

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH JULIE R. NEWELL

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT AND LAURA BETH DAWS

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Southern Polytechnic State University Series, No. 3
Interview with Julie R. Newell
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Location: Dr. Newell's office, Atrium Building, Southern Polytechnic State University

TS: We're interviewing Julie Newell today who is the chair of the Department of Social and International Studies at Southern Polytechnic. Thank you for talking to us today.

JN: It's a pleasure to be asked.

TS: Why don't we begin with a little about your background? I think it's really intriguing that you are interested in both science and the literary side of things, and you were able to combine those things together for a doctoral dissertation even. Why don't you talk about your educational background and how you got interested in both biology and English and communications and all of that?

JN: I was just interested in both as a high school student. I did several independent studies because I was at the only high school in Boise that didn't have AP [Advanced Placement].

TS: Really? You were among the poor folks or something (laughter)?

JN: No, Borah High School is pretty affluent, but it's long enough ago that AP was not universal like it is now. Boise High and Capital both had AP. I just happened to go to Borah, which didn't. But we had open campus, so you could come and go as you needed. By at least my senior year and I think some of my junior year, I had gotten to the edge of what was available to me. I had a couple of professors who did independent studies with me, one in biology and one in Elizabethan non-Shakespearian literature because that's what I wanted to. That eclectic interest has just always been there. I needed money to go to college. My mom is a nurse, and by the time I was a senior in high school was working part-time. My dad was a carpenter and a contractor. So on paper we had money, and in the real world we didn't. I really needed a scholarship. I had won a small biology scholarship in a competition, and I did speech and debate all the way through high school, and I had small communications scholarships. From the very beginning I double majored in communication and English and had a second major in Biology. I finished all three, and I graduated with both bachelor's degrees on the same day. People kept saying I would decide what I wanted to do, and I said, "I have, thank you."

But I've always been interested in the interactions between science and society. Science communication, I thought, would probably be where I went, and as I got

up in the program at Boise State as an undergraduate, I kept hearing about an honors student who had preceded me by a few years, who had gone to graduate school in history of science. I went, “I don’t have to triple major anymore!” So I applied to about four or five places. University of Wisconsin, Madison, offered me a fellowship. I worked my way through graduate school. That was a one-year fellowship, and then I had teaching assistantships and research assistantships my other years. I did my master’s and my PhD in history of science.

I went to work with this scholar name Bill Coleman [William Coleman (1934-1988), historian of science at UW-Madison from 1978 to 1988], and I was going to be a Darwin scholar basically, like the world needs another Darwin scholar! Bill was wonderful. He was just phenomenal. I take notes like a maniac. Bill could write different things with both hands at the same time! The only time I’ve ever had to tape the lecture—because my notes are basically transcription—but I had to listen to the lecture over again and get the other half. He was amazing. But I got there, and he said, “Oh, I’ve decided I’m not going to do evolutionary history anymore. I’m going to do German ecology.” Dread—ecology yes; German no! So I did a paper my first year in graduate school in my History of the Physical Sciences class. I was trying to get out of doing a physics paper, so I did a paper on the Age of the Earth debates—Lord Kelvin [1824-1907] and the discovery of radioactivity and how that turned the concept about a cooling earth completely upside down because now there was an internal source of heat. I got totally hooked on history of geology. I also had a son who was eighteen months old when I started graduate school and a marriage that didn’t make it through graduate school . . .

TS: That’s not uncommon.

JN: So going to England to do evolution research was just not going to happen. I got really hooked on American geology. My specialty is the history of American geology up through about the end of the Civil War because science kind of shuts down in the United States for the Civil War, as you well know, and then when it starts back up again it is what everybody expects it to be; it’s physics. But the guys who made all the models, who founded what was the AAAS [American Association for the Advancement of Science], *American Journal of Science*, all of that stuff in the pre-Civil War period are all geologists. They were the first ones who figured out how to get the rest of us to pay them to do science, which in a democratic, egalitarian society is no small trick. The way they solved that problem has impacted how we think about science and how it should be funded and what should be funded right up to the current day. Now, basically, you know what my dissertation is about.

TS: That’s probably the same thing wasn’t it in a field like history? You had all those “amateur historians” writing about the early American republic and so on, and I guess eventually they started getting tenure-track jobs in colleges.

JN: In geology it's a little bit different because they make their inroads in the state geological and natural history surveys. Those are state-funded because in the pre-Civil War period federal funding of science is complicated at best.

TS: Unless you're doing explorations far away?

JN: Right, it had to be either military or interstate commerce. Most of the original geological and natural history surveys were state-funded. They wanted to know where the building stone was or where the roadbed would be stable. The most famous and the most important of the really early ones is the New York State one. What they wanted to know was where the coal was, so they could quit importing it from other states, and the answer is, "How do you convince the legislature that knowing that there's no coal in New York and they should stop looking for it is in fact valuable economic information?" The funding was dependent on utility at the same time that the geologists were trying to find a way to do what we would think of in more current terms as pure science and get a foothold among their European colleagues. The other nice thing was that they weren't behind in geology. Geology in the early nineteenth century was really just getting started everywhere, and in some places and in some ways we had better rocks than they [the Europeans] did.

The question that I really set out to answer was I kept reading, "Geology was the first professional scientific community in the United States and laid the groundwork [for the other sciences]. But nobody explained why, and being me, I wanted to know why. The answer turns out to be because they could show return on investment and justify public investment in a democratic, egalitarian society; because geology as a whole didn't have a big head start, so [the Americans] weren't trying to play catch up; and because unlike botany and zoology where you just collect the samples and send them back and the Europeans work on them, we're talking about stratigraphy here. It's critical to see the rocks in situ and you couldn't take the Appalachian Mountains back to Europe. So they had really good rocks, and they just couldn't be collected and sent back, so that's why geologists . . . that really is my doctoral dissertation.

BD: That's really interesting to me because, looking at your background, I've always known that you were perfectly suited for chairing a department that's interdisciplinary like this. So how did you move from that doctoral dissertation to this department? What was it that brought you here?

JN: I didn't move to this department actually. When I was on the job market with a degree in history of science, I had done a lot of TA-ing [teaching assistantships], and Southern Poly had a dean, Ed Vizzini. Ed's still around too; he's in Arizona. He was phenomenal. He really believed in STS, Science, Technology, and Society, as part of the curriculum here, and they already had a twelve-hour STS requirement built in for all the majors in Arts and Sciences. We were on quarters then, so a one-quarter class was five hours, so it's not as much as it sounds like.

And you can actually see that documented in the catalogues. They wanted to hire somebody who could become the STS person. There probably wasn't a full-time teaching load, so the fact that I could also teach American History helped, but really what they had was they had the Interface conference, which was a joint project between SPSU and I think it's science technology and humanities association or society.

They had this conference every fall, and it was held close to campus. It had its own bank account, although the university was putting up \$6,000 a year for it. It was completely organized and run by a faculty member in what was then Humanities and Social Sciences. It rotated through the faculty, and they all hated it. So when they wrote the job description that was the STS person, they made running that conference that person's job. They needed somebody who could do STS. I had graduate degrees and teaching experience in history of science, which is a STS discipline. They needed somebody who could teach something else in the core, and American History did just fine. And they needed somebody who could run this conference. When I had the teaching assistantship, I was the editorial assistant for *Isis*, which is the international journal of record in the history of science and was housed at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and the editor at that point was my major professor, Ron [Ronald L.] Numbers [professor of the History of Science and Medicine at UW-Madison, 1974-2012; currently Hilldale Professor of the History of Science and Medicine Emeritus]. Plus, I had worked my way all the way through college. The way we funded our competitive speech activity was by running debate tournaments for the high schools. So I convinced them I had organizational and . . . it was a combination of those three things.

When you read a job description and you think it's been cooked, I didn't think I had a chance, but that job description was so weird, they didn't have anybody in mind. They just knew exactly what they wanted somebody to do, and I fit all the pieces. I interviewed two places. I interviewed in Lowell, Massachusetts, which was not an entirely pleasant experience, even before the blizzard of '93 snowed me in the Hilton for three days. I interviewed here in early April. I'm an Idaho girl. I lived in Wisconsin. We were living in Lancaster, Pennsylvania for a year at that time because my husband had a one-year sabbatical replacement. I had never seen dogwoods in bloom because I had just gotten far enough east and the ones in Pennsylvania weren't blooming yet. So I had the blizzard of '93, you know the one that took out the Big Chicken; I had that in Lowell, Massachusetts.

TS: It took out a big tree in my front yard.

JN: Yes. I had never seen a big northwester, and it was so fun because I was snowed in at the Hilton, and they've gotten all the staff in that they could before the storm hit, and there was almost nobody else there. They had nothing to do.

TS: So you were a privileged character.

JN: I was excellently cared for. I interviewed here in April, and so I saw dogwoods in bloom for the first time ever. I may have a degree in biology, but at heart I'm a botanist. Sandy [William S.] Pfeiffer, who was the department chair at that point, called and offered me the job on my birthday in early May [1993]. At Lowell everybody shared offices, and they explained to me in great detail why they could not provide me with a computer. Sandy asked me if I wanted a Mac or a PC! I still hadn't finished my doctoral dissertation. I had horrible writer's block. Writing is very difficult for me; I tie myself up in knots. I mailed my doctoral dissertation to my committee the morning the moving truck came to move us down here, got down here, ended up flying back to Madison for my defense, and that was the semester where I think I had either three or four separate preps, and I was staying just ahead of my students. But I loved it down here, really wanted a place where I could work with students, and this has always been such a teaching-focused place.

At Wisconsin we helped with registration as teaching assistants, [and] I used to sit and make lists of classes that students could get into without having to go around and collect their little IBM cards because literally I was tired of watching them cry. They couldn't get into what they needed; everything was full. I TA'd in a class where I was one of three TA's, and I had more students as a TA than I had as a full-time professor down here. I mean, the workload down here wasn't light. It was just a huge class. So I really wanted a place where teaching mattered and where there was lots of contact with students, and this was definitely that place. I started teaching in the fall of 1993. My hire letter was very carefully written because I turned my dissertation in late in the summer and that meant I was going to be a December graduate, but having your dissertation accepted by the library was the last official act, and then you just got the paper when you got the paper. My hire letter actually specifies that my dissertation has to be in the library before whatever the first day of classes was. I actually got my PhD in December after I had been teaching for three months.

TS: But they paid you as though you had a doctorate from day one?

JN: Well, technically I did (laughter)! I just didn't have the paperwork yet!

TS: I thought maybe STS was something unique to Southern Polytechnic because it sounds like such a perfect fit for this institution. But I was talking to somebody at the KSU History & Philosophy Department party on Saturday afternoon, and it sounded like maybe other schools have STS programs too. What's the history of STS programs?

JN: STS appears in many different ways and in many different flavors. It emerged in the second half of the twentieth-century as a couple of things: as a way to pull together disparate disciplines and help them speak to each other, and a way to give students a more integrated view. Wisconsin had a thing called integrated

liberal studies. In some but not all of the classes, in the ones I work with, it was STS in a different name. The humanities students could take the integrated liberal studies class I TA'd for a long time for science credit. We did Newton, Darwin, and Einstein. The engineering and science majors took the same class and got liberal arts credit. It has that function. It's also a home for really serious scholarship that's interested in the societal/cultural/sociological impacts of a highly science and technology focused way of living. It's got its own pedagogy and its own scholarship. It's also got a whole lot of people like me who are less deeply rooted in the traditional STS discipline, but who are very interested in the interaction between science, technology, society and culture. That's kind of where I was when I started as an undergraduate.

TS: So you were the one and only in that program here when you came?

JN: When I came, yes. There were people who were teaching classes, some really good classes, and what they needed was just somebody who had a perspective of that. We created a process for vetting course proposals and making sure that classes got scheduled and those kinds of things. That was primarily my job. It was still the twelve hours in the arts and sciences. Then when we went from quarters to semesters and the Board of Regents challenged us to not just pour old wine into new bottles, but to really rethink things, Ed Vizzini and I worked really hard to get the STS class in the new core curriculum. Area B is institutional option, it still is, and we worked really hard to get a two-hour requirement in Area B because STS reflected what this institution was and what it could be. It depends on whom I'm talking to. Dr. [Lisa A.] Rossbacher tends to say, "We produced socially responsible engineers and technologists," and I tend to say, "I want them all to know they can screw it up for the rest of us."

It's almost always taught as a reading and discussion course. It's a two-hour course, so over the history of the program, most of us who teach it have wanted to teach it in one two-hour bloc, rather than two shorter blocs because by the time you get students really into a discussion in a fifty-minute class, it's over, and then you have to start over again the next time. It was required of all majors. Originally, the master syllabus—and the master syllabus is on my website along with a long list that's out-of-date now, but that has a lot of the topics that have been covered—[contained an] original requirement that everyone had to participate in a debate. We changed that. That's about the only thing that's ever been changed in the master syllabus. It's designed to give scaffolding onto which people can build courses focused on what they know and love. There's no better combination than that as far as I'm concerned.

We changed the debate to an interdisciplinary project. It could still be a debate or a presentation or whatever. But we were getting a lot of feedback from our industrial advisory boards in the departments that our students were absolutely phenomenal working in teams, but they really had experience working only in single-discipline teams because they mostly did teams in their major courses.

And ABET [Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology] had a requirement that made this kind of course really valuable for accreditation purposes, which I thought was perfectly appropriate because I thought it was really valuable for the education of students, especially in science and technology fields. [Consequently], we changed it to an interdisciplinary group, so we knew every student who graduated from here, at least in theory, had taken at least one class in which they were required to do something where they worked with students from other majors. That's pretty much how it is to this day.

When we first started it, we were small, and we were faculty-heavy, and I could borrow faculty from all over campus, which was wonderful, because department chairs needed some extra classes to help make faculty schedules. And then as we began to grow like Topsy, and it got tight, and I couldn't borrow faculty, now, I'm trying to think, this semester I don't think I have anybody out of department. That's been the rule rather than the exception for the last few years. I have some really devoted adjuncts who love the class and love teaching and do a great job and who probably make more money in a day at their real jobs than they do with me in a semester. I have a couple of people who have varied between full time and part time depending on need. We were able actually to hire a lecturer in STS last academic year. I have a full-time, temporary faculty member who was an undergraduate student here in T-Com [Technical Communication], who told me she was going to go get her master's degree and come back and teach for me. She was also my research assistant the year I had a NSF grant, and went away and got her master's degree, and came back, and has been teaching for me. Trina [M.] Queen in my department has the perspective both of an SPSU student [BA in International Technical Communications, 2003] and an SPSU faculty. She has a lot of experience here.

TS: You were talking about how, when you got here, it was a small campus. Do you have any idea how many students, and how would you describe the campus? You talked about it being teaching-classroom-focused, but could you talk just a little about what you found when you got here? It must have been a little different than the University of Wisconsin.

JN: It was wonderfully different. When I got here, I was hired into the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. I went to one faculty meeting, and one of my faculty members was cleaning out his office the other day. That's the minutes from the faculty meeting I went to [pointing at a document attached to her wall]. One of the things that they announced was that they had applied to the Board of Regents to split the department into two, and they figured it would take a long time. But in the early 1990s international was the big catchword, and approval had come back really quickly. So I only went to one faculty meeting in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, and then it split into English and Humanities and Social and International Studies.

That made us the newest department on campus and the only department with no major—and there wasn't really any place to put us. Humanities and English was in D building [currently the Mathematics Building]. Their offices were where [Georgia] Highlands [College] has been on the first floor. The G building [currently the Engineering Lab Building] is one of those 1960s buildings that had, until they enclosed them a few years ago, an open-air hallway and an internal closed hallway. They built a wall across the east end of the hallway and put a door in it, and they used what had been a janitor's closet. They turned that into our storage space and where our mailboxes were. There was one faculty office right there in the corner, and that became the department chair's office. Then the piece of hall that they had walled off became our lobby and secretary's office.

Over in G building, my first office was G165. I had students doing journaling a lot. We used lab notebooks, composition books, so they built me a doublewide drop box that I put a Pennsylvania Dutch design on the front of so it would be easy for students to spot. It's still in the hallway over there. Finally, about two years ago, they painted it, so it's no longer exactly the way I left it when this building [J or Atrium Building] opened. In the new department we were all core, and it was just an amalgam of different departments . . . and I have lost the question!

TS: Just what the campus was like when you got here, your impression when you first came here.

JN: Yes, so it was old, but cozy and community. The whole campus was like a house that the whole family had lived in for a long time, so it had its idiosyncrasies. My first classrooms were mostly in the G building, and the second floor of G has been completely rehabbed and redone. Every spring they would practice touch and go landings over here at Dobbins, and so I learned to lecture—the plane would come over; I'd stop wherever I was; I'd wait till it left; I'd start talking again; and then three minutes later it would have touched and come back. So that was not exactly fun, but one adapted. On the second floor of G—and the second floor of some of other buildings that were built on that same plan were the same—I don't know who designed them, but there were no elevators, so there was no ADA access to the second floor.

Then they built the external elevator shafts, like they have on G. D is more incorporated into the building. G you actually go up in the elevator, and go across a tiny little walkway and into the building. Well, I had a student who was in a chair and needed to get to early classes. I would have to meet him when he came out of the elevator because they built the building by chopping that top floor into classrooms. We had to go through two locked doors of another classroom to get to my classroom. Now, you could come up the stairs there, but you couldn't get there from the elevator. So I had to meet him and escort him through another classroom to get to our history classroom. Accessibility on this campus has always been a bit of a challenge. The changes in elevation and when they

proposed the new Science Building that has never happened, one of the things they built into that was a way to use the elevators in the building to go up and out and deal with the elevation a little better. This building [Atrium] does that a little bit because it's got first floor and second floor ground entrances.

TS: So you were teaching roughly fifteen hours a quarter—three five-hour courses—unless the STS courses were less than five contact hours?

JN: Yes, that sounds about right. When I first got here, and it was the old STS program, and we were on quarters, they tended to be five-hour classes because that was how they were built into the system, four or five-hour courses. Once we went to semesters, the teaching load changed to twelve hours, which meant I usually had two history classes and three sections of STS or one history class and five sections of STS.

TS: So the two history classes would be six hours—three hours each—and then the STS classes would be two hours each?

JN: Three STS classes, yes.

TS: That would make the other six hours.

JN: But I had more students in three STS classes than I had in two history classes.

TS: I always thought that the switch from quarter to semester greatly increased the workload for everybody. Twelve hours on the semester system was a lot more work than fifteen hours on the quarter system.

JN: Yes, it's a full day. And then our lecturers have fifteen-hour course loads on semesters. I mean, that's just a lot, especially if we've got somebody who is teaching one of the only two two-credit classes we have, which is STS in my department or speech in what is still ETCMA [Department of English, Technical Communication and Media Arts], right?

LD: Technically; we just voted a change.

JN: I heard that. I just call it the department of letters because for a long time I couldn't get the letters in the right order.

TS: So everybody takes this two-hour course in STS?

JN: It's an area B core requirement.

TS: Was your title coordinator when you got here or did you have to wait until you got more faculty in it before you became coordinator?

JN: I don't remember what happened before we switched to semesters. Mostly, I just worked very closely with Ed Vizzini when we were on quarter hours. When we switched to semesters—and I actually wrote the master's syllabus and was coordinating all the sections—nobody ever made me coordinator. I just needed something that I could put [as an email signature], so I went to Ed, and I said, "Ed, I need something I can put right here in the email. Can I be the coordinator?" And he said, "Yes, you're the coordinator." So I've been the STS coordinator ever since.

TS: It didn't take you long to get a teaching award.

JN: No, and that was a huge surprise. I was doing what I had always wanted to do, loved it to death, and received the faculty of the year award my first year I think [1994].

TS: I wanted to ask you about that because you won Outstanding Faculty Awards in 1994 and 1998 and the SPSU Teacher of the Year Award for 1998-1999. I didn't know how outstanding faculty awards differed from the teacher of the year award.

JN: The Outstanding Faculty Award has changed over the years, but in general it has always been something that your colleagues and your students could nominate you for. We have five schools, and they only picked three [recipients] this year, but often there was one from each school. It was based largely on teaching, but also on the other responsibilities of a faculty member. When Dr. Rossbacher came [on August 1, 1998], as part of her inauguration year and her celebrations, she changed it a little bit. I was the first one who gave a Teacher of the Year lecture, but I was not the first Teacher of the Year.

TS: Do they give the award at the end of the school year?

JN: They give it at the end.

TS: So when we talk about the Teacher of the Year and the Outstanding Faculty Award, are we talking about two different things?

JN: Well, actually we're not talking about two different things.

TS: I have the names of the Teacher of the Year Award back to 1995. David Brani [Mechanical Engineering Technology] was the first in 1995, and then Rich Bennett [Social and International Studies] in 1996, Joel Fowler [Mathematics] in 1997 and then you in 1998.

JN: Right, I was the first one who did the lecture. In [1998] Cobb [County] began the Give Our Schools a Hand program [sponsored by the Cobb Chamber of Commerce to recognize a teacher of the year for each of the Marietta and Cobb County public schools and post-secondary institutions], and when SPSU started

- choosing teachers of the year to represent us in that program, what they did is they looked at the people who had won outstanding faculty [awards] and chose among them. They chose one for Teacher of the Year.
- TS: Okay, so you got the Outstanding Faculty Award in the spring of 1998 . . .
- JN: And then Dr. Rossbacher continued the tradition of they chose from among those outstanding faculty one person for Teacher of the Year, and I was the Teacher of the Year in 1998-99, chosen from among the spring of 1998 winners, and she also instituted the Teacher of the Year lecturer as part of her inauguration celebration. But now we have that, and in fact this year's lecturer gave his lecture last week, and I had to miss it.
- TS: So what did you lecture on?
- JN: I already gave you the whole lecture. It's in my dissertation (laughter).
- TS: Oh, You talked about the history of geology!
- JN: Well, it was so perfect for me because I had been the only person on campus who was even close to being in geology. Dr. Rossbacher's a planetary geologist, and that's played out in some really interesting ways. It makes it really interesting to have conversations with her because she knows what I'm talking about. I have not been so active since I've been department chair, but I used to be really, really active in the History [and Philosophy] of Geology Division of the Geological Society of America. In fact, I worked my way up to chair. I would go to give my paper at the GSA meetings, and Lisa would show up because she was the only other person there from our campus, which was much appreciated. I chose to talk about my dissertation. What I talked about was that story about how geologists figured out how to get geology paid for, and I talked a little bit about the impact of that on how we deal with science now. So it was a combination of the dissertation work and what I would be doing about three or four years later in the year I was on the NSF grant, which was bringing that model forward.
- TS: That was 2001-2003?
- JN: Well, actually, it was a calendar year, and it was calendar year 2002. It shows up on my activity reports [for two years] because they are not calendar year; they are functionally academic year. But the grant itself was spring and fall of 2002 plus pay and research that summer. I had more archive work to do.
- TS: Let me just ask you, when you got here in 1993, I guess they told you, "You're going to teach a heavy load." Was teaching and service about all that was expected for tenure and promotion when you got here? When did scholarship begin to become really significant in those decisions, do you think, or was it always that way?

- JN: It depended tremendously on the department and the school that you were in. Those of us who were in Arts and Sciences had such heavy teaching loads because we had primarily Gen Ed [General Education] core courses. There really wasn't much scholarship expected. I really wanted to get my doctoral dissertation published as a book, which has never happened. I got the manuscript completely revised and was working with the University of Chicago Press just about the time I became department chair. Not only have I not had time to work on it, but my editor went away to pharmacy school, and it just fell between the cracks. The scholarship expectation is keep doing some, try to be active, lots of different kinds of things count as scholarship. The year I had an NSF grant we didn't have a grant support office at that point, so I wrote and submitted that grant, got a revise and resubmit and redid it, and I did that all by myself.
- TS: Oh, so you had to do all the clerical work of administering it.
- JN: Oh, yes, there was no support. Part of what I really hoped for and a little bit of what happened is that the overhead from that grant helped to kick start having some support for people. So I've always been proud of that. I thought that was really great.
- TS: I've got some horror stories that I've recorded with faculty on our campus from back in the 1990s when they were spending most of their time on clerical things to run their grants.
- JN: Yes. I kept really close track of the financial stuff and that kind of stuff. As an historian, my grant was fairly easy because it was basically my salary, which I didn't have to worry about, and travel expenses. The department secretary was absolutely critical, Debbie Stanford, who is now Debbie Patrick [currently secretary to the vice president for academic affairs], but we kept close tabs on it to keep track of my money. There were some problems in part that the original agreement—sat down, agreed around the table, had it in writing—was that the school and the department were supposed to get some of the overhead, and the university was supposed to get whatever the standard chunk is. The first year we only got any of it because I fought for it because suddenly everybody remembered, and because it was calendar year and not academic year it went across two fiscal years, and the second year they just plain flat told us we couldn't have it. We were a department operating on a shoestring, so the two things I really hoped to kick start for the bigger institution was to get people some help for working on grants and to get a little bit of money back into the department that we could use to do things for students and to help other faculty maybe go to a conference or something. Losing that money was really frustrating. What I was angry about was feeling like I was lied to. There have not been a lot of those moments at Southern Poly, but that one—it took me a little while to get over that one. It was absolutely characteristic for me that I was mad because it was what was supposed to help somebody else that got messed up. I think I would have gotten over it faster had it been me.

Trina Queen was my research assistant, the one who came back to teach for me, but she was still an undergraduate then and was my research assistant on that project. By that point Alan Gabrielli was dean [of the School of Arts and Sciences, 2001-2011], and he gave me my office over in the Science Building so nobody could find me because he knew if he left me in my regular office, I wouldn't get my work done. That was wonderful. I was a visiting scholar in the Science Department, and at that point it hadn't split. All the sciences were in E building. I loved it. I loved every minute of it. There was a chemist up the hall who came in and made a pot of coffee every morning, and anybody else, being very kind, would have picked up the phone and said, "Julie, the coffee's ready." He would come and knock on my door with a coffee pot in his hand. "Julie, you want some coffee?" Every single morning! We'd have a little visit and some coffee.

TS: So nowadays what would you tell a new faculty member: "Get your dissertation published very quickly before tenure and promotion"? Or have things changed that much?

JN: Things have changed, but things haven't changed that much. As department chair, I really want them to be doing something, but we have an excellent group of young faculty right now who have done a fair bit of research and came to us with a few papers published and things in press and that kind of stuff, but who have really switched their attention to doing research with their undergraduate students in Political Science and Psychology in particular. I've been able to help fund that a little bit out of the department; and the dean has some small grants they can get; and that work is really phenomenal. They're really frightened right now that that's not going to count or that the expectations are going to be really different with the consolidation. They chose to come here not because they weren't doing research and they didn't know how to, but because they really loved teaching, and they really love working with students.

TS: Right. Is the perception that Kennesaw requires more scholarship than Southern Poly, then?

JN: Yes, especially in the departments that are at issue here.

TS: Do you think that is an accurate perception?

JN: I don't know about the Political Science Department. My sense is that it's very accurate in the Psychology Department. My understanding is that the university has a threshold, and then departments set their own thresholds, and the Psychology Department has made the choices it has particularly because of who it wants to be and what it wants to become. But I'm a little worried about really, really good faculty.

You asked earlier about what the campus was like when I came. One of the big crises right after I got here was every faculty member had a 24/7 assigned parking space and nobody else could park in it; 24/7, that was your space! Just when I got here, they went to assigned faculty lots as opposed to assigned faculty spaces, and you would have thought somebody had told them they were going to have to turn in every dime they had ever made. It was like they had been stabbed through the heart! I so didn't get it, in part because I had just come for University of Wisconsin, Madison, where you had to be tenured to apply for the closer in lots that didn't require you to ride the little shuttle. It was just amazing to me. Then the second part of that was, I think probably, the first discussion about whether faculty ought to have to pay for parking. I have argued since the day I got here that faculty and staff ought to have to pay for parking because parking fees are designated and students have always had to pay for parking, but it pays for the upkeep and maintenance on all the parking lots. That was just absolutely an equity issue for me. I've just about gotten decked several times because I took that position.

LB: People don't like to hear that.

JN: People don't like to hear that *and* I also think that if we had to pay for parking, there would be a little easier time getting some car pooling and commuting consolidation. Students have to pay for parking whether or not they have a car. Now it's a transportation fee. But faculty still—unless you want to park in the deck—if you park in the deck you have to pay the same fee [as students].

TS: I was going to ask you. Our decks are really built by our KSU Foundation. Is that what you did here? The university has a contract with the foundation where the foundation is going to get its money back, and the way they get their money back is parking fees.

JN: I'm not sure. I'm not the best person to ask. I think I remember that it was a bond, and it's all going to get paid off with parking fees.

TS: Well, basically, our foundation sold the bonds, and that's the way they pay it off for the next twenty-seven years.

JN: If a faculty member wants to park in the parking deck, you have to pay a per semester fee. Any place else on campus, you can get your little parking tag.

TS: Oh, okay, so faculty members don't automatically park in the deck?

JN: Yes, we went from an assigned parking place to you can park in any faculty lot on campus, which is really handy because you can park where you need to be. Now we have assigned lots.

LB: That was chaotic as well.

JN: Which actually doesn't make a whole lot of sense—I got the lot I asked for, and I asked for the lot I've parked in forever because on those rare occasions when I parked somewhere else, I would go the wrong lot to get my car. But that lot is now less used than it was before they instituted the new parking system. I think there really needs to be some reshuffling, but they needed a year to see how it was going to work out, and there were some real problems in the implementation and transition. But, yes, every faculty and staff on campus had a 24/7 assigned parking space. Mine was in a lot that's not even there any more. It was kind of under where the Q building [Engineering Technology Center] is. Where the walkway is now used to be the road—it's now moved beyond. Where the front part of the Q building is there was a lot there, and there was a little grass strip between the lot and the road, and it was a big row of the most gorgeous red bud trees. Then they all got heart rot, and they all had to be chopped down. It broke my heart. But, yes, my lot's not even there anymore!

LB: That was pretty close to your building [G].

JN: Oh, yes, it was really nice. But, yes, the road used to go where the wide walk area is between Q and the deck and the dining hall [Stingers Restaurant]. These buildings just outside my window [just west of the Atrium Building], K and I and G, are all part of the original 1960s buildings. I remember that because I'm one year older than the certificate of occupancy in G. It's on the wall over there, and I'm sure it's 1961.

TS: Zvi was telling us that there was some faculty opposition to buying the old Elks Club and expanding the campus. He explained because the trees made it seem like it was so distant. Were you one of those that were opposed to it?

JN: Well, no, we really needed the space. I was really disappointed when the purchase of the Life University property fell through. We've got nowhere to grow. We desperately needed parking. If there were ever a budget to do it, we should have an integrated Students Services Building. I was over at Kennesaw the other day for a meeting, and I went into Kennesaw Hall where you have that open space with the stations around the edges, and students could do whatever they need to do and then get where they need to be. We need that, we really need that. We've been small enough that everybody knew everybody, and to some degree that still works. It works for me in part because I've been here for twenty years, and I know who to call for what. But we really need a kind of integrated place. The Registrar's office is in B building [the Administration Building]. Financial Aid is on the lower floor of one of the old dorm buildings [Norton Hall]. So they really do have to run pillar to post to get anything done. I walked into that space [at KSU] and I thought, "We need this." That was one of the buildings that was proposed was the new Science Building and, where D (the Math building) is now, an integrated Student Services Building.

TS: That would be nice.

JN: It would be great.

TS: Laura Beth do you want to start asking some questions about women and such as that on campus?

LB: Yes, since you're talking about things that have changed with the campus, I'm personally interested in women's issues, as you are too, and I know you've worked extensively with some of the women's recruitment initiatives and awareness initiatives. Did you face any barriers coming here at what I'm guessing was a woman in a pretty much male-dominated area?

JN: My department and the people that I worked with were phenomenal. I replaced a woman I've never met who was "*the*" woman historian in the department. I was very careful—we had a faculty coffee pot that lived in Charlie [Charles J.] Weeks' office. He was my mentor, and his office was right next to me when we moved to G. For the first year I pretended I didn't know how to make coffee. I don't drink a lot anyway, and besides that we had coffee wars going on because Charlie's ex-Navy, and you can stand a spoon in his coffee. So depending on who made the coffee, everybody else complained that it was too weak or too strong, and I didn't want any part of that, but mostly I didn't want to be the girl who made the coffee. There was never any sense that I should be. My daughter was born in the spring of 1996. At that point we were still on quarters, and we had no [paid leaves of absence]. Now the short term disability insurance actually helps with maternity [leave]. That was instituted right after my daughter was born. It's always right after, right? They instituted five-year service certificates my sixth year, so I know the difference between correlation and causality!

TS: You're saying you didn't get a paid leave of absence?

JN: No.

LB: I've heard horror stories about that.

JN: There's more to it than that because if I had taken the quarter off, not only would it have been non-paid, but I would have lost the whole year towards promotion and tenure.

LB: The entire year?

TS: For one quarter?

JN: My daughter was born in February. If I had taken winter quarter off to have a baby, I'd have lost the whole year towards promotion and tenure. So Charlie Weeks gave me alternative duties, and one of the STS people we had working

here then was her dad—and Robert Fischer was in the department—Robert took over my history classes, and her dad took over my STS classes. He has the same degree from the same institution four years earlier than I do, and Charlie gave me other stuff to work on, but mostly he just bent the system really hard to keep me from getting really . . . I have heard horror stories, I went and talked to the only other person I knew who had just been through this, and her department chair had not only not helped her, but he had made her life as difficult as possible. If I remember correctly, he gave her a teaching assignment that both in length of time and location of classes made it very, very hard for her to get to the bathroom, and left her on her feet for long stretches. I worked right through fall quarter. I worked winter quarter up until two weeks before my daughter was born. I was going to go longer, but she was not turned the right way.

LB: Was she a breech baby?

JN: Not by the time she was born, but they actually had to bring me in and physically climb up on the table and turn her around. Well, sometimes when you do that, you then just deliver. But, no, she turned around and did the right thing. She was born to two historians of science. She was due on the ninth of February, and we said she will be born on the twelfth of February, thank you, because that's Darwin's birthday, and she did.

LB: How did you work it out for the rest of the quarter? Did you come right back?

JN: The guys covered my classes for the rest of the quarter.

TS: Which would have just been to early March anyway, I guess.

JN: No, I think it was a little later than that. I came back for spring quarter, as I recall, but it helped that my spouse was an employee in the department, and they could schedule our classes so we weren't in class at the same time. He and I shared an office by choice so I had a play pen in my office for a long time, and he taught part time and was her stay at home parent. But he'd bring her in, and we could tag team, so that worked out really well. But it was because we were in a department that made it work. When the Board of Regents was starting to revise things a little bit to make it a little less onerous, the campus here did ask for my input about what the challenges had been and what would really help.

LB: How did that finally change? Was it just a Board of Regents policy change or did something happen here?

JN: It's mostly been legal and policy. Short term disability insurance got added to the package just a little bit later. If you chose to have it and paid the premiums, it provided some coverage. National attitudes and national law were changing, and the Board of Regents needed to stay in compliance. So I always had the sense

- that a lot of it was external, that the rules and the laws changed, and we had to change with them, which was a good thing.
- TS: Two years later you had a woman as president here; did that make a difference?
- JN: Yes, that didn't hurt! That did not hurt. I think having a woman as president at this place, especially somebody who really cared about this stuff, but knew how to work with colleagues, especially in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] fields, and comes out of geology, which has, not necessarily any more, but traditionally lots of men, lots of field camp—I think that really helped because I would say official influence helped a little bit, but unofficial but clear expectations, I think, made more difference than anything else. I know that in the late 1990s I still had students telling me that professors were telling them both explicitly and implicitly that they didn't belong in some fields on this campus. It's been a struggle, but it's not this institution so much as the broader professional and disciplinary cultures too.
- LB: Well, I feel like SPSU has recently done a lot to recruit women on campus and to bring awareness to women's issues on campus.
- JN: Yes, and that started when Lisa came here. There have been focus groups; there have been initiatives; there have been all kinds of Women's Leadership Initiatives. Lisa had a lot to do with that. The women students have been really active too. The women in computing group [Association for Women in Computing] decided they wanted a women's collection in STEM, especially in history of STEM fields in the library, and asked me for recommendations. They bought some out of their organizational funds. They did a big book drive, and people all over campus donated specific titles from the list. I have a copy of the *Sting* [student newspaper] article in my files I can get for you if you want it. The big surprise for me was when the *Sting* article came out that they named the collection for me.
- TS: Wow.
- JN: I had no idea, and I don't even know if anybody still knows, but to me that was a huge thank you for something I did out of love and joint spirit of this needs to happen.
- TS: You listed Women's Leadership Initiative as a research area. Could you talk a little about what kind of research you've done in this area?
- JN: Women's Leadership Initiative is something that Dr. Rossbacher put up the money for a small group of us to go to a summer, I think week-long [event] up at KSU. From about two hours in we were going, "We have to take this back to campus; we have to take this back to campus." Becky Rutherford [Academic Affairs], Kit Trench [Advancement], Phyllis Weatherly [Career and Counseling]

Center], Dr. Rossbacher, and I were the coordination team, and we created this idea. Lisa was always the spearhead and really made things happen. The other four of us participated because we all come from different areas with different strengths and different contacts, and we're busy but she's busier. We put this together, and then we brought in a few guest speakers, but we also did research and pulled things together and taught. The one article that I had published out of that was co-authored with Dr. Rossbacher. It was originally my presentation and my ideas, and then we wrote the article together, and she got, I think it's in *Women in Higher Education*, which is a newsletter that comes out. She had contacts, and they were really interested, and we got it published.

But coming out of my background in biology and geology and my experience—my daughter has an older brother who is thirteen years older than she is—so my experience trying to juggle family and work and research—my family is eight hours travel by air one way—trying to juggle all those things. People kept talking about life balance. There's no such thing as life balance. I finally decided the best thing I could do was dynamic equilibrium, which is the balance changes over time as the stressors and the immediate demands change. I took that metaphor and I built a whole presentation around it to try to share that because if you try to get to stasis, to just true balance, all you do is get frustrated and feel like a failure because nobody ever gets there, despite the fact that all the guru stuff says . . . So I used the model of dynamic equilibrium. I did mostly biological examples. When Lisa and I worked together, she built in geological examples. But the idea that what you have to do is [realize] that balance has to change over time depending on what's going on. If you can do that you're doing okay. I think that's especially important for women.

I think at least in traditionally structured families, there is a little bit more degree to which men can divide up the proportions and hold it there. Now that parenting is much more by both parents, I think the dynamic equilibrium model is going to become a lot stronger. But I've never seen it anywhere, and I thought, "Somebody just needs to say this because this is how it works for me!" Then we wrote the article together. We did whatever we could think of in that project to try to give people tools. In the Kennesaw thing we kept saying, "I wish somebody had told me this ten years ago!"—so we tried to bring it back to campus and share it with some of those people who were where we were ten years ago. I think it was really successful. We were gearing up this year to do—we couldn't do the whole thing over again, as much as we would have liked to, but we were going to have sessions all through this academic year that were extension for the initial participants and that new participants would be able to partake of, so that they could have the benefit too. We were pulling it all together last fall, and then we were going to do sessions this spring, and then consolidation [of SPSU and KSU] kind of took over our lives.

LB: Right. This might be a good transition into talking a little bit about consolidation since you mentioned it.

- TS: Maybe before we do, you were talking earlier before we came down here, Laura Beth, about Julie's role with women's athletics and Women's History Month and so on.
- LB: Yes, yes. I noticed you spearheaded a petition in the J building to get women's athletics.
- JN: Actually that was a student initiative. The students started that. Imagine that, the guys wanted more women on campus, okay. Even though they knew that basketball would be more expensive—for Title IX purposes, softball and baseball are two different sports, but women's basketball and men's basketball are the same sport, and they have to be funded equally. It was going to have to be funded out of student fees because we have no P.E. classes, so our coaches are entirely paid as coaches, which makes it more expensive. What they were doing was a drive to create a fee for themselves to create a women's basketball team. All I did was just be the Building J person because I'm the mom of Building J anyway who had the petition so people knew where to come to sign it. Yes, I was just helping out; I was not a spearhead there.
- TS: So the male students wanted women on campus and thought basketball was the way?
- JN: They thought women's basketball would be a good way to go. And I appreciated that they didn't want the more stereotypical sport of softball, but they went for the more expensive sport, but that they thought would be a good mechanism and would give the women some real parity because we've had a good baseball team, we've had a good men's basketball team, and so I thought they were doing the right thing for all the right reasons, so I volunteered to be the person who had the piece of paper so others could find it.
- LD: Do you think it helped? Did you notice a jump in enrollment for women students after that?
- JN: It helped some, but anything we could do on this campus that gave women a way to connect and, you know, with basketball impart some money to get here—I think everything helped a little. It didn't help enough. Our numbers are still really low and fluctuating and different, depending on who quotes them to you, but I think it did help. The women's basketball team has been very successful. I think probably the only other way I'm connected is that a fair number of the athletes, especially in basketball, majored in our department once we had majors. They have been International Studies majors or since we've gotten the Psychology major, they've been Psych majors. I think that started out because people thought it would be easy. I think it continued because as a department we take the student and student athletes very seriously. We hold them to task, and we're not afraid to call the coach if we think a student is in trouble. We've

worked very well with the coaches, and I'm proud of that. Plus, we have mandatory advising in this department, so the coaches didn't have any problem getting somebody to help them know what the student should actually be taking to make progress towards their degree. I've had coaches come over, especially in the fall semester, with two or three athletes in tow, who have just come in and they're kind of late, their transcripts are late . . . I've been doing core advising the entire time I've been here, so that part's easy, and really what they need to take and working out a schedule that doesn't make them miss too many practices and where they're not going to miss a lot of classes for games, I've just done a lot of that. It's been a pretty good working relationship.

TS: What about Women's History Month?

JN: Women's History Month and Earth Day, I'm just going to keep celebrating until something happens, and with Women's History Month, God bless you, it did! There have been lots of times on this campus where the committee was me, myself and I. I would order some stuff from the Women's History Project, and I would put up some posters or try to organize something. I had a lecture I wrote on women in the history of STEM, because the women of AT&T called the university saying we want somebody—when I first got here, if it had anything to do with women, they would just readdress it to me because then they were done. I'm not kidding.

LB: You were the token woman?

JN: I was the token Women's History and Women's Issues person.

LB: So the type of woman who cares about women.

JN: Yes, and there were lots of other people who cared, but I was the one who kept tilting the windmills and putting up with the email every year when I'd send out an email saying this is what "we" have planned—I've often been a "we" of "one"—what we have planned for Women's History Month, and every single time a dean who shall not be mentioned would email me back and say, "When is Men's History Month"?

TS: The other eleven months [laughs].

JN: Well, actually, all twelve of them, really, so I would buy posters and put stuff up or plan a little something, just whatever I could do. It was really spotty, and it was what I could manage. We celebrated women's suffrage, giving the vote to women, a few years ago. I had people collect quotations from women that they really liked, and then I wrote a hundred different ones out on cards. We met where the globe is, and it was like, I'm trying to think, whatever anniversary it was, we read that many quotations, and people came and read, and some people read multiple times, but it was just fun, and it was something that the community

- could do together, and it was something to celebrate—so Women’s History Month and some other little things.
- TS: We’re coming up on the hundredth anniversary [of the Nineteenth Amendment] in five more years.
- JN: Yes, so just whatever I could do. I came from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where the political climate is very different from Georgia. On the other hand, that’s Madison, that’s not the State of Wisconsin. I grew up in Idaho, so I’ve always been kind of out there. I’ve always said that my students think I’m an extremely liberal feminist, and if they ever meet a real one of either they’re going to be terrible shocked.
- LB: Good way to put it.
- JN: But Idaho was one of the first two states to grant women the vote. My dad had three daughters. I was the eldest, and as soon as I was old enough not to drown when I fell off the log, I was fishing with him. I came from a place that’s very politically conservative, but it’s not really gender-biased very much. It’s just not part of the history of the state. They needed women to achieve statehood, and they knew it. So it’s been really piecemeal, and some years I couldn’t do anything. That set of posters and stuff that I loaned you . . .
- LB: Yes, I still have them.
- JN: That’s okay, but as you can tell, I bought them, and they have been trotted out year after year after year. Sometimes I could get the Science Department to put some up or we could put them some place. I have some that have been pretty creatively defaced (laughter)!
- LB: It sounds like you didn’t have a lot of institutional support.
- JN: No, and Earth Day was exactly the same way. We almost had nothing to celebrate it this year because this was the year I was going to put it together way ahead, and we were going to do what we tried to do last year. Then I got so busy with consolidation I couldn’t. Luckily, somebody picked it up at least at the last minute, and we did a couple of things—Jordyn Clark [Coordinator, Student Activities].
- TS: Well, that’s our segue back to consolidation, I guess. When did you first hear the news about the consolidation?
- JN: I was in a meeting with a student in the little conference room across the hall. I don’t remember what it was about, but I remember that it was tense and contentious. I walked out into the hallway, and our administrative assistant, Shirnett [Campbell] ran toward me and said, “You have to check your email.” So

we found out on November 1st when they issued the press release. That was it. I had that morning turned in the application I had been working on for two weeks for the Dean of Students position. I turned it in about ten o'clock. I went to that meeting. I came out. The email was out, and we all went over to listen to Dr. Rossbacher over by the Student Center. About 5:00 o'clock that night, I had an email that all searches were suspended. I cried all weekend.

Nobody knew what that meant, but I love this place, I love this community, and it was just the way it was done. It could not have been more hurtful. So I cried all weekend. Every time somebody said something to me, I cried. It hasn't helped that my daughter is a competitive fencer, so I spend a lot of time in places where there are lots of parents from the community that have heard what is going on. Plus, I recruited any number of students to SPSU. We actually have our own fencing club just because they were looking for some place close and well suited to their interests. They just didn't know we were here. But I could say, "Oh wow, here's a person to talk to, and here's my card if you need anything or if you want to just come have lunch with me or whatever." So I had built up—a lot of people knew I worked here, and so everywhere I went I got asked about it, which didn't help.

LB: Especially that weekend.

JN: Especially that weekend.

TS: So even as a department chair, you didn't get any inkling ahead of time.

JN: No, no, no. We all found out when they made the press announcement, which was part of what was just . . . The first thing I knew was that my department would not continue to exist because I have four historians who need to go into the history department, and three political scientists who were going into political science, and I don't have a home yet. I don't know where I'll be. I think there are some options, but my interdisciplinary self—plus, I was wanting to move into student services, and being able to do that here, I had a better chance because people know me and know my work and know my role on the campus. The nature of my kind of service and existence at Southern Poly is that I work really hard all the time, and 99 percent of it doesn't exist on paper. I really wanted to go for that job.

I knew the minute they announced that this department, which I sometimes call the department of everything else, was going to get scattered to the four winds. It just didn't make any sense in a consolidation world. Now, that's not necessarily bad. I know history faculty who are phenomenal who will finally get to teach history majors and hang out with people in their discipline. The political scientists, they're really excited about some of the good things. Once I had my whole weekend of crisis, being me—I say that I usually see the glass three-quarters full—I decided that the thing to do was just to get really focused on

making sure that my students and my faculty were taken care of and do whatever I could to help in the process.

Then I got appointed to the Consolidation Implementation Committee [CIC], which was a tremendous opportunity to be of use. All the area coordinators for the Operational Working Groups [OWGs] have to be CIC members, and I volunteered to coordinate the committees that make up the academic, non-degree granting programs because I was on the committee that helped create our honors program, and I went through the honors program as an undergraduate. I work with the librarians closely and well. Last fall, I had just completed working with Maralee Clarke in the Registrar's office. She and I taught something like thirty-two hour sessions of degree works for advisors for which I wrote the curriculum and the handbook. Advising was one of the committees there—Advising, Mentoring and Tutoring. I worked my way through college as a tutor. So there were a lot of things there where I thought I could be useful and at least have a clue what was going on.

I tried to organize a breakfast or a lunch or something so the historians could meet some historians—the two departments could get together. That proved to be huge. It helped a lot to understand that the KSU people were as nervous and scared as we were and that they embraced us with a kind of, “Oh, cool, we really need somebody who can do that” attitude rather than a “you guys are second-class citizens, and we don't really want you,” which was what this campus was expecting. I just tried to be as positive and constructive as possible.

I am really frustrated. I think we had opportunity here that we have wasted in just truly shameful ways. Change in an academic institution is so hard, and when the consolidation program—and this is just my perspective—but when the consolidation process started, there was such opportunity and such rich discussions about figuring out what the new institution should be. The longer it's gone on the more it's solidified into, “how do I not lose turf.” I just find that incredibly frustrating. We're going to do good things, and the new institution is going to be strong, and it's going to do a lot of things better, but it's such a tiny fraction of what we could have done if we hadn't gotten stuck in turf defense and silo defense.

I have to say one of the most surprising things for me, having been a historian and an interdisciplinary person on this campus for twenty-plus-years, I thought we had disciplinary silos. We had free trade and exchange of everything compared to some of the things I have run into up at KSU. It's bigger. It's politics are stark. I'm not good at politics. I am so not good at politics because I'm always, “we all do better when we all do better,” kind of person. But I have begun to find that really frustrating. For a lot of the faculty, I think, the tension has gone down. A lot of our staff here are really, really worried, and I'm just really frustrated. I know we need to get through it. We need to meet deadlines. But the time constraints were such, the announcement structure was such, that we're going to

waste so much of what we could have done even knowing that we didn't have a lot of money or that we just needed to reallocate resources in a way that really supported students and made the institution stronger. We're going to do some of that, and I think what we're going to do is going to make a great institution. I'm just at the moment a little frustrated about how much we're not going to do.

TS: What about STS. Is that going to survive in the new university?

JN: Right now, I don't know. And I can tell you this because nobody is going to see [the transcript] for a while. STS, which was the one piece of the department that didn't map onto something that already existed, but which is really important—originally, I thought it was going to move into [the Department of] Interdisciplinary Studies, which is where I think it belongs. They saved the core course. It's still in Area B. It's one of many options instead of a stand-alone. That's fine. I think that course is really important for majors in a number of fields, and having that option there I was please with. I was not going to stand up and fight for STS because I felt like that was my little silo. But a lot of other people thought that it was important. The last I heard, it's going to belong to University College because they want a class in the core, which is exactly the kind of—I'm sorry, crap—that's making me crazy right now! It doesn't belong in University College, and it is a real disciplinary thing. If it gets put in University College just so they have a class in the core. . . I haven't confirmed that but . . .

TS: They have a class in the core, KSU 1101. I guess that's going to continue isn't it?

JN: Kind of. It's complicated. Is 1101 the seminar?

TS: Yes, it's freshman seminar.

JN: And there will be a non-seminar option, I think. For a lot of the technical majors who are already well over 120 hours, learning communities are a better model because it let's them bond and connect with each other without adding yet another three hours that they just don't [need]. Architecture is what, 158 hours now? Three more hours may not sound like much, but . . . And they're going to have to add the P.E. [Physical Education requirement] anyway. So there's going to be a learning community option that programs can choose or a freshman seminar option, as I understand it. I haven't had a chance to find out for sure what's happening to STS. One of the things that has been frustrating for me, and we've already talked about how I've been interdisciplinary from [the beginning] is that—and I don't know how many other faculty this affects, but I know there are a couple of people in my department that this affects—but there are some of us who don't map directly onto a department. There's no real place in the process for us to have a say about where we want to go, except that I've been real pro-active with looking out for my faculty members, about having them talk to different programs and figure out where they want to go. So I think we've wedged that door open. But it doesn't seem to occur to anybody that there might be some of

us where it's a question and not a foregone conclusion. I'm guessing there may be some people in your [Laura Beth's] department [English, Technical Communication & Media Arts] that are like that?

LB: Absolutely.

JN: I am just so tired of being department chair right now. I mean, not that I hate the job; I mean literally I'm exhausted. I've been department chair since August of '06.

TS: So you're obviously not going to be a department chair with the consolidation?

JN: That's fine, thank you!

TS: Right.

JN: But I would like to find an opportunity to continue to grow and learn. "*Just*"—and put that in big quotation marks—rotating back into the faculty would be okay. But I was already looking for a way [through] the Dean of Students application, to find a place where I could learn and grow. I would love to work more directly with students—my favorite part of what I do in this job. Plus, my youngest is graduating from high school in May and going off to college in Chicago. My whole family lives in a ten-mile radius of Boise, Idaho. I can't even go visit unless I've got two full days for travel. I was already kind of thinking what I want to do. This in some ways may open up more opportunities, but I still don't know what I want to do, and I don't know what the opportunities are. Mostly, I know I need to just stay put for the next year and help get people through this process the best I can, and take a year—like they say, don't make any big life changes in the year after a major life event. Well, my youngest going off to college is a major life event. I've been raising my two kids for thirty-one years! Next year will be the second time in my entire life I've lived by myself.

So I need this year. Somewhere, someplace, there's something for me to do. I need some time to try to figure out what that might be. So many really talented people are leaving in the face of consolidation that some institutional memory and somebody who knows a lot of people on campus and is part of the process—I think that's really important. I don't think it's important that it's me. I think I have the qualifications for something that somebody really needs to try to do, just to help see the process through. I'm really concerned about how few of us there are going to be who are engaged in the process and have the institutional memory and the breadth of experience to try to help that process be really productive.

TS: But on the whole you're not happy with the way consolidation is going, I gather.

JN: I'm not unhappy with how consolidation is going. I don't think there is any huge, big, "Oh my Gosh, this is a disaster," kind of thing. I don't see at this point any

- really big disasters in consolidation. My frustration is just that I saw so much opportunity and so much possibility that we're going to waste. We're just not going to do it.
- TS: Can you give some examples of what we could have done that we're not going to do?
- JN: We had the opportunity, I think, to rethink things in a way where we are, just to reuse a metaphor, pouring old wine into new bottles and sometimes we're not even changing the bottles. There were opportunities, I think, to rethink the structure of the colleges. I think the structure that Kennesaw has where schools are really just departments by another name within colleges—I think that's going to increasingly be a problem as we grow. Basically, they kept the existing colleges. We ended up with thirteen, ten that already existed at KSU and the three from here that didn't exist at KSU. The structures within those colleges have changed pretty much not at all, but the structure of what will be the three new colleges down here changed in Engineering and Engineering Technology [being] a combination of two existing schools and a really problematic combination. It's a return of an old problem for us, which is Engineering and Engineering Technology have to be significantly differentiated from each other to maintain their accreditation. Plus, they don't always play well together. Now, they'll all be in one college with one dean.
- TS: Oh, so they've been in separate schools?
- JN: Well, we were Engineering Technology and had no Engineering until just a few years ago. Then they created the Division of Engineering, which became a School of Engineering, and we have the School of Engineering Technology and Management with separate deans and the faculty kind of divided, and they've hired a bunch of new people. Now they're being put back together. Engineering and Engineering Technology are really different approaches with different end goals for their students. A lot of the Engineering Technology people are afraid, yet again, that really what they're watching is the demise of Engineering Technology at the new university. So there's a lot of tension and concern about that.
- TS: Which dean got left out?
- JN: Our dean of Arts and Sciences, Tom [Thomas] Nelson and Jeff [Jeffrey L.] Ray, the dean of Engineering Technology and Management.
- TS: So we kept the Engineering dean but not the Engineering Technology, which is probably very revealing. I thought it was very revealing when they named who the deans were, and they kept everybody at Kennesaw, basically.

JN: Right. I was in the meeting [of the Consolidation Implementation Committee] when they announced that, and they sent the press release to the rest of you during the meeting. They told us they were doing that. That was a very, very quiet meeting. And it was announced to us.

TS: It was announced to you?

JN: It was announced to the Consolidation Implementation Committee. But President Daniel S.] Dan Papp had both the right and the need to make those decisions up at that level. Those are the people he needs to work with. Nobody in the room really expected it to be that one-sided, but something somebody pointed out to me a couple of days later really made sense to me, which was so many of our people at those levels have already gone that that affected the make-up too. It will be really interesting to hear what happens at the next level and how that process goes.

TS: Next level being department chairs?

JN: Under the provost and the people who report just to Dan, because those people are making the decisions in their own divisions, and it will be another report. I sat in a really interesting committee meeting. My OWG has been phenomenal. We work together great. We met on alternate campuses. I really like the Kennesaw people I met and got to work with. We were talking about this, and they were all worried because they were so convinced that the next level is going to have to tip in the other direction, and nobody on this campus expects that to happen. The fact that we have occasionally used analogies like “hostile takeover” and “assimilation by the board,” which somebody pointed out is Board of Regents Georgia—there is really that feeling, and that first round of announcements didn’t help at all. On the other hand, I can kind of see why it went that way. [But] I think both of the deans who got out of a job [are] just phenomenal. I think Jeff Ray and Tom Nelson have both done a really great job. I went up for the job when Tom Nelson got it, and I have never for a moment been unhappy about working with Tom.

TS: What are they going to do now?

JN: I don’t know. I especially don’t know for Tom Nelson who ended up down here in a previous consolidation in part. He was at North Georgia [College and State University].

LB: Was he really?

JN: Yes, and I don’t know if he was displaced or if he just wanted to move up to the dean’s level. Jill Brady, who is our registrar and just phenomenal, was displaced in that consolidation [of North Georgia and Gainesville College into the University of North Georgia] because I was on that search committee. I’m really

- hoping that Kennesaw knows a really, really good person when they see one because they don't have a registrar right now, but Jill is just amazing. Actually, when they announced on the 1st of November, my first thought was, "They can't do this to Jill again, they just can't!" I don't know what they will do. I know Jeff has been looking for other positions, but we've just got a lot of people who are finding other jobs and going other places because they want the certainty rather than the uncertainty.
- LB: We've had ten people retire or leave this year in my department.
- TS: Ten out of how many?
- LB: About twenty-five.
- TS: My goodness, that's 40 percent.
- LB: I'm estimating. I don't think I've heard that you've had that many in your department to leave.
- JN: No, in my department I haven't had anybody leave. I have one faculty member who is eligible to retire and may consolidate or may retire, but at least that person has the choice. The only person who is teaching in my department who left was Raj [Rajgopal] Sashti [director, International Program Development], who actually works for Zvi [Szafran, the vice president for academic affairs], but teaches one class in my department. He retired and went to half time and has worked for us and has done just really great things in getting international programs built and bringing workshops and symposia and speakers to campus. But he just didn't want to deal with the uncertainty and had a chance to go back to [Clayton State University] where he previously taught.
- LB: Yes, in the last week our department chair [Mark Nunes] and the two people who spearhead the Media Arts program announced that they are leaving, as of last week.
- JN: Yes, I would just put myself in Mark's suitcase and follow him to Appalachian State [University as chair of the Department of Cultural, Gender, and Global Studies] if I could figure out how to do it.
- TS: Let me just ask what I often ask as a concluding question: what has kept you at Southern Polytechnic all these years. Of course, now everything is uncertain, but what kept you here so long?
- JN: Community; the fact that I really work with both other people across campus, but with students, which is what I've always wanted; the fact that teaching is highly valued here; the fact that we bought a house, and I've been raising kids. My son did every grade of school in a different school until we moved here and he started

middle school. My daughter has been in the same house since she came home from Northside Hospital. I do native plant gardening, and I have a garden. The house I don't care, but the garden I don't want to lose and its native plants. What I'm really afraid of is when I finally sell the house that it will all get pulled out and turned back into God-awful turf. But mostly, just the community . . .

TS: The campus community?

JN: The campus community and the students, yes. I was starting to think about whether I needed to think about leaving only because there was no place for me to go—there was no place for me to grow. Then the Dean of Students position became a maybe, and now I have no idea. It did help that I was already thinking—and my mom really wants me to move closer to home. My parents are both older and have health challenges, and it's really hard to be this far away. Luckily, both my sisters are right there, but that also means I never carry my share of the load, which is a problem for me. They're great, but I feel like I'm not helping them meet the challenges. So, yes, I just love this place, and I love the people most of all, and that has for me been the hardest thing in all of this is not knowing what's going to happen to the people.

TS: Thank you for the interview.

JN: You're very welcome.

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