Gretchen Philippi remembers well her own experience applying to Princeton, “typing (using a typewriter, not a computer!) my application on the afternoon of December 31, as close to the deadline as I could be.” After she was accepted, it was the April hosting weekend and staying with students that helped clinch her decision to go to Princeton. Some of those same students are still her friends today.

She also recalls wonderful scenes as a student: seeing snow for the first time in her life on the Forbes golf course, spending cold weekends warm in Tower Club, attending midnight mass in the Chapel’s faint light, celebrating in the Woodrow Wilson School fountain after handing in her thesis. And after graduation, when she was teaching in Manhattan, she returned to campus often through the Teacher Prep program “new teachers network.” “Whenever I arrived back on campus,” she says, “it felt like I was coming home. We had dinner at Prospect while sharing our classroom experiences. The group and the director at the time, Marue Walizer, were a great source of support.”

So it was no surprise that in the late ’90’s when she had returned to Puerto Rico, married and started her family, she volunteered to be an Alumni Schools Committee (ASC) interviewer. It was a natural choice to share the Princeton experience that she so treasured. Chair of Puerto Rico’s ASC since 2000, Gretchen feels that “every time I interview a student it is as though I am going back to Princeton in spirit. It helps me stay in touch with the University.”

Even from Puerto Rico, Gretchen does return to campus regularly in person, and not only for Reunions. She currently serves on the Alumni Council’s Princeton Schools Committee, which supports Princeton's army of alumni interviewers around the world. “If all volunteers were like Princeton volunteers, the world would be a better place,” she declares. The task of interviewing the nearly 30,000 applicants is daunting, she notes. “But as a community we handle it together and get it done. The achievement alone is not enough. It’s the community that makes it work.”