it. Jack the price by 50% if they know you're from Lewisburg, a lot of young families that... especially single-income families at Bucknell are stretched financially, and there's a lot of stress coming with this big push to tenure as well.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And student evaluations, which often drive those young faculty members into... and I've heard many, many of them tell me this in confidence, that they make decisions to give higher grades, to be nicer, to bring donuts to class.

**JT:** Mmm. MmHm.

**SJ:** And to really compromise some of their academic and intellectual integrity to get through this rough patch. And that's where I think it would be interesting to have support built into this system that we don't have right now.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Beyond... or that we may have, but we don't systematically or effectively do across campus.

**JT:** MmHm. And I mean, I think one of the reasons that we've been circling around this issue of teaching and teaching evaluation so much is because this is still a campus which puts its emphasis on teaching. Right? It used to be a place that required professors to do...

**SJ:** Right.

**JT:** More teaching than they do now, it used to be a 3-3 load and now it's a 2-3 load. .

**SJ:** Meaning 5 courses a year.

**JT:** Exactly, 5 courses a year, right.

**SJ:** Which seems really low to a high school teacher or something, I appreciate that. I think that my colleagues and friends and loved ones who teach in the public schools work really really hard.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** As hard as we do.

**JT:** Right. Of course they do.

**SJ:** But to teach five courses a year effectively, and to do all the other things which you were just getting at -- the research and the services.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** It's more than a full-time job if you want to do it well.

**JT:** So particularly for people who haven't achieved tenure yet, right? Who are working towards it, like in your mind, having already lived through that, having many colleagues, right, go through that process. Like what would be better ways of continuing to assess faculty, but in a way that was supportive to them. Rather than something that was being used in punitive sense?

**SJ:** You know, I can't overstate the esteem I hold my colleagues on this campus. Having served on many campus committees and seeing the care, and thoughtfulness, and sheer work that our colleagues put into their courses. And so I sort of reject out of hand the notion that they need correcting.

**JT:** Hmm.

**SJ:** That they need some sort of punishment or even or even a raise to motivate them to do better.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** There's a lot of integrity on this campus in the way people approach their jobs. And so to me -- I've thought about this a lot -- and I feel like we have a stable of thoroughbreds here, and forgive that comparison, but it sorta works for me, like, some some of the finest performers at what they do in the world, in my opinion on our faculty here. And yet when we pass through periods of depression or through periods of insecurity, it's very rare -- in fact in my experience it's never happened -- someone in a position of power with resources to bring to bear has brought me or any of my colleagues in and said "what can I do to help? what can we do to make you the most successful, effective person at this institution you can be? And I... I... It's been a long time since I worked outside academia, but I imagine good managers out in the world in many different fields are doing that kind of thing. Are looking at the skill set of their employees, and saying "how can I help this person feel valued and fulfilled..."

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And reach their potential as an employee by giving them tasks and giving them strategies that are suited to their strengths and not giving them tasks and strategies that are not suited, that are... not giving them things they're not suited to do.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And so for years, I've thought it... what does Bucknell have? Our budget... I'm just trying to remember, a couple hundred million bucks a year. Why don't we hire a few professional coaches? You know... wouldn't it be interesting to have a coaching office where we could go in and set goals with someone who is trained as a professional to coach high-performing employees, and help them set goals, and help them think about their strengths and weaknesses systematically, and devise strategies to be successful in this job. Never happens here. Never happened to me. No one's ever suggested to me that it happened. I came out of a PhD where I had no training... virtually no training in teaching... and was thrown into a classroom and somehow survived it.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** But but think about that. You're gonna hire someone at a relatively high salary with very generous benefits, and so on and say "uh... we have this job for you to do, and we're not going to give you any inclination or teaching or indication of how to do the job." It's crazy, frankly.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** To have a resource... a world-class resource like our faculty are... and to not support them with keen, effective smart management.

**JT:** So you are tuned into Bucknell: Occupied here on 90.5 to WVBU, Lewisburg. We're talking about assessment, particularly assessment of faculty on the campus. If you have a question for either myself or my guest in the studio. Feel free to give us a call. The number here is 570.577.3489. So if we're thinking about this issue of how faculty could be supported, I think the flip side to that, to me, is is why is it that faculty are treated in the way that they are? Right? So why is it that the University treats faculty as untrustworthy

members of the campus community? Right? And what are some of the ways in which that's made visible to faculty?

**SJ:** That's a great question and I'm kinda raising my eyebrows at you because I'd like to hear what you think about it. I don't know why, but in my 15 years here, I've seen... seen case after case of official policy that does treat us as untrustworthy.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** While at the same time giving us enormous amounts of freedom and trust in other domains, so it's kind of in stupid little areas sometimes that it seems like we're not trusted, and honestly I don't know why. Things have changed a lot in the last few years since we professionalized our HR, specialized meaning having a VP of HR who is a lovely person. Who I know as an individual and think highly of, but who has brought a very corporate mindset to the way that HR is managed on this campus. In a way that may breed insecurity and help have individual groups of people feel either privileged or underprivileged compared to others in a way that didn't really exist before.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** So this quote-unquote professionalization of our HR doesn't feel that good to some of us who've been here a long time.

**JT:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean... I think certainly there's... there's the corporate aspect of this, right? That you've talked about both in the professionalization of HR, but then... you just look at the background of so many people on the Board of Trustees, right. They're people coming from a corporate environment who understand this place as something to be run, maybe not like a corporation, but akin to a corporation. You know, and that shows up in all kinds of ways, right? From the way in which assessment is practiced, to the way in which faculty voices are disregarded when it comes to larger, more substantive issues of how this campus is going to be run, what the social environment will be like, how resources are allocated, right? These are all decisions that we are expected to participate in to a limited degree, but then excluded from actual substantive participation in.

**SJ:** Yeah, it's going to be interesting to see what the administration does with the strategic planning documents that were written by the four strategic planning working groups last semester. I was on one of those working groups and we worked really hard at...

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** I think we met over 50 hours over the semester, and came up with a document I feel actually quite proud of. I didn't go to the forum the day that reviewed where the process is now and where it is headed, but I looked at the slides. And the slides that summarized, that are relevant to my working group are paltry, are shockingly incomplete compared to the nuanced and deep document that we came up with...

[CROSSTALK]

**JT:** Can you give one, like was there one particularly striking example to you of the discrepancies?

**SJ:** Well, off the top of my head, not really. Some of what we did maybe a legitimate... a legitimate response to that maybe some of what we did kind of verged into the tactics. Our charge was very tactical--what programs were working, what programs aren't working--and I have strong opinions about that. And our group came up with some really good examples and ideas of what kinds of things we can support and not support. And maybe the document that came out the other day was... simply didn't as a summary slide, didn't have the ability to catch that nuance. I hope that's in the final, the final report.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** They've got a lot to work with, and if they ignore the good work that our colleagues did, it's going to be very discouraging.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm. But I meant that again, I think... those of you tuning in that are aware of the strategic planning process understand it as being a large commitment that was put on members of this campus, right? They were expected to do as you said upwards of 50 hours of work on this particular document. Take decent amount of heat from other people on campus about how that should go. And are at this point, I'm assuming you haven't been consulted on the shape of the final report.

**SJ:** No, and I won't be, right? Cause it's out of the... it's moved onto the steering committee and the executive committee now.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And the document that we wrote, of course, hasn't been made public, and so no one will be able to read except us that wrote it will be able to compare what we wrote to what the final, uh, document says.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** Yeah. Yeah.

**JT:** Yeah.

**SJ:** There are a lot of ways I feel the erosion of trust, just even from simple things like having to read... before the student evaluations are given--the blank forms are given to students on the last day of the semester, there's a statement that has to be read only by proctor. And things have to be signed to prove that you didn't read it yourself, and that you were out of the room and that you didn't cheat and all of this nonsense. I'm aware of quite a few faculty who just ignore that stuff and give out their own student evaluations and sign whatever they need to sign. Maybe that's a privilege of tenure. Things like that feel like a lack of trust, and I'm sure there are others that I'm not thinking of.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm. And so, one of the current debates on this campus is a particular program that's being introduced to help -- as its introducers have talked about -- managed

the review process, and in particular we're talking here about the process of reviewing faculty after they receive tenure, right? So collection of merit review data, so this particular database is something called Activity Insight. It's a program that's currently being used by a significant number of universities. Penn State is using it, other large universities are using it. Obviously our discerning listeners will understand that shorthand is AI. This particular database promises to collect and collate faculty information for the purposes of -- as the website says "streamlining review, helping universities quote sail through accreditation, and improve their marketing efforts." So this is something that was recently introduced to the campus on a large scale, but I think it, as you and I were talking about before we went on the air, it's something with a bit of a longer history so I'm wondering if you could catch us up on that.

**SJ:** Well I know very little about AI, about Activity Insight.

**JT:** UhHuh, yeah.

**SJ:** I, I, after it became sort of... came to the fore the other day, I looked in my email to see when I first heard about it. And there was an email from 2015 saying that in 2013, the University began moving towards purchasing this program, 2015 they said Management and Engineering were going to begin using it first, and then I... I keep all my emails... then there's nothing for four years. Literally for four years. So that email was March 15, and I got nothing until January of '19 about Activity Insight.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** I haven't seen it, haven't used it. Not interested in it, don't need to use it. I have a CV that I update when I publish new papers and teach new courses, and mentor new students, and serve on new committees, and edit new journals, and review new papers. And I'm really good at updating my CV, which is like a resume for an academic. I think it's... I loved it when you read a minute ago that it would help us "sail through accreditation." Well that'll be news to the really dedicated and hard-working team that led our last accreditation process and who put in thousands of dollars. If we can cut that to just pushing a button. It reminds me to that episode of The Office, where where Michael Scott started his own paper company, and the numbers aren't adding up, and he tells the accountant "run those numbers again," and he's like "it's a spreadsheet, buddy." He says "go ahead and run 'em again," and he like pushes the Enter buttton "yep, they didn't change!" I mean, but if it becomes that easy we just have to push a button... It's just a joke, right? Like... it makes me really suspicious. Like I don't need help doing my CV, don't tell me... It kinda bugs me that... I love my faculty colleagues, but I... it kinda bugs me that they're giving me this BS line that I need help doing my CV, and so we need to buy this probably high 5/low 6 or who knows figure.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** Many thousands of dollars for this extensive software package. I mean, it makes me nervous because the implementation this past year of another new program--the Workday program has been a morale buster.

**JT:** Yes.

**SJ:** So our colleagues who are not professors, who are staff members, who are often very lowly paid, and even often have trouble making ends meet, have been treated really poorly through this Workday transition. And are now required to punch in and punch out in ways that are not at all suited to the work that they do.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And I worry that Activity Insight is bringing that kind of an attitude to the faculty.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** I don't understand it. I think you may know more about it than I do, though.

**JT:** Yeah. Well, I mean I can certainly talk a little bit more about the Activity Insight program. But I'd actually, I mean I'd like to pull in what you're bringing up, right, about Workday.

**SJ:** Ok, yeah.

**JT:** Last year, right, staff were informed that Workday would now be the primary platform through which they did their job here, right?

**SJ:** Right.

**JT:** And it it's a platform which you know... encompasses all kinds of different functions but its primary function in the lives of all staff, the thing that brings it together for everybody is the way in which it monitors people's locations in their working hours, right? So this is a program that staff are required to log into on a regular and quite frequent basis during the course of the day. It's something that some staff are only able to log into at their actual desk, meaning that they are required to be physically present at their desk at set periods of time.

**SJ:** Just let me interrupt you to say that's a preposterous notion for a campus like ours. I can't imagine a single job on this campus that has to be done from one location, I can't imagine a single job that can be done from one location. Even the academic assistants for each department are moving around in their buildings and across campus on a regular basis. And so the notion that someone has to be physically in a certain location... You know, I worked in a factory once, and I needed to be standing in my workstation at seven thirty a.m., and I was. This isn't that kind of job... so... so... Yeah... Yeah... I don't have words, it's so disrespectful of our colleagues.

**JT:** Yeah.

**SJ:** And it's been a morale buster. So I was on a planning and budget committee last year as this was being implemented, talked to a lot of staff members across campus--confidentially--and and heard from them about their colleagues from other parts of campus. And had people crying to me about some of the nonsense that was happening with the implementation of Workday. About a loss of overtime hours legitimately earned overtime hours.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** About about just profound sense of betrayal from an institution that they had given a lot to and that they, that they frankly cared about. And I don't think that the morale busting aspect of Workday was ever properly considered, and if it was properly considered then that's even worse, because someone decided "well, I don't really care about morale of the staff." And that's shocking and a big bummer. I don't think it reflects the value of what I hope our institution is.

**JT:** MmHm. You're listening to Bucknell: Occupied here on 90.5 to WVBU Lewisburg. If you want to join the conversation give us a call 570.577.3489. So a program like Workday, right, is not something that only applies to staff who work at desk, right? Academic assistants, people in student affairs, etc. but in fact is is now being used by facilities staff as well, right?

**SJ:** Right, right.

**JT:** So staff who come to work between 4:30 and 5 in the morning. They work through the morning and they leave in the early afternoon. They are often reassigned with very little notice from one building to another during the course of the day. Nonetheless, they're expected to maintain their profile on this particular program. So one thing that happens over the course of the Summer, is that different stations were installed in different buildings where staff would -- facility staff -- would be required to, in fact, login, right? Much like you see workers in the supermarket, right? Having to mark their progress through the store as they work through the aisles. In fact facilities staff are now having to do the same things.

**SJ:** Oh, as they do rounds. Oh, so like the watchman at the plywood mill I worked at as a teenager, he would have to punch in to 15 different spots around the building to make sure  [indiscernible].

**JT:** Yeah. Yeah.

**SJ:** he wasn't dozing in the breakroom. Which... sometimes he did anyway. Nice guy.

**JT:** So... as someone who has been here before this kind of program is implement, and who's now here, what is your sense of... what is the point of a program like Workday, right? Why, why implement something like that?

**SJ:** I love that you asked me that question, because I have no freaking idea. Like, you want me to get in the head of like Senior Administration?

**JT:** Yes! Yes, I do! I do!

**SJ:**  Do they think that we're being ripped off by these people who we're paying nine bucks an hour? You know... what is starting salary here for facilities work, I would guess that it's under ten, and so "Oh god forbid that they rip us off!" Never mind the fact that at an NCAA meeting in Manhattan representatives of Bucknell are going to have $500 steaks, let's make sure that the guy pushing a broom...

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** ...isn't three minutes late. Is it that?

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Because if it is that, then I hate you, right? Like I hate the person that thinks that that's important. Sorry, I... [laughs] I warned you. No, really, we gotta be better than that, right? Where are the bonuses for these folks? In my department, we we all contribute -- the faculty -- all contribute money before Christmas, that is then distributed as a cash gift to the employees in our department, and it's... they're... it's heartbreaking. I can't even really talk about it, it makes me so uncomfortable, and such a bummer, because it's not as much as it should be. Where are the nice holiday bonuses for these staff who are getting up at four in the morning and leaving their kids to get ready for school on their own?

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And who, one of them was crying to me after the implementation of Workday, cause this person didn't have enough money for her granddaughter's birthday party. You know? I just don't get it. I feel like I'm part of a, a, amoral, impersonal machine.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** That's treating people this way, and it hasn't historically been this way, right? When I got here, there was much more of a feeling of camaraderie and respect across job titles and across campus.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** I hope I'm not making that up, I think that was real.

**JT:** Right. So I mean, if we look at Workday as a key example of a top-down program that is attempting to treat a large number of employees on this campus in the same way, right? And basically in a way of surveilling them, controlling their time, and making them all feel like they're being watched, right?

[CROSSTALK]

**SJ:** You know what's interesting about that, yeah... I see where you're heading. Then mine's probably a secondary consideration. It's more about the surveillance. It's almost like... I don't know, it's almost like having a camera, closed-circuit camera, watching someone in jail cell, so, just so that they're, have that level of discomfort. I don't know who gets their jollies off of that. I don't know why that would be interesting to someone who would make that decision. But it is hard to imagine it's really about money.

**JT:** MmHm. No, I mean, I think, you know, fine, there's going to be a monetary argument that could be offered to explain it, but it is very much about controlling the workforce, and controlling a workforce by controlling information that not only do they have access to, but that's gathered about them.

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**SJ:** Yeah, and through fear as well.

**JT:** MmHm. So I mean, one thing that's been suggested, as as people have been kind of thinking through this new program Activity Insight is that it is the Workday for faculty, right? It's a program -- not one that we would be required to log into on a regular basis throughout the day -- but one that effectively we are expected to do that, right? By continually updating our profile, continually adding new information, being pushed to make sure that it's it's always in a state of maximum preparation.

**SJ:** Well, so yeah, I'm really concerned, you know, I've had very productive years, and I've had years that were less recognizably productive, because I've been changing my study system for example.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And so I need to do more background work, and be off-campus more, and so I put off publications for a couple years, and then I have a year where I have a couple publications come through. And if, well, yeah... if they're tracking... it was interesting... if they're tracking that over time, it's going to be hard to show consistent, constant progress.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** For many of us on campus, but even more acutely for people who are in disciplines where the primary products are major works of art, or, or, or books, as opposed to small journal articles.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** I can sit with the right dataset, and write a journal article that will get published if I can focus for two weeks, I can write that up, probably. There's no book I can write in two weeks, you know, and many of our colleagues on campus are writing important books that take many years. How does that factor into Activity Insight? Got no idea. I don't understand how this program is helpful.

**JT:** MmHm. Yeah, I mean it certainly seems to be serving a similar function in terms of gathering data in categories that have been determined not by the people who are submitting the data, right, but by the Corporation that's designed the program, and in this case, the institution's purchased that program.

**SJ:** Yeah... And I'm concerned about the impersonal face of it.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Again, sort of the the box checking rather than talking to a human being and writing a narrative and talking to someone who is compassionate who is able to look at my narrative, and say, and say "I see what you're struggling with and I see where your strengths are... let me help you feel valued and fulfilled" and generate a plan that will keep you and the

institution happy moving through the next three or four years.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Seems far less likely that that's going to happen now. Even though that isn't what's happening right now anyway, but it will become less likely with sort of a mechanized process.

**JT:** Yeah.

**SJ:** Yeah.

**JT:** So one thing that you brought up earlier in the conversation is the role played by several of our colleagues in in bringing these programs into use, right. Whether it's Workday and Workday receiving faculty support either directly through the governance process -- the shared governance process -- or indirectly through simply not protesting on behalf of staff colleagues, right. So we have that that kind of complicity and then there's certainly some faculty on this campus who have helped to bring Activity Insight, and the larger problems that it represents into into focus, right... into practice. What are your thoughts on that, right? What's the relationship between shared governance, right and faculty's role in shared governance, and then the way in which faculty end up facilitating larger institutional processes?

**SJ:** I have strong opinions about this and I probably shouldn't say them on the radio, but being me, I probably will. First of all, I feel like our colleagues, I have a ton of respect for the service given by our colleagues, even those with whom I disagree. There are a lot of conscientious, hard-working, altruistic people on this campus. I think that my experience on faculty committees is that, we are, we are, we are more concerned about being nice than representing values that we find important. For example, last year I served on the planning and budget committee when Workday was being implemented, and we had some very heated conversations about it in August and September at our first meeting. And I was told to knock it off, that we would get to that stuff later, that I'd have a chance to ask HR who was in the room what the goals of this program were and why it was being implemented when it was so clearly harmful to the morale and financial well-being of some of our colleagues, and then I never... the faculty leading that committee never gave me a chance, never gave us a chance to have those hard conversations as the year progressed.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** Even though I reminded them, I was told to play nice. Told to look out for the higher institutional needs, and not just, not just represent my, my department, or a subset of people on the campus, and to support the higher institutional needs meant buying into a particular paradigm of what Bucknell is, how Bucknell should succeed moving forward, which which very clearly for the last seven or eight years has been to emphasize management and engineering at the expense of Arts and Sciences programs. Again, I love my colleagues in those two colleges, wonderful people. It's... they've gotten a lot of resources and a lot of attention in the last eight years at the expense of other colleagues I care about. And so that was troubling to me. I think there's a phenomenon on the Bucknell campus of faculty being in positions of governance very quickly, giving up... Giving up's not

the right word... Excited to be at the table with the big boys and girls, you know, with strangers and frankly carrying their water with a smile. After a few months in those the board and the administrators, and frankly carrying their water with a smile after a few months in those positions. And it really bothers me. I voted against something in planning and budget, I voted against every faculty and staff pay raise for the entire time I was on the committee. And I was the only person on that committee who voted against the salary increases as they were presented to us. I voted against them because I thought we were being given inaccurate information about what was needed in terms of raises, I thought the process was was was incomplete and manipulative, and none of my colleagues -- again who I adore -- supported me in voting against and asking for more information, asking for a values-driven conversation.

**JT:** Hmm.

**SJ:** About what people should be paid on this campus.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** None of my faculty colleagues supported me in that. "Yeah, Steve's self-righteous" and I hate to act... appear that way right now, but it comes, it comes from a place inside of me that I just can't turn off. Anyway, yeah. Really frustrating.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** We get in positions of power as as leaders in faculty governance, and then we shirk the responsibilities in the name of playing nice with an administration who, uh, is doing the best they can, but probably have different goals and than many of the rest of us do.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm. So I mean, it's interesting, right, cause... we're talking about your experience on Planning and Budget, right? Like you were able to pull together the implementation of Workday with the clear institutional prioritization of Management first and Engineering closely second to that, right. So, sort of connect the dots for us, right? Especially for the listeners, right, like how... what is your sense of the way in which Workday and these institutional priorities are in some way... moving towards the same goal for the University.

**SJ:** I never thought about it until now, I mean it's... Maybe there are leaders on campus who are just more comfortable being in sort of a corporate, macho alpha male kind of world.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** And so maybe they try to create that world in any way that they can. I don't... I never connect those dots so I'm at a bit of a loss.

**JT:** MmHm. MmHm. MmHm.

**SJ:** I've always... it's time to have leadership on this campus that understands what it's like to be a Liberal Arts professor at a teaching school. It's time. It's high time. Our last Provost came from an R-1 institution, our president -- who I'm very fond of -- came from an R-1

institution. From the first day of his college career until he came to Bucknell, many decades. I don't know that they have a good sense for what it is like to... Well I sat in my office for 45 minutes today with a student talking about his future. That never happened to me when I was an undergrad at an R-1 institution or a grad at an R-1 institution for that matter... grad student.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** I don't know that there's a sense for what this job is. You know, I did my PhD at University of Connecticut, and they were changing vendors for the custodial care of the buildings every six months. And there were so many problems, the buildings were filthy and smelled bad, and there were problems with theft and a lot of other issues, and I was so grateful to come to Bucknell where we have long-term employees managing our facilities who cared about their jobs, and cared about the faculty, and whom we cared about. And I... And since that time, we've lost some of our employees at Bucknell, and the bookstore we lost Barnes & Noble, and food services we lost those employees to...

**JT:** Parkhurst.

**SJ:** Parkhurst. And I worry eventually we could lose facilities employees to an outside vendor. In fact, I have on pretty good authority from several sources, that HR in a meeting with staff last year about Workday threatened to do just that if there was much rebellion from staff about Workday.

**JT:** Yeah. And they're continually reminded that they're at-will employees.

**SJ:** Right. Continually. Yeah.  The fact that I even know that phrase, and that I've heard it used professionally in the last week shows that it is very current on this campus.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Yeah.

**JT:** Yeah, and I mean, I think just to refine maybe refine one of your statements a little bit, right, it's not it's not just that we lost those employees, it's that the University made a conscious decision, to...

**SJ:** Yeah.

**JT:** Subcontract out.

**SJ:** Yeah, I used a passive voice there, it was a very active voice kind of a deal.

**JT:** Yeah. Yeah, sorry. History professor kind of correcting.

**SJ:** No, that's fine.

**JT:** Sorry. Alright. Ah, so you are tuned in here to, Bucknell: Occupied here on 90.5 WVBU Lewisburg. Ah, in our last few minutes, Steve, I'm wondering if we can switch from kind of

deconstructing all of these various elements of this increasingly corporatized University, and think about like what might be alternative pathways, right? Like what are some alternative ways to organize University, which ends up making everybody that's a part of that university feel supported?

**SJ:** Yeah... I haven't thought a lot about this outside of the faculty circle.

**JT:** Sure, so just take us through the angle of faculty.

**SJ:** Although I will say, everyone like to be complimented on the work that they do and appreciated. Everyone likes to be treated like a trustworthy human being, to be pounded on the back, and to be paid an amount of money that reduces stress and even some of our Bucknell staff members work second jobs, work evening jobs.

**JT:** Yeah. Yeah.

**SJ:** At Walmart and other big employers in Valley, so we could start by giving people living respect-respectable wage.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** That would be amazing. You know, last year when the Workday thing was coming. I brought up to the Planning and Budget committee, maybe it's time to push for the $15/hr minimum wage on campus, and I got no traction, and then we began to talk about other things. And frankly shame on my colleagues for not backing me up on that in such an important committee. I'll say that. Shame on them. For faculty, it's a bit of a different beast. I think the daily stresses of this job... you know, "poor us," right? First world problems, I know. But the daily stress of this job can really take a toll on mental and physical health. Many of our colleagues on campus... It's not rare for someone to say I don't really deserve to be here, to have imposter syndrome, to feel like they're not worthy of the position, and I think we can immensely bolster mental health care offerings, perhaps institutionalizing... I know colleagues who sought mental health care on campus and have been turned away, and told to go wander around town until they found a counselor. Frankly, counselors are hard-to-find in Lewisburg right now -- as they are nationwide -- if I understand. It's hard to find in-networking to be able to pay them. But like I said a minute ago, you know, there've been some neat things happening in the Provost's office lately whose job is to shepherd young faculty, to help them as individuals do what I said a minute ago -- assess their strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan for success. That's happening now with some groups on campus, do you know about that?

**JT:** No, not so much, I'm not sure what you're referring to.

**SJ:** Yeah... I hate to start naming names, but there are people in the Provost's office who are thinking about faculty development -- in a new way, in a very personal, in what I hope will be an effective way, and all I can say is the more of that, the better. The more professional coaching that's available. So one of the great things that Brian Mitchell did -- the President of Bucknell before the current President -- was that he created the Teaching and Learning Center. We had nothing on campus before that creation. Ten or Twelve years ago, now.

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** To help faculty think professionally about how to design a course, and how to teach effectively, and how to be a good advisor, and that kind of thing. Now one of the sort of downsides of the Teaching and Learning Center is that pretty much every week there's a new thing to feel guilty about, a new thing to feel like you're not doing very well as a faculty member, and I'm not sure sure what to do about that. You know... I think the burden on faculty has increased enormously since I've been here as well. Both in service expectations, but also in saying "You need to be a perfect teacher, you need to flip your classroom and you need to be doing active experiential learning, oh and you need to be a great advisor," and some of us are in departments where we have 25 to 40 advisees, and we're expected to meet an hour or two a semester with each of them. And it simply doesn't happen...

**JT:** MmHm.

**SJ:** Can't happen, but we're made to feel guilty if we aren't doing that kind of advising, and so some sort of realistic assessment of what these jobs actually require, and tailoring of the job to a normal human being's capacity wouldn't be a bad idea.

**JT:** MmHm. You know, as you're talking, I'm thinking about the barrier that that each of these roles is coming up against is the barrier of external expectations, right? If there was a reorganization of the University along democratic lines, right? Where people, actually faculty, staff, and students, ran the University collectively, right? And determined expectations... salaries, right, what assessment might look like for each group, right? I think things might work out in a much more interesting and equitable way.

**SJ:** Wouldn't that be lovely? Wouldn't that be interesting?

**JT:** Yeah. Well, thank you very much for coming on the show tonight, Steve, it's been a pleasure.

**SJ:** Thanks for asking me. It's been a pleasure. I hope I haven't shot my mouth off too much. I'd be happy to come back and talk about something I know more about.

**JT:** OK, sounds great, have a good evening.

**SJ:** Thanks.