

TRANSCRIPT

SCRC Series: North Carolina State University Oral Histories – MC 00449

Field Notes: Debra Stewart

Interviewee: DEBRA STEWART

Interviewer: Virginia Ferris

Interview Date: Monday, March 1, 2016

Location: Raleigh, North Carolina

Length: Approximately 116 minutes

This interview was conducted in Room 4411 of the James B. Hunt Jr. Library at North Carolina State University. Debra Stewart was born in Petersburg, Virginia, and was raised in central Pennsylvania. She holds degrees from Marquette University, the University of Maryland and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. In 1975, she joined the North Carolina State University faculty and was professor of political science and public administration from 1984 to 2000. She became Associate Dean of the Graduate School in 1983, and was the first female dean at NC State when she became Dean of the Graduate School in 1988. She served as Vice Provost and Vice Chancellor at NC State until 2000. In 1994, she served as Interim Chancellor at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Dr. Stewart became President of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in 2000, and a Senior Scholar at the CGS in 2014.

In the interview, Dr. Stewart discusses: her childhood and family background; her early education at a school run by the Sisters of St. Joseph; attending Marquette University in Milwaukee, Minnesota; experiencing a shift in her political beliefs while a student at Marquette, and discovering a passion for political science; earning her master's degree at the University of Maryland; teaching in a United States Army education center in Germany; completing her Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; political activism on campus at UNC Chapel Hill; being hired at NC State University; being the only woman, and first female tenure-track faculty member, in her department; working with students at NC State; taking on administrative leadership roles in the department and in the Graduate School; becoming dean of the Graduate School in 1988; forming the Commission on the Future of Graduate Education at NC State; developing the Graduate Student Support Plan increase funding for graduate students; creating the Graduate School Advisory Board to guide fundraising and curricular development; the value of collaborative leadership; the scarcity of women in higher administration leadership roles during her career; working with Susan Nutter as another early female administrator at NC State; mentors and influences in her career; former NC State chancellors, including Joab Thomas, Bruce Poulton, Larry Monteith, and Mary Anne Cox; and her experiences as President of the Council of Graduate Schools.

START OF INTERVIEW

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Virginia Ferris: This is Virginia Ferris with Debra Stewart on March 1, 2016, in the James B. Hunt Jr. Library. Dr. Stewart, thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with us today. So, we'd like to start out just by asking you a little bit about your background, where you grew up, a little bit about where you came from.

Debra Stewart: Well, I was born in Petersburg, Virginia, during World War II. My father was a dentist and ended up staying entirely in the United States and we traveled all over the country. There were, by the end of the war, three children and so my dear mother hauled us all over the country to various dental clinics. Then we came back to where my parents had grown up, which was central Pennsylvania, and so I grew up in a small town in central Pennsylvania. Then I came to graduate school and that's how I ended up in Chapel Hill and then in North Carolina.

VF: So, as a young girl growing up, did you have any vision of what your future would hold or any thoughts about what you might want to do with your life?

DS: Well, you know, for old girls like me people often ask that kind of question: what were your motivators? My favorite question of this kind was a wonderful professor from NC State, Salah Elmaghraby, called me one day and said, "My daughter is in high school and is doing a major high school paper article on career women, and I told her about you and she'd like to interview you," so I said great. So she came and her first question was, "When did you decide you wanted to be a graduate dean?" [Laughs] Well, I'll tell you, I didn't even know what a graduate dean was for most of my life.

So, these are sort of hard questions to answer, but when I was growing up I really had three models of adults: my father, who was an extraordinarily successful and actually highly political orthodontist. He was president of the Dental Society of Pennsylvania and on the board of the Orthodontic Society of North America and that kind of thing. My mother worked in the home and never worked out of the home, and both of them were very good, I think, at what they did. But I didn't want to really follow either one of those career paths, and the people who were most inspiring to me as a child were the Sisters of St. Joseph who taught me through my grade school years at St. John's. They were women who had extraordinary commitment to their work, who were fundamentally kind, and who were committed to trying, in their own way, to make a difference in the world. Now, it's very odd for a modern woman like I am to say that my real models for a career were women of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the 1950s, but that's the truth.

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So after that, you know, my teachers were always very strong models for me because they sort of combined a commitment to really understanding the world better in various ways kind of coupled with a commitment to trying to make life better for people through education. That was kind of the—. Now, of course, there was also a strong religious theme since my teachers up through high school were nuns, but that religious theme simply reinforced the other two themes, which were to understand the world better and help others do so as well.

VF: At what point did you know that you would go to college, that that was a goal for you?

DS: Well, going to college was not an option in my family. My father, of course, had a graduate degree. His parents had gone to college, which was very early. My mother came from a working class family and going to college had never been an option for her. So from both sides, for different reasons, the assumption always was that children in my family would go to college. It was really just a matter of where I was going to go to college. There's an interesting story about that.

So, one of these Sisters of St. Joseph, who was a real mentor to me, was Sr. Adrian, who led the—. Her fields were English, speech, and communications, and she led the debate team in my high school. I was a high school debater and also in drama so I spent a lot of time with this nun and knew her really well by the time I was a junior and thinking about college. All of my cousins had gone to these really great Catholic women's colleges in the Middle Atlantic and the Northeast. I had aunts and cousins who were actually on the faculty at Seton Hill College, which was outside of Pittsburgh. So the assumption in my family had always been that I would go to one of these wonderful Catholic women's colleges where my cousins had gone, and my aunts, and so on, and there's a lot to be said for that. I think women's colleges do a phenomenal job for many, many women.

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But [I was talking to Sr. Adrian] one day about college and she said, "You know, these colleges would be great for many girls, but I think you should consider Marquette," and I said, "Well, I don't know about Marquette. What is Marquette?" and she said, "Well, it's where I got my master's degree. I spent two years there, and you really like drama, and you're very good in these fields, and there's this fabulous program there led

by a priest whose name is Fr. Walsh, and it's one of the strongest programs in the country. I really think you need to go to Marquette." I said, "Well, if that's the case, we'd better talk to my parents," and I said that before I said, "Where is Marquette?"

So, when we were talking to my parents, my parents said, "Well, where is Marquette, now? It's out in the Midwest somewhere?" and she said, "Yeah, it's in Milwaukee." So, my parents said, "Well, Sr. Adrian, if you think this is where Debbie should go to school then that's where I think she should go to school, but let's have her take a look at it." So I got on the train and went out for my college interview at Marquette, and Sr. Adrian had arranged for me to stay in a convent when I was there with some nun friends of hers, and so I stayed in a convent and it was all very comfortable. It was all very much like really my whole life up to that point, and they walked me up to my interview and waited for me outside and walked me back, and I came home and said, "Oh, this is great. I love Marquette. This is really super," and so my parents said, "Fine."

So then I went to the real Marquette and realized that, in my judgement, I had landed in the center of godless communism. I mean, there were all of these really left-wing people and all of these people challenging every value that I had, and Jesuit schools are basically set up to do that and their concept of how one learns is to begin by challenging everything that they think they already know. Of course Sr. Adrian had this in mind all along. It was very clear in retrospect that she thought that I was fine as I was but that if I wanted to really develop much further I really needed to get myself out of this very comfortable world in which I had grown up and have all of my values and beliefs and understandings of the world challenged, and college did that for me in a very deep and fundamental way. It was fabulous. It was just fabulous.

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I mean, you know, I spent my first year as an extreme right-winger. I was in Young Americans for Freedom, which was, in those days, a very right-wing college group. It was not right-wing in the sense that it was racist but it was right-wing in the sense that it was libertarian and very fundamentally conservative. I read Ayn Rand, I bought into the whole belief system of the conservative ideology in those days, and then of course by the time I graduated from college I had swung completely to the other end and I was a radical protester against every aspect of the establishment and, like most old people, I now think I'm just in the right place. So, that was how my how my college situation worked out.

My parents were very happy with Marquette in the sense that I think they—. They worried about me both when I was an extreme conservative and when I was an extreme liberal but they figured that was just how kids are and my parents were very tolerant of my beliefs. The one thing they were not tolerant about was when I made a change in what my post-graduate plans were going to be. I had always planned to be a lawyer. Really from my college debate days I figured this is something I can do, and I think this is what lawyers do. And I didn't know any professors; I knew lots of professional people. I knew doctors, and lawyers, and dentists, and orthodontists, and all these people my parents hung out with, but I didn't know any academics, except for the Sisters of St. Joseph, and they weren't real academics. None of them, in fact, had doctorates.

So, I was going to be a lawyer, and then as senior year progressed and I applied to law school – and was in law school and all prepared to go to law school – but as senior year progressed I said, “You know, I really love political science. I mean I find that the

questions—.” You know, I loved it because it, on a very fundamental level, helps one understand both how public policy decisions are made and how they’re implemented. By that time, both in my right-wing stage and in my left-wing stage, I really did understand that if you want to accomplish objectives in the world in which we live in any democratic society you need to understand fairly deeply how decisions are made and you need to understand fairly deeply how you can impact those decisions, and that’s what political science is about, I mean, how values are allocated across a society through rational discussion and deliberation and then implementation.

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But the prospect of telling my parents that I was changing my plans was just really pretty scary, so I didn’t do anything about it until spring, at which point it was really too late to apply to many graduate schools, but I had a friend at the University of Maryland. He was a child of family friends of my parents and so I’d known this kid for years and years. He was there as a graduate student and he said, “Look, I mean you have a really good record. Let me talk to my advisor and see if there’s a chance that we can get you into the master’s program at the University of Maryland, even at this late date,” and by this time it was probably April, and I said, “Well, let’s do it, but let’s not tell my parents.”

So I applied and was accepted and then I told my parents and they said, “Well, you can do that, but—,” and I’m sure they thought this was just a temporary thing that would pass. So my dad said, and my dad was not generally very tough with me, but he said, “You can do it, but if you’re doing it you’re paying for it, because I will pay for law

school, that's always been the plan, but I'm not supporting your doing something that you've just developed on a whim and isn't really a serious activity."

So I called my friend and said, "We've got a problem." I had no way of paying for graduate school. I hadn't paid for college, my parents paid for college. In fact my family had this rule, which is a little hard to understand, but I was not allowed to work for money. I mean, I so envied the kids who could work for money. My aspiration in life was to be able to work for money but we were not allowed to work for money. My father would say, "You can help me out in the office, or you can help your brother with his reading, or you can volunteer, but you cannot work for money." So I really didn't have any experience in finding a job or working for money but I knew I needed it, so he said, "Well, there's a possibility. It's way too late for assistantships of any kind in the department but there's a possibility that I can introduce you to the person who hires dorm counselors." So, I was introduced, and I'm sure I seemed like a nice girl who could probably do this job, and so I was hired as a dorm counselor, which, of the many things I failed at, this is probably my biggest failure. I was a disaster as a dorm counselor – and I'll tell you a story about that – but I was able to support myself for a year, which is all that I needed to get my master's degree, and it was very interesting.

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Just a quick aside on how bad I was as a dorm counselor: Compared to the undergraduate girls at the University of Maryland in 1965-66, I was just a babe in the woods. I did everything that our guidebook for being a good dorm counselor said to do. I mean, I had meetings, and they were very disrespectful at meetings and brushed me off, and I kept trying to do everything I was supposed to do and enforce all these rules that we

had, which of course none of them wanted to obey and which of course I later learned no other dorm counselor was enforcing. I was the only floor that was enforcing all these rules.

So one morning, say 3:00 in the morning—. Well, background, this was a tall dorm that I was the dorm counselor in. I was on the twelfth floor, it was my floor, and there was a field—. It was the University of Maryland, it was the ag school; there was a field beside the dorm where there were cattle. So one morning at 3:00 in the morning I heard this very loud mooing, very loud mooing, and I thought, “Did I leave my door open?” It’s the middle of the winter. “Did I leave my window open?” I looked and the window was closed, and I went out and I opened the door and there was a cow in front of my door, and I looked down the hall and there was a group of girls peeking around the corner, and I said, “Girls, you know cows are not allowed on the twelfth floor of Deaton Dorm.” This was my effort to control the situation.

So, after that, I just gave up. I mean, I was just—. I survived the year, they survived me; God bless them. I mean, they were perfectly good girls. You know, I just was trying to be too much of a Girl Scout and they were not about being Girl Scouts. So, I realized dorm counselor was off the table for me as a career after that.

VF: How did you get the cow out of the dorm?

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DS: I called the police, and they came, the campus police, and all the girls—. I did nothing. You know, they then—. I realized at that point that I was just a complete failure at this job and, you know, actually after that I decided not to do anything about this great violation, because these girls were just having fun, and at the end of the day I created the

opportunity. I mean, I was just so ridiculous to them that I created the opportunity. So, when I really didn't push any kind of punishment for any of them, they all became my friends and life was much better. I mean, they'd bake me cookies and bring them to me. I mean, I sort of became the child they were taking care of. But I still understood that this was not a strategy for leadership. My leadership domain had to be someplace other than in the dormitories.

So at Maryland I actually had kind of an interesting thesis. My master's thesis focused on international space law, and I was sort of carrying on my theme from not going to law school but remaining interested in law, and the best way to do that at that time in political science was to study international law and the big area at that time was space. So, I left international law and space far behind, but it was a really interesting exercise and it taught me how to do research, which is the most important thing.

VF: At what point did you decide or realize that you wanted to continue on to a PhD?

DS: So, I went to Europe and I was teaching, actually, in an Army education center in Germany, and I really liked teaching and I liked—. You know, I was teaching people who were—. I was not teaching political science; I was still actually then in the write-up stage, finishing the write-up of my master's thesis, and I taught something called—. I was teaching in an Army education center where the students were entirely enlisted men, and to some of them I taught GED courses. I taught English and high school math. To others I taught what were training courses, things like, "Prescribed Load List for Repair Parts and Maintenance-Related Supplies," or I taught a course called, "The Army Equipment Records System," and both of these were about how you fix your

M-16s and stuff like that, and of course I couldn't have identified an M-16 if I saw one but I really wanted to stay in Europe and wanted this job.

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So, they would give you a teacher's manual and I would memorize it and then I would teach it. When there was a question asked which I couldn't answer, which was often because it had to do not just with the theory of prescribed load list for repair parts and maintenance-related supplies but what you actually do with them once you get them from the supply system, which of course I didn't know, and so I learned quickly to say, "Excellent question. Sgt. Jones, what do you think the right answer is? Sgt. Smith, how about you?" and to get a class discussion going.

So, that was some of the toughest teaching I have ever done, because I actually didn't understand the material, but I got through it and I learned a lot about teaching too, and I learned a lot about how teaching is not just a talking head but it's about getting the class engaged and helping everybody learn. But I realized through all of this that I did want to teach, but I didn't want a career in which I was teaching "Prescribed Load List for Repair Parts," or even Dickens, which is what I was teaching mostly in high school English, but I really wanted to go back to political science, and by that time I understood what a professor was and I understood what this career track was.

So, I applied to graduate school from Europe, not having any sense of how I would get it funded. My parents, who were just lovely people, were still thinking, "She'll come around and be a lawyer." So, the National Research Council every ten years puts out a ranking of doctoral programs by field, and in the library at the Army center where I was teaching there was the most recent volume. So I went to it and I looked up all of the

graduate programs in political science and went down the rankings and selected, in the schools in the top ten, which ones were public, because I figured a public institution will be less expensive. Now, of course, that actually isn't true at the graduate level, as you know, but I had no advisor. I had nobody to talk to. I was just figuring this out myself. It is true that at the undergraduate level public institutions are less expensive than private, but at the graduate level, when you're pursuing a PhD, especially at the top institutions, everyone is supported. But, I didn't understand that.

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So, at that time Chapel Hill political science was ranked number four nationally across all institutions and it was one of two or three [public institutions] in the top ten, so I applied. I applied to Chapel Hill, I applied to Indiana University, and I applied to the University of Illinois. These were the three publics that were in the top ten and Chapel Hill was ranked the highest at that time, and I got in to all. I came back to the US in late November and started in a road trip to go first to Chapel Hill and then to Indiana and then to Illinois to talk to faculty and try to make a decision about where to accept. It was maybe mid-December and I arrived in Chapel Hill, and it was a day like today. It was about, you know, fifty-eight degrees and sunny, and I had been living in Germany where fifty-eight was a warm summer day and you knew it was summer because sometimes the sun came out. I said, "Well, you know what? I think this is where I need to go to graduate school. [Laughs] I think this is my spot." It was just lovely.

So, we went back to—. I was married at that time and I had had a baby in August, and so I had a new baby and we started graduate school in January, and it was wonderful. I mean, it was—. Graduate school was just a life-transforming experience for me. The

opportunity to spend all day pursuing questions that you think are fundamentally important, and then figure out answers to those questions, and then write them up, and then publish them so others can read them, and communicate your ideas, and others' ideas, and get ideas from others in the classroom situation; I mean, who gets to live like this? I just thought, "This is way better than even the Sisters of St. Joseph had." So, graduate school was really a terrific experience for me.

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VF: I can imagine in that place at that time there was a lot of political activism—

DS: Yeah, it was—.

VF: That must have been interesting.

DS: Well, it was a very dynamic place. I was there during the Cambodian invasion. I was there—. Well, the whole Vietnam War set of issues were really coming to a crescendo at that time. I mean, protests were just a regular thing on campus and my department led the protests. My department was the most mobilized left-wing group of students on campus at that time. I actually had been living in Europe for three years and had been a little bit isolated from this, and I was a true believer in the university. I mean, you know, I—. And so when Jane Fonda spoke on campus one of the activities that my department elected to pursue in support of Jane Fonda and in opposition to the war was to close down the department and to boycott all classes, and I was, like they were, in opposition to the Vietnam War. I was, like they were, very supportive of Jane Fonda speaking on campus. But I did not support closing down classes because at some level I believe this is all that we have, you know?

So, gosh; even now, thinking about it, it was so scary. I crossed the picket line [Laughs] to go to a class with a guy—. I can't say his name, because he was the worst professor in the department. I mean, he had spent many, many years in—. How can I say this in a way that disguises who this guy is? He had spent many years in a bureaucracy in Washington and mostly, unlike basically every other faculty member in political science at that time in Chapel Hill, mostly he told stories.

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Many of the faculty were in agreement with the students so decided not to hold their classes, but this particular faculty member was in disagreement and held his class and so there was a very—. All of my friends formed a picket line and a guy who was an African-American—. Vic Hackley is his name. Do you know Vic Hackley? Well, he has been president of some of our HBCUs in earlier times here in North Carolina, but Vic Hackley was a graduate student with me. Vic had just returned from the military and had been a captain and understood military stuff inside out, and he was actually politically not aligned with the students. I was politically aligned with the students. But Vic and I, I crossed the picket line and Vic crossed right behind me, and we went into this professor's class and sat through the class. It was really tough.

But anyway, those were exciting times. There were lots of other times where I was—. On basically everything except closing down the university I was very supportive of all of the activities, and the other issues that were really heated in those days were the women's issues. There was a wonderful organization initiated by faculty women but which graduate student women were also invited to join to improve the status of women on the campus, and it was also a kind of funny situation because I was in a department

that had very actively recruited women my year, so we had I think four or five women, maybe four, in a class of twenty people coming in, which was huge. So, in my own little departmental world, there was a real effort to support women in every way possible, so again I was in this sort of juxtaposition of I wasn't really experiencing personally the challenges that so many women were facing but it was clear to me that my experience wasn't everybody else's experience.

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But it was a time that anyone who liked politics should have been there. I mean, it was a very exciting time. A good friend of mine, a very close friend is named Raymond Dawson, and he was then dean of arts and sciences. He is a political scientist, was dean of arts and sciences, and then went with President Friday to be vice president for academic affairs for the UNC system and was there for many, many years. We often joke about how funny it was that he was the enemy in those days, and the enemy was the administration, which of course later, as I pursued a career in administration, I really came to understand pretty clearly how one could be viewed the enemy and how one needed to constantly try to create an environment in which you did your job but you weren't perceived as the enemy.

VF: How did that experience then bring you to NC State? What was that transition from your PhD program?

DS: Well, when I finished, when I was in my dissertation year, I went on the job market, as we say, and it turned out that, in part because of my field, in part because I was a woman, I had a huge number of opportunities, a huge number of opportunities. I mean, really good job opportunities all around the country at really terrific universities.

But I had a particular family situation that required that I really stay close to the hospital in Chapel Hill, so I was really in a quandary because I knew I needed to stay close by and there were these fabulous job opportunities all around. Then I saw an advertisement for a job at NC State. Now, I had actually been interviewing at these other places, and I talked to my advisor and said—. Now, at that time, NC State didn't have a PhD program in political science [and] certainly had a strong reputation in engineering and agricultural sciences but not at all in political science or in public administration. So I talked to my advisor and I said, "I'd really like to apply to NC State," and he said, "I don't know. Do you think that's a good decision?" and I said, "It's my decision. I need to do this," so he said okay.

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So I applied, and I got an interview. I went to the interview and I thought I did a really good job. I mean, you know, I really geared up for it, and the questions were good, and my presentation went well, and there was lots of dialogue, and we all went out to lunch afterwards, and we just had a grand time, and I thought, "I think I've got this job." So I waited and waited, and didn't hear and didn't hear, and they had told me I was the last person to be interviewed for this job. There were four people they had brought in and I was the last person.

So I called Dr. Block, who was the department chair at that time, a lovely man, after I hadn't heard. I think it was three weeks. He said, "Well, let me tell you. We're still really in a quandary in the department and I'll just be frank with you and tell you what the situation is. The interview went very well. We think you'd really add to the research profile and move us in a way that our dean's pressing us to move here. We think you can

teach. But we really don't know if you can teach the kind of men that we have who are mid-level state officials in a graduate program who simply might not take you seriously." Now, you know, this was a time—. And he said, I'll never forget, he said, "But we really would like to hire you because you're a woman, and it would be great if we could hire you."

So, in a sense all this sounds bad, except that his honesty allowed me to figure out what to do in a way that today nobody would say that. Nobody would say that today. So I said, "Okay, Dr. Block. Let me think about this," and I hung up. I screwed up my courage and I called back and I said, "Look, you pick the toughest class you want to pick, I mean, the kinds of people who you think would not be responsive to me as a professor, and give me that class to teach and just come in and observe. This'll be the deal: if I'm successful and they like me and they think I can teach them, okay, and if not, that's it. I mean, I understand your practical situation." This was a core course. What I would be principally teaching would be a core course in the graduate MPA program so it was sort of reasonable, his concern was reasonable, and it wasn't his belief but his fear that these students wouldn't be able to respond to me as a professor, and not just his fear but I think a more general fear of some people in the department.

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So, I went in and taught that class, and it was from 7:00 to 9:00 on a Tuesday night, and of course I've never taught as well since, but that evening went very well. [Laughs] I left and then he went in and talked to the class and he called me at 8:00 the next morning and said, "You have a job." So that's how I got to NC State.

VF: That's amazing. [Laughs]

DS: Yeah! It was. But, you know, in many ways, I mean I have thought of this so often over the years because, number one, I am clearly a product of affirmative action. I mean, I would not have a career anywhere close to the career I've had if people hadn't wanted to create opportunities for women and give them a chance. I mean, it was true of graduate school, it was true of getting my first job here, it was true ultimately when I was selected as graduate dean, I think. So, when there's so much discussion about affirmative action bringing in incompetent people and people who can't do the job, I mean, I am the first person to say, "I am a product of affirmative action and I'm proud of it."

So, I came to NC State and I just loved it. I just loved it and the department really-. I was their first woman, the first tenure-track woman in the department, and I think they really wanted me to succeed. They wanted me to succeed so much that they did some things that were naturally not likely to help me succeed. For example, I had a corner office. Probably if you make this room about half again as large as it is, that was the size of my first office, as an instructor, because I hadn't defended my dissertation. So as an instructor I had the ultimate C-suite. I mean, it was really something. That office was so big that-. By the time I came to NC State my daughter was five and I was still living in Chapel Hill and some days when she was out of-. She was in Montessori school but when they were closed I would just bring her with me. It was so big that she had a whole corner in which she had all of her activities. We had a little toy box, books, and all kinds of things, and no one even noticed her, the office was so big. I mean, she was good at entertaining herself, which was a good thing.

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So, part of how I knew that office wasn't the right office for me was time and time again students, who did not know who Dr. Stewart was, would come to that office and say, "I'm looking for Dr. Stewart. Do you know where Dr. Stewart is?" and I would say, "Well, actually, I'm Dr. Stewart." [Laughs] So it wasn't an office that fit an assistant professor, however, it was their effort to try to make sure I succeeded. After that first year we had an opportunity to switch some offices and I asked if I could have an office more like the other assistant professors, and I explained to Dr. Block why I just didn't think this was a good plan. So, I got a normal office, and I think the fact that all those guys didn't just hate me is a real testimonial to their effort to make things work.

So it was really good. The political science department, we really developed the MPA program during my time there. I had some great students. Some of my students, oh, there were people who ended up as the director of the state budget, and town managers and city executives all over North Carolina, lots of state officials, so I had fantastic opportunities to teach really wonderful people who were very engaged with practice. The think about political science is, you know, my field is political science and public administration, and these subjects give you the opportunity to understand both how public policy decisions are made, but that's only half the story. It's also how they're actually implemented, and you need to have good policies and practices in both domains to make life better for everybody. So it was really great to have an opportunity all those years to teach people who were actually taking public policy and making it achieve the objectives it was designed to achieve, and that's what our program did.

VF: Did you immediately sense a difference in the sort of students and the emphasis on practice at NC State—

DS: Absolutely.

VF: –compared to your past experiences?

[00:44:52]

DS: Absolutely, yeah. In the early days one of the first things that I had to address, coming to NC State, was my attire because I was used to wearing—. When I was a TA at Chapel Hill I wore blue jeans and t-shirts, or when I got dressed up I wore a buttoned-up shirt and blue jeans, and my first few weeks at [NC State] I realized all these guys came to work in suits and that I had to do something about this. So, while I was on a very low budget, I did go out and buy a suit, and I remember that first suit. It was sort of awful-looking. I wasn't very good at buying suits. I mean, that's sort of a very personal thing, but the culture was different. It was much more application to the real world: this is how we apply what we know.

In my program in particular, the ability—. I taught Organizational Theory and Organizational Behavior and I knew a huge amount about the theoretical constructs in the field. I knew a lot about the research in the theoretical constructs. But my own understanding of the field was deeply transformed by the fact that day in and day out I taught people who were doing it, and when something just didn't ring true to them it helped me understand some of the issues that needed to be probed, to be questioned in the theoretical models that we were working with. So the fact that we were working with people who day in and day out were applying knowledge made a huge difference, and for me it gave me a much more grounded understanding of what I had learned in graduate school. It also helped me shape my own research program because I realized that if we can't figure out ways of applying the theory that's generated to solve real-world problems

by careful empirical studies that are focused in settings that matter, much of the theoretical work that we do is just that. So, it shaped my interest in continuing to work on decision making but looking at decision making in a variety of different contexts.

[00:48:08]

The last big body of work that I did that is on the academic side is work that looked at how mid- and high-level officials resolve ethical quandaries in their work lives, testing a variety of models about moral reasoning and looking at how they apply in real-world work settings in the public sector. The reason this makes a difference is that it really is important to understand how public administrators exercise discretion. We enact laws and then we ask administrators to implement those laws, but it's not really possible to give them a kind of rule book of the kind that I had when I was teaching Prescribed Load List, because the world is much more complex than Prescribed Load List of Repair Part and Maintenance-Related Supplies. It involves people who will change their minds, it involves resources that may or may not exist, it involves different value systems, and so you have to figure out a way to select administrators and develop administrators so that they exercise the discretion that they must have in appropriate ways to advance the good of the society. So, one of the ways that impacts how administrators implement this discretionary judgement that they have, is their capacity to engage in reasoning at different levels and so that's what we studied.

VF: Fascinating.

DS: And we studied it, of course, in many states in the United States and then at this time there was this huge transformation, of course, in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. So with democratization coming truly to the Eastern European

countries and trying to break through in Russia – but as we know today it's still in the trying mode – so we studied moral reasoning among public administrators across Poland and also in Russia.

VF: Wow.

DS: It was fun.

VF: Fascinating. It seems like it would be a very relevant area of research to prepare you for a future in leadership in administration that eventually evolved from your first position as an instructor.

DS: Right.

VF: So could you walk us through how that progression developed?

[00:51:01]

DS: Sure. Well, you know, NC State is really a place that creates opportunity for people. It creates opportunity for students and it creates opportunity for faculty. The fact that they hired me–. Well the fact that they were so straightforward about what the problem was so I could address it, and then they took a chance on hiring me, and then they agreed to move me from the big office to the office like all the other assistant professors had. I mean, the administrators at NC State were willing to be my partners all the way. So, pretty early on, I was made director of the graduate program, which was really great because I had lots of ideas about what we weren't doing right, you know, and so on, and you always take people like that and give them the job and then they see what all the problems are to implement their wonderful ideas about how things should be done. So, I was director of the graduate program, and I had just finished a very big project and had published my first book, and was just working very, very hard to make tenure, and

made tenure, and was exhausted. Someone in the university said to me, “You know, we have this flyer here about an administrative internship program run by the ACE. We’d like to nominate you for this.”

Joab Thomas was chancellor at this time and out of nowhere he picked me to serve on some university-wide strategic planning committee on the future of NC State, and I had been here maybe two years at that time. Again, I mean, affirmative action: I’m very sure I was picked so that there would be a young female faculty member on this committee, but it opened a whole world of experience for me and gave me a vision and perspective about this university that I could never have had otherwise, and I’m sure I did bring the perspective of a young woman faculty member at NC State to the committee but it brought much more to me. I mean it opened my world, and I understood that there were these administrators who were making decisions, and that they were trying the best they could to make the right decisions but they often didn’t have access to information, and that this was a form of public administration but it was the administration that was happening in my own world.

[00:54:04]

So, you know, I certainly had no vision of being an academic administrator, but I was exhausted from all of the work I had done to make tenure, and from the book that had just come out, and the idea of spending—. I said, “Well, what do you do on this internship?” and they said, “Well, you know, you travel around the country and you spend time at different institutions,” and I said, “Well, that sounds good. The problem is I still have a child who I have to [care for] so my traveling’s going to have to be to local

institutions, except for occasional trips, but if we can work that out, let's do it." So I was nominated and I was selected, so I did this administrative internship.

I was very deeply interested in and concerned with opportunity issues for African-American students so I asked if I could spend part of my internship at North Carolina Central University so that I could work with the administrators there and have a better understanding of what some of the challenges are and the opportunities are for the HBCU institutions. I didn't know much about private institutions. I had gone to one as an undergraduate but I didn't really understand a lot about how they operated, so I thought spending part of my time at Duke would be good, so I worked at Duke for part of the time with the chancellor there. Then what always had been a mystery to me is the general administration, UNC system administration, and so I asked if I could also spend some time there, and I did, with Raymond Dawson, with President Friday, and with the other administrators in that system. I was just learning so [much]. It was like camp. It was like summer camp. I had so many real responsibilities at NC State and this was looking like it was going to be a year of camp, and I loved camp. I mean, I was a big camper and I thought, how good this is, you know. Who gets to do this as a grownup?

[00:56:38]

Then in, I'm going to say maybe January, maybe February, I got a call from a woman who was a historian at NC State, her name is Betty Wheeler, and she said, "I'm working on the search committee for the associate dean of the graduate school and there's this really wonderful man, Jasper Memory, who's dean of the graduate school, who you met when you were interviewing for the ACE internship, and he's asked me if I would give you a call and ask if you will consider putting your name in the hat," and suddenly I

said, “Well, wait a minute.” I mean, I didn’t actually mean to be an administrator. I wanted a break from what I was doing, I wanted to go to summer camp; I didn’t really think I was going to do this, at least not yet. But, you know, I said, “Wait a minute now. This is actually a real job that you could do. You find this very interesting, you’ve loved those university-wide committees you’ve served on; think about it.”

It turned out there had been a failed search for the associate dean and they had restarted the search and Jasper wanted me to come in to be considered, and so I’m sure there was a process, the details of which I can’t really remember, but I ended up saying yes and I became the associate dean of the graduate school. Now, I couldn’t have told you, really—. Well, I knew what the associate dean did because mostly they told me, when I was director of graduate programs, “No, you can’t,” do things that I wanted to do. That’s mostly what I knew about the associate dean. But Jasper had gotten rid of everybody who had been there previously and brought in me and another new associate dean, whose name was Ray Fornes, and another associate dean, whose name was Gus Witherspoon. The Witherspoon Gallery is named after Gus Witherspoon here.

[00:59:14]

We just had a grand time. We just had so much fun. We had fun because we were working for a guy, Jasper Memory, who died recently, who is maybe, if you put the combination together, the smartest, kindest man I’ve ever known. He’s just a brilliant physicist, he is deeply, deeply intellectual, and he is kind to the core. He just gave us free rein to do whatever we thought needed to be done to help improve, mostly the policies and procedures, which is what associate deans mostly work on, and so we went to work and we made things a whole lot better. A number of the people who worked in the

graduate school at that time, a couple of them just decided to leave after we came in because they didn't agree with the approach we were taking, which was to be a little less rule-oriented and a little more policy-oriented.

But we had a great time and we were a fabulous team. I had no idea that administration could be so much fun. It really is political science in the university. I mean, it's basically—. You know, all of my life my academic work was studying decision-making processes and what drives decision-making processes, both at the policy development stage and at the implementation stage, what drives processes, and to be doing it, to be in a situation where everything that I believed was important and actually understood theoretically, I now, like my students in the public sector, could actually apply in the university world. In the university we have a bunch of different stakeholders and a bunch of different interest groups, a lot of personalities, a lot of competing value systems, budgetary constraints; all of the things that you have to work with in any kind of important decision-making system we had here and all of that was sort of revealed to me when I became associate dean of the graduate school. So, I was hooked. I mean, six months into it I was hooked on administration. I loved it.

[01:02:25]

A couple of years later, in maybe 1986, Jasper Memory was brought over to general administration as the vice president for research, [and] Bruce Poulton was then chancellor and the question was who should be dean, who should be the replacement. So, in retrospect I can see that it was a very complicated situation because there was this really talented young physicist, who was really Jasper's protégé, who had all kinds of great administrative skills; there was this extraordinarily dignified man who had made

huge contributions in civil rights, Gus Witherspoon, who had been the second African-American to get a PhD ever from NC State and was a man who was just revered by everyone, including me; and then there was me. Bruce Poulton decided that the best thing to do, on a short-term basis at least, was to have co-deans, so he appointed us all interim co-deans for a year, and the three of us, thank God we liked each other and got along and had really built this friendship in earlier times.

So we had this very unusual co-deanship situation for a year, and I think we did okay. I think we did okay. I can say this: no three people could have gotten along better, and no three people could have resolved questions any more efficiently than we did. But three people making these decisions is tough and it's just not efficient, among other things. We all had halftime positions and three halftime people actually doesn't make one fulltime person. So then the chancellor decided to appoint—. I believe, if I recall correctly, Gus decided that he really didn't like administration very much anyway and would do one more year but would rather—. But, whatever the decision-making process was, Bruce Poulton decided that I would be the interim for a year and that we would have a national search. So we went through another year of interim and the guys both continued to be very helpful to me, I mean, really helpful.

[01:06:30]

This is kind of an aside but, when I think back on my career, I couldn't have had a career but for friends and colleagues and supporters, and NC State has always been a place that encourages that. The go-it-alone guy might be really highly admired in many environments but NC State is a team-based place. Again and again throughout my career the fact that there were people, frankly, just because I was at NC State, almost always

men, who sort of had my back and were willing to support me and work with me, even in this case where I ended up to be the who was selected as the interim, is a real sign of what kind of people are here. Both of these guys got their PhDs at NC State so they were much more kind of-. You know, they had had the NC State history much longer than I had.

So there was a search and I was selected, but now we're at 1988 and the campus has gone through two years of having a graduate school that they weren't sure was even going to survive. When I think of the next two years between 1988 and 1990, I would say those were years of discernment. I spent a huge amount of time-. Ray left the graduate school, Gus left the graduate school, and I hired a wonderful man who represented many of the best qualities of both of them, from crop science. His name is Don Emery. He was an older guy and just a very distinguished faculty member but someone who knew the institution really well and knew lots of people really well.

[01:09:03]

I chose him as my associate dean and he and I just went around the campus and spent time in virtually department and every college and asked people what their hopes and dreams were for the graduate school: what were we doing that they liked, what were we not doing that they wanted to be done, what was their vision for graduate education, what were their obstacles. We did a kind of SWOT analysis in conversation across the campus.

After those two years a couple of things became clear to me. First, that the faculty and the other administrators at NC State wanted graduate education to be a larger footprint on the campus than it was at that time. We had been a Research I, doctoral-

intensive institution for some time, but the presence of graduate education on the campus, the belief that success in graduate education was synonymous with success in the university, that kind of understanding of the critical role of very high-quality graduate education with very high global visibility, the absence of that was felt by the faculty and was felt by many of the administrators. So I feel that I came off those two years of discernment with the belief that we needed to figure out a way of organizing, in a systematic way, the community's hopes and expectations for graduate education on the campus and a kind of agenda that would allow us to move forward.

[01:11:20]

So in the early '90s, with the strong support of the chancellor, I appointed a Commission on the Future of Graduate Education at NC State. It was a huge commission. I mean, I think we had thirty-five members. It included a significant number of people who held the most distinguished chairs on campus; it included several of the associate deans for graduate studies in the colleges; it included many members of the administrative board of the graduate school; and the assignment that I wrote for this group was to do a kind of deep dive into three areas. First, what do we need to do to develop the resource base? What were the investments that needed to be made and how could we figure out how to make those to improve the quality of graduate education on campus. Second, how did they assess our interaction with external stakeholders? Was there any systematic way to improve our capacity to get external input on graduate programs at NC State? Third, what needed to be done in the curriculum? What were the opportunities out there? What weren't we doing that we needed to do more intensely?

Out of that work came three really powerful sets of recommendations. With respect to the investment side, the committee highlighted the fact that, compared to virtually all of our aspirational peers, we were underfunding graduate education, and that particularly if we wanted to be competitive at the doctoral level we really needed to find a way to ratchet up that investment. Out of that we basically did two things. The first thing we did was I started a very aggressive program for acquiring fellowships and traineeships from the federal government that were allocated on a competitive basis. So, three years later we had seven percent of all the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need funding allocated by the Department of Education in the country. We had a very focused effort to increase the resource base.

[01:14:42]

The second thing I recognized that we needed to do was to fix the tuition remission problem, and the details of this would put you to sleep, but basically out of the work that we did to fix that problem we developed the Graduate Student Support Plan, the GSSP, which today allocates probably thirty million dollars to graduate students to pursue work on this campus. In 1997, when we first implemented the new support system, we had somewhere between four and five million dollars. By 1999, through this mechanism we developed of getting contributions from grants and pooling all of the money centrally and then allocating it, we moved from four to five million to ten million. The system that we put in place was such that, as every new grant came in, the dollars would go up, so today we're at thirty million dollars, and over eighteen thousand students have benefited from the Graduate Student Support Plan. On the other front in terms of grants and contracts brought in that we started with, with the Graduate Assistance in

Areas of National Need program, the graduate school today has about eighteen million dollars coming in annually from grants and contracts of this kind, traineeships to support graduate students. So, you know, in total it's almost fifty million dollars today that the graduate school has to support graduate education at NC State.

Now, I have to say, that sounds like a lot of money, and it is, but the next chunk is going to have to come from the private sector because we have now, in graduate education at NC State, basically tapped all of the federal resources and all of the internally-generated Graduate Student Support Plan resources that we can tap, and from that we've generated forty-eight, fifty million dollars. But to continue to progress, to be really successful, to be globally competitive, and to serve students well, we now need to do much more work in private fundraising.

[01:17:45]

The problem we face is that—. This is kind of an aside and it's not an NC State problem particularly, but the problem we face in America right now is a significant accumulation of undergraduate debt. It's true for students who attend public institutions as well as private institutions, and they carry that debt into graduate school, and in the last fifteen years we've seen a remarkable rise in graduate student debt. If we want students to pursue graduate education, which is absolutely critical not only for their own personal success but for the success of the state and the success of the nation, we have to find ways of enabling them to do this without encountering financial disaster. The Graduate Student Support Plan has been a huge contributor on the positive side, as has the program to bring in training grants and fellowships for students. But to continue to progress, and to try to control the debt that students have, and to attract the most talented students from

around the world, we have to be able to be more aggressive and more successful in private fundraising.

So, let me shift now to the second piece that happened. So that's what we did on the financial part. It came out of our set of recommendations of the faculty. It took huge faculty investment and buy-in to make this happen, and that's the part where you would go to sleep if I told you all the technical part of this, but we did it. We basically sold it like a campaign. I mean, we basically ran a campaign on campus to get everybody to buy into this, and they did. Once you have something in place it just becomes part of the normal fabric of practice and then it's no longer a question.

The second area of work was how can we ensure that the graduate school itself gets rich and realistic advice from external stakeholders about direction, both for fundraising and for curricular development on campus, and on a variety of fronts the faculty said there needs to be some way that the graduate school itself can get input, not everything channeled directly through individual departments and programs. So we created the Graduate School Advisory Board. We gave it a couple of different missions. One was helping us with this early days of our fundraising campaign, one was to give us general advice on the initiatives that we were launching across all of our graduate programs, and frankly one was just to be a sounding board for me, people who I could call up and say, "How would something like this fly in the private sector," or, to some of the members who were from government, "How would something like this fly in the Department of X?"

[01:21:26]

We had some marvelous people who joined that first board. David Parker was our first chair, just a brilliant guy, hugely successful in the world of finance; moved back to North Carolina, to Greensboro, and as a second or a third career started another investment company. Burley Mitchell, who was—. These were all graduates of NC State, mostly undergraduates, people who got their undergraduate degree. Burley Mitchell, who then became the chief justice of the State Supreme Court. Robert Boyette, a wonderful, wonderful Raleigh guy who runs a major construction company. Peter Lehrer, a fabulous man from New York who is the CEO of Lehrer Construction, one of the biggest and most financially successful construction companies on the East Coast. I could go on. There were many, many fabulous people who joined our board, and I learned so much from them, so much. Because, you know, I really knew the academic world by this time, I mean, I had the academic world down, but that had been my entire world. I mean, remember, I was the person who was never allowed to work, so I didn't even know restaurants or most of the jobs that kids get.

So, they were fabulous, and many of them—. My husband and I had dinner with Peter and Eileen Lehrer in New York a few weeks ago and I see Robert Boyette and David Parker at the beach. I mean, these are still very good friends of mine, and they're still people who I personally today, if I needed advice on something, I would call and ask for it. But we engaged these folks, and many, many other good people—. I mean, the problem with naming names is you never manage to name all the—. I mean, you know, there are twenty-five people, all of whom made equal and wonderful contributions to the graduate school.

[01:24:00]

So, initially we were told, by the way, that this can't be done. You can't have an advisory board that's involved in fundraising. The other colleges will just be way too opposed to it and will block it. So I said, "Well, let me try. Just let me try," and I, of course, went to each one of the college deans and I said, "Now, look. I'm not going to be any threat: a) I don't know what I'm doing in this domain; b) we won't go after any of your donors; c) when we talk to anybody it's going to be for graduate education alone; and d) we may actually find people who otherwise the university might not be able to find." So those were actually the criteria that we used. People who weren't already engaged, who weren't owned by anybody else. They could have any kind of contact with the university at all, they didn't have to be graduates, they could be graduates, they didn't have to have a graduate degree, they could have a graduate degree, and they didn't pose any particular threat.

One of our early really good friends, Randy Ward – who is also a spectacular guy and one of the funniest guys on Earth, so it was just fabulous to have him at a board meeting, he was so entertaining. He founded the This End Up furniture company and just his telling the story about the founding of that company alone is worth the price of admission. But after having been involved with the graduate school at NC State and understanding all the fabulous things that happened here he then gave a major gift to the university – five million dollars, as I recall – as a whole, some of which came to graduate education, much of which did not. And it was my hope that we would bring new people in on the concept that all boats rise on a rising tide and anything that was good for the university was good for graduate education at NC State, anything that was good for graduate education at NC State was good for the university. So, you know, we started a

hundred thousand dollars at a time, but we eventually built up a reasonable little portfolio of support programs that came from this.

[01:26:55]

Then the third area that this committee, back in the early '90s, was so enthusiastic about was—. Remember I said part of what we needed to do was look at the curriculum. So, in looking at the curriculum, as we worked all these issues in the committee and looked at all of our competitors and looked at our own strengths, what was very clear is that NC State had a unique competitive advantage in one area, and that is we could work better at the interface of disciplines than anybody else: first because of our basic can-do, let's-solve-the-problem-whatever-it-takes attitude; second because we really have a history of working across disciplines; and third because, particularly in science and engineering at that time, the funding sources were beginning to strongly encourage interdisciplinary work. So we decided that we needed to find ways—. So our committee had asked the question: Why aren't we doing more interdisciplinary work here? What are the barriers? The conclusion was, first, we didn't have any particular support for interdisciplinary work. There wasn't seed money to encourage it. Second, we had in place a whole bunch of policies and procedures that discouraged it.

So, with the effort for fundraising for graduate fellowships, we made our entire focus interdisciplinary program areas and so we generated money that could incentivize more participation in interdisciplinary programs by making fellowships available if people wanted to participate in this kind of work. Then, second, we took a systematic look at all of the policies and practices that had been identified by our faculty that militated against meaningful, collaborative work across disciplines and we began to pick

away at them one by one, bringing them first to the administrative council of the graduate school, then the academic council at the university, then to the deans' [council], one by one, and we managed to systematically reduce them in a pretty significant way.

So, when I think back on my time at NC State, all of this happened because these committee members, these thirty-five or so members of these committees who divided into three task forces, who represented every corner of the university, came together to think deeply and in a non-territorial way about the future of graduate education at NC State and how to make that future brighter. So it was kind of organic, everything that happened grew organically from that wonderful, wonderful collaborative work, led by—. There's so many extraordinary stories to tell in this.

[01:30:33]

There's a man whose name was Jim Ferrell. Jim died a few years ago, but Jim chaired this committee. Jim was a chemical engineer, had been the chair of the chemical engineering department for many years and then associate dean for graduate studies in the school of engineering; just a wonderful man, just an extraordinary human being, and a phenomenal supporter of everything that we did to the graduate school. He chaired the committee. One of my traits that I need to continue to work on is impatience. I mean, I never know why things aren't happening faster than they are. So I have always surrounded myself with people who are better at things that I'm not so good at, and he was just such a patient man, and deeply respectful of opinions, and deeply respectful of people who disagreed, and his leadership was just so important.

And of course the marvelous work of the associate deans, who I had the privilege to work with over the years. I mean, Bob Sowell, who really is the numbers guy behind

the Graduate Student Support Plan. He understood the numbers at a detailed level that, you know, would have—. So there was no question that anybody could ask about it that Bob could not answer. I mean the answer could be so long that they would get tired and give up, you know. And then there was Margaret King, who was an extraordinarily gifted person, deeply intellectual. She was an English professor and she was the associate dean who really developed the graduate school advisory board and who worked with me and David Parker as we put together this group for the first time at NC State.

[01:32:52]

So, you know, the thing about leadership, and part of what I know you're interested in, is leadership is—. At least for me leadership is really about finding colleagues and friends who will help you solve problems, respecting their opinions, changing your own opinions when they tell you that you're wrong, getting new ideas from them and from others. Collaborative leadership is the only kind of leadership, in my judgement, that has allowed me to be successful, and that might even be true more generally. So, anything that happened that was good during the time that I was at NC State had to do really with two things: first, NC State. I mean, NC State is a place that's always striving to do better, and so people who want to take that journey are always welcomed here. And the second thing is the people who help think through decisions, who help formulate policy directions, and who help implement those. Those are the things that make a difference.

VF: It's an amazing impact that you've had on the university, from your first years here as an instructor all the way through your time as dean of the graduate school, and I'm curious how you see things changing for women on campus from your first days

here, if there were other women faculty who you connected with in those early years, and how you see things today compared to that time.

DS: Well, if there were one thing that I would say throughout my career, since I left graduate school where there was this band of four women, I really have not had the opportunity to have as many female colleagues at each level as I would have liked. I really like women. I mean, I like men too, but I really like working with women and, you know, I was the only woman in the department. We had a great older woman who was a part-time instructor who was there some of the time. Her name was Eva Rubin but she wasn't there a lot of the time. We brought in some women. I felt very happy about the fact that we hired a number of bright women in the department after I came, on tenure-track positions, who stayed and became full professors.

[01:36:14]

But through much of my career in the department there were very few women, and then in administration there were no women, and on the administrative board of the graduate school it was rare to have a woman. So one of the things that I – and really in all my jobs. I mean, there just weren't a lot of women. Frankly, my administrative assistants have been wonderful friends over the years. [Laughs] That sounds crazy but they've been fabulous friends and always had my back in a really terrific way and that's been fabulous.

I think one thing that's different now, and that I would have appreciated, is many more female colleagues. That's a really good development at NC State. I mean, it's fabulous. I was the first woman in my department, and then as an associate dean of the graduate school I think I was the highest placed female in academic administration, then as dean of the graduate school I was the first female dean, and then when I left as the vice

chancellor we, wonderfully, had a woman chancellor. Now, that was a woman friend. Marye Anne Fox was a friend who was the chancellor when I left. But what happens in administration actually is that these jobs are so demanding, and you really are working all the time, and if you have a family that you have responsibilities for, at least for me, I have to say I really didn't have friends except for colleagues who I worked with, which is maybe not a very good statement about life, but happily the colleagues were wonderful. I have some very old friends from graduate school days who are still my friends today but the colleagues who I worked with really became very close friends, Margaret King and Bob Sowell, and I just recently reconnected with Ray Fornes, who was one of the associate deans with me when we all started out. We had lunch and had a great time talking about the old days.

[01:39:25]

But your colleagues are your friends, and in part it's driven by the fact that, at least if you have my life, you really didn't – that took up twenty-four hours plus a day.

VF: Being the first female dean on this campus, you hold a place in this university's history that's very special, and I know Susan Nutter was another woman that joined you in that place–

DS: Susan was great.

VF: – In the early years, and I'm sure there were a lot of moments that you all shared that were unique to that situation.

DS: Mostly, when I think of my time with Susan, when Susan came, I mean, she was such a breath of fresh air. She's an extraordinary woman, you know. She's just fabulous. But both of us were working as hard as we could and working twenty-four

hours a day and so the moments—. You'd think we would have had lunch. There was no time for that. If you had lunch it was a strategic lunch that you had with somebody because of something you were trying to accomplish, and typically for me it wouldn't have been Susan because if there was something we had to accomplish we would have talked on the phone two minutes and it would have been accomplished and we would have been on to our next project. So, if there was anything that required lunch, neither one of us would have taken the time to have lunch with each other.

So our real communication was in deans' council or in one of these meetings where we would sort of knowingly look at each other and think, "This is just too funny to be happening," or, "Can you believe that person said that?" or, "This is an opportunity. Maybe we should figure out how—." You know, it was sort of—. I would say, especially with Susan, who was really—. I mean, as time went on, there were more women, but Susan was early and there were just lots of sort of knowing glances where we just understood what each other was thinking. She's fabulous. She's a woman who's made unbelievably significant contributions to this campus, and has stayed. She's an amazing woman.

[01:41:58]

VF: So, we touched on a lot of these. There are a lot of people that you've named who have been instrumental in kind of helping you succeed and who you've looked up to. Who would you say has been the most influential or inspiring to you along the way?

DS: Hmm. [Pause] I think for me—. [Pause]

VF: We can come back to that question.

DS: No, it's okay. I mean, this is the thing. It's hard for me to sort out in answering that question the difference between people who opened doors for me and people who inspired me, because what inspiration really is to me, to motivate a person, to drive a person to be everything they can be, for me it's not so much a matter of exhibiting particular traits as it is a matter of opening doors and then having your back when you fail. So, when I think especially of my life in administration, the people who have made the most difference for me are people who have opened doors and that had my back when I failed, because everybody fails, and you learn as much from failures as you do from successes.

[01:44:48]

So, I could name less than a handful of people if I'm really at the top, top, top [Laughs] group here. I could name a number of people who have opened doors and believed in me and had my back. Jasper Memory: about as different from me in some ways as you could imagine anyone to be. Jasper was extremely thoughtful and did not act until he was certain. I try hard to be thoughtful but I act, and we sort of anchor two ends of the continuum of that. He opened doors for me and he had my back consistently. Raymond Dawson: hugely inspiring to me, a person who didn't so much open doors, although I'm sure there were doors he opened that I never knew about, but who I've been able to talk to and who understands me at a very deep level and understands both personal and professional challenges and has provided phenomenal support over the years.

All of the chancellors here, I would say every one of them has opened doors and has had my back when I needed it. You know, they were all very different, very different

people. Joab Thomas, I mean he opened the first door by putting me on that university-wide committee. Bruce Poulton opened a very risky door when he decided that I was going to be the first female dean at NC State. You know, oddly, in some ways I think my femaleness was one thing, but what might have been more controversial was that I was a political scientist and not an engineer or a physicist or a chemist or a biologist. That was really what was controversial.

[01:48:02]

I think Larry Monteith, who supported—. Although the Graduate [Student] Support Plan was essential, and politically, once we built the constituency for it, almost inevitable, it was not without its stresses and he got a lot of negative feedback on it, but he had my back on that. He basically said, “She’s going to do it,” [Laughs] so.

And then Marye Anne was just a great friend. I went off to UNCG and was chancellor there. I was an interim and they asked me to stay, but my son, while I was there, he had leukemia and he had been in remission but he came out of remission. The cancer came back and he was scheduled for a bone marrow transplant and, you know, issues in my family were more important than being a chancellor, so. I loved UNCG. It was a fabulous place and the people were terrific, but I came back, [and then] after that my son actually got better and is fine today.

But Marye Anne came and one of the first things that she did was to change my position to a vice chancellor position. She believed deeply in graduate education. I mean, they all had their strengths, and Marye Anne’s strength was her deep understanding of graduate education and research and her belief that it needed to be very high profile in the

university. By the time she came we had done all the things to put us in place but she actually elevated the position to a vice chancellor position.

Larry Monteith had wonderful strengths, mostly because he really deeply understood the university. He had gone to NC State and he understood the dynamics in a way that were very helpful to me in implementing the plan. Bruce had extraordinary vision. I mean, this whole Centennial Campus is driven in part by his brashness and his vision. So, all of these people have wonderful strengths and all of them opened doors for me. I think I've learned a lot from all of the senior leaders at NC State with whom I've worked and I've learned a huge amount from the faculty.

[01:51:24]

VF: So you've remained very active in your years since you left NC State and went on to UNCG. Can you say a little bit about how you remained involved with the graduate school here and what your hopes are for the future of graduate education at NC State?

DS: Right. Well, as you know, when I left NC State in 2000 I became president of the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington and just stepped down from that position last year. That gave me the opportunity to really understand in a much deeper way how graduate education was being moved forward both nationally and globally. I came to understand, without any question, not only that graduate education was critical to the future of the United States – we simply needed to find ways in this knowledge economy to enable more people to get advanced degrees – but that the capacity of our universities to provide high quality graduate education was also critical to the future of the country and that NC State had a very important role to play in that.

So, when I reflect back, really from the vantage point of playing at the national and local scene for many years, I see many of the strengths that NC State had then, and still has now, as strengths that position it in a very competitive way. We still do interdisciplinary work – work at the interface of disciplines – as effectively as anybody in the country. We still have that very deep commitment to the application of knowledge that's so critical in a knowledge economy, and we still have a wonderful, motivated faculty, and today fabulous leadership, that will try to continue to take these special advantages and put the university in a position to move forward.

[01:53:55]

Now, the single thing that NC State–. It's got a motivated faculty, it's got terrific programs, it's got good leadership, but we continue to have, relatively speaking, an inadequate supply of private funding going into the graduate programs. As I said earlier, we've done everything we can in terms of the tuition remission graduate student support base. We've done everything we can, and will continue to do, in terms of nationally awarded, competitive federal fellowships. It's now time to really ratchet up the private fundraising so that we can create, in this time of extraordinary student debt, more opportunity for NC State to attract the most talented students across a variety of disciplines to come and study here, because research programs and national and global preeminence hinge critically on the capacity to attract the best students. That's what attracts faculty; that's in large part what drives research. So, we have to have the financial resources to do that, and we began in the 1990s and I think good progress has been made in the next decade, but going forward it's the private fundraising that really needs a particular emphasis.

VF: This has been just incredibly powerful and we are so grateful to you for spending so much time with us today. I know how busy you are and truly appreciate it. So, if you have anything else you want to add before we wrap up?

DS: No. The only thing I would say is that NC State gave me my start. I mean, I made lots of mistakes along the way, and was given lots of opportunities, and learned so very much at this institution. It's an institution that rewards people who work hard and who try to make good things happen, and that makes it a very good place. So, I'm hugely grateful to NC State for giving me the opportunities to find ways of making things better.

VF: Thank you so much, Dr. Stewart.

DS: Thank you.

[01:56:52]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcriber: Debra Mitchum

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