



Darlene Russ-Eft Oral History Interview, June 23, 2016

Title

“Evolution and Growth in the College of Education”

Date

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Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Russ-Eft traces her upbringing in Ohio, noting her family background, her early interests, and the path that she took to enrollment at the College of Wooster. From there, Russ-Eft discusses her undergraduate studies in Psychology, her decision to pursue an advanced degree, and her experiences while a master's and Ph.D. student at the University of Michigan.

Russ-Eft then details the many years that she spent working prior to her arrival at OSU in 2001. In this, she details her tenure as a senior research associate at the American Institutes for Research, as well as the seventeen years that she spent at Zenger-Miller and its successor, Achieve Global. A primary theme of this discussion is her key involvement in the growing field of program assessment.

From there, Russ-Eft describes her decision to move into academia and to join the faculty of OSU's College of Education. In recounting her OSU years, Russ-Eft shares her thoughts on the evolution of the college, commenting on organizational changes within the college as well as physical changes in what is now Furman Hall. She likewise recalls the major themes of her research on evaluation capacity and the transfer of training; discusses the paths taken by many faculty members within the academic field of education; and shares her memories of the work that was required once Education at OSU was elevated to the status of a college.

As it nears its conclusion, the session shifts focus to a detailed overview of Russ-Eft's involvement in the Community College Leadership Program at OSU. The interview winds up with Russ-Eft's thoughts on the value of online education; her sense of her own evolution as a teacher; and her optimism for the future of the college and the university.

Interviewee

Darlene Russ-Eft

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/russeft/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Ok, today is June 23rd 2016 and we are in the Valley Library with Darlene Russ-Eft who is a professor in the College of Education, and we'll talk to her a lot about her career and her association with OSU. I'd like to begin by developing a broader biographical sketch of your life, so I'll ask you first where you were born?

Darlene Russ-Eft: Berea, Ohio, which is a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio.

CP: Is that where you grew up?

DRE: I grew up in a next door community called Fairview Park.

CP: Can you tell me a bit about your family background?

DRE: Well, let's see. My parents met before World War II, my dad was a high school teacher and he was taking a group of high school kids from Fairview Park to a dance, and my mom was there with her friends but she was a high school student at the time at another school, nearby school. My dad had just graduated from college, and they started dating. So they got married at the beginning of World War II and my dad was in the Navy, he was a commander of a landing craft. He was sent all over the world, came back and became the head coach at the high school and developed, as I understand it, the first city recreation program in the state of Ohio. So he managed both the city recreation program and the high school athletics program and took the gym classes to the elementary schools as well. So he was very much involved in sports, but he also enjoyed reading and he worked on both his master's and did part of his work towards his doctorate. So I grew up in that kind of environment with a brother two years younger than me.

CP: Can you tell me a bit about community life for you growing up in Ohio?

DRE: Well, certainly my family was really active in the community, with my dad being in the position he was. And so we just were engaged in all kinds of things, always went to – they had what they called the playgrounds, went to those playgrounds every summer, participated in all kinds of different recreation classes and courses. My whole family lives around that west side of Cleveland, and still lives around the west side of Cleveland. So we had a lot of family get-togethers on both sides of the family.

CP: They're probably in a good mood right now.

DRE: Oh yeah. [laughs] I was cheering for the Cavs; my husband was cheering for the Golden State Warriors. [laughs] Yeah.

CP: I'm interested in any specific interests that you had growing up as a girl.

DRE: Well, I remember in – this is in middle school and I can't remember, 7th or 8th grade – the teacher asking us what we wanted to be when we grew up, and all of the girls were saying "Oh, I want to get married and have kids" or "I want to be a teacher." And I said "man, I want to be a doctor." So yeah, I wanted to do something different. I knew I wanted to not just be a stay-at-home mom.

CP: Where do you think that came from?

DRE: I think partly from my mom, who was a stay-at-home mom, but I think was not real happy with that. She was unable, because the family spent money to send her brother to college, she never had a chance to go to college. I think she was quite brilliant; certainly very mathematically inclined. So in today's world, I'm sure she would have been in the professional world, but that was not within her purview at the time.

CP: What was school like growing up?

DRE: Oh, I loved school. I really enjoyed going to school, and I hated it when I was sick and had to stay home. Of course it wasn't terribly pleasant being sick so... [laughs]

[0:05:10]

CP: There is that. So I'm guessing that you always had college as an ambition for yourself?

DRE: Yeah, and it was certainly an expectation from our family. My dad went to a college called the College of Wooster in Ohio. And my parents restriction was I could go to any college I wanted, and I looked at every college I think in the US. I had a whole room full of catalogs because we didn't have the Internet, so I had college catalogs and I'm looking at them and I picked out colleges that were on the East Coast. And my parents said, "we'll pay for you to go to college in Ohio." So I started looking at colleges in Ohio and I ended up at the College of Wooster. And it was a good choice.

CP: Was it an easy adjustment for you?

DRE: Going to college?

CP: Yes.

DRE: Oh yeah. I actually thought college was not as hard as my last year in high school. I was taking a lot of Advanced Placement classes. So yeah, there were interesting activities and it was good.

CP: Tell me about your academic progression at Wooster. You ultimately majored in psychology, was that your ambition from the get-go?

DRE: I had no idea what psychology was. No, I said – well, I started out by saying I was going to be a history major because I really enjoyed history in high school, and how that would get me to become a doctor – because I was thinking medical doctor – no idea. But I took a psychology course because it was part of the required curriculum; you have to take so many of these and those and the others. Really, really enjoyed it.

So I took another course, and I was taking psychology courses, but I was also taking courses in Spanish and German, and at the end of your sophomore year you had to declare a major. And I remember in the main classroom building the Psychology offices were at the basement – it's no longer the case but they were at the time – and the rat lab was down there. And the language professors offices were up on the top floor, and I was running up and down talking with the professors in language and talking with the professors in psychology trying to make a decision, because I really wasn't sure. But the final decision came down to psychology because I thought "well, with language, you can either be a teacher or you can be an interpreter." I didn't really see too many other options. And I thought "well, I don't know exactly what psychology is going to do for me but I think there are more options, so I'll go that way.

CP: You also had a TA-ship during this time, was that your first experience in a classroom setting teaching? Or did you do any teaching?

DRE: Yeah, I was teaching and then I did some grading of exams. The TA'ing was in statistics, so Intro Stats course, and I helped the other professors with – I was sort of the department assistant, so I did anything people wanted me to. "Type this letter" or "grade these exams, here's the rubric," you know. So...

CP: At what point did you decide you were going to pursue an advanced degree? Or was that always in the back of your mind?

DRE: Well, first of all I didn't think about it much when I first got to college. And I remember, after taking my final exams my first term in college, someone asking me "well, are you going on to graduate school?" And I just looked at them going, "what? What is that?" Even though my dad – I knew he went for a master's, but I really didn't know what that entailed. So once I decided on psychology, I recognized pretty early on, you can't really do much with just a BA in psychology, you really have to go on. So at that point I said, "I'm going to go on to grad school."

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CP: And you matriculated at Michigan. How did that come about?

DRE: Well, my parents paid for college, but beyond that I was expected to work or support myself basically. So I applied to several different universities. The ones that had the most interesting programs for me – so it was University of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Stanford, UCLA and Berkeley. And I got into all five, and I got fellowships in all five. And I really would have preferred going to Stanford because I could have worked with Don Campbell there, or even the University of Pennsylvania. Anyways some of these other institutions had reached out to me and Michigan hadn't. But my now husband – friend at the time – was also applying to law school, and the only major law school he got into was Michigan. So it was either we break off this relationship or go to Michigan. So I said "ok, I'll go to Michigan."

CP: Well, you worked on and earned both a master's and a Ph.D. in Michigan, can you take me through those two phases of your life?

DRE: Well, the program I went into, the doctoral program was basically master's to doctoral, straight through. And so in some ways almost seamless. You took the coursework that you needed to take and you did what was called a 6-19 project, which turns out that was a master's thesis. And then you take your written exams, they didn't have orals they just had written exams. And assuming you pass, you then go on and work on your dissertation. So I progressed through all of that, took the exams, passed, worked on my dissertation collecting data and so on.

In the meantime, my husband was going through his law program. He finished, I was still working on my dissertation work, but we both started looking for jobs. He was going to be graduating in the summer. So I went to the graduation with him that summer and discovered my name was on the list for my master's, which I didn't know. I mean, I had just signed up for it. Basically we were planning to leave Michigan and I thought "better leave with a master's in hand," so I just signed a piece of paper and said "yeah, I want to get a master's." Then I discovered my name was on this list and I'm sitting in the audience. [laughs] That was a little strange.

So I had applied – we both were applying for positions in different parts of the country – and as two people trying to find a job in the same place, it's not always easy. So my husband got a job offer in Michigan, and I said "well, I could stay here and work on a post-doc, I could get one if I needed to, and blah, blah, blah." So we talked about that and then, in the meantime, I got a position in Palo Alto, California. And we both said "Palo Alto sounds nice," so we moved to Palo Alto and that organization moved me across the country. And then my husband looked for a position there and was able to find a non-legal position at first, and then later was able to pass the California bar.

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CP: Can you tell me a bit about the research that you did at Michigan as a master's and Ph.D. student?

DRE: Yeah. Well, when I started at Michigan, I was starting in a program in what was called a "combined degree" I think in education and psychology. At the time, I was really interested in an area called psychometrics – it's a testing measurement sort of thing – and as I read the materials, that seemed to be the appropriate place to be. Later I decided "no, I really am interested in more experimental cognitive psych kinds of things."

So I switched in the middle of my studies, and so my research was around how people learn and remember over time. My dissertation was on the buildup and release of proactive interference in short-term memory. And one of the questions I was asked at my oral defense – and I knew the person was going to ask it because he said he was going to, he was a linguist – he said, "so how can this be applied to anything in the real world?" And when he asked it, I said "I have no idea." And fortunately my major advisor said "well, there isn't. This is basic research, we don't know whether it's going to be applied or not." Still I think that some of the – I experienced this kind of situation of proactive interference, which is the interference that you have when you're trying to learn something new, that there's interference from something you learned earlier. So the best example I had is "ok, I've studied Spanish. Now I'm trying to learn German. All those Spanish words keep coming up and I can't get to the German word that I'm looking for." That's considered proactive interference.

CP: Did you do any teaching during this time period?

DRE: Yes. During my Michigan time, you were required as a graduate student to do teaching. So I did two different things. First of all I was – I conducted labs with regard to, again, I think it was basic statistics or basic research methods, so the course had a lot of undergrads. And they divided us up and so as a grad student I had a smaller group of students

that I worked with. And then later, I was a teaching assistant with my major advisor in his course, his undergrad course, higher level, on learning and memory.

CP: Were you finding yourself gravitating more towards the education side vs the psychology side during these years? Because it sounds like the program was kind of split. And then looking at your research topics, there's definitely a educational slant to a lot of it.

DRE: Yeah, I would say I started out with this education slant and I did a lot – I did research, I did some evaluation work and writing. That was related to education, kind of the crossover of education and psychology. Then when I moved more into experimental cognitive psych, it was really straight psych. When I took my first position, that was when I really got into education and psychology so to speak, and looking at one of the first projects – well, several years' worth of projects – around how education affects people's quality of life. So that and then later we did a project with the National Center for Education Statistics, a whole series of different special projects on new approaches to statistical methods or displaying data or looking at education finance issues and so on. So I got drawn into more educational work through the work that I was doing with the American Institutes for Research.

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CP: So what was the first position that you got in Palo Alto? I know there's a ten-year gap between when you get out of Michigan and when you started at Zenger-Miller, but I don't know what you did. [laughs]

DRE: Oh I started at – it's called the American Institutes for Research. Their main office is now in Washington, DC. They had an office in Palo Alto; it's now moved to San Mateo. So I started out as a senior research associate because I hadn't yet finished my dissertation. So when I got there I was working with the person who headed up the organization, his name is John C. Flanagan, well known for what's called the critical incident method. So some of my early projects involved collecting critical incident data to find the dimensions of quality of life. Anyways, I started out there in that position and then once I got my doctorate I was like an assistant research scientist, and then I was there for until I went to Zenger-Miller.

CP: So ten years about?

DRE: Yeah.

CP: Was it an influential time for you? It kind of sounds like it might have been.

DRE: Oh yeah. It helped me identify some of the things I was most interested in. I became more and more interested in programming evaluation activities. I undertook a project that was called Evaluability Assessment of the Adult Education Program – Federal Level. And that really got me involved in programming evaluation work as well as a project done for what's called the Action Agency under which, at the time, was the Peace Corps Vista, something called University Year for Action. So a lot of volunteer work. And we created, basically, approaches to evaluating those programs. And so I really understood or recognized that programming evaluation was a really interesting field.

CP: And then you made the switch to Zenger-Miller in 1984. Was this also in Palo Alto? Or did that involve a change in location?

DRE: They were, at the time, were located in Cupertino where Apple is now located. In fact, we could see the Apple headquarters and then they eventually took over our building. So it was within the same geographic area.

So one of the reasons I changed, I recognized I could stay at AIR, and I have several colleagues and friends who stayed at AIR their whole career, but I said, well, one of the issues of doing program evaluation, especially with a not-for-profit kind of organization that AIR is, you do these evaluations, you hand them or talk to the decision makers, but you don't rule whether they use the results or not; whether that report, all of your work, just gets shoved onto a shelf and forgotten. So I said "hmm, I wonder if I were to go to a for-profit organization where they are paying for this to be done, will they use those evaluation results?" So I was really just intrigued to see. I wanted to experience a different culture than I had.

So I told my friends at AIR "well, I'm just going to do this for a year or two and then I'll come back." Well, I didn't go back [laughs] because it was just – the for-profit world, at least what I experienced, was so changing. The organization changed, the people changed, everything changed. And so it went from one couple of years to another couple of years. [laughs] Couldn't be completely transformed. Now I would say that's true because that organization was a start-up, and so, yeah, it would be changing quite rapidly. Now it was eventually acquired, then acquired again, then acquired again.

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CP: And you thrived in this environment?

DRE: Yeah. I mean, there were challenges, but it was pretty fast paced and interesting. I was able to build up a small group of evaluation research folks and some of those people are still in touch; they contact me every once in a while and ask me to do some things for them. So it's good.

CP: So it's similar types of work then, it sounds like – program assessment.

DRE: It was similar kinds of work. I was trying to identify or figure out ways to evaluate the effectiveness of their training programs.

So Zenger-Miller was a training company, they developed what would be called generic packages of training. And so my role was in some cases to figure out what should be included in that training, how should it be delivered, what's going to be the most effective way to present this information so that people remember it and learn it and use it so they transfer to the job? And how do we assess that if we want to go into one of the client organizations and see, "ok, if they implement all this, what happens with the people who go through that training? Do they end up using it, and in what ways?" So all of that was related to the work I had been doing on program evaluation. And I did indeed find that when the organization was supporting this function, they were very interested and used the results. So my hypothesis was confirmed. [laughs]

CP: Just as an aside, I'd be interested in hearing some thoughts on what it was like to be in Cupertino as Apple became this major, iconic company.

DRE: Well, when I started at - the organization, when I began, was growing. So where I interviewed was a different place than where I started to work, because they had outgrown that facility that was also located in Cupertino, but a very small office. So this is a fairly new building. However, right next door and right around the corner there were apricot trees and there was a feed store right around the corner. So it was in the middle of this transition between the orchards that had been occupying the Santa Clara Valley and what's now Silicon Valley.

So I do remember parking my car and coming out and there's all these spots all over the car, and that was from the birds and the bees dropping pollen that came off those apricot trees. Well, not too long after that, the apricot trees got cut down and the feed store closed and big buildings got put in and, yeah. Palo Alto changed in the time that we were there as well. It was kind of a – I don't want to say sleepy, but it was seen as a laid-back college town, quiet. No longer. I mean, it became part of the Silicon Valley rush rush rush, hurry hurry hurry. So yeah...

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CP: So between Zenger-Miller and OSU, there were three years at Achieve Global. Can you tell me about why the switch to Achieve Global and, again, a similar sort of place, it sounds like.

DRE: Actually, Achieve Global was an acquisition and Zenger-Miller got folded in, and so the whole thing, we became a much larger organization. So we were acquired by the Times-Mirror company, so the *Los Angeles Times*; big newspaper conglomerate at the time. Why they wanted to purchase – well, I think they wanted to diversify, so they purchased some other training companies. We were merged with several other training companies and became this new entity called Achieve Global. So I became then, the head of research for that entire group called Achieve Global.

CP: Well, after nearly thirty years in the private sector you made a switch to OSU. How did that come about?

DRE: Well, so while I was at Zenger-Miller, and then later Achieve Global, I became involved with the research department group and then research committee of what was called the American Society for Training and Development; they're located in Alexandria, Virginia. They're now called ATD, Association for Talent Development. At any rate, I became active in this research group, and in that research group were a number of people from academia.

And I started doing some – well, I wrote one book with a couple of the other people on this committee. I became introduced to an organization called the Academy for Human Resource Development and became quite intrigued with that. And eventually I put my hat in to be the editor of one of the journals for that organization – refereed journal. So it was my – I started moving more and more toward academia in terms of what I was doing, even though I was still in the private sector. I taught a few courses and had students, actually had several interns all along the way from several universities and so on. So eventually I said "gee, I think I now know something. I did not know a whole lot when I got out of my doctorate, but now I think I have had a lot of experience and I know a lot of things, so maybe I can find an academic position." So I started looking around, first in the Bay Area, and then kind of going wider than that. My husband, whose position was in San Francisco, said he was perfectly happy to move anywhere that I find a job as long as it's Portland, Oregon.

CP: [laughs]

DRE: So that kind of narrowed my search. And a friend had said "you know, you ought to contact this person at OSU – there's Sam Stern, there's George Copa." I didn't know George Copa, but I did know Sam Stern from this AHRD group. So I gave them a call and, "oh yeah, we have a position" – they had just opened up a position. So I applied and I got it. And I said "ok Jack, you said Portland, Oregon. Well, this is close!" [laughs]

So my husband was looking for a particular position in Portland, and that position hadn't yet come open, so for the first year I commuted. And given that the teaching that I did was through Ecampus, we met face to face for a few days and then the rest of the work was done online. So I would commute from Palo Alto, stay a couple weeks, and then go back. So I did that for the first year. And then about February, I said to my husband "when is this job coming open? Because this is really tiresome coming back and forth five hours." It's five hours to fly from Palo Alto to PDX, rent a car, and drive here.

[0:35:15]

CP: So you ultimately made the move, now you live in Lake Oswego, has that always been your base of operations in Oregon?

DRE: Yeah. Because my husband's job was in downtown Portland and he needed to be there every day, and I did not need to be here every day. I mean, we looked around the Portland area but we ended up in Lake Oswego. It's a smaller community.

CP: A couple of questions about early impressions – the first thing I'd ask is your initial impressions of the university itself. Had you had much interaction with OSU before you joined the faculty here?

DRE: Not really. I knew of only a couple people, a couple friends who – one of my neighbors actually, was an early graduate from OSU, back in like, when would it have been, 1910 or something like that. And then I had a friend who was on the faculty for a short period of time but then they moved to Austin. I mean, I knew a little bit about it from those friends, but other than my coming here to visit, that was really my first introduction to the college and so on. Well the building was pretty old. [laughs]

CP: Wrapped in a chain-link fence.

DRE: Yeah, exactly. [laughs] This is a different experience than the private sector, where you may have brand new offices and everything. The Zenger-Miller offices, everything was furnished in antiques, and it was quite impressive. So this was not quite so impressive, the facilities part of things. But what impressed me was the collegiality of the faculty, and that had been a major concern of mine. I had always had a really good group of colleagues in all of the different places I had work, and I had heard horror stories about academia and silos and warfare among the faculty, and people not able to work or talk with each other. I just don't want to experience that, and I didn't, and it was wonderful. I had good mentoring from the other faculty, which was quite helpful. And I really enjoyed the teaching aspect which, I hadn't taught

a whole lot. Well, I taught one course in the past, but I had just been coming in and doing some guest lecturing at different times, and that's different.

CP: How would you describe the state of the – it was the School of Education at that time?

DRE: Well, it was an exciting time because the Department of Education had just become a school. So there was all this new energy about "we've got to form this personnel committee or this academic affairs committee, or this other committee." And "how do we do? What do we do? How are we going to operate?" and so on. There was also – I got involved with the proposals around the double degree program, and so all of that was quite exciting. So I found it a lot of fun.

CP: You mentioned mentors amongst your colleagues. Who were some of the people that were important to you in those early years?

DRE: I would say one of the most important would have been George Copa. Anytime I had a question – his office was two or three doors down from mine on the same side of the building – I just walked out, "George! George! How do I do this?" Or "what do I do about that?" Or "I encountered this problem and I'm not sure what to do." He was always very gracious with his time and advice. I would say that, in addition, Sam Stern was very supportive. He was the dean at the time and I found him very supportive of me and the work that I was trying to do. My other colleagues, the same.

[0:40:14]

CP: So it sounds like it wasn't too terribly difficult an adjustment. I mean, you followed a very different path than most academics, most incoming new academics, but you made that transition fairly well it sounds like.

DRE: Well, and the thing that I appreciated about academia that I hadn't really experienced much in either of my other positions is that my publications were very appreciated. So yeah, at AIR, "oh yeah, if you publish something, that's fine and dandy but we really need you to get this proposal out the door and win the project." And at Zenger-Miller it was like "yeah, if you publish that's fine, but we really need you to be gathering the data to do this evaluation and helping our program developers know what they need to do." Whereas here it's clear that publications are what's important, and doing solid research. So that was really something that I appreciated.

CP: Yeah, so that fit in with your way of operating in the private sector work too.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

CP: Well, let's talk about research. Tell me a bit about getting set up and how your research progressed.

DRE: Well, my area of research tends to be around program evaluation and people learning from program evaluation, or issues around the transfer of training. So, you're going through this training/whatever intervention, and to what extent is there transfer and use on the job? And so I guess in some ways my work is pretty eclectic. So I'm not – and maybe it sounds like it's really narrow, but in fact it's like whatever opportunity I have that's somewhat related to any of those areas about adult learning, about transfer of training, about how people work on the job, any of that is fair game as far as I'm concerned, and I can write it into what I want to do.

And I've just been blessed with a lot of various opportunities. One of the first ones I started at the college, a fellow named Michael Dalton needed someone to help with an evaluation of this intervention; sort of this training that occurred for teachers over in Lincoln City. So with that I was using my evaluation experiences but also looking at how these teachers were learning. Another opportunity came along, there's an organization called the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians and they're located in Columbus, Ohio. They needed someone with a background in education and research to be a part of this team that was undertaking a longitudinal study of EMTs. So out of that work, along with colleagues there, I've been able to look at issues around the career success of EMTs, look at the transfer of training of EMT training experience and how it affects their practice. And right now we're looking at some issues around the factors that affect retention as an EMT. So I'm able to do that kind of work.

In addition, I'm working with folks right now over in Biology – SMILE – looking at the Bioenergy minor program and looking at the effects of that program on undergrads, both in terms of their academic progress and work, but also we're now starting to look at people who've graduated, how they've been able to use that knowledge. Has it helped them find a job? Get a job?

I did a similar type of project recently for University of Nevada-Reno, looking at – it's called the NSF GK12 program. In this case, the School of Engineering at Nevada took graduate students in engineering, put them into middle and high school classes to be teachers – teacher assistants and so on. And so, over a three to four year period, I was interviewing those students and the teachers and looking at what happened with their classes and what are the effects. And now we're looking at, ok, how are those doctoral or master students – mostly doctoral students – using that in terms of their careers? Either in academia or in business/private industry.

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CP: So it sounds like there are both qualitative and quantitative components to your work.

DRE: Yeah, exactly. Depends on the data – well it depends on the question and depends on what's the sampling that's available. With the EMTs it was a nationally representative sample; they could run all kinds of interesting statistics. When you've got a limited number of students in this GK12, a lot of it is going to be qualitative.

CP: I'm guessing you continued to lean on your training in psychology for a lot of this.

DRE: Oh yeah. I mean, what I learned in statistics, what I learned about how to ask questions, there's a lot of courses in measurement. All of those kinds of courses really helped.

CP: In that regard, I'm guessing it helped set you apart a little bit from a lot of your peers. What's the standard progression that a faculty member in the College of Education might follow? Are they being trained in education? Or are they coming through a different discipline like you had?

DRE: Most – well, I mean there are different aspects to education. So we have, within the college, we have the science, STEM education, right? So some of those folks had their degrees in science or had their degrees in mathematics, and then decided "hmm, I think I want to move into education." Now, they may have done their doctorate in education, but certainly their early work was done in science. They taught science at the high school level, and then moved into education. My colleagues in, say, the Community College Leadership Program, most – all of them came out of colleges of education. So they do definitely have an education bent. One person also has a background in being a community college president, another one having worked in the Office of Student Affairs, running lots of data analysis, another coming more out of the adult education arena. People have different experiences, I think.

[0:49:47]

CP: Yeah, maybe more so in Education than in other colleges.

DRE: Right. Well, because education is an applied field. You're not – let's say physics. Well, you're going to be either – well, probably a theoretical physicist maybe. [laughs] But you're going to be doing more basic research kinds of work, whereas with education you're dealing with either children, teachers, administrators, presidents. So yeah, you need to have – I think to be credible, certainly in our programs – you've got to have some real world experience. You don't just walk in to this, say, our doctoral program. The folks there, they could be VPs, deans, department chairs, instructors in community colleges. Well, you don't walk in just having acquired your, you know, going straight through your education without some real world experience. You just wouldn't have a lot of background to pull on then.

CP: Before we move on – we may have already defined this, but I want to make sure to bring it up. Looking at your vita, the phrase that comes up or the term that comes up is "evaluation capacity." Have we defined that? Or should we define what that means?

DRE: Yeah. Well, what that means is really related to people learning from evaluation, learning about evaluation. So one of the roles as a program evaluator is help to equip people that are maybe even recipients of the program, but certainly the

staff within a program that's being evaluated, to help them be better able to potentially conduct their own evaluations in the future. So providing them with some background tools or experiences that would help them better understand what program evaluation is; that's what's considered capacity building. So it's really a learning experience.

CP: I have a few questions about milestones for the college and for yourself. You mentioned that when you arrived, the Department of Education became the School of Education, and in 2005 it became the College of Education. Can you tell me about your memories – was there a significant impact from any of that?

DRE: Well, I think the major thing involved all the activities that had to go on in order to become a college; so the creating of the double degree. You really don't become a college unless you have an undergraduate major, so that was a critical step. Forming these new committees to figure out "ok, what does an academic affairs committee do? What does a personnel committee do? How are we going to manage the promotion and tenure process for people?" So all of that had to be sort of be, I'll call it reconstructed or constructed. So that was, for me anyways, quite exciting coming in. It wasn't like "oh, well this is the way we've done it for the past fifty years and this is the way we're going to continue to do it." It's like "well, ok, blank slate, what do we do now?" [laughs]

CP: And you were involved, it sounds like, pretty closely with the double degree piece. Is that correct?

DRE: Well, I did help with pieces of the double degrees yes. I was on a special committee working on that.

CP: Can you tell me a bit more about how that went down?

DRE: Well, first of all it was a fellow named Michael Dalton who was really spearheading – I mean, Sam had appointed him to be the person to pull it all together. What our committee was doing was trying to figure out "well, what are the kinds of courses that could be offered?" and coming up with the rationale with this course versus that course versus the other course. What courses would be required to be in a undergraduate program. Do we have that? Have we covered that? Where's the WIC – the writing intensive course – where's that going to fit? What are the requirements for people to come into this program? All of those issues are things that we have to figure out. And then, of course, Michael pulled it all together, and started writing it all up.

[0:55:16]

CP: At some point the Department of Science and Mathematics Education also came into the college, can you tell me about that?

DRE: Yeah. So there was a reorganization – maybe you have the dates, because I can't remember exactly what it was. But there was a kind of reshuffling of the College of Education. When we started out, we had basically three groups: we had Teacher Education, we had Adult and Higher Education Leadership, and we had Extension. And then Extension got moved out of the college, and Science and Math Ed, I guess, before there was the big downsizing of the college, had been a part of the college but had been moved. Now it was moved back. So Science and Math Ed moved back, although they didn't physically move right at first. They ended up staying because there wasn't space; our building wasn't completely finished. So for a year, two years, something like that, they remained in place. We – I think it was in Kidder – we were in Waldo. Furman was being refurbished. [laughs]

So it was, I don't know if I would say chaotic, but I know we were trying "well, how are we all going to work together?" And we had some meetings over in Waldo trying to figure out "ok, what's our vision? What's our mission? How are we going to work together?" I think that work – this is just my opinion – I think that work would've been easier to do had we all been physically together. Having us in separate places just is more difficult. And so I think there was still this feeling of apartness – "we're not really part of them, they're not really part of us, because we're not together."

CP: A lot of change in a short period of time.

DRE: Yeah. Then Furman Hall got rebuilt and we all moved into there. Yeah, and I think we're still kind of figuring out "ok, how can we better integrate?" I think with our newer faculty there's more of an emphasis on trying to cross over a little more. So that's good, I think.

CP: Well, you became chair of Adult Education, Higher Education and Leadership in 2008, I believe.

DRE: Yeah. So I became department chair and then I became non-department chair. So I was department chair for a while and then there was a decision that we won't have departments. So instead we're called a discipline. So it's the same group of people, same programs, but were called a discipline. In some ways I am doing the same things I did when I was department chair. The one thing that I'm not doing right now, but it sounds like they're going to want us to do that, is personnel reviews and really homing in on the budget. Although I've been doing a whole lot of budget work and I'm in the process of doing personnel reviews, so...

CP: So the shift from a department to not a department was just an issue of nomenclature mostly?

DRE: As far as I can see. I think it could have been different for some of the other groups, but for us we're kind of doing what we did before so.

[1:00:04]

CP: What was the impact of the extra administrative burden for you?

DRE: Well, I was at a point in my career – I said, "I'm willing to take this on once I am full professor," because I figured then I wouldn't have to be worrying about publications so much and I can be more supportive of our incoming faculty. So it's been a shift.

One of the impacts has been, I do less teaching. And that's a concern. Actually, I said something to the dean a year ago or so because he said "well, why don't you buy yourself out of teaching?" And I said, "well, one of the reasons I came to the university is so I could teach, so why would I want to buy myself out of teaching?" But I did for one term, just because he asked me to. [laughs]

CP: Well, we've talked about Furman Hall a little bit, but I'm interested in getting a fuller sense of the impact that this renovation made – the chain-link fence came off, for one, but it's pretty different on the inside for sure.

DRE: Yeah. Well, from my standpoint I have a much smaller office. So I used to have all of my books, all of my journals, everything; I mean, I had a huge number which I had to move to my house. And so it means I don't have all of my resources there. But a lot of resources are online now, so paper copies are probably not that useful.

What I really appreciate is how well-used I see this space is. It's open and there are students. You know, there's this group over here drawing on whiteboards, talking about whatever, and there's another group over here studying for something or other. So there's a lot of use, not just by the faculty and staff but by the students and staff of that building; unlike before, when as far as I can tell people came and they went to their classes and left, because it was not a very inviting space. So I love the building, except for the lack of air conditioning. [laughs]

CP: [laughs] Well, it's pretty old; it's a pretty old building.

DRE: But that's – hey, you know, if there are any alums who want to donate some money, faculty and staff would be most appreciative of a few million dollars to put air conditioning in so it's not so hot in the summertime.

CP: Ok, that's duly noted. Tell me about the Community College Leadership Program.

DRE: Well, it's one of the top programs in the US. They're ahead of – I would say, would have been UT-Austin, however that program closed a few years ago. So the only other, I would say, major competitor program is Columbia Teachers College. So it is a major contributor to the leadership within community colleges. It's not just within Oregon; they program draws from people throughout the west. So we have people coming in from Alaska and Arizona and Hawaii and Utah and all places in between.

The program is designed for people to improve their leadership understanding and skills, not just to become a president, although some people want to move in that direction, but in whatever capacity. So people move up to vice presidency and say "I'm happy," or they move to a position with a state agency. For example, in Washington state there is a central

authority for the community colleges unlike here in Oregon, where each community college is its own entity and has its own separate board.

The students, I don't know, they're wonderful [laughs] and the faculty are great. We have – it is a hybrid program, so we meet now two times in a term, and the rest of the time we're using Canvas online and doing activities or postings or etc. The students, we've undertaken some enhancements to the program so that what we're finding now is people are actually able to finish in about three, maybe three-and-a-half years, a lot of them. Not them all. We tell people, "if you get admitted to the program we know you can finish." You may not finish because of some personal tragedy or experiences. Some people end up taking a job across the country. It's not so much being across the country, it's just a new job that kind of derails folks for a bit. But we have a pretty high completion rate. Some of our cohorts – so the cohorts are about ten to twelve in number, and some of those cohorts have 100% completion. Some might be 1% hasn't yet completed. So I think it's a very effective and successful program.

[1:07:10]

CP: And when they meet, they do not meet in Corvallis. Is that correct?

DRE: They do not meet in Corvallis. We meet close to Portland, so that makes it easy for people who are flying in to get to the location. It's also part of the requirement for Ecampus that you not use the facilities here on the campus, so that's another reason.

Now the one other aspect of note, the originator of the program was named Charles Carpenter, and he was a faculty member in the program at its beginning. We just admitted our twenty-fifth cohort, so it's been in existence for twenty-five years. His family started the Charles Carpenter Lecture Series, so once a year we'd bring in either a community college president or a renowned scholar in higher education or community college or something or other, to address both the students and the wider community. So last year we had Betty Duvall. She was a faculty member in the program when I first started, and then she retired maybe a year after I started. She was a president at PCC, one of the campuses of PCC, and she was the first – I don't know what the title was, kind of Assistant Secretary focused on community colleges in the federal Department of Education during the first Clinton administration. So she is currently on the Higher Education Coordinating Council board. So she did the Carpenter Lecture this past year.

Every other year we have a scholar provide the address. So in the coming year, Daniel Solórzano from UCLA, who is a recipient of the American Educational Research Association Award on Social-Critical Work is going to be addressing the Carpenter Lecture. And we're making that Carpenter Lecture one of the offerings through the upcoming Year of Arts and Sciences.

[1:10:09]

CP: I have a few questions for you to get your thoughts on issues of learning, and I guess this would be the right time to ask you about online education – the pluses and the minuses, in your experience. It sounds like you've had quite a bit of experience with this.

DRE: I think that online education is a very useful way for some people. I cannot claim that it's useful for everybody, just like I'm not sure that in-person education is useful for everybody. I think I view it as a tool, and so for those people who can't be sitting here in Corvallis because of other commitments, this is quite a useful way to go. I think there's a lot of communication and information that can be shared through the online media. Furthermore, I know more and more people are using video conferencing and through Canvas there's this thing called the big blue button and you can be talking with your students. So I've really been making use of that, either set up – we had, for example, our Associate Dean for Research who was just appointed, I had her address the doctoral students remotely. So they were all in their offices and she was in her office and they could ask questions, I could ask questions, they had her PowerPoint they could see. So they were getting a close to in-person experience, but they didn't have to travel.

At the same time though, I think there's something to be said for being together, and certainly for both our students in the doctoral program and in our masters Adult Ed program, having that cohort and that personal feeling of connection is very helpful. But the doctoral students, one of the things I've seen is that people make a commitment to a cohort, or some make

a commitment to the cohort, and we all have get-togethers. So Joe is just about ready to take his oral exam; everybody, or as many can do it, get together somewhere and they grill Joe to get him ready for the oral exam. I think that those personal connections, both to help you finish your degree but also later on to find new jobs, is something that you can't replace with online texting. So I think there are positives and negatives.

CP: Sure. My sense is that OSU Ecampus measures up pretty well compared to others.

DRE: Yes. They're phenomenal in terms of the level of support that they provide to faculty, the training that they give, just everything. I was just talking with a new hire of ours, a new faculty member coming in, and I said "you know, you really should be relying on the instructional designer here because" I said, "well, they'll help you with this and they'll help you with that." She said, "well, here I have to do it all myself." I said "no, they'll help you and it'll probably be better than what you can figure out how to structure yourself." So I very much appreciate the people from Ecampus.

CP: How about the issues that are faced by non-traditional students?

DRE: Well, I think almost all of our students are non-traditional students. They are people who are out there in the work world, they're pretty successful in their careers, and they need this next degree in order to further their career. I find these people to be quite engaged, quite interested in doing the work. Now sometimes there are interruptions, there's things that go on at work, I understand that. But in general, these students are pretty dedicated and I just very much appreciate being able to work with them.

[1:15:49]

CP: How do you feel like you have evolved as a teacher?

DRE: Well, I've learned a lot from my colleagues by watching them, by talking with them. Now, my colleagues both here in the college as well as my colleagues around the world, as I've got quite a network, they're able to help me identify new resources that I can use. Same thing with Ecampus – new resources, new ideas to put into my work. So I think – well, certainly I've become more comfortable with online work. I had not really done online teaching before I came here, so if nothing else I've learned how to do that. I guess I also wish that I could observe more of my colleagues. There are some people I know who are really gifted faculty, really gifted instructors, and I feel like I should take more time and just go and sit and watch them some.

CP: I wonder too, it seems to me that it would be a different experience teaching people who want themselves to be teachers, versus students from other disciplines.

DRE: Yeah, exactly. Now I no longer teach this course, but I taught a course on, it's called Instructional Leader. It introduces various learning theories. And what I tried to build around that was "well, if you're going to adopt this learning theory, how would you be teaching? If you adopt that learning theory, how would you teach?" And I had people try to work on those different kinds of teaching approaches. That was really a fun course.

CP: Well, as we wrap up a little bit, I've got a couple of questions in conclusion. First, what lies ahead for you?

DRE: Well, we've revamped our doctoral program but, even more exciting, we've revamped our adult master's program. So in the fall, I've constructed a new course on – what is it called – Ethical Professional Issues. So I'm going to be teaching a whole new course around ethics here in the West. Now I actually am teaching, in August, in a program in human resource development in Bangkok, of course, on ethics. But it's very different. [laughs] Both the topic area – human resource development – is somewhat different that adult education here, and it's Thailand vs U.S. So I'm really excited about that. I have some publications that I'm working on with doctoral students, and we've got some things in the pipeline, we're going to be submitting some others. Conferences coming up and new faculty. We're so excited; we just hired two new faculty who are going to be joining our group and they are phenomenal. So I'm really looking forward to having them integrate into our group and contribute. And maybe then, one of them can take over. [laughs]

[1:20:06]

CP: So after this period of change and turbulence for the college, it sounds like it's a more optimistic feeling right now.

DRE: It is. For me I'm really – yeah, I think things are going in a good direction. I know Larry Flick is super concerned about the budget and making the numbers this way add up and all that. I don't have a lot of concern, because I know that we're going to be growing our programs sufficiently and that will be fine. So I'm just really excited about the future and our new faculty. And then we've got faculty who've joined maybe in the past couple years, so that's bringing all new energy which is wonderful.

CP: Well, my last question for you is one that we've been asking a lot of people for this project. This is a sesquicentennial project and we're asking people to give their thoughts on where they think OSU is positioned as it looks towards its 150th birthday, a couple of years from now.

DRE: Well, what I've seen happen here at OSU is it has grown phenomenally since I came. My recollection was, when I first came, I was told there are 19,000 students. I think it's now at, what, 35,000? Something like that? That's phenomenal growth. I'm not sure that the – well, I think that there may be a little more growth, but I think we're probably at a pretty stable size right now.

What I see happening, I mean, it's pretty obvious, there's going to be growth going on through the campus at Bend. There's going to be the Marine Studies over in Newport. There's some growth in the Portland area. We might be a part of it, I don't know. So I see that OSU is reaching out beyond Corvallis. And certainly with Ecampus, it's reaching out throughout the US; at the very least, in Education, it's throughout the US. I think in other programs, it's around the world. And I think that more global focus is going to be a part of where OSU is going, both because of its Ecampus presence but also because of INTO. So I think the future is really bright for the university. We're getting a stronger and stronger arts and sciences presence. Yeah, things are on a good trajectory.

CP: I agree. Thank you, Darlene.

[1:23:39]