Tim Burke: One of the things I wonder about a lot when I'm grading students, or evaluating them, or trying to get them to understand what they seem to be skilled at is that our mission is to nurture and encourage, and to sort of do that inside an academic environment, and I wonder often whether what I'm seeing in a student is going to be consistent with what the world sees in someone once they're out of here. So, have you found that the things that you were told you were good at or rewarded for, or that the faculty here kind of gave you some sense of a positive assessment about are consistent with the things that you've discovered you're good at or are drawn to doing now that you're doing this professionally?

Nell Bang-Jensen:Yeah. That's a good question. I think there are some consistencies. I think there are skills I gained at Swarthmore that I am immensely grateful I have now. First and foremost, probably writing actually. I think being able to write and articulate ideas in terms of speaking, and a lot of what I do now as a director is facilitating a room and managing people, and I think being able to engage in civil discourse in a way in which you're listening but also being able to stand your ground is a lot of what we do in Swarthmore discussions and seminars, and really directly applies to my job now. I mean, I think in terms of a continuation of what I felt like I was good at or really was working on at Swarthmore into now a huge thing that I think Swarthmore gave me is actually confidence.

That's, I think, sort of a hard skill to measure, but I do think the investment that the faculty and staff, and peers at Swarthmore put into each other, made me feel like I had a safety net to do certain things, and also that I could take risks because I knew there were people around to catch me. I mean, I was just thinking last night when I was reflecting on this about a first year seminar I took. It was Betsy Bolton's Jane Austen seminar, and first of all, I was blown away that Jane Austen could actually be an academic study that I could take and discuss, and I was so excited by that, and it was my first college paper.

We had submitted little drafts or proposals for what we were going to do, and Betsy Bolton, as she should with first semester Freshmen, totally tore them apart, and I remember being so wounded because I felt like no, writing's something I've been good at, and it destroyed me not to do well, and I remember I was talking to her about coming up with a thesis, and she said okay, I have to teach this other class, but we'll continue this conversation, call me tonight. She gave me her home phone number, and I remember vividly, it was Halloween, and so I called her, and she picked up, and we would talk about the thesis I was creating for, I think Jane Austen's persuasion, and we'd talk for about 10 minutes, and then she'd say hang on, I have trick or treaters, and she'd hang up and go deal with the trick or treaters, and then call me right back.

Over the course of sort of on and off phone calls over an hour, we narrowed in on this thesis, and she really pushed me to articulate it and figure out how to support it, but she was there for me that evening to talk through that process, and it was a process I used throughout my time at Swarthmore, and I think today, just feeling like I've been through a process that required me to keep going and be persistent but have the confidence that people had my back has been immensely helpful.