

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH W. KEN HARMON

CONDUCTED, EDITED, AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

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Location: Provost's office, Kennesaw Hall, Kennesaw State University

Part 1 – Tuesday, June 6, 2017

TS: Ken, I wonder if we could start talking about your background. I know you are from Memphis, and I have a lot of Memphis connections. I used to go over there frequently. My parents were originally from Obion County, and I had an uncle that lived in Memphis. For nine years in the 1980s and 1990s I was on the board of Memphis Theological Seminary.

KH: Oh, really? That's wonderful. Did you have the theological background?

TS: No, but the president, J. David Hester, knew me and knew my parents from when he was pastor of the church I grew up in in Knoxville, and he needed a non-Cumberland Presbyterian on the board. Another thing we have in common is that we both went to the University of Tennessee and have three degrees from there. I'm guessing with a bachelor's degree in 1977, you were probably born about 1956 or 1957.

KH: In 1955.

TS: So, you passed one milestone a couple of years ago.

KH: Yes, I'm turning 62 this summer.

TS: Why don't you start talking about your background, and why accounting and why the University of Tennessee and maybe some mentors along the way.

KH: Okay, now I warn you that even though I'm an accountant, sometimes I tend to get nonlinear. So if I ramble, you can steer me back in. Yes, I was born and raised in Memphis. My family actually goes back. My parents were high school sweethearts at South Side [High School] in Memphis. They were born, both of them, in 1927, married in 1947, and their families go back beyond. So we've got deep Memphis roots. I grew up in Memphis, and I'd like to say it was some deep analytical kind of thing that took me to [the University of] Tennessee, but it was not. I'll even back up a little bit from there. I was always good in math. I had a great advanced math/trig teacher in high school, Larry Siler, and he inspired me. He was an inspiration. He challenged us like crazy. I would say that was truly one of my early mentors. At that time, if you were a fairly bright kid, and I guess I would call myself at least a fairly bright kid—I was president of the Honor Society in high school and some things like that—you went off to do pre-med. I was being recruited by Amherst College in Massachusetts, as well as some others, but I just decided I'm going to go to the University of Tennessee. My next-door neighbor . . .

TS: It was the flagship university.

KH: Yes. And I was a football fan [laughs]. It was Volunteers and all that.

TS: Let me think, 1977; was that Johnny Majors yet?

KH: I went in 1973.

TS: Oh, that's right. You graduated in 1977. Was it Bill Battle [Tennessee football coach, 1970-1976]?

KH: In fact, I got to have lunch with Bill once I became dean here years later because he was running this collegiate franchise licensing company.

TS: I ran track at Tennessee back in the 1960s.

KH: Oh, that's impressive. They always had great track teams.

TS: Well, we did; we had good teams back then.

KH: That's very impressive. Wow. Those were some real athletes. Yes, so Bill was coach. Then with all my degrees I've been through all the agony [of mediocre football teams] after the great days.

TS: I started out in pre-med also. That's another thing we've got in common.

KH: So I ended up going to Tennessee. My next-door-neighbor, David Davis, went with me. He had been my best friend since we were ten years old. We're still best friends and do a big motorcycle ride every year just the two of us even fifty-two years later. He lives in San Diego, but he was my next-door-neighbor. Then I had a number of other friends going to Tennessee. So a bunch of us just went from Memphis. It's like Memphis goes to the east to Knoxville. I was a chemistry/math double major, pre-med. It's what I started off in, so that's what I did. I never even thought about accounting. I'd never heard about accounting. David and I went to become roommates for the freshman year, but living in that same residence hall was Dan Counce, another dear friend. Dan was an accounting major. I was in pre-med and not enjoying it. I did okay on the grades and all that, but I really wasn't enjoying it.

This was in the second year. A group of us moved over to Andy Holt Tower and got an apartment. Another guy from Memphis was Eddie Aronwald. Eddie went to East or Central in Memphis, and then the rest of us were from Overton High School in east Memphis. I was talking to Dan one day, and he said, "You ought to go take an accounting class." I said, "Well, maybe I will." I was in my sophomore year, and I thought, "What the heck. I'll take an accounting class." I took an accounting class, and it was one of those that was on TV. Now this was way before the Internet. All over campus they have TVs in different rooms, or you could even go downstairs in the dorm

and watch the TV. I remember we took our first test. We had a classroom that had a TA in it, a teaching assistant. He came in after that first accounting exam, and he said, “Where’s Ken Harmon?” I said, “Uh-oh.” I’m in the back of the room, and I sheepishly raised my hand. He said, “You made the highest score out of all the thousand or so people who took the exam.” I thought, “Oh, maybe this is for me.” So it was just that.

I stayed in it, and I loved it. I liked the problem solving and that kind of thing. It was an application of math that seemed to really fit with me. I kept having a good time with that, so I switched my major over to accounting. I finished still in my four years. It fit with my math background, and I enjoyed it a lot more. If you look up into my family tree, there are a lot of accountants, so I don’t think I could escape it. Maybe it’s genetic or dysfunctional genetics! I graduated, and at the same time one thing I haven’t mentioned is that as I grew up in Memphis, I always saw myself as a musician. I started playing guitar around the age of ten, and I always played in bands and wherever I could.

TS: Music and math go together.

KH: They go together because I always saw music as patterns. I played in bands in high school and did all these types of things. I kept playing in college. So I always had a little bit of that. I guess I was kind of an old hippie musician kind of guy.

TS: Did you have long hair back then?

KH: Oh, yes. Down to the shoulders.

TS: Down your shoulders?

KH: It was right to the top of them, back when I had hair. I didn’t have a lot of it even then, which is kind of sad. In fact, I remember I was seventeen years old, and I used to play guitar for a lot of people as their accompanist, like when people do pageants and talent shows. I was the guitar player for a Junior Miss pageant. I would sit in the background, and the spotlight would hit me on the top of the head. Somebody came up afterwards and said, “Did you know you’re going bald?” That was at age seventeen they could tell it was thinner on top when the spotlight hit. So I didn’t have a lot, but it was long.

TS: That had to be genetic too.

KH: Very much so.

TS: You know, Memphis had Elvis Presley and W. C. Handy and the blues and all that.

KH: I always said I was more of a blues musician. I was not a country musician or anything like that—a blues rock musician. I’ll jump forward quickly, and that’s what I mean by being nonlinear. I was a guitar player in the 1990s for a couple of people in Phoenix.

TS: In the 1990s?

KH: In the 1990s.

TS: You were still playing?

KH: Oh, yes. I was a guitar player for a couple of folks out in Phoenix, and I was a guitar player for this woman. We were doing an acoustic venue. I came off the stage, and somebody said, "You play like you're from Memphis." That was the greatest compliment I've ever received in my entire life. He said, "There's just a funk to what you play." You know, with the funky stuff we were playing. He said, "There's something different." I said, "Thank you, I am." So yes, it was Memphis purely. It was a big R&B, blues, Elvis—Elvis had that blues connection. You go back, and the Beatles and [Eric] Clapton, everybody had that old blues connection. That was always there, and it was always in the blood. So here I am graduating—now resuming back to my senior year of college—and I'm looking at what I'm going to do. They were steering us all to go with what were then the big 8 accounting firms, the big CPA firms. So I went out and interviewed with the big CPA firms and got hired with what was then Price Waterhouse.

TS: I was wondering how you worked that into your resume—a staff auditor for Price Waterhouse, straight out of a bachelor's degree.

KH: Straight out of college I went back to Memphis; they had a Memphis office. I went there and worked as an accountant and hated every minute.

TS: Oh, really?

KH: I learned that studying accounting and problem solving is different from sitting at a desk and being an accountant every day. God bless the folks who do it. It's just, and again being nonlinear, I'll jump way forward and say I remember having a thorough analysis by Myers-Briggs and all these other measures when I did this leadership thing years later. The psychologist looked at my personality profile and all of my profiles, and she said, "Why the hell are you an accountant?" I said, "Why do you ask that?" She said, "Because your profile is the opposite of an accountant. Did you ever work in accounting?" I said, "Yes, I worked as a staff auditor." She said, "Did you like it?" I said, "I hated every minute of it." She said, "Good! Welcome to earth."

So I worked with Price Waterhouse. My sister has a doctorate in accounting, but at the time she only had her masters and was working as a professor up at Southeast Missouri [State University] in Cape Girardeau. It sounded like heaven; being a teacher sounded like heaven. I talked to another friend of mine, Dick Fisher, and Dick was instrumental. Dick is from a prominent family in Memphis, and we worked together at Price Waterhouse. We were standing in the parking lot of one of our audit clients, and I started talking to him about that. They used to call me "Bullet" on the audits for being fast. He said, "Bullet, you would be excellent in the classroom. I think you ought to go look at it."

This was already the summertime, and it was past the deadlines to apply, so I called the guys up at the University of Tennessee. I said, “I’m thinking I might want to teach or do something.” They said, “We remember you.” I said, “I haven’t taken the entrance exam, the GMAT [Graduate Management Admission Test], or anything.” They said, “We think you’ll do okay. We’ll go ahead and let you in. Come on up.” I left Price Waterhouse a month later and had an offer to come back if I wanted to. It was all on good terms. I jumped in my car and drove off to Knoxville and started a master’s in accounting. I said, “Do you have any teaching jobs?” They said, “We don’t have anything in accounting, but there’s something in management science.” That was teaching very heavy transportation models, linear programming, and all this intense kind of math focus stuff. They said, “Here’s a book, here’s where your classroom is, go.”

TS: My goodness.

KH: And that was it. I went back, and I taught my first term back. They let me in, and sure enough I did okay after they let me in on the GMAT. At the end of that term I said, “I want to do this for a living.” They said, “Well, if you’re going to do it for a living, you probably need to go get a doctorate.” I started looking around, and I saw a couple of better ones were UCLA and Illinois for a PhD in accounting. The folks at Tennessee came back to me, and they had a DBA [Doctor of Business Administration]. They have since converted it to a PhD.

TS: So they didn’t have a PhD program at that time?

KH: It was a DBA. At that time, if you look around the country, most of the ones that were DBAs were converted soon thereafter because the business schools had difficulties implementing their doctoral programs with campus requirements. If you look at Virginia, Indiana, Harvard, Arizona State, a number of them had DBAs instead of PhDs at that time, but it was still a research degree. It was still very much an academic degree. Today a DBA carries a different connotation. When I came out it carried the connotation of a PhD. They said, “We have our DBA program. If you’ll stay here for our program then we will pay for it, you will work as a teaching assistant, and we’ll streamline your master’s and doctorate together, so that you can save time.” I stayed there, and in four full years I completed my master’s and doctorate, including my dissertation. They were true to their word. So that’s how it all happened.

TS: That’s pretty fast getting through.

KH: Yes, I was twenty-six years old and got my doctorate and had my CPA as well by then.

TS: Okay. What about mentors at the University of Tennessee?

KH: Oh, my goodness. There are almost too many to count. Jim Scheiner was my dissertation chair. Jim was one who was realistic. The guy was brilliant in terms of theoretical thinking, so you could sit in a room and just bounce ideas off him, and he’d stay with you. At the same time, he said, “I tell you what. On your dissertation, as fast

as you work, I'll work." I could hand him a chapter, and he'd have it back to me in a couple of days. He would mark it, and we would work like that. So that's one way I got my dissertation done so quickly is because Jim worked with me on that. He was fantastic. Another one would be a guy by the name of Dick Townsend. He was another professor up there. Dick was a legend up there. To me he was the ultimate balanced professor. Tennessee was moving at that time very much into what we now would consider R-1. Even our discipline was changing. Accounting, historically with the doctoral levels, had not had a lot of history of research and all that. That really got developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Dick was more on the teaching side, but could also hold his own. Dick Townsend just had a beautiful attitude. He loved the students, and he was loved by everyone. He and I used to go play tennis. He always kicked my butt in tennis! But it was just that you saw his approach to students and to education and his role as a faculty member. So he was an inspiration to be that well-rounded guy who really cared about the students when he walked into the classroom. I could think of a number of other people up there in the accounting faculty, but those were the ones who stick out to me primarily.

TS: What was your dissertation?

KH: "An Empirical Investigation of the Relative Strength of Association between Market Reaction and Certain Measures of Income and Funds Flows." Now, what's weird is I always enjoyed computer science.

TS: I noticed you had a minor in computer science for your doctorate.

KH: For my doctorate we had to declare a minor. My area of expertise is accounting information systems. It's a combination of designing information systems for accounting applications. You had to understand the computer side of it. At that time, that was really a non-developed discipline. They said, "Go where most of the computer science folks are." Really, they were two separate things. So they had me do most of the master of computer science and take some comprehensive exams like the master's students do in computer science. Then I did stuff in accounting, but I really didn't marry them at that point. Later it's become a very well recognized discipline. Even though that was my focus, I didn't see where to blend them.

I was also interested in the stock market, so my dissertation was looking at this idea that a company will release net earnings, net income, and those kinds of things. You always hear that income was up or down, but everybody kept talking about cash flows matter more than income because income has a lot of accounting stuff in it. So what about cash flows? We were fairly early in the stages of releasing information about corporate cash flows. I could get to cash flow measurers, but I had to go into all these databases to get these corporate reports, the annual reports, and calculate that cash flow and earnings, and then see what the stock market seemed to respond to more than the other. It turned out it was more earnings. That's what I first did. I've written some articles on that since then, but it really didn't remain my passion. It wasn't really my launching pad.

- TS: I finished my doctorate about four years before you did, and I spent a lot of time in the business building. I don't think it was called the Haslam Building back then.
- KH: It was not, it was not. It was Glocker. [Editor's note: The James A. Haslam II Business Building opened on January 6, 2009 at the corner of Andy Holt Avenue and Volunteer Boulevard on the site of the old Glocker Business Administration Building. The new building preserves the façade of its predecessor, which had been named for the first dean of the business college, Theodore Wesley Glocker Sr.]
- TS: At any rate, I had to go in there because I was doing a quantitative study, and that was the only place on campus that had these key-punch readers where you could put in all your IBM cards. I had 60,000 punch cards by the time I got through, so they had to run all those cards through over there.
- KH: That's where you hope that one of them doesn't kick out and distort your printouts.
- TS: Exactly. I was kind of like you going to Price Waterhouse. After I did that one quantitative study for my dissertation, I said, "I'm never going to do anything like this again!"
- KH: Glocker is where my office was.
- TS: We probably were over there about the same time.
- KH: Probably so. Probably wandered some of those same halls, exactly.
- TS: I was already teaching here [at Kennesaw], but I'd go up on the weekends and run all those cards through.
- KH: Oh, you were here at that time?
- TS: I started here in '68.
- KH: Wow, I didn't realize you had started then. You have seen a few things change.
- TS: We have about as many full-time faculty members now as we had students when I started.
- KH: That's right.
- TS: Well, okay, so you got the dissertation done. Much of your career has had to do with leadership, and I don't see a whole lot of academic background leadership at this point, unless I'm missing something. I was thinking there were probably some courses you could have taken or programs you could have been in with regard to business leadership.

KH: Not much. But here are the things that started to change some of that. When I was at Price Waterhouse, I took a Dale Carnegie course. My dad had always had his own businesses, and he also taught for Dale Carnegie on the side. So I got to go take Dale Carnegie for free. It changed my life as much as anything else. I had actually forgotten about that. My dad taught sales courses plus what they called the Dale course, but it was the basic, human relations, public speaking, confidence building, and all these kinds of things. It lasted months and months and months. Then I became a TA for Dale Carnegie as well. Before that I did not enjoy public speaking. Just this notion of connection with people, and there was a lot of what we learned about how to influence people. You know Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* [1936]. It truly was a study in, if you try to get somebody to come to your way of thinking, how do you do that? It's this combination of psychology and leadership. That started very early on. I was always intrigued with that, how do you connect with human beings. If you look at my personality type, in retrospect, that fits exactly.

TS: It makes sense doesn't it? Were you doing this while you were in graduate school?

KH: That was before I had gone back to grad school, and then when I went off to grad school I did a little bit of Dale Carnegie up in Knoxville as well. I became intrigued by that [type of leadership education]. Then, while we were grad students in the doctoral program in accounting, I met a woman, Kay [M.] Poston. I guess she was Kay Anderson at the time—that's another long story. Then we ended up going to Drexel University in Philadelphia [as assistant professors of accounting, 1982-1985]. They were starting a PhD program, and they wanted us to help teach in it. We went up there, and we were only there for three years in Philadelphia, but even then, all along I've gone out and worked with CPA firms. When in Philadelphia I did consulting for software controls companies, testing companies where they test software and that kind of thing, and I went in and worked with those folks. Then I worked on some advisory boards with partners of CPA firms and that sort of thing just right away. I was always intrigued by that business world and being part of it. Then we were recruited to the University of Missouri-Columbia.

TS: You said "we?"

KH: My wife and I. We were still together [laughs]. We went there in 1985. We were looking at some different programs around the country. There was a lot of mobility in academia, especially in business academia, at the time. Fortunately for us, there was a lot of demand for accountants. We were actually teaching assistants when we met in the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee. I think they said that there was something like fourteen jobs for every person with a doctorate in accounting. There was huge demand at that time. We got recruited to the University of Missouri. At that time the University of Missouri—and I think it still is—was ranked as one of the top fifteen in accounting programs in the country. So, it was a big deal to go to Missouri.

TS: Tell me something about Kay Anderson Poston.

KH: That was my wife. She had been married and was recently divorced when I met her, and Anderson was her married name, but Kay Poston is her maiden name. So therefore my oldest daughter has Harmon-Poston as her last name. We got married in 1980 while in the doctoral program. In 1982 we took jobs at Drexel. I moved to Philadelphia. She went to Flint, Michigan, to work on her doctorate because she was working in cost of quality. She worked with Buick on the manufacturing floor to get her dissertation work there. Then she moved over to Philadelphia, and in '85 we left Philadelphia and moved to Missouri. Like I said, it was a big deal to get recruited there. We enjoyed it there. I started flying airplanes there. We just had a ball being part of Missouri. Then my daughter was born in 1988 in Columbia, Missouri. That's Ashley. By then, for lots of reasons, my wife had decided to go back to her maiden name of Poston. We were both Dr. Harmon, we were both in accounting, and they'd say, "K Harmon, was that K. Harmon or Kay?" She said, "I'm tired of the confusion."

TS: Too complicated who's who.

KH: She went back to her maiden name. My daughter Ashley Harmon-Poston was born in '88. Then we started getting recruited to a couple of different places, LSU and then they were starting a new campus at Arizona State University on the west side of Phoenix. It's still in Phoenix, and it was affiliated with Arizona State. So we had to get recruited out of the main campus but they were staffing an office on the west campus. We knew some people out there, so they called and really put the pressure on us. So we ended up moving to Arizona in 1990 and loved it. I loved Arizona.

TS: Did you go there as the director of the accountancy program?

KH: I did not. I went there as an associate professor of accounting. In 1994 I became the director of the accounting program [for Arizona State University West]. I never had wanted to be [chair]. This is true of most of the positions I've held. It wasn't that I wanted to go be a chair or a dean or a provost or anything. It just kind of happened. In '94 a number of the accounting faculty said, "We need a new director. Would you consider it?" I said, "Sure. Why not?" So I became the director. Then in 1995 I went through a divorce, and my wife moved back to South Carolina where she was from with my daughter who was then seven. I stayed in Arizona until 1998. Then a guy I had worked with at Missouri had been moved to Middle Tennessee State University as the dean. He contacted me. He said, "I heard you may want to come back to the southeast." I was traveling there once or twice every month.

TS: To see your daughter?

KH: I didn't miss a recital or a meeting or whatever, but that's a long way to travel for all that. Anyway, he and I worked well together, so I moved to Middle Tennessee State to be the chair of the accounting department. He said, "I have a need for an accounting chair. Would you come look at it?" It got me that much closer to Ashley in Florence, South Carolina, and then Newberry, which was wonderful. I was in driving distance of Ashley.

TS: You didn't stay anywhere too long.

KH: I never did. This provost job is the longest I've ever held a job in my life.

TS: I was reading where we almost lost you in January of this year [to Florida Gulf Coast University].

KH: That's right. It's crazy. I've lived in this house [in Cobb County] longer than I've lived in any house in my life including childhood. I was four years at Middle Tennessee State [1998-2002]. I had married for one year in there. It was one of those marriages . . .

TS: A second marriage?

KH: A second marriage.

TS: And it lasted one year?

KH: Yes, sir. It was to Tavi Fontana. It's short for Octavia. I was playing in a band in Nashville. She was a singer in that band. These guys were good! That's one thing I learned about Nashville. It's a different level of music. I moved to Nashville thinking I'll continue playing. The average guy playing in a coffee shop was ten times better than I was. I felt I'm not worthy. But I kept playing up there in this band called "Back to Blues."

TS: What instruments?

KH: Guitar, I was just a guitar player and did some singing and some writing with some of the songwriters up there.

TS: But one year was enough for that marriage?

KH: For her it was enough. So in 2002 I accepted a job as chair of accounting at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. I guess I should say it was actually 2001 that they started recruiting me.

TS: I was wondering about that move because it was a parallel move at best.

KH: It was. There were a number of factors there. Here's where a tie-in comes. As department chair at Middle Tennessee State, I had tried to hire Dan [Daniel M.] and Susan [Hermanson] Ivancevich. Well, here's the little interesting piece of this. Oh! I should have mentioned something. I'm going to backtrack a little bit. In 1994 I said I became director of the accountancy program out at Arizona State University West. At the same time I got recruited to be a department chair at this place called Kennesaw State [College].

TS: Is that right?

KH: Yes. [Dean] Tim [Timothy S.] Mescon contacted me or rather a search firm contacted me. My wife at the time, Kay, said, "You ought to go take a look at it." I came over here by myself, flew over and did the interview. At the end of the interview, in fact right there on the spot, Tim Mescon said, "I want you to come here and be the department chair."

TS: Of accounting?

KH: Of accounting. So I went back to Arizona, and I mentioned it to Kay, and she said, "Oh, I'm not interested in moving [laughs]. I thought it would be a good experience, and you wouldn't get the job." But now that I had an offer . . .

TS: That didn't show any confidence in you.

KH: Maybe that was a harbinger. I ended up taking the director's job in Arizona right around that same time. So I had met Tim Mescon, and I had learned about Kennesaw State in '94.

TS: Right in the Burruss Building over there, which was there by that time.

KH: Exactly. It was. Now, I'm going to roll back to where we were, which was around 2001. I tried to recruit Dan and Susan Ivancevich. Well, Susan Ivancevich's maiden name is Hermanson, [KSU accounting professor] Dana [R.] Hermanson's sister.

TS: How about that! Small world isn't it?

KH: I had met Dana. I knew Dana. So Susan and Dan contacted me, and they said, "We think you'd be happier over here at UNC Wilmington." They did not accept my job at Middle Tennessee State. They moved to UNC Wilmington, and then they contacted me from there, and they said, "We think you'd be happier over here as our department chair."

TS: I've seen that name somewhere before. I'm sure it's in Dana's oral history.

KH: Oh, no doubt; he's written with her a good bit. Back in the day, I guess I wrote a couple of things with Dana over the years before I ever moved here.

TS: How about that? So you knew all about us then.

KH: Oh, yes, very much so. One of my very best friends was at Georgia State University.

TS: So the only reason you didn't come here is that your wife didn't want to go?

KH: That was the primary reason, yes. I probably would have taken it . . .

TS: Plus you got the job as director at Arizona State West.

KH: I got the one there, and at that time the State of Georgia could not bring you in with tenure.

TS: I didn't think they could now.

KH: Yes, when I came in 2006 I got tenure. I think I was the second one who was brought in with tenure. Now we do it more routinely with certain positions. So I moved to UNC Wilmington, and that's in 2002, and enjoyed it thoroughly. But again, another opportunity just came knocking, and it was to be the dean [of Else School of Management] at Millsaps College, a little liberal arts school.

TS: It's really small [985 students in 2017], but elite, I guess.

KH: Exactly. It also gets me back to Memphis. My parents were getting older and those kinds of things.

TS: Is that Jackson, Mississippi?

KH: Jackson, Mississippi. And I knew of Millsaps growing up. I'd grown up in the Methodist Church in Memphis, and Millsaps was [founded by members of the Methodist Church in 1890]. So I knew it well, and I always had great respect for it. We moved—now I should have mentioned . . .

TS: And that's the first time you had become a dean also?

KH: Yes. I left out a very important part. I met this woman briefly in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, named Mary Angell. I told you I'd ramble; I apologize.

TS: That's all right.

KH: I told you about my best friend next door, David Davis. He was an anchorman in Milwaukee.

TS: Anchorman?

KH: Yes, WISN in Milwaukee, he was an anchorman up there. David and I remained close through all these years. I went up and visited David briefly, and I had gone through the divorce with Tavi, and I was in the process of moving and going to Wilmington. For about five minutes or so I met this woman named Mary Angell. There was a group of women. They saw David. He was a local celebrity. And Mary came over and talked as well, so we started chatting. I said, "Here's my e-mail and phone number if you want to get in touch." Then we hit it off and started a long-distance relationship. Then I said, "I'm getting ready to pack up and move from Murfreesboro to Wilmington. Do you want to come along and pack up things in Milwaukee?" So we got engaged and moved to Wilmington together in 2002. We got married on December 28, 2002. Then she became pregnant in about two to three weeks. She had never been married before. She was

younger. She was working with intercity at risk kids, getting her masters in reading and learning disabilities, and just loved kids. So we got married, and Ava was born in Wilmington in October 2003. Ava Harmon. Then during 2003-2004 I got recruited over to Millsaps. So we packed up with Ava and moved over to Jackson, Mississippi.

TS: She's a teenager now then.

KH: She's thirteen; she'll be fourteen this fall. I've got a twenty-eight-year-old and a thirteen-year-old, getting ready to go to eighth grade. We moved to Millsaps. I enjoyed it. It was my first time to be a dean. I enjoyed that; small school; just a really cool atmosphere at that school. This will be telling maybe about me, about how I went through this decision process. I went to the Center for Creative Leadership to study leadership, and that's actually where they had staff psychologists studying your personality profile for a whole week in residency.

TS: Where is that?

KH: Well, they are headquartered out of North Carolina, and they're considered one of the better leadership development programs around. They were doing one in Memphis at the Peabody [Hotel], so I got to go up there and take their weeklong leadership development program. Actually, one of our board members donated money for me to be able to go as the dean. I went up there in fall of 2005; I think it was September. I was being recruited at that time for a president's position at a private college in North Carolina and for a dean's position at a very large R-1 university in the Midwest. I had gone through this Center for Creative Leadership, and it caused me to do a lot of personal reflection about who I was, about what I wanted out of life, et cetera. I got a call from Dana Hermanson, and Dana said, "We have an opening for a department chair. Do you want to come take a look at it?" I had known Dana over the years. I said, "Well, Dana, I'm looking at a presidency and a big dean's position. I can't imagine going back to being a department chair."

TS: Right.

KH: He said, "Oh, I understand. I just wanted to put it out there. If you ever change your mind, let me know." Not long after, I'm talking to my wife one night, Mary, and we're talking about this. We said, "You know what we need to do? I've moved so much in my life." Mary was pregnant with Norah. Norah was born in May of 2006. So we're talking about how we've got a family, and I've moved as you know every two, three, or four years. At that time Ava was almost two. We said, "We need to find a place where we love . . ."

TS: Oh, for the children to grow up.

KH: For the children to grow up in a city we love and a university we love. So we started talking about it. Mary looked at me and said, "That kind of sounds like Kennesaw State." I said, "Yes, but I'm looking at a presidency here and this big dean thing there." The

words that changed my life were when Mary looked at me and said, “When did you give a damn what you were called?” I said, “You’re right. I don’t care about a dean or a department chair or what I am. I don’t want to get caught up in that.” That’s part of this reflection about my personality type, who I am, et cetera. I never strived to be in one of these positions. They just kind of happened. So the next day I called Dana Hermanson, and I said, “Is that position still open?” It was getting close, but he said, “Yes, you can put your application in.” I also called that same day and dropped out of those other two positions because I said, “That’s not what I want.” One of them the school was a little questionable, one of them the location was a little questionable. Kennesaw State, the school and location both looked wonderful.

So I applied and became department chair in July of 2006. The morning that we were supposed to sign to buy the house here—we were going to do a remote closing in Jackson—my wife woke up and said, ‘I think I’m in labor.’ I said, ‘The hell you are! We’ve got to go sign closing papers.’ We literally had the bank transfer money while we were timing contractions. Literally, one of these grand, big banks in downtown Jackson, everybody’s kind of moving slow, and I said, ‘By the way folks, I know this is taking a while, but we’re timing contractions over here.’ They said, ‘You’re kidding.’ I said, ‘I’m not kidding.’ They looked at Mary, and they said, ‘Uh-oh.’ They hurried up and got everything done. They brought the paperwork to my conference room. We signed the papers at about noon and then went straight next door to where the hospital was, and Norah was born, I think, at 7:57 that evening. So Norah was born the day we signed those papers, and two weeks later we moved to the Atlanta area.

TS: So you were coming to stay then.

KH: Yes, this was a very deliberate process to come here. We bought the house here. Actually, I went back and forth for the next month, but they went ahead and moved here—brand-new house, a brand-new baby, and a two-and-a-half-year-old.

TS: The R-1 deanship or the presidency were probably pretty attractive jobs in some ways, but I was thinking too, Kennesaw at that time probably paid a lot better than Millsaps College anyway, didn’t it?

KH: Yes, I actually moved up from dean to department chair, and I think I increased my income by about \$20,000. So, yes, Kennesaw was paying well. Tim Mescon, you knew Tim Mescon, and the dean was still Tim. Tim had offered me the job in ’94. It was funny. We sat down, and he said, “Well, finally I got you.” But Tim was aggressive. He said, “We’re going to pay competitively to do what it takes.” So Tim was very aggressive.

TS: I’ve always liked Tim.

KH: Yes, he and I have stayed in touch, but we don’t as much anymore now that he’s in Amsterdam, but we’ve stayed in touch.

TS: He's in Amsterdam?

KH: Last I heard unless he moved. He went to Columbus [State University in August 2008] as president. But AACSB International [Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business], our accrediting body, opened up an office in Amsterdam, and then he and [his wife] Lauren moved over there [in January 2015 as executive vice president and chief officer for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa]. He's been traveling all around Europe.

TS: I didn't know that. I did an interview with him a number of years ago.

KH: I bet you did. I bet he was fascinating.

TS: He was.

KH: His background and his family's background—he's just a bundle of energy and a visionary.

TS: I think you've already told me that you knew what you were getting into, but 2006 is also the year that Dan [Daniel S.] Papp comes in [as KSU's third president].

KH: He and I started the same day, July 1, 2006. When I was being recruited, Tim Mescon and Dan Papp were the two finalists for the job as president. So, in fact, Tim's driving me around at the time that he was involved with the interviews. We didn't know what was going to happen.

TS: Well, I didn't know Dan that well at the time, and I was really pulling for Tim to get the job.

KH: Exactly. I like to say to this day, I've always loved Tim. I came here and worked extremely well with Tim. Before I arrived [Kathy S.] Kat Schwaig had been the interim chair of Accounting, Business Law, and Information Systems, all together in one department. Kat's background is Business Information Systems, but she was the interim chair. Then I came in to be chair. Then I think it was a year or so later Tim made her the associate dean. I guess after we bought the house out in West Cobb and just kind of became entrenched here, in [August] 2008 Tim left [to become president of Columbus State, Kat became the interim dean, and the search opened up for the dean's job. I wasn't sure and then decided I was going to apply for the dean's job. I got the dean's job and became the dean of Coles College [in 2009].

TS: Which is going to last only a year before you move up to interim provost.

KH: Yes, and I loved it. The next year, I'm trying to remember what month it was. I'm going to guess it's somewhere around May or June of the next year, [Lendley C.] Lynn Black had announced that he was going off to Duluth, Minnesota [as chancellor of the University of Minnesota Duluth]. I was on the golf course with Gene [W.] Henssler, who used to be a faculty member here [as professor of finance, 1986-1996]. He has gone on

to be extremely successful with his own firm, Henssler Financial. Those folks are still dear, dear friends to this day. I'm on the golf course out there, and I still remember because rarely for me I hit a really good drive. My phone's ringing. I see it is Dan Papp, and I said, "I'm going to have to sit out this hole." I pick up the ball, and they said, "Go ahead." I went over to the cart path. I told Dan, "Dan, I'm on the golf course, and I just hit a great drive." He's laughing, and he said, "Ken, I've got a question for you. You know our provost is leaving, and I was curious. Are you going to be interested in that provost job?" I said, "No, sir, not at all." He said, "Oh, I thought you might want that." I said, "No, I'm really happy being the dean of the Coles College." He said, "Well, let me ask you another question. Would you consider being the interim provost just to help out while we're searching?" I said, "To help out the university I'm happy to do, it but I want it to be known I will not be an applicant. Therefore, just hold the place, and I'm going to go back to the Coles College of Business." That's what we did. We ran the search, and that search did not work out, as I'm sure you probably recall.

- TS: I had to scratch my head today and think, who was that guy? His name was Timothy J. L. Chandler [who was offered the position of provost in February 2011].
- KH: Tim Chandler. In fact, Tim, to his credit when I became permanent provost, sent me a note to say congratulations. He said some very nice things. He and I have talked over the years. But we went through that whole process of hiring Tim and all that stuff.
- TS: He had an unfortunate article in his past, but actually it sounds to me like the other guy wrote most of the article probably.
- KH: And Otis [A.] Brumby [Jr., publisher of the Marietta Daily Journal] got a hold of it and just loved to sink his teeth into it [laughs].
- TS: I sent all my chapters when I was writing the history of Kennesaw State to Dan, and I know he read some of them, but I think there were maybe two things he wanted me to change.
- KH: I can imagine what the other one was too [laughs].
- TS: This particular one was he said, "If you want to add it that's fine, but there are a lot of people who are Marxist scholars that don't think that that was a Marxist point of view." So I put that in the book.
- KH: He was adamant about that, yes. So we went through that. I know we were going through the struggles and the PR [public relations], and Dan was down in this office almost every day with us talking through it, et cetera, et cetera. Then it's coming around to time to go open the search again. Dan and I chatted. He said, "Can you tell me why you don't want to be provost?" I said, "Dan I could give you a list." He said, "Well, we need to go have a beer and talk about it." So we scheduled a beer over at Marlow's and sat up there at the bar and had a beer. He said, "Well, tell me." I did; I went through a list. It was about my personality type and who I am. I love being external. I love being

strategic. I love developing international partnerships. I'm the guy who actually enjoys going and doing the rubber chicken speeches, you know, at the Rotary clubs, the Kiwanis clubs, and talking about Kennesaw State. I love being out there.

TS: You ought to be the president!

KH: So many provost jobs are internal and transactional. I said, "That would kill me. That's not what I want to be." But Dan asked me to apply, so I applied, and before we finalized on the job, we talked about that list again. He said, 'What if I can change everything on your list?' I said, "You've got a deal." So that's how I became the provost. The search was quicker, and I became provost in December of 2011, and that's the story.

TS: I think maybe the next interview we do, it's really impressive how much international involvement you've had since you've been at Kennesaw. I think that's certainly something we could talk about in more depth.

KH: Then I'd love to talk about leadership. This is a parallel that has really transformed my life in many respects. I started studying leadership and getting intrigued with leadership, so I'd like to go down that path and how happiness hit me and how I merged that with leadership and culture development. So that's been a big part of my life since then.

TS: Right. We can definitely talk about that and your role in fundraising too. You've been doing that I guess the whole time you've been here.

KH: That's one of the items on my list. I told Dan, "I like being involved with that."

TS: Do you really?

KH: Oh, I love it.

TS: You like to go out and ask people for money?

KH: Sure, because the old cliché is it's not fundraising, it's friend-raising. You go out and make connections. Everybody wants to give to something, and the idea is to say, "Here's an option out here because there are these incredible things happening at this wonderful university. If you'd like to be a part of that, that would be fantastic." I find that a lot of people do.

TS: That's something we can talk about—the things that you've been involved in.

KH: Some of the ancillary kinds of things.

TS: You have on your resume that you helped with the naming of a building. I assume it has to be either Prillaman Hall [Health Sciences Building] or Bagwell [Education Building].

KH: Right. It was a little bit of both. More with Bagwell, but I was just part of the team. I don't claim any leadership on that effort. In fact, I think that was probably even when I went out to apply for the presidency that I wanted people to know that I had been part of these teams to look at things like building names and school names, which would be Leven [Michael A. Leven School of Culinary Sustainability and Hospitality]. Again, others took leads, but I was an active part of all those.

TS: Great. Next time, too, I want to ask about consolidation and your involvement because you were central to all of that.

KH: We had a lot of fun. It was a learning experience.

TS: Also, the retention/progression/graduation—we can talk about what you've been doing on that and what we still need to do because we're still a long way from maybe where we want to be.

KH: Very far, and it's also interesting, just in my time as provost, which is now right at seven years, how the national dialogue has changed. I go to these meetings of provosts up in Washington, D.C. every year. There's a group of about fifteen or twenty of us sitting around a conference table for two days. It's wonderful. These guys are kind of a think tank. They do best practices research and what's going on nationally. That conversation is so different today than it was five years ago, very different.

TS: Great. Well, I guess we better stop for the day.

KH: That's a good stopping point. You allowed me to ramble; you're very good at that.

TS: I wish we had more time for it, but it's going to take at least one more interview.

KH: Sure. I enjoyed it; obviously, everybody enjoys talking about themselves [laughs].

TS: Some do a better job of talking about themselves than others, and you've been fabulous!

KH: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it.

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Part 2 – Thursday, June 15, 2017

TS: Maybe a good topic to start with today is your experience chairing a state-wide task force in the University System of Georgia with regard to retention, progression, and graduation rates and your involvement with Complete College Georgia and Complete College America. I was just checking at lunchtime today, and it's been just about eight years since Complete College America started. It hasn't been very long. You talked just briefly last time about how when you go to national meetings, the discussion is different on these topics than it used to be six or seven years ago. Your task force had to do with identifying and trying to modify policies that were hindering graduation. What are the policies that needed to be changed that kept graduation rates so low?

KH: There's a combined answer here. The idea of Complete College America and Complete College Georgia all of a sudden hit, and in fact I remember that the chancellor and, I think, even the governor called all the presidents and provosts from the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia to Athens to say that this is important. I kept laughingly saying that they could have just sent us an e-mail to say this is important.

TS: This would be Governor Nathan Deal and Chancellor [Henry M.] Hank Huckabee?

KH: Yes, it would have been Deal and Huckabee. I don't recall if Deal was there at that one. I know he's been at one. I think he was. The idea was that, "Folks, this is important. We need to get students graduated." The system started taking a look, and they put together a task force, saying, "Do we have some policies and things that just get in the way?" So while I wouldn't say that this task force was a main driver of Complete College and retention, progression, and graduation, it was like, do we have some barriers out there that we just need to get rid of? Some things like that. I don't know that I can sit down and recall a whole lot. We found a lot. It was kind of fun. They called me and said, "We'd like you to chair this because we know that you don't mind pushing things a little bit. If we need to think outside this policy, let's think outside this policy."

At the time they said anything is possible. A good example might be just things like students enrolling in one university and then going to another. Could we not have a more common database, plus could we have more data around completion within the system because sometimes we're fighting against ourselves. For example, let's say somebody starts here at Kennesaw State and transfers to the University of Georgia and finishes at Georgia. To me that's a success for Georgia. It would have been a failure for Kennesaw State. So they've been building a database to try to track that kind of information.

TS: Oh, so Georgia wouldn't get any credit for it since the student didn't start at UGA, and Kennesaw would be zapped because the student started but didn't graduate from KSU . . .

KH: Georgia would get credit because they had a completion; they had a transfer and a completion.

TS: But in terms of what we measure, the six-year graduation rate of first-time, full-time students, the transfer students don't appear at all.

KH: Exactly. So, there were a lot of data related issues. There were some things around campus level policies. We all went out to our campuses, and oftentimes we had repeat policies, graduation, GPA issues, some things like that that sounded good, but that were just hindrances.

TS: Repeat policies means when a student doesn't complete a course and takes it a second time?

KH: Right. So it may be that sometimes it can sound good to say, "Just let them keep trying." What we found in terms of resource utilization towards completion is if that student enrolls in a class, sits in there for a while, and then drops out, somebody else doesn't [have the opportunity to] come in and fill that seat. That's a campus level kind of thing; that wasn't system-wide. But we said, "Go look at the idea that maybe if we limit [the number of withdrawals] and get pretty serious about it, the student is going to keep moving and just move on rather than just give it a try and give it a try and just keep taking up chairs that could be used for students to progress."

And graduation GPA [grade point average] to say, "You must have all these grades and have an overall 3.0, or whatever it may be, to graduate," well you might be within a couple of classes of graduating, and all of a sudden you can't graduate in that degree. So all of a sudden you have to go and think about another degree, and you've got to add all these other classes on. Is that truly something that we need to have or not? So maybe it's just questioning a lot of things that we historically have done. As academics we sit around a room, we design curriculum, and we always have the right intentions, and it is high levels of learning, but I don't think we have always focused enough on what is good for the student progression to get out the door. Sometimes perfect is the enemy of good. So I think sometimes we have that. There are financial aid issues, with students not being able to finance their degrees, but now they can do that. They can go on payment plans and so forth.

TS: I was going to ask about that because you know Leigh [Beggs] Colburn [former principal of Marietta High School and director of Marietta's Graduate Marietta Student Success Center], I guess she just announced she was going to retire . . .

H: I saw that.

- TS: At Marietta High School she did something that I don't know why nobody had done before to do a survey and ask the students, "What is keeping you from graduating?" A lot of it had nothing to do with academics. It had to do with whether they were hungry and had enough to eat or whether their family had food at night.
- KH: And that's what we have found. Aside from the task force issue, as we had looked at the national data and looked at own data, there's a lot of financial pressure that hits students. I guess it was Houston Davis who used to say, "Some students are one flat tire away from enrolling the next semester."

TS: Or one increase in the price of gasoline away from being able to come down here.

KH: Exactly, remember when it shot up to four dollars a gallon?

TS: Yes, I heard it from several students at that time.

KH: Sometimes it's that close. There are so many different issues here, but financial issues, family issues. It all relates back to family and obligations and money that oftentimes create quite the barrier. One of our primary focal points now is GAP scholarships, little \$500 or \$1000 scholarships. We're going to allocate a significant amount of money this year toward that out of the KSU Foundation. We've gotten some historically from the Board of Regents. We've generated some. But we are going to have a much larger allocation. If you look at the different schools, Georgia State has done a beautiful job with this. A lot of schools have. You actually have a mechanism where if the students are trying to register, trying to do what they can, and an extra \$600 makes all the difference for them to get in, they'll get that \$600. What we find is that donors and the public at large really attach to this. It's like sometimes, potential donors say, "Oh, I'd like to give a scholarship, but if I know that \$500 will make a difference to somebody, you bet I'm going to hand you \$500 or \$5,000 or whatever I have."

TS: After Houston Davis mentioned that last year in his Opening of the University address, I gave to the GAP scholarship too.

KH: Wonderful. So you get it.

TS: Well, I hadn't thought about it. I didn't even know we had one before.

KH: Exactly. We have students who are homeless and who have food insecurities, all those types of things, so we have our CARE [Campus Awareness, Resource, and Empowerment] Center here. I actually have the honor of serving on that board. The stories there and just a few dollars or a few things here or there and those students are trying to go to college. It's amazing.

TS: What about the role of advisement in retention and progression?

KH: Advisement has been found to be one of the greatest determinants of success. Advising in all of its forms makes a big difference. I am going to talk about it from two different directions. If I could wave a magic wand tomorrow, I'd make every advisor a graduation coach. We started something called the graduation coach model a few years ago in what we call the Thrive Program. These are students who are in a certain range where they come in, and they're at risk possibly of losing their HOPE scholarship. We'd like to do what we can, so we want to give them a little extra support. So these are the Thrive students. We set up a graduation coach model. The idea is I'm not just an advisor that's going to sit down and say, "Here are the classes you need to take." Instead, if you have a problem with your finances, you've got a problem with your roommate, you've got a problem with a teacher, or whatever your problem, I call it the concierge model. I'm going to give it to you and say, "I've got a problem." Now, they are probably not going to solve all your problems but they're going to say, "Why don't you go talk to this person and then come back and talk to me. I'm here to help you graduate." So that's why we call it the graduation coach. We find that these people make such a big difference, such a difference!

Good advising, just what classes to take, when, and how also makes a difference. I had somebody stop me yesterday in the hallway of Marietta Country Club saying, "Hey, my daughter was enrolling, and her friends told her to take this course and not this course, et cetera, and now she's all frustrated." I said, "Did she talk to an advisor?" That makes all the difference. Too often we deal with these situations. To round out this thought, when we started this notion of really focusing on college completion, we brought Chris Hutt up here to be assistant vice president for academic advising. Chris Hutt has this background with advising and was asked to take a look at what we do across campus. We were all over the place. We all have this thought sometimes that I'm going to become a so-and-so major, so I'm going to go see my advisor, this professor advisor who will sit down with me. In some areas, we have faculty doing advising. God bless them, faculty love the students and are there for the students, but oftentimes they are not the best advisors. And if nothing else there's too much variability. I can't expect them to keep up with all of the nuances of which courses and those kinds of things. I used to do it at other schools. I was an advisor, and I can't say I was very good. What we have found and what the literature shows is that professional advisors, true professional advisors, make a difference. So, Chris started looking across the campus at what we needed to do here, and we need to hire a lot more advisors; we need to standardize the advising model; we need to have standardized software. So that is what we're doing now.

TS: I think maybe the last interview I did with Dan Papp he said that some of the redirected funds from consolidation were going to hire more advisors. Did that happen?

KH: He's correct. It did happen. We tried to hire fifteen, but we ended up hiring about eight to ten that year. We wanted to hire thirty, and I could probably hire fifty. There's a national standard of about three hundred to three hundred and fifty students for each advisor, and in some disciplines there were a couple of thousand to one. We just need more advisors. We did use redirection funds. Actually, I want to say it was eight and then we supplemented, but we tried to get fifteen, and there were some issues with the

state budget at the same time. This year we just now released funds to hire, I believe, twelve more advisors across campus. Again, we need more, but Chris Hutt is overseeing that across campus to say we need more here, we need more here, we need this structure here, et cetera. So we're trying to coordinate true professional advisors across campus.

TS: I know we got the six-year first-time full-time student graduation rate up to 42 percent with Dan Papp and about 50 percent if you include students that transfer from Kennesaw to another institution in the University System of Georgia. The last figures I saw it doesn't look like it's improving any in the last couple of years. It's still right at 41 or 42, so is that a matter of concern to the administration? What's the goal? What do we think would be the goal that we're shooting for?

KH: That's a good question. We've never articulated an exact goal. I'll just say we need to do a hell of a lot better than 42 percent. We should be over 50 percent. I'd like to be closer to 60 percent. If you look at similar institutions and nationwide, there are different numbers that get thrown around. We're not hugely off the mark, but we are below. I think I've seen it in the 50s with similar institutions, but we should be much better. If you look at a couple of factors, it's true. The needle has not moved enough. Does it take a while? Yes. Is it a big lift? It's one of those things that every percentage point is a big lift. But we should do better. We've got to do better. It's not always something we can control, but we're going to try.

Plus, some things are looking encouraging. We're measuring six-year first-time full-time graduation rates, so if you change something now, really, that shows up in a measure six years from now. We do have that. So what we need to look at are intermediate measures. For example, first to second year retention rates have gone up. I think we were around 78 [percent]; now we're over 80. So it's those kinds of numbers that make me say we're doing something in the right direction. We take these intermediate measures. But is it frustrating? Do I want to do a lot better? Yes and yes.

TS: Great. You were vice chair of a statewide task force on cyber security. I guess not to find out if we've got a problem with cyber security, but to see what employers out there are interested in. What did you all accomplish on that?

KH: It was interesting. We were given a fairly broad charge. What are the needs for cyber security education in the state? What's the demand? Then what are we doing in the various schools within the University System of Georgia? In a nutshell we found demand is huge. Huge! It was in the thousands per year of jobs in cyber security in Georgia. The numbers are a little misleading, but it is still a strong story. If you look at actual cyber security degrees, there were forty-nine graduates in the State of Georgia per year at that time, right around forty-nine.

TS: Forty-nine? That's all?

KH: Yes. Now we had computer science majors, software engineering, IT majors, information systems majors, and a lot of those people will go into cyber security. So

that's why I say the numbers are misleading to say that there are only forty-something cyber security grads. In other words, there are hundreds of jobs for every person. Well, again, you've got to realize that computer science and IT people et cetera are going after those jobs. But the idea was the demand was almost limitless, especially with Fort Gordon coming into the Augusta area [in 2012] with the National Security Agency and all of the needs there. Their cyber security headquarters for the military is right here in Georgia. So all of this together was part of that discussion.

What was it? Seventy or 80 percent of all financial transactions processed in the country come through Atlanta. What's called FinTech, financial technology. There's so much happening in Georgia in all these areas that the cyber security demand is huge. We were looking at what we could do as a system because it's very costly to build a strong cyber security program at Kennesaw or other individual institutions. Now some of these do, but the idea is there's so much need. What can we do? So we talked about different models. We talked about a collaborative model. We even had a proposal for millions and millions of dollars to set up a cyber security network or institute across the whole system and that kind of thing.

That per se did not happen, but there have been some good results. The state has allocated, I don't recall the number, I want to say \$50 million to Augusta to do the cyber security center over there. We formed a cyber security institute. We already had Information Systems Assurance, ISA. We now have IT and computer science down at the Marietta campus. So the idea is that there are a lot of areas interested in this, so let's form an institute that is independent of the colleges and have those colleges with faculty in this institute. Kennesaw State has the first and only e-major in Cyber Security sanctioned by the system. We are going to host the very first online cyber security major for the system that can be taken by students anywhere in Georgia.

TS: Or the world, I guess.

KH: Or the world; excellent point; yes, sir.

TS: Fabulous. Well, maybe another area that we can discuss fairly quickly, although you've done a lot of international initiatives that you've spearheaded or been involved in. Just looking at the list, of course, dear to my heart is Montepulciano [KSU's education abroad campus in Italy] because of [professor emeritus of history] Howard Shealy's work there for years and years and years.

KH: Yes. I probably mentioned this last time. When I became provost one of the things I said I would like to do is to remain involved in international initiatives. To me it's such an important part of education, and then in leadership we know the more you expand boundaries and expand comfort zones and understand others and embrace other cultures and other people, the happier you are, the better leader you are, the more comfortable you are in other situations, et cetera. So, it goes back to when I was in Coles College. I'm not going to say that I was primary on a lot of these. Some of them were already in place, and then I was just part of a team. But we already had a long-standing relationship with

Romania. I've been going to Romania—I haven't gone in the last year or two, but I'm going back this fall—teaching in their executive MBA program and also doing public lectures in Bucharest on happiness and leadership and things like that.

In 2009 when I became dean, this was when the BRIC countries were being discussed quite a bit (Brazil, Russia, India, and China). We looked around and said, "KSU doesn't have a lot going on in India." So I led an initiative to do something in India. We actually issued a contract to the India, China and America Institute [a non-profit organization in the Division of Global Affairs, Kennesaw State University]. They established a number of connections for us to go into India to see what the needs were around business education, especially at the graduate level and the executive level. I spent a couple of weeks traveling around with a small group meeting with government folks in Delhi and going to Mumbai and Mysore and Agra and all these different areas of India. We established a partnership and went back and forth for a year to develop an executive MBA, and then it all fell apart.

The school we were working with, Mumbai Business School, got bought up. There's a fine line between public and private and all that within India. We were working with this business school in Mumbai. Again, we had developed an entire curriculum, et cetera, and that business school got bought up and made part, effectively, of a company within India that owned another big university. So they pulled out of the deal and just went in another direction. But since then I've been on an academic advisory board at Alliance University in Bangalore as they expand. They are rapidly expanding in engineering and medicine and law and some other areas. They started off primarily in business. We've had other relationships in India. Over the years I've developed some of those.

Regarding Montepulciano, again I was in some of the early discussions when it was conceived. Obviously, people have been going there for years. Howard and Tom [Thomas H. Keene, professor emeritus of history and former director of Kennesaw's International Center] and a number of folks. There's a lot of history there. So we already had that relationship. The idea was, what can we do with the Fortezza? Is there something we can do more permanently there? I remember being part of some of these discussions with donors and what could we maybe go over there and do. It was just an exciting thing. The idea was, could we set up a facility there and take an entrepreneurial approach? That's one thing I've enjoyed about all of this. It's not just, "Oh, can we just take students there and teach them?" That's great stuff; it's wonderful stuff. But could we be more entrepreneurial? For example, we talked about our partner school in Bucharest, Romania, and said, "Can we do an executive education program that you would like to deliver, and let's do it in Montepulciano or somewhere like that?" So we've done some of those things as well. Just going and trying to establish partnerships—I'm going next month to Tel Aviv, Israel, to meet with some universities that would like to work with us in areas like cyber security or dance or any number of things.

TS: Great. How did the trip with John [H.] Eaves [chairman of the Fulton County Commission] to Brazil come about?

- KH: John was setting it up, and I had just met John at that point. John was establishing a linkage with Brazil, and the Brazilian government had money to send students to the U.S. to do English immersion programs in the hopes that they would matriculate into universities in the U.S. That was the whole theme of this. John had been going back and forth to Brazil for a while, so what he was doing in his role as Fulton County chair was to reach out to universities, public and private, and take small delegations down to Brazil to see if there might be some connections. He had talked to me about it for a while so finally I was able to go down with him. Lance [R.] Askildson [vice-provost and chief international officer, Division of Global Affairs] went with us, along with a couple of other people, including the president of Spelman College. It was my first time to Brazil, and we went to Brasilia and to Rio de Janeiro and went to some government agencies that were handling these grants from the government and then also went to schools to do direct recruiting of students. We actually had a decent number of them come in, but then it kind of fizzled it seemed. Numbers tapered off significantly from that particular program. But John and I remain friends to this day and I get to see him sometimes, not often enough.
- TS: I remember a group of Brazilian students coming through. They had me speaking on the history of Cobb County or the history of Kennesaw or something to that group. It must have been four or five years ago now. I can't remember who contacted me to talk, but it was over in the meeting room at the Chet and Hazel Austin Student Residence Complex.
- KH: Yes, Lance Askildson was heading that and Mark Forehand [assistant dean, international graduate programs and director of graduate admissions] was working with that as well.
- TS: This leads into the incredible amount of your community engagement. Maybe we can talk about some of those things, such as the board of directors of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce.
- KH: The Cobb Chamber was a natural, being a business school dean. I just started going to the Cobb Chamber, and I was also involved with the Metro Atlanta Chamber at the time. But with the Cobb Chamber, I tell you what really changed everything was when I got the call saying, "Would you like to be the KSU representative for Leadership Cobb? Would you like to take Leadership Cobb?" That happened to be the year I was interim provost and still keeping my hand in. Kat [Schwaig] was running the business school, but I was still keeping my hand in there. It was a crazy year. So I became part of Leadership Cobb, and that was transformational. Quite frankly, it really was. It just gets you connected in a different way. Out of that I was asked to be on the [Cobb Chamber] board, and they have a very large board. So, to say "being part of the board of directors" makes it sound more grand than it is. But then they wanted me to become a part of the executive committee for a while, and I headed up their leadership programs and things like that. They have staff to do a lot of that work, and sometimes you get the glory without the work. But it was just board meetings, exec committee.

I was asked to help out with Leadership Cobb to chair a couple of committees or to work on a couple of committees for different Leadership Cobb days. One was leadership; one was education; some things like that. We've always enjoyed a close relationship, so I just got more and more involved because of Leadership Cobb. I just became more involved with the Chamber. I still go back and speak to Leadership Cobb every spring at the retreat. I've been doing that for four years now. I talk about happiness and leadership. We have a lot of fun. We've worked on initiatives together, like [Cobb Chamber president and CEO] David Connell, [Georgia State Representative] Earl Ehrhart, and I worked together about the business incubator called IgniteHQ [to support start-ups and early stage businesses]. That was a Cobb Chamber initiative. So we've worked together on a number of things.

TS: Leadership Cobb used to invite me to speak on the history of Cobb County, but I think they've gone in different directions since those days.

KH: Yes, I don't know what they might be doing. They have added a number of different pieces. One of the things when I came out of it, I said, "It's a great program." As I said, it was transformational. But I said, "We call it leadership, and I don't know if we have any direct leadership training in that course." And now they've added that.

TS: So that's your lecture?

KH: Yes, and they have a leadership day, so they bring in different leaders and that kind of thing.

TS: That's good. I had not heard of the Town Center Alliance. Of course, I know about Town Center CID [community improvement district].

KH: Yes, it's an outgrowth of the CID.

TS: Is it mainly fundraising?

KH: Yes, and the reason you hadn't heard of it is because it's fairly new. In fact, here's my hardhat for it [pointing to a hardhat in the provost's office]. If I'm going to be real candid about how this one happened, Tracy Rathbone is the executive director of the Town Center CID. I've known Tracy for a while. So Tracy called and asked me to be her partner in Dancing with the Stars in Marietta a couple of years ago, and we've become very, very good friends. Like I say, I knew Tracy and always considered her a friend, but we became close friends. She was setting up this board. The CID does great stuff, but they are limited in what they can do. The idea was to get another related group that can raise private dollars and do some initiatives outside of what the CID can do. So that's what this was. She formed a board, and we had our first success down here with this aviation park that's going in.

TS: Yes, I've been reading about that.

- KH: We had our groundbreaking a couple of weeks ago, and so that's what that is all about.
- TS: Fantastic. You have on your resume something about working with Governor Deal and the DOT on a bridge. I guess that's the Skip Spann Connector [across I-75 from Frey Road to Busbee Drive]?
- HK: The Skip Spann Connector. Again, I was just part of the group. I was part of a lot of the discussions. Then it came down to "we really need to go down and deal with this." So I went down with [Cobb Commission Chairman] Tim Lee, [Cobb Department of Transportation director] Faye DiMassimo, and a handful of others to make the pitch, to go to the governor. So we went to the governor's office and sat down to talk about it. Again, a lot of the work was done by others. I'm not sitting here saying, "Boy, this was my brain child." I was just in the right place, and they asked, "Can you go to this meeting?" I knew Tim and Faye very well, and I had gone off on retreats dealing with DOT issues. I had been a KSU representative on some of that stuff too as far as master planning on transportation here. So how does this all fit together? Faye DiMassimo was just wonderful. She had really done a lot of that work.
- TS: I'm sorry that she has left Cobb County [to become general manager of the Renew Atlanta infrastructure bond program].
- KH: You and me both. I'm very sorry to see that. Anyway, we got down there, and they were very receptive and did some creative things with federal dollars et cetera, and the Skip Spann Connector happened.
- TS: Great. It's been several years, but you were involved with the Atlanta Regional Commission's Regional Economic Development Committee [2012-2013]. Can you talk about that a little bit?
- KH: I was asked to go sit on a task force at the time and then started becoming part of some other groups down there. It was a series of interesting meetings. In hindsight it was more an articulation of the problem that we have in metro Atlanta with all the different pieces of government and politics that we have. The ARC does some wonderful things. This is when I think Market Street Services came in with their consultants to talk about what we could do as a multi-county region. I can't point a lot of fingers at stuff and say, "Here are the great accomplishments that we had," other than to say they had a great report and some good ideas came out of it.
- TS: Right. I've kind of given up on too much regional planning because nobody wants to give up local control.
- KH: Yes. If you look at TSPLOST [Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax defeated by metro Atlanta voters in 2012] and some other things around, you're exactly right.
- TS: Anything else on community engagement that we ought to talk about?

KH: No, nothing that I can think of. There's a board I'm part of right now that's near and dear, the Horizons Atlanta board that helps underserved kids. It happens that KSU has one of the sites. I'm on the Horizons Atlanta board for that. That's about it.

TS: Okay, fantastic. I've got several topics that are going to be time consuming and some others that are not. It is 2:51 now, so if we have to stop at 3:00 today . . .

KH: I think we've got a little bit of leeway.

TS: Then let's do consolidation. Let me just ask you, you've told me this informally once, but how did you first suspect that something was in the works on consolidation?

KH: There were early signs years ago, just discussions about some kind of mega-university in Northwest Georgia and all that, but that may have been as much speculation as discussion. I was frequently hearing rumors and speculation, so I suspected something may happen.

TS: Well, you told me at one time that they were asking you questions from the Board of Regents that kind of tipped off what they were interested in.

KH: Yes, right.

TS: Like what?

KH: I didn't know anything for certain, but there were second-hand comments and questions that made me suspicious. Nothing official at all, but people around me were speculating about who would play what role.

TS: In a consolidated university?

KH: Yes, in a consolidated university.

TS: That's interesting. So when did you first hear the word, I guess from the chancellor's office, that it was going to be a done deal?

KH: Gosh, when would that have been?

TS: Maybe the question is how long did you know ahead of time?

KH: I can't say I knew anything official until the actual announcement. I had some suspicions ahead of time.

TS: Let me ask you as a general question, what did you learn about the Marietta campus after we started going through the process of consolidation that surprised you the most? Is there anything that you learned about them that you didn't know about them?

- KH: Actually, I didn't know them. I didn't know them that well at all. I'll be honest with you. When I moved here, I saw a sign on Interstate 75, and I said, "What is this?" I did not know them even though I had been coming to Atlanta for years. I just didn't. It didn't happen to be on my radar. [Before consolidation] I knew their online accounting program because I had been the director of the School of Accountancy. I knew about their program just because it was kind of a competitor. But that's about it. Frankly, I guess everything was a surprise because I didn't know anything.
- TS: To me one of the sad things is that I had been here forty years, and I really didn't know the faculty down there. I didn't know anybody.
- KH: Right.
- TS: It's been fun going down and doing interviews with folks down there.
- KH: Isn't it, to see what was there? One of the IT people, an online learning IT guy, was in the leadership program. He shadowed me for a year. During that process we would talk about Southern Poly. I told him, "I have never seen it or anything." So he actually invited me down to do a tour of campus one day, and I didn't even know where it was. That was maybe one year to two years before consolidation. So it was all new to me, this idea of engineering technology versus engineering and understanding the nuances and where they had some great strengths as well: software engineering, game design, computer science, architecture, and all these things. So it was all a learning, discovery kind of thing to me. Then we just started going around, and this idea of bringing everybody together in different kinds of systems, and all that was a challenge.
- TS: What were the biggest problems to overcome with the consolidation from your perspective?
- KH: Not surprisingly, if you look at the mergers and acquisitions information from the business world, the people make all the difference in that post-merger workforce integration. It's always important. Curricular, or I'll state it more broadly—bringing academic policies together was a challenge.
- TS: When we both had the same programs?
- KH: Programs or slightly overlapping programs, and how you bring that [together]. I make academic policies to include promotion, tenure guidelines, and those kinds of things. Bringing all that together was challenging. The systems integration, things like Banner integrations, while I was not as involved in the details of that, the folks that report to me were, and that was a big effort. That was a huge effort because you have data fields defined in different ways in different systems, like all these student records here with all this history. We brought them together, and we called it the Big Bang. Today we were going to bring them all together and turn on the new systems and see what fell out. That was a harrowing experience as well. But, really, it's like we can talk about the people

side of it and the emotional side of it. People [on the Marietta campus] were losing their identity, their history, and so there was a lot of that. But, really, for me the biggest challenges were those academic integration issues.

TS: Was the Marietta campus as well funded as this campus out here? What did you find out when you studied that?

KH: If you look at the amount of dollars coming in per student, it was not that much different. I think the dollars had been spent in different ways, which is a budgeting process, how we tend to have more money at the end of the year because of certain budget processes, which then let us do more with the facilities. We, therefore, saw that we needed to go in there and do more with systems and facilities, so we early on had to pump quite a bit of money into IT infrastructure, bringing up some facilities, fixing some facilities, and things like that. So that was a challenge.

TS: What is your overall assessment of consolidation and how it has played out? Maybe I should ask another question first. I think our missions were slightly different not only because they were engineering and we were more liberal arts and business and so on, but a lot of the faculty maybe saw it more as a teaching institution and less as a research institution on their campus. My impression was that in some ways they were what we were ten or fifteen years earlier in terms of our evolution. Is that a fair assessment?

KH: That's pretty fair. I think that is pretty fair.

TS: And that created problems for promotion and tenure particularly. For faculty it is always a number one concern, and that can create a lot of anxiety if all of a sudden people think they're going to be judged differently than they have been in the past. How did you deal with that?

KH: They're still dealing with it. You've got to give people time. You talked about bringing them in with different expectations. You've got to be fair and say, "This is where we're going," and give a decent runway for people to succeed. Mostly, what you want to do is say, "You were hired under one assumption. You're not in any different situation. We won't yank the rug out from under you. You've got some really good people, some brilliant people, and let's utilize the resources to teach the students." And they [the SPSU faculty] were doing research. It's not that they were failing to do research. But we also need to provide more structure around them, more funding around them, which will help to be successful in research. So it's just as incumbent upon us as it is them to do that. That's part of it, giving time and being reasonable in that escalation of expectations.

TS: I did an interview with [Thomas E.] Tom Rotnem this year, and he was doing fabulous scholarship before the consolidation as well as afterwards.

KH: Exactly right; he's a good example.

TS: And [Albert J.] Al Churella in the history department.

KH: Yes.

TS: So some of them were doing some fabulous work already.

KH: I agree.

TS: But that's always been Kennesaw's history, I think. We've always been evolving, and it has always created tension for those that came in under one system, and then all of a sudden different things are expected.

KH: Exactly, it's just a classic case. I've been at R-1 institutions where people were hired in when it was a completely teaching institution. It's just that things change over time.

TS: Right. Do you think we're going to be an R-1 institution in the next twenty years?

KH: I'll just say if we are, it will be closer to twenty years. That's my guess. I wouldn't be surprised to see us become an R-2. The way I keep seeing this, and this may be just my own bias, so I don't mean this to be some kind of administrative perspective. That is, we are who we are. I keep saying, "We're not an R-1 want-a-be. We're just damn good at who we are." To me we are a really good comprehensive university. But that means when we meet the demands that are out there, more graduate programs are needed, more doctoral programs are needed, and with that comes an escalating need to be really at the cutting edge of a discipline in order to teach at those levels. So, therefore, you have to be involved in scholarship. So all of this builds. In other words, we became an R-3 just because that's who we were. We didn't say, "We need to go do this, and let's invest the money toward that goal." We were just doing the right things for us and for this community, and we became an R-3. It looks like we will become an R-2 at some point just based on additional doctoral programs and additional spending on research. That's just how it happens. But to have it as a singular goal—for me at least that would not be [wise].

TS: Yes. Having sat on more tenure and promotion committees than I ever wanted to be on, I have always felt that the push is more from the faculty than the administration to move increasingly toward research.

KH: In fact, if anything, I have watched at other universities some cultures get really damaged because you bring in, perhaps, certain faculty members who themselves, as you say, have extremely high expectations: "Everybody should be like me." Everybody can be really, really good, but they're not like them. It just creates this kind of struggle, and that can be a real culture killer.

TS: Oh, yes. If you want to be a teaching institution, hire people for their teaching and not for their scholarship. But we don't do it that way.

KH: Exactly. But I think we do a wonderful blend. I really do.

TS: Yes. Well, the main areas left in the interview, I think, are the events of the last year and also your scholarship: happiness in the workplace and leadership and culture and some of those things. So maybe we can do that next time.

KH: I'll be happy to. I look forward to it.

TS: All right, great!

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
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Interview with W. Ken Harmon
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott
Location: Provost's office, Kennesaw Hall, Kennesaw State University

Part 3 – Wednesday, June 28, 2017

TS: This is part 3 today with Ken Harmon. Ken, we said that we would start out today talking about the crises of the last year. I've got a question to begin with that one of our longtime retirees who retired many years ago asked me the other day. He wanted to know, what is a provost? I actually did a Google search with Wikipedia and found out that in some places provosts were actually presidents. In fact, I think that the University of Pennsylvania until the 1930s didn't have a president, but instead was headed by a provost. Presidents are an American creation. The historic English universities didn't have them, but instead had chancellors as the titular heads of the universities and provosts as heads of some of the colleges that made up the universities. But also I guess the main thing that I learned is that everybody has a different definition of what a provost is. I think it might be relevant to the problems that we've had this last year to define what a provost is at KSU because it's more than a vice president for academic affairs. So how do you define what your job is?

KH: You captured it very well because there's not one definition. You go to the national meetings of provosts, and you find there are all different types. I don't know if you know the humor writer Dave Barry. He's one of my favorites. I remember in one of his columns he said, "I think the best job in the world would be provost because nobody knows what you do. So you can deduct anything on your taxes [laughs].". So I think that's pretty accurate. You are exactly right. It's different than vice president for academic affairs. The vice president for academic affairs is over all things academic. At some places the provost is considered the CAO, the chief academic officer. To me that is equivalent to vice president for academic affairs.

TS: It sounds like it.

KH: Yes, so typically and the way it is implemented here is that a provost has direct purview over academic items—and that's faculty, curriculum, degrees, et cetera—but as a provost you have some perspective over other things on the campus.

TS: Some perspective?

KH: Yes, whether it's coordination, some purview; for example, I would never go step on the authority of the vice president for student affairs, but I might be in on discussions around certain items that have to do with housing and some other things like that. I'll sit on the athletic association board. I might be dealing with the campus master plan and things like that. Also, usually, you're in the number two position, so sometimes it's a

denotation of the number two position at the university. Therefore, you are someone who steps in for the president in an official capacity and, sometimes, unofficial capacity.

TS: That's one thing I learned recently about Harvard University where just after World War II the president [James Bryant Conant] had a job in Washington [as chairman of the National Defense Research Committee], so he was away a lot and asked the Harvard Corporation to create the position of provost to run the show while he was away.

KH: That's typically been the case here since I've been in this position, interim first and then permanent. In fact, Dan Papp and I would oftentimes sit down and coordinate our calendars for the year or as far in advance as we could because if he's not going to be here, could I be here?

TS: You don't want both of you to be in China at the same time.

KH: Right, even though sometimes it happened. We would have somebody else in place, but we'd be on call.

TS: Right. Were you a member of the board of trustees of the KSU Foundation before all the problems or is that a new appointment?

KH: I'm trying to remember. I've always sat in on the meetings. I've always been asked to be at the meetings.

TS: Ex officio?

KH: Yes. I can't recall when it was that they said, "We'd like the provost to become a member of the executive committee," or something like that. It didn't feel any different.

TS: So that wasn't a result of the issues of last year; it happened before?

KH: Yes, it all happened before. While we met with them, I was not privy to the inside discussions or anything like that.

TS: Okay. I guess my next question then is when did you find out about the problems that we were having in food services and auxiliary services? I know it became an issue long before it became public. When did you know that there was a problem?

KH: It would depend on which problem per se. I will be quite candid to say that while I knew of certain personnel issues, we could go back to one of the early ones where an individual had a letter of reprimand that goes back a couple of years. So I knew that that had happened. That was being handled over in the operations side. Then beyond that I guess I heard, here and there, about this looks like it may be an issue or something like that, but not the pervasive nature until the audits came in.

- TS: The good news in all of this from your perspective is that the issues had absolutely nothing to do with academics.
- KH: Yes, there was nothing in the academic lane that seemed to rise to [the level of a crisis].
- TS: I guess I always had the opinion that Betty Siegel was a visionary, but not necessarily a hands-on person, while Dan Papp had set up a management system as good or better than anyone. So to me one of the embarrassing things about it all is that we didn't catch it ourselves. The audits came from the Board of Regents.
- KH: The audits came from the board. I'll be honest, Tom, and say I don't know if it was a matter of degree because there were certain things that were known. It wasn't that nothing was caught [on campus]. It may be that once there was a digging into it, it was maybe a little more severe than what was understood here, et cetera. Again, I wasn't privy to a lot of that discussion here and, obviously, at the board. So my understanding was very tangential on that. I think we had good processes in place. I'll be honest and say I am still not clear on exactly what happened on some of those, whether it's particular contracts through vendors or what that might be. I was in on contract discussions and had pointed questions during some of that: "how could this work; that doesn't seem right." So we had people looking at everything. It wasn't that anybody was being lax. I think it was maybe an understanding of the degree of the situation. Also it may be a situation where people relied on each other, which tends to happen. My area of expertise is fraud and control and all of that and how people respond. Sometimes you see these things happen where there's an assumption that this expert or that expert has all the understanding, and then collectively it doesn't work. So I'll say I'm baffled myself.
- TS: You're saying you trusted each other?
- KH: Exactly. And not in terms of trust in that something nefarious was necessarily happening. There could have been some of that as well, and it appears there may have been. But in other words with this person's digging into the details of that, so they have checks and balances.
- TS: One of the people that was at the center of the scandal was chosen administrator of the year the year before, if I'm not mistaken.
- KH: I think that is correct.
- TS: Obviously, he must have been doing some things right.
- KH: I know that he was viewed very favorably by some people in the administration and that he was one to think outside the box. In fraud controls sometimes that is not good. But at the same time he had just really good ideas. So we'd look at some of the really creative things that he did, the farm and the dining services. We were rated top five in the country if I remember correctly or top fifteen.

TS: Yes, culinary services won all kinds of national awards.

KH: Exactly, so here's somebody who is considered a visionary, thinking outside the box, doing some really cool stuff, bringing some great attention to us. I won't ascribe motive, but I will say there may have been problems with the checks and balances.

TS: Okay.

KH: But I can very candidly say and honestly say that it's not like I knew there was a huge problem. There was never that knowledge.

TS: Okay. how would you define the problem? We've obviously made some changes in the last year and not only in personnel but in policy. What do you think was *the* problem?

KH: I would summarize it as lack of due diligence and oversight in contracting and related matters especially in auxiliary services.

TS: Okay, and those are the people that now are not here anymore?

KH: If you think about that chain of auxiliary, food services, and that person reports to ... that person reports to ... that person reports to ... Those people are all gone.

TS: Quite a few people are gone from a year ago.

KH: Yes, sir. Yes, sometimes we sit back and look and say, "Whoa, the landscape has indeed changed." It has.

TS: I asked someone if it was a culture of corruption around here, and he said, "No, it was a culture of accountability or lack of accountability."

KH: That's very appropriately phrased. Especially in terms of the upper administration—I don't know motives below—but I know the folks in the upper administration who are no longer here, and I would bet my reputation on the fact that it was not an atmosphere of corruption. It may have been not fully understanding those areas or it may have been not an appropriate level of holding people accountable, whatever it was, but I'd be shocked if there was anything that bordered on corruption by those individuals.

TS: I wanted to get your answer before I prejudiced the case, but the culture of accountability comment came from Houston Davis when I interviewed him.

KH: Oh, okay. If it comes from Houston, that's pretty strong.

TS: He thought that it was just a matter of nobody wanted to hear bad news.

KH: I would not disagree. Again, I hate to ascribe. That starts to border on ascribing motive, but that would probably not be far off.

- TS: The way you're describing this though, this is not something that you would have discussed in a cabinet meeting?
- KH: I don't recall discussing it in a cabinet meeting. It would have been more small groups or just with the president. If something was coming up that he was dealing with, you might mention it to him.
- TS: Okay. Well, it must have been uncomfortable around here last May and June. I remember when we had the dedication of the library renovations in very early June, Dan Papp was still here for that. That was about it, I guess. Shortly after that we started getting memos from Houston Davis a month before he officially took over.
- KH: Yes.
- TS: What was it like? It must have been uncomfortable around here in June 2016, when we basically had two presidents, wasn't it?
- KH: Yes. I go back to the day we all learned that Dan was leaving.
- TS: In May. Or at least it was public in May. Did you know ahead of time?
- KH: I got a phone call two hours before graduation, the evening graduation ceremonies.
- TS: And it was right after that that he announced it?
- KH: That evening I walked to the graduation, and the phone call I received said, "This is going to happen tonight."
- TS: So the phone call was not from Dan?
- KH: The phone call was not from Dan.
- TS: Okay, and you don't want to say?
- KH: I'd prefer not to.
- TS: Sure.
- KH: So I knew it. Obviously, I wasn't saying anything to anyone including Dan. The platform party always gathers before graduation ceremonies at the Convocation Center upstairs in the Hospitality Suite. So Dan said, "Can you close the doors?" And he made the announcement that he would be retiring June 30.
- TS: To all of those that were in the room?

KH: Yes. So it put a real pall over the room. So that was that, and so Dan was planning to phase out June 30. It looked like more and more Houston was going to maybe come in and then come in a little earlier and then come in a little earlier. I've known Houston for years as well. I like Houston Davis quite a bit. We hit it off right away when he moved to town. I had no problems with Houston, and I was friends with Dan as well. I had worked with him for years. So it was uncomfortable, but you just try to keep things moving forward.

TS: I'm a little unclear. Who was actually occupying the [president's] office up above?

KH: Dan. Dan stayed in the office.

TS: Until the end of June?

KH: I forgot his exact last day. I want to say it was a week or so before the end of June, but it was something on that order. What happened was Houston came in, and Houston went and set up at the other end of the hall.

TS: Where the conference room is?

K: Right before the conference room there's an office on the right. It's just a small office back there, and Houston set up in that small office out of deference to Dan. Of course, you don't intrude, but the system office had asked him to come in and start dealing with some issues.

TS: Do you think Dan would have survived the auxiliary services audit if he didn't have his own deferred compensation problems?

KH: I don't know. There's no way to know . . .

TS: What the chancellor was thinking?

KH: You go out in the community, and I've had various people take me to lunch and drinks and dinners and whatever who are all speculating a hundred different things. So who knows?

TS: What do you think Dan Papp's legacy is going to be?

KH: I think, first, let me say it's a very positive legacy. You always hate to see someone go out in that fashion because it seems like it can tarnish a legacy. But I think a strong legacy is there. Dan got here in 2006 and left ten years later, and in that time transformed the campus into a destination campus. So I think that in itself is a huge legacy. Obviously, football is a legacy. To me football is part of that larger picture of a destination campus with a real campus life. If you think about all of that, I think that's what Dan's legacy will be. It went from a university of about 18,000 and handling the

consolidation, bringing in football, making a destination campus, and now a place with 35,000 students.

TS: To what extent do you think that with consolidation taking place people were just too busy doing other things to man the store?

KH: I don't think that's it. I don't think consolidation provided so much traffic that it confused the channel, if you will. I think, unfortunately, it would have happened anyway.

TS: You said you liked Houston Davis. How would you assess his accomplishments in his six months here?

KH: Frankly, Houston came in to clean up. Houston came in, cleaned up, and made some tough decisions. Like I said, Houston and I had already worked with each other, liked each other, so he talked to me a lot through that whole time. I think the main theme there was that things that the system office thought needed cleaning up, Houston came in and cleaned up. That's how I would characterize it. And Houston always does things in a very affable manner. He had a difficult job to do, but he is a very likable guy, and so it's interesting, the juxtaposition.

TS: I know I thought very highly of some of those that got replaced as a result of all of this.

KH: Yes.

TS: More than Dan, I guess, had their reputations tarnished at the end.

KH: Yes. That's unfortunate.

TS: Did you have any thoughts on selecting a president without a national search?

KH: I did. In fact, I was very public about it, but I was carefully wording what I was saying because I've known Sam Olens professionally for years out in the community, the Chamber of Commerce, working with the Cobb County Commission, et cetera. So like I say, Sam and I have known each other for a few years. So I was very careful to say, "I'm not saying anything about Sam, but I do think that the university deserves a national search." I think this is a gem and is something that you jealously guard as such, and in that light it should have a national search. So that was my take on it.

TS: I think that's probably the majority take around campus or at least from those who knew Sam. They didn't have anything against Sam Olens. Some people were unhappy because of his service as Georgia's attorney general.

KH: Yes, you're exactly right. By the way, I've been very open with Sam about that as well. "Hey, Sam, I was open that I thought it needed a national search, but it had nothing to do with you, and now that you're here, we'll work together."

- TS: How has it worked out this last seven or eight months or whatever it's been since November?
- KH: It's actually going well. I don't know if we talked about it or not, but I was in the market looking at other jobs.
- TS: Well, that's the next thing I wanted to ask you about.
- KH: Oh, I thought we'd already covered that.
- TS: No, we haven't covered it. We just mentioned it in passing.
- KH: Okay. But it kind of blends with this question is the reason I even bring it up.
- TS: So you were in the market because things were uncertain here on campus?
- KH: People oftentimes don't believe me, but I would say this under oath. That night that Dan had us close the doors and told us that he was retiring, the week before that I went and had lunch with a search firm.
- TS: Oh, the week before?
- KH: The week before that I went and had lunch with a search firm. I know the search firm people very well, and we went over to Marlow's and had lunch. They said, "There are probably some really neat president's jobs opening up, and we thought that it was time for you to go look." I said, "Well, maybe. Do understand (and I said to Dan) my goal is not to be a president." They said, "What's your goal?" I said, "My goal is to wake up tomorrow morning and enjoy my life. As far as I'm doing that I'm okay. If something comes along that I'm interested in, that's kind of cool." I said, "But I'm not going to jump at something so I can be called the president. That's not something I've got to check off before I pass on." Anyway, we had this very candid and great conversation, and these are wonderful folks. It turned out that same week another search firm called me to talk about some things. I told both of them, "Let me think about it." And that week, and again we're still in the week before Dan's announcement, that Friday night I sat down with my wife with a glass of wine and talked about life and all of that and the age of our girls. I have three daughters, and at the time they were a twenty-seven year-old, a rising seventh grader, and a rising sixth grader. Given the ages of the girls in the house we thought, "Once they start getting into high school, we don't want to move."
- TS: They're not going to want to change schools.
- KH: Exactly. They were already not crazy about the idea, but we said, "If we're going to do it, this is the year to take a look." That Friday night I said, "Okay, starting next week I'm going to reach out to these firms and just say, "Keep on the look out; here's what I'm looking for." Then it was Tuesday when Dan made that announcement where I got a call

two hours before. So that was the first I'd heard of that. I had been very candid with Dan that I might go look. So I was already on the market, and it had nothing to do with these things. It was just coincidence.

TS: It's not surprising that a provost might be looking at presidential opportunities.

KH: Yes, and I'm not saying this because it's any great thing about me, but I get a call almost every week asking, "Will you look at this presidency or that?" It's just that if you are a provost at a huge university, you get attention. So I was looking at stuff, but I was very particular about where I wanted to move and where I did not want to move. The year progressed. I looked at a couple of things. I went down for an interview at one school and did not make the cut; in fact, there were two of those. Then I became one of two finalists at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers, and that was a prime location. I love warmth, I love salt water, and all those things, and Florida Gulf Coast—I loved where they were and where they were positioned. It reminded me a lot of a KSU. Anyway, it showed lots of potential.

TS: Their men's basketball team went to the Sweet Sixteen in the NCAA tournament a couple of years ago.

KH: I want to say 2013. They called them Dunk City and Florida Gulf Coast University. Neat place. I had gone there for my interview. I became one of two finalists. It was early December, and they were planning to make a decision the second week of December. I told Sam all of this, et cetera.

TS: And he'd been on the job a month at that time.

KH: Exactly. They were supposed to call me back in for the final interview the second week of December. I thought I had a very, very good chance, and the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida said you have to have three finalists. So the search firm and the head of the search committee called me and said, "We wanted it to progress. We're happy with what we've got now. But they won't let us progress. We're going to have to open the search back up and get a third finalist, and it's going to take until the end of January." So I said, "Okay, all I can do is go along with it." They said, "You won't be interviewed again. You're still a finalist. It's just going to be delayed before you're called back in. Things still look great, dah, dah, dah."

During that time we had the holidays and did all of that. I worked with Sam some more and realized that Sam and I could work together. Again, my wife and I sat down. I guess it was the second week of January, and I said, "You know, we just love it here. I've said I don't have to be a president. What do you think if I go to Sam with a proposal and talk about staying?" She said, "The girls would be ecstatic!" My wife loves it here; I do too. I said, "What things are going to get better if we move?" So the next couple of days I wrote something up and took it to Sam. Sam had been open and said he had some faith in me and all that, but he didn't want to get in my way. He was really, really nice about it.

TS: So he didn't come to you and say, "I don't know anything about running a university. I need you to stay?"

KH: No, he did not say that, but he did say, "I'd like for you to be happy here." He made comments like that. So I went to him with a proposal that had to do with salary if I go back into [the teaching] faculty and salary now and just different things. We don't need to get into the details, but it was a proposal. Sam said, "Let me take a look." Sam is very methodical, appropriately so. He went and did an analysis. He came back about a week later and said, "Let's go for it. I'd like for you to stay."

TS: Great.

KH: At that point I pulled out of [the Florida Gulf Coast search]. And I was being courted for a nice presidency out in Texas. So on both of those I called them up and said, "I'm going to withdraw, and I'm going to stay at KSU." That is a long-winded response, really, to your question about working with Sam. If I didn't think I could work with Sam, I wouldn't have done it. So I think it's worked very well. He has said many times over, "The academic side of the house seems to be going well." He's climbing the learning curve very rapidly. So that's where we are.

TS: Great. I think we've talked about the climate on campus and how it's changing and where we are going in the future. I know you've done a lot of work in your scholarship on leadership and culture. Is there anything that you would change about the culture on this campus if you could?

KH: Oh, gosh, that's a great question. There was a time when I was being interviewed—I can't remember whether it was a newspaper or radio—and somebody asked the question, "What's your greatest (I want to say) threat or obstacle as you look toward the future?" I said, "Frankly, our greatest threat is us." We've made this family culture, this idea that we are welcoming and supportive and nurturing of one another, and [we've done so] very sincerely. We've talked about [Kennesaw] being entrepreneurial, and I love that term. People think it's just a business term, but it's [a spirit of] "let's take something and do something with it, and let's go try new things." I think that's what we had and have, but we're twice the size now of when I first got here. So I don't want to say I would change anything. I would just want to double down on that culture and really inculcate that culture of support, welcoming, being friendly. I even said I thought it was part of our strategic plan that we ought to make sure everybody is focused on customer service, which sounds overly business I realize, but almost that Chick-Fil-A thing that you're going to get a great customer service experience.

Now my other point that I put with that is I would like us to have even more of a culture of customer service with the understanding that every single person that we talk to is our customer. It's not just families. If I walk down the hall and talk to [Valerie] Val Whittlesey [associate vice president for curriculum] or [Ronald H.] Ron Matson [senior associate vice president for academic affairs], that's my customer at that moment. In other words you always treat everybody with that same respect as does an entrepreneur

who loves that customer walking in the door spending a dollar. There are ways to do that. When I hire at the dean level or whatever I'm hiring, that's the main thing I look for is attitude toward others.

TS: When I've interviewed long marchers, as Betty Siegel called them, they're often very nostalgic about the time when we knew everybody across campus, and there is always a sense that we've lost some of that.

KH: We have just so many people here, and we do have some of that missing. Of course, I also know from the research that people have the tendency for the "good ol' days" syndrome and not to pull up the negatives from the past, which is a wonderful selective processing, psychologically. But my point is I can still walk across this campus and be truly appreciative of every person that I encounter. I don't have to know them. I remember sitting at lunch one day. There was a group in. If I recall correctly, they were student leadership heads from different universities all over the country. We sat down for lunch at the Commons in probably 2010 with all these folks from other universities. Somebody said, "How do you do it?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "We've been talking about this among ourselves. There's something different here." And they brought it up. They said, "The people we encounter are genuinely nice. They genuinely want to help us. It's that kind of an attitude." I said, "It's just who we are." We've got to protect that. We had an accreditation team here for one of the colleges. I happened to know a couple of people on the accreditation team. You always have an exit interview with the provost and the president. I walked in there and they said, "We've been discussing your accreditation and all that. You did great. But mostly we want to say we're envious. We wish we had what you have."

TS: Wow.

KH: So we've heard this from outsiders, and I think it is something palpable. But we've got to be intentional about it.

TS: You've done a lot of talking about happiness in the workplace. Can you talk about that research a little bit?

KH: Yes, and in fact I'm always quick to say I don't know if I really research in it. So I don't know if I'm a real scholar in it, but I love it. So I talk a lot about it. I've always been fascinated by the leadership literature, and I've often been frustrated by the way leadership is taught because it seems to be, "Here's what great leaders do. Try to do those things."

TS: Military style leader?

KH: Yes. Oftentimes, I teach leadership, and I'll say, "What words come to mind? What images come to mind?" A lot say, "Military, make the tough decision, that kind of stuff." There's a certain element there, but I've been fascinated by what is true leadership. Then one day I was hearing an interview with this Harvard sociologist named Daniel Gilbert,

and he was talking about his book, *Stumbling on Happiness* [Alfred A. Knopf 2006], and talking about what really makes people happy and what doesn't. It was fascinating because what I have since learned because I've become a voracious reader in this area of happiness is, I think, most days most of us wake up and work against our own happiness. This applies so much to the work place. I was driving home from South Carolina. I came back home, and I told my wife, "I think I've figured out the linkage. Great leaders understand happiness." So this became a kind of dual focus.

Then I stumbled on some psychology stuff. This guy named Keith [M.] Eigel, who I think is brilliant, happens to be here in Atlanta. He talks about the psychology of people, where they are in their development, their psychological interaction with the world, and how they are as leaders. It's fascinating work and I think it links up to happiness as well.

So I've been trying to work on a book called *Managing Happiness* for quite a while. I've written an article, "Managing Happiness: Tapping the Power of the Individual" in *Business Acumen* (Kennesaw State University Press 2010)]. It's this idea of how can I promote a work place that understands what makes people happy and therefore helps to contribute to it? I'm not saying I'm going to make you happy. That has got to come from the inside; 90 percent of it comes from the inside. But how can I at least not detract from it and help promote those things that might make you happier? It also helps me as a leader to grow, to understand other perspectives. Therefore, we find that great leaders actually provide an atmosphere not where people do things out of fear, but where people do things out of a desire. So it's all linked together.

TS: I think the academic world is a good place for that. People that go into the academic world could probably make a lot more money if they did something else, but this is what they want to do. I've always found Kennesaw and, I think probably most colleges, to be places where, if you're doing the job, you can pretty well define what your scholarship agenda is going to be, for instance.

KH: That's an excellent way to put that. It's not always that way. I remember a phone call I got from an old friend in my discipline. I've been in a couple of R-1 universities in my past, and then I used to run a research conference within my discipline for fourteen years, I think. So I got to know people in the discipline and some fairly high-level researchers. I remember I was dean here, and I got a phone call from this guy. He said, "Ken, I would love to come work at KSU." I said, "I'd love to have you, but I can't afford you. I know what you make at your university." And he said, "I will gladly take a cut in pay to get out of here and have an atmosphere like you have at KSU." So that captures the sentiment in a nutshell. And the research shows, if somebody made \$70,000, and all of a sudden they were making \$150,000, there would be a temporary bump, and then probably twelve to eighteen months later they're going to be back to their same level of happiness. So why not let people explore lives as they want to explore them and do that to the degree possible?

TS: There was an interview that Judy Woodruff did last night with Warren Buffett on the PBS NewsHour. It was a two-part interview, but in the second part particularly he was

talking about how he was so happy. He is living in the same house that he bought in 1958. He said, “I can buy anything I want. I can have all these houses all over. But I can’t see that it’s going to make me any happier.”

KH: That’s a great perspective. A lot of people do think that. There’s jealousy and envy and all those things that come into play as well. I will tell people, “Yes, all of those things, your house, your car, even health to some degree, a lot of these things make a difference, but they only make a difference in about 10 percent of your happiness. The other 90 percent is your decision to be happy.

TS: Warren Buffett was drinking a cherry coke. She asked him about his health, and he said, “Well, I eat like a six-year-old. I don’t know too many six-year-olds that are dying on us [laughs].

KH: Good perspective.

TS: I guess so, but he was obviously very happy.

KH: Yes, he is one of those who has a little different perspective, what he gives away and all that.

TS: I think I’m about out of questions. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed the whole three sessions that we’ve had. Is there anything that you’d like to add that we haven’t talked about?

KH: There’s nothing else that I can think of offhand. You’ve been very thorough [laughs]. It’s been fun. It’s been a lot of fun for me.

TS: Well, great!

KH: Everybody loves to talk about themselves.

TS: Well, that’s good, I guess. That’s my job to help you do that. Thank you.

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Part 4 – Friday, September 13, 2019

TS: Ken, when I interviewed you back in June of 2017, you were provost, and Sam Olens was president. He had about six months to go before he announced his retirement, which he did in December. We talked about what you were doing and your relationship with him, and that you were getting along well together. Could I begin by asking you, what do you think that we accomplished as an institution during that year plus that Sam Olens was president?

KH: I think Sam came in with a mindset of being two things. One was to bring about more operational efficiency. I think he looked really hard at that and made, at times, some difficult calls that needed to be made. I thought that was good. Two, he helped us become even more focused on students and student achievement. That is the real Priority One for the university. So I would say those were primarily the benefits from that year.

TS: Of course, he also had a cheerleaders' controversy, among other things. I think you were sensing that he had a long learning curve because he didn't come from the academic world.

KH: Sure, and he admitted that.

TS: How rapidly do you think he was coming up to speed on how a college operates?

KH: I had known Sam for a number of years, which I probably told you in the previous interview, and I always had respect for him. Sam always has had, and still does, a big heart. He is a caring guy, and a smart guy. I felt like he was acclimating fairly rapidly to the academic environment. He would say, "I don't understand why you do this." And sometimes that is a good, healthy question to ask. Sometimes we become an echo chamber, and we do things because that's how we do things. Academics are famous for that. But, no, I think he had climbed the curve very well, frankly. Like I say, Sam was a smart guy. You didn't get to where Sam has gotten without being smart.

TS: Yes. Well, during football season, the cheerleaders decided to take a knee during the National Anthem.

KH: I think that happened at the game that I was hosting the presidential suite. Sam wasn't even there.

TS: So they kneeled and got a lot of boos. I know because I was out in the stands. Then the Athletics Department decided that they would wait until after the National Anthem for the cheerleaders and the players to run on the field. And that became controversial.

KH: Yes.

TS: I guess Sam got a lot of criticism at that time. Let me ask you, he admitted he could have handled the situation better. How do you think he should have handled it?

KH: Oh, I hate to go back and second-guess. I don't know who said what to Sam. I don't know what all conversations he had.

TS: Well, [Cobb County] Sheriff Neil Warren and [State Representative] Earl Ehrhart seemed to brag in an email exchange that they pressured Sam into keeping the cheerleaders off the field. Whether he did respond to their pressure or not is debatable.

KH: Yes, exactly. I don't know what conversations he had with attorneys or with the University System Office. But Sam is, again, a smart guy, and he has been in the public arena before. It is not his first time to deal with a lot of those pressures and sensitivities. So who knows? I may not have handled the thing differently at all. I mean, it was a time of heightened sensitivity in so many ways. It was just like the next spring when I became interim president and got called down to the Capitol to respond to some things and got grilled.

TS: Oh, yes, the Earl Ehrhart Committee. He was chairman of the Appropriations: Higher Education Committee.

KH: Yes, exactly. It was a continuation of a lot of concerns, oversight, that kind of thing about universities. In fact, at the time, I know, appropriately, the System Office folks started taking a look and saying, "How do we handle these things around all of our various campuses? And how do we unify around how we are appropriately addressing these items?" So, I think, Sam was just on the front end of all that. At that point, you're just responding to a whole lot of different things. So, who knows? Sam may feel like, after the fact, maybe he would do a few things differently. But I don't know what that would be, and I would hate to second guess it because I just don't know what it was. I know how that can be. You're getting advice from ten different people at the same time, and you've just got to make a gut call. I know Sam always had the right intentions. I do not question that at all.

TS: Well, supposedly he didn't report it immediately to the regents. Although, if they read the newspapers, they would have known about it.

KH: Right, yes. Again, I don't know how that conversation was and what some of the particular sensitivities were back and forth there.

- TS: I guess the sixty-four-dollar question is, they picked him without a national search, he was their man, so why didn't they back him?
- KH: I don't know. I don't know. We could sit around and do a political intrigue speculation all day long, but I don't know, and I don't know really how everything came down with Sam leaving. I don't know the particulars, and I would be guessing. And to guess would be precarious.
- TS: Well, the purpose of an interview is to talk about what you know firsthand.
- KH: Yes, exactly, and I don't know. It is not like Sam sat down with me and said, "Here's what is happening." In fact, he kept me out of some things, and I think appropriately so. He wanted to handle some things like that.
- TS: The provost is first among equals, but your bailiwick was academic affairs. How much were you involved in things like athletics?
- KH: It varied. I would say a decent amount. It depends on the president. When I first became provost, Dan and I had a conversation, and I think his words were, "I see a provost as kind of a president in training. I want you involved in a lot of other things." So, therefore, I would sit on the Athletics Committee. I would deal with Student Life. I would deal with a lot of different things as provost that went beyond just academic affairs. Some interpret the difference between a vice-president for academic affairs and a provost as the provost having a little more purview [in a variety of areas]. That's how Dan saw it. Sam would talk to me about anything, but he was a little different as far as just day-to-day communication style. He was very open. We were very open to one another. I was still involved with athletics and things, but not as directly.
- TS: Was it difficult for you to do your job in that period when I don't think the faculty ever accepted him as president?
- KH: It was difficult. It was difficult. I mean, you still do your job. I think part of the job is just caring for everybody on the campus and hoping that they maximize their potential. You are always doing that. Yes, there were frictions there, and Sam knew about them. Sam and I went to some difficult meetings, some very difficult meetings at times. I do not want to say it was because of Sam. I want to be very careful there. It was a culmination of a lot of pressures, a lot of things that were happening nationally, around free speech debates. It was a perfect storm. There were some difficult faculty meetings and things where it got pretty heated. So that was one of the toughest years of my entire career.
- TS: I bet. I did an interview with President Olens one week before he made the public announcement, and he didn't mention that at all when I was interviewing him. When did he tell you that he was going to leave?

KH: I'll be honest and say I don't know that I can recall. It wasn't like I had some great advance notice or anything like that. I'm wanting to say it was just right around the time.

TS: So he kept it to himself?

KH: Yes, he did. It was pretty close to the time is all I remember. Maybe he was weighing the decision. But, yes, he kind of kept it to himself.

TS: Did he ever have any discussions with you, "I don't know if I want to stay in this job any longer."

KH: No, it wasn't that. Oftentimes, quite appropriately, he would get frustrated with the academic world, and he was open about that. Again, I didn't blame him. I think it was good, healthy questions. It was like, "Why do you do this?" Well, it is a good question. But, yes, you could tell that some things were bothering him. But he didn't sit down to have that kind of a candid discussion with me.

TS: Okay. Did anybody talk to you about the interim presidency before he made the announcement?

KH: No, no. They did not.

TS: How did that come about?

KH: Well, it is interesting. Something that I guess became somewhat known is I actually was looking at the CEO of the [Cobb] Chamber of Commerce job, and I was a finalist for it.

TS: That's when David Connell was leaving?

KH: Yes, David was leaving, and I was one of the [four] finalists, and it was all during December [2017]. In fact, it came down wire to wire. Sam had announced [on December 14, 2017] that he was stepping down, and then I got a call to say, "Would you consider being interim?"

TS: You got a call from...

KH: From [Chancellor] Steve Wrigley. I was very open with him. I said, "You know, I'm also in this other queue." My thought was, "I would probably prefer to do this, but let me just weigh some different things."

TS: Prefer to be interim president?

KH: Right, just for a number of personal and career factors. But I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure. I was looking at this Chamber of Commerce thing. It was very interesting.

TS: So you withdrew from that search?

KH: Well, no. In fact, I went ahead, and I did find out that I was not going to advance. So it just made the decision easier. It all happened to happen at once. They made a wonderful decision at the Chamber. It was a dear friend of mine, Sharon Mason.¹ So it all just worked out. It is one of those things that happens for a reason, and it was just perfect. So then I accepted the interim presidency.

TS: What did Steve Wrigley say when he called you?

KH: He just said, "Would you be willing to do this?"

TS: "Hi, hello, would you take the job?"

KH: Yes. Steve and I always got along very well. He just called, just small chitchat, and then he says, "Well, as you know, Sam is stepping down. We wondered if you'd be willing to step into that role while we conduct a search?" So it was very straightforward.

TS: After Dan left, they went outside the university to find an interim. Were they satisfied that whatever they thought was wrong here had been corrected by this time?

KH: I have no idea. I really don't. I'm assuming they saw that there was still a lot of work to be done. We still had a lot of discussions around budgets and growth and just lots of things, and so I'm sure it was not that. I don't know if there was anything greatly strategic about it. One of the old strategic things you do in management is you go outside if it needs fixing, inside if it doesn't. But it was an interim role, and I think they knew they could do a fairly quick search because they were going to go ahead and launch the search right then in January and try to get somebody in for the fall [semester], which they did. So it worked. I think for that period of time, they felt like, "Harmon has been around long enough and can handle things on an interim basis." I don't know that there was any larger consideration than that. So it was a fun time.

TS: There was about a two-month interregnum between when he makes the announcement [December 14] and February 15th, when he actually left.

KH: Correct.

TS: What was going on in those two months? Were you working closely with him on decisions? Or was he beginning to defer to you as the time passed?

KH: Yes and yes. So it was very much go ahead and start working with Sam, have some oversight, etc. It wasn't as though Sam were reporting to me. It wasn't like that at all. It

¹ A CEO selection committee interviewed eight semi-finalists for ninety minutes each, then four finalists for an addition two hours. Afterwards, the committee made its recommendation to the Chamber Board of Directors, which approved Sharon Mason on Tuesday, December 19, 2017. Mason had been the Chamber's Chief Operating Officer. Jon Gargis, "Sharon Mason Named Cobb Chamber president and CEO," *Marietta Daily Journal*, December 19, 2017.

was just more that we worked collaboratively during that time, so that I could just ease right in.

TS: So, increasingly, you were running the show, and he was stepping aside?

KH: Yes, effectively. It just seemed to work very naturally, frankly.

TS: How did you perceive this position? You knew it was only going to be a half a year or whatever. It turned out five months, I guess, that you were interim president [from February 15 to July 16, 2018, when Pamela S. Whitten began her tenure as president].

KH: Yes, but since I had started taking on some of those responsibilities in December, it felt a little longer [seven months].

TS: Nobody comes up with a grand new scheme [for the university] that would take ten years to implement while you are an interim president, I guess. So did you see it as a caretaker role, or did you continue to push for new things?

KH: I continued to push. When I have hired people in interim roles, this is my bias, but sometimes when I think, “caretaker,” it’s almost a pejorative of, “Let me just sit at the desk and sign stuff and then go home.” It was like, “Yes, we have some stuff to do.” We were right in the middle of a budget cycle. We still had some of the political things going on. The free speech issues, etc., had to be addressed. So it wasn’t that I was going to start new initiatives, but this idea of focusing on student success, I wanted to keep driving that and making it the focal point. That was primarily it. It was a continuation of things that had been started as the focal point. It wasn’t anything new, and it would not have been the right time to start anything new.

TS: But the legislature would have been in session at that time.

KH: Exactly.

TS: And you were working on a budget. Of course, the Board of Regents and the governor had made their recommendations, I guess.

KH: Right. We went down for a budget meeting with the regents and sat in a room and talked through our budget. We had a very good budget meeting with the folks down there.

TS: I guess, where the money goes is an indication of where the university is going. Were there any new initiatives that you were working on that were going to cost a lot of money?

KH: No.

TS: Or more money into Student Affairs or whatever?

KH: Well, it's a reallocation if anything, more for frontline, student-facing types of expenses, whether it was [hiring more] professors. If you look at what President Whitten has done, I think she's done a great job at focusing a lot more money over toward faculty members and advisors. So it is student-facing types of things.

TS: We've hired more advisors?

KH: I think we have. I know we were looking at more and more of that. We know that professional advisors make a real difference.

TS: And more faculty?

KH: A lot more faculty, yes. From what I've heard, I think she has directed a significant amount of money over toward hiring of faculty. And so, I think it's exactly what needed to be done.

TS: In my interview with President Olens, he talked about how inflexible our hiring process can be when you start a search in the fall and hire somebody about January who isn't going to arrive until August. Then if you have five thousand new students you weren't expecting, how are you going to find the faculty to teach them?

KH: Yes, it is a tough cycle. It is the nature of state budgets. But yes, we faced that a few times. In fact, we deliberately tried to curtail some of the growth, so that we would not have as much of a surprise.

TS: While you were the interim president?

KH: Yes. So we try to say, "Let's stem that a little bit." I guess it was two years before me. We had such a surprise explosion of students, and we were hiring temporary faculty, adjunct faculty, whatever, as quickly as possible as late as August.

TS: And that led to the fixed seat plan?

KH: The fixed seat model, yes, exactly.

TS: What happened this year? We have 6,500 new students. It doesn't sound like we're worrying about a fixed seat model anymore.

KH: Yes, it is just different philosophies around things. I think it's a model of, "We can handle it." Again, I think the president has done a good job. She said, "Okay, we're going to bring in a lot of students, but we're also going to direct the resources." It looks like they've directed the resources well. So it matches up, I think, quite well.

TS: So we had classes for all of them when they got here?

KH: I assume so. Of course, I don't have my ear to the ground on all that anymore. I used to get a lot of those calls and emails about students not able to put together a schedule. From what I sense, it seems like things are going pretty well.

TS: Well, if you look at your time as interim president, what would you say were your accomplishments?

KH: I think we handled the whole budget situation fairly well. I think we responded to outside pressures fairly well. I've always been a culture freak—the idea that we provide a good culture, make people feel welcome, and those kinds of things. I hope I did a good job or providing a welcoming culture for everyone, all the faculty, staff, students, etc. But I think there had been some swirling about. We hoped to get some stability, get the budget straight, respond to any criticisms, and then, "Let's just move forward with the business of the university." So I think we did a decent job at that.

TS: By outside pressures, are you referring to the legislature?

KH: The legislature and different interest groups out there that tend to call you or meet with you.

TS: You mentioned earlier about going down to the legislature to Earl Ehrhart's committee and getting grilled. What was that over?

KH: There were just a number of things that were coming up about [perceived] inherent biases and policies and how we proceed as a university.

TS: Was that over people speaking on campus and where they could speak?

KH: About people speaking on campus, about bias in classrooms. For example, they had two students who were there who spoke about getting mistreated by faculty members because these students had an opinion on certain topics.

TS: And they got squelched?

KH: Exactly. So some of those kinds of things. And we had the [gender-neutral] pronouns issue going on. It's just a number of things swirling around about. To me, it was just a microcosm of the national discussion that was happening about an extreme left-wing bias on campuses.

TS: So, you got raked over the coals down there?

KH: Oh, pretty much, yes.

TS: And so, what did you tell them?

KH: I know Earl fairly well. In fact, Earl and I chatted right afterwards. I like Earl. [Georgia State Representative] Bert Reeves I consider a friend as well. He was in there. I told them, “I’ll be honest. I’ll tell you anything we can, and we’re going to try to do everything the right way. So let’s talk about it.” There were times they might say, “What are you going to do about this faculty member?” I’ve been around long enough. I’m not going to make an immediate decision about that. There’s a process here, and I think sometimes that frustrates folks.²

TS: If the president fired someone on the spot it would start a faculty revolt.

KH: Yes, exactly. I’m not just going to go back and fire anyone today. No, I’m not going to do that. We have a process. [I told them], “We’ll look into any bit of this, and we think we need to be respectful of all points of view. We have to make sure that that happens on campus.” In fact, in a strange way—and I know this does sound strange because I had people coming up to me and saying, “Oh, I’m so sorry [about how you were treated at the legislature].” But in a way, I enjoyed it because we should be answerable. I should be down there as an open book to just talk about anything. It is like I’ve always told faculty, “If you want to come yell at me, come yell at me. That’s okay. Then let’s talk about it.” That should be my role.

TS: I think we should be criticized if we are not respecting students and their points of view.

KH: I’ll be honest and say, “I had gotten concerned about some of the national dialogue and about speakers getting shouted down on one side or another.” I mean, what other place should we have open dialogue than a university? That’s exactly what we should have, good respectful [dialogue]. And if somebody is out there speaking some hateful stuff, I need to hear it. I need to know what’s out there. So let him speak. Let’s hear it.

TS: Yes, the marketplace of ideas.

KH: Exactly. Yes, that is the phrase that Dan put together years ago as well.

TS: Did that satisfy them?

KH: You will have to ask them. Actually, I’ve had good discussion with, I guess, all of them since then. So, I hope so.

² For newspaper coverage of the free speech controversies, please see, “AROUND TOWN: Gender-neutral Pronouns at KSU...,” *Marietta Daily Journal*, March 5, 2018; “AROUND TOWN: Chancellor to KSU President, ‘Systematic, Fundamental Improvement Expected’: Lawmaker Schedules Hearing on University Discrimination,” *Marietta Daily Journal*, March 15, 2018; and Matt Hennie, “Georgia House Republicans Attack Kennesaw State’s LGBTQ Center,” *Project Q Atlanta/Q Magazine*, March 26, 2018.

TS: Well, what do you want to say on the record about why you didn't apply for the permanent presidency?

KH: It was very personal. It was combination of age...

TS: You're a young guy.

KH: Oh, heck, I just turned 64. I know it all becomes relative. But I have three daughters. One just got married, age 31. I have a 15- and a 13-year-old. I go around the world and teach about happiness.³ This conversation did actually happen having a glass of wine with my wife. I may have told you this one before with the decision with Florida Gulf Coast.⁴ I said, "I've got to start listening to myself." It was just like, "No, I need to focus on just life and those kinds of things." If I had applied, do I think I would have gotten it? My guess would be no. I think there was a feeling of a need for change. I was never told that. Nobody ever secretly said anything to me. It was not that at all. Do I think I would have? Probably, not, but that wasn't the reason [for not applying]. I don't mind going into something and being told, "No." That's okay. But it really was just a very deliberate, conscious decision to say, "I'd love to go back to being a [member of the teaching] faculty." I had been an administrator for 24 years.

TS: Maybe that answers my next question. Why not go back to being provost?

KH: Yes, it was just that. Do you want to know something? It is maybe not unusual, but a bit disclosing, if you look at my personality type. If you go into various measures of personalities, the structure of a provost job is not my personality type. Just like being a CPA is not my personality type.

TS: I think we talked about that earlier when you were telling Dan you weren't going to be a traditional provost, that you wanted to be involved in some things off campus.⁵

KH: Exactly, exactly. So I knew if I went back to provost, it would only be temporary. I thought it was a great opportunity to say, "Let me just go try being a professor." It was just that. In fact, I've had a few calls recently about presidencies and things like that. I don't think I'm going to look at them. I'm thoroughly enjoying life now. I feel like, "Man, this is wonderful." It has been since 1994 when I first became an administrator. So it's about time I realized what I got into this profession for.

TS: It has been over a year now that you've been back here in the School of Accountancy.

³ For a discussion of Dr. Harmon's scholarship on happiness, please see Part 3 of the oral history, especially pp. 44-46.

⁴ Please see pp. 41-43 for the family discussion.

⁵ Please see pp. 16-17.

KH: It has been.

TS: How has it been to be back on the faculty full-time?

KH: Frankly, it's heaven. It is just heaven. I still remember when I first became a professor, and I think I may have told you this story too. I'm probably repeating myself. It's like when I first became a professor, I thought, "I've died and gone to heaven." A guy who had encouraged me to do that, just a friend at a CPA firm, had said, "You would be a good professor. You ought to go look at that." His name was Dick Fisher, and I sat down and wrote a thank you note to Dick Fisher. I said, "You encouraged me, and I have found Nirvana."⁶ So I love it. I'm back in the classroom. Maybe I'm climbing a little bit of a learning curve on what I'm doing, but I think I'm doing okay. I've already co-authored one article and submitted it with somebody. I'm working on another article now.

TS: What are you writing about?

KH: A couple of different things. We just did a small article on the senior citizen tuition waiver in the state of Georgia, how it's used and how it is marketed.

TS: After 62, you can take classes for free if there's space in the classroom.

KH: Exactly.

TS: Did you write pro or con on that?

KH: Oh, no. It wasn't a policy. It was more of an examination of, "Do people know about it? Is it being used?" We gathered some data. Don Ariail [KSU Professor of Accounting Donald Lamar Ariail] has already written on this,⁷ so he invited me in. He is mentoring me back through the writing process. My [research] emphasis is more information systems and controls and fraud and those kinds of things. So I'm doing another piece right now that is in early sketch phase. I won't even call it a draft yet. It's kind of outline sketch form of biometric security and information systems and where we are and where we're going with biometrics—what they do and don't do in terms of real security of information systems. So stuff I find fun.

We're also working on a couple of papers on what they call PO (Person-organization) fit. Organizations are run by individuals. Those individuals have certain personalities. When they try to hire, the question is whether there is a culture fit. There are unique

⁶ Please see pp. 4-5.

⁷ Donald L. Ariail, "Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program: Literature Review, Pilot Study, Evaluation Proposal, and Recommendations for Future Research," *Georgia Educational Researcher* 14 (July 2, 2017): 124-44.

cultures sometimes with different firms and different individuals. We are measuring values and cultures of accounting grads and seeing how that fits and whether we can do anything as professors to move the needle to make them more of a fit toward what they may be trying to do in their career.

TS: Fit with the culture of the organization?

KH: Exactly.

TS: It seems like there was a time when you had to run marathons, or they wouldn't hire you in the math department. That was kind of the culture over there. They were all runners.

KH: Oh, really?

TS: I mean, it seems like everybody they brought in was another runner.

KH: Well, there is that thing that I think is fairly true in a lot of literature that we tend to hire in our own image. I think that has been probably the beauty of a lot of the diversity discussion, that diversity has a lot of dimensions to it. Let's be sure that we're breaking out of having our own image kind of mode.

TS: What classes are you teaching?

KH: I'm teaching two classes. One is called Accounting Information Systems [ACCT 3300]. That has been my specialty since the 1980s. It is design of information systems and control of information systems like a sales system or an HR system or a purchasing system. The other class is interesting. It did not exist when I was here [originally] in the School of Accountancy. In fact, we're one of the first in the country to have it. It is an Accounting Data Analytics class for accounting majors [ACCT 4550], and it is actually a capstone class for accounting majors at the undergraduate level. It's a senior level class we teach because data analytics have become so important due to these huge databases out there. How do we grab data out of those? How do we evaluate that information, and how does it affect the world of accounting? Just this morning, I was in class, and we were out grabbing some data off this big database that we have access to. We were deriving store transaction data and working with it and that kind of thing. So I'm learning that one. I've taught it three times.

TS: Are you teaching all undergraduate courses?

KH: Yes, so far. It has been fun. The Data Analytics, I guess, I'm teaching it for the third time now this year, and I'm teaching Accounting Systems for the second time this year.

TS: What about service?

KH: I'm serving on a couple of committees, mostly like promotion and tenure. I'm also helping to write our accreditation report. I'm taking the lead if you will. I mean, [Steven

W.] Steve Smalt is the director [of the School of Accountancy]. But they came to me and asked me to work on the AACSB [Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business] accreditation report for accounting because accounting has separate accreditation. We are going through business accreditation and accounting accreditation. So I took the lead on drafting our report, and we just submitted it what, a month and a half or so ago? The [accreditation] team is going to be here in October. So I'm playing a pretty big role. It's because I've done that as a dean and even when I was provost. I've worked with this accreditation agency for years and years on both sides. So I've seen a lot of it. I'm also serving on not-for-profit boards out in the community and trying to do what I can.

TS: What kinds of boards?

KH: I'm on the Town Center Community Alliance board. It's a foundation associated with the Town Center CID [Community Improvement District]. I'm in my third year on the board over there.⁸ I am on the Cobb Community Foundation board.

TS: Good for you.

KH: That's a good group. I'm very involved over there with different aspects of Cobb Community Foundation.⁹ I haven't been as active recently with the Accountability Courts in Cobb County [Superior Court] where people may have drug addiction issues or whatever. It's an advisory board for Accountability Courts.

TS: You mean if they've got a drug problem, they've got to do such and such, and they're accountable for doing what they said they were going to do?

KH: Bingo. And it can keep them out of jail. I've seen just some heart-rending stories and some beautiful stories, where maybe there is a single mom and drug arrest and problems, but also kids at home. So what is the best way? Just going to lock her up is not going to be the best thing.

TS: It won't be good for anyone.

KH: Instead, let's keep the family together, and are you willing to be accountable? I mean it's an intense accountability. They have done a beautiful job, and that thing has a lot of success. And it's not just drugs. It has some different pieces too. It can be different

⁸ According to its website, the Town Center Community Alliance supports greenspace and beautification projects in the Town Center CID and also tries to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors through various educational programs and services.

⁹ The Cobb Community Foundation manages charitable funds for local individuals, families, and organizations.

types of things.¹⁰ And then there is a separate DUI Court that is almost like an accountability court. So I've also been asked to sit on that advisory board. I've been doing that again. I haven't been as active with those just because of my schedule. I haven't been able to go for a while, but I'm serving on those as well.

TS: Do you get calls from the president or provost for advice from time to time?

KH: I don't know if I could give them any advice, but yes, Pam [Whitten] and I have always had a good relationship. I knew her as provost over at the University of Georgia [UGA]. Early on, especially, we sat down a few times. She would just say, "Let's talk openly. Let's just have a chat." We have done that a few times. She's a quick learner. She's got her feet under her. Kat [Schwaig] and I have been great friends since the day I got here. We haven't talked in a while. I am supposed to be getting with her later today, in fact, for the first time in a long time, just a conversation. I don't expect them to ask me for advice. I don't know if I have anything to tell them, but sometimes I can be a good sounding board. Kat and I have always been that to each other. We're kind of mutual mentors as we say.

TS: I need to do an interview with her before long.

KH: Yes, she is a wonderful person. I think the world of her. And I think she's great in that position [of provost] as well.

TS: We talked about this in some of the earlier interviews, but looking at 2019 KSU, how would you describe the culture of Kennesaw State now as you see it—its reputation, where it's going, what have you?

KH: I think it is still in the upper trajectory. I've deliberately just not been as involved and am just letting everything come into play while I'm a professor. But it seems good. I mean, the feeling is good. It seems like, okay, it's a new day. We're going forward. We've got the big growth this fall, got the new branding campaign. I talk to people in the community all the time, just in my various roles out there. It all seems very positive. I don't hear some of the old criticisms. I don't read it in the paper as much. It may be there, and I'm just not finding it because I don't open the paper as readily every morning like I used to. But we are huge now!¹¹ We are just getting bigger and more prominent with the R2 status. We're a true research university. And so it seems very positive, very big. It's still one of those things where I jokingly said, "Our tagline should be, I had no idea," because you tell people about us, and they say, "Oh, I had no idea." We're one of the fifty largest in the country. But it's nowhere but up it looks like.

¹⁰ In addition to Drug Treatment Court, Cobb County Superior Court maintains Mental Health, Parental Accountability, and Veterans Courts.

¹¹ Preliminary KSU enrollment figures for Fall 2019, as of October 4, were 34,482 undergraduate students and 3,309 graduate students, for a total of 37,791.

- TS: Now that you're back on the faculty, do you think that as we've grown into an R2, we have maintained the quality of teaching?
- KH: I think so. Again, my reference set is very small, but it used to be considered somewhat of a dichotomy, kind of research versus teaching. I'm not the only one teaching these classes, and when we coordinate, I'm working with some of our highest-level researchers. They are very focused on quality of instruction, what we teach, how we teach it, and how we make sure students learn it. It seems like student focus is very top of mind. I remember some old research, and this is very old research. I don't know what is showing recently, but, actually, there was old research that showed what was called The Good Person Syndrome. Oftentimes, the people who were the good researchers were also the good teachers. So it wasn't necessarily a trade-off. I'm seeing that right and left. The School of Accountancy, man, I just feel honored to be a part of it. I say that seriously. It's a good group of people, and they're not just about the research. They are very focused on the students. So I don't think we're giving that up. I mean, that's who we are. In fact, if you look at the national dialogue, it is students first.
- TS: Good. We used to think it was ironic, at least some of us did, that the reward for doing a lot of scholarship is that you got to teach less.
- KH: Exactly. Yes, and then it appeared to be a punishment sometimes [to have to teach more classes]. It is kind of an odd trade-off, but yes.
- TS: Well, I have just a few questions left. With your experience as president, provost, dean, all the positions you've held, how political is higher education today, do you think? I mean, back in Gene Talmadge's day [in the early 1940s], we lost our accreditation because of political interference over who was going to be the president of Georgia Southern and who was going to be Dean of Education at UGA and what have you.
- KH: I didn't know that. I didn't know that history.
- TS: Well, that's when Ellis Arnall comes in as governor in 1943, and, supposedly, the Board of Regents was set up as an independent body. But thirty or forty years ago, I was hearing politicians snicker about the Board of Regents being non-political and saying, "They are about as political as you can get."
- KH: Oh, I've heard.
- TS: Who runs higher education in Georgia today? Is it really the Board of Regents or the governor? How would you describe it?
- KH: That's a great question. I don't know if I've got a good succinct answer, but I'm going to give you an odd answer. I'll go ahead and tell you that because sometimes, if I were to say, "Yes, it's very political," it's almost an inherent pejorative. But I don't think that it is. In other words, do I think a public university is political? Of course, it is. Now they've done a good job of maintaining some of the autonomy of the Board of Regents

and that kind of thing. That is one thing that Georgia does, I think, fairly well. But what some call political, I would call accountability.

Now, does it sometimes go beyond accountability? Yes. I'm sure. I've dealt with lots of that over time. But the idea is there is a lot of public money. So it's not just, "We trust you. Here's the money. Go do what you will." I think we need to be accountable, and sometimes that word doesn't go over well. So I do think we need to be accountable to the public, which to me is being political. If you come into the philosophy of politics, it is protecting the public good and the resources of the state and of the citizens and all of that.

There is a lot of money going into the university, so I think it is appropriate we're held accountable. It's like when I went down for Earl's committee. It is very appropriate to be accountable. [They ask]: "What's going on? You are using state dollars. Are you doing stuff that we wouldn't like with our dollars?" It is very appropriate. So I think it is political, but I don't think that's necessarily a negative is my unusual answer. Then I blend that with they've done a good job of letting the regents be the regents and manage the system.

TS: You think they do?

KH: I think they do. Do they ever have political conversations? I imagine just about every other hour. So, yes, I imagine there is a lot of that because we've got to be accountable.

TS: Of course, the regents have to go to the legislature for money for the system.

KH: Exactly. And there have been times of greater tension there. So they have to have a close relationship with the political influences down there. They're right there next to the Capitol, but I think it's a natural relationship. Let's be frank about it. If the regents are not doing their job or are not accountable, then their autonomy can be stripped away by the legislature if they wanted. So they have to be very careful with that, I would think.

TS: As far as I can tell, academic freedom is alive and well on campus, isn't it?

KH: Yes. If you come down to what truly is academic freedom, I think academic freedom is here. I mean if you even get into the pure AAUP [American Association of University Professors] definition, some have, I think, stretched that to maybe an illogical end.

TS: Yes, if I'm talking [in class] about things outside my area of expertise.

KH: Right, right. Or if I run into my class and say, "Okay, we're going to have an anti-whatever rally or a pro-whatever rally," and I'm teaching Data Analytics.... If I want to research something that is a controversial issue, I mean, we've got people who do that, who explore some questions that others may not like. To me, that's what academic freedom is about. I remember years ago at another university, I had somebody teaching a statistics class, and he started getting into a lot of other topics. I said, "You're not

teaching statistics.” He said, “Well, that’s academic freedom.” I said, “No, that’s not academic freedom. You still have to teach the subject.” Some would probably argue vehemently that academic freedom is not alive and well, but I think it is very alive and well. If you look at President Whitten, she came up through a very academic background, and I think she is very sensitive to all that.

TS: Any advice you have for current or future administrators on dealing with faculty?

KH: I do some executive coaching in different arenas too. A constant theme that I would give, and it works for working with faculty too, is, “Truly care about the individual sitting there, and be very open to whatever they’re saying to meet them where they are.” If I have a faculty member in my office who is all upset, if I get defensive and bristle and say, “No, you’re wrong,” then it just shuts down the conversation. Instead, “Come in. Let’s talk. Let’s have a conversation.” I mean, these are human beings. We’ve got to care about them as human beings. So that’s usually my advice. Now, sometimes, I’ve got to make tough decisions. I’ve had to fire more people than I care to even remember. So sometimes you have to get to those places, but at the same time, you treat them with kindness and openness. I think Kat Schwaig has a term—I’ll give her the credit for it—called “the kind truth.”

TS: Kind truth?

KH: Kind truth. I love that expression. It’s like, we are going to be honest. We’re going to be truthful, but we’re going to be kind. And if the truth is, “I’ve got to fire you today,” that’s what we’re going to do, but I’m going to be kind.

TS: That’s great. Maybe I’ll ask that same question about any advice for administrators on dealing with the community that you’ve learned.

KH: I guess my advice is pretty much the same. One is, connect to the community. What you don’t want is a university that seems isolated, and I think we’ve always been seen just as part of this community. I mean if you look at how we started... I’m sure you know that history better than I, but I mean a lot of it was the political and community influence to get us here.

TS: Absolutely.

KH: The same thing with Southern Poly as well.

TS: Yes. When she became president in 1981, Betty Siegel hated the expression “little Harvard in the pines” because it sounded like a very cloistered college.

KH: Right, good point. I think we’ve always been connected. It used to be called “Town and Gown” and those kinds of things. I think it’s more than that. It’s this idea of being truly connected to the community. It’s really here in the community, and so, making sure you’re a part of it.

- TS: Has the concept of community expanded as time goes on because we draw students, I think I heard, from 150 of 159 counties now in Georgia?
- KH: Yes, I saw that write-up. It has. When we talk about community engagement, it may be community engagement in Italy too because we have students from [126 countries in Fall 2018]. We are drawing students from [more] places and placing students in more places. We have still one of the largest study-abroad programs in the country. So our sphere of influence and connection is greater and greater and greater. Are we primarily still right here in Cobb County? Yes, but we're metro Atlanta more than that. We are Georgia more than that. So I do think it's a much larger community than even when I came here in 2006.
- TS: Which wasn't that long ago.
- KH: Doesn't feel like that long ago, but we were only about, what, 19,000 students I think at the time [19,854 in Fall 2006].
- TS: We have almost doubled that now that we are approaching 38,000, depending on how many students are dropped for failing to pay their tuition on time.
- KH: Yes, they always had that big fee payment date, I remember. You would call and see what was going to happen, see what the ultimate fallout would be.
- TS: Maybe the Gap Scholarship [for students registered for their final semester who lack the financial resources to finish] will help with some of them.
- KH: And I love the Gap Scholarship. That was another thing that you go back to Sam's influence. I love the Gap Scholarship.
- TS: I think we talk about that in the previous interview.
- KH: Houston did a lot of that too. Yes, exactly.
- TS: Well, you said you were 64. What are your plans? Are you going to teach till you're 85?
- KH: Well, we'll see. I hope it's not 85. I hope that's an option, I'll put it that way. My youngest is in the 8th grade. So I have a few more years of all that.
- TS: Can't retire before she gets through high school.
- KH: Exactly, exactly. And I don't want to. I'm having fun. I'm having a ball. Life is good and is just a more flexible life [without administrative responsibilities]. I may be working at 11:00 at night, but I can work at 11:00 at night and then go hike Kennesaw Mountain maybe in the day. It's that kind of flexibility that I haven't seen in a long time. So I don't know what it is. I've considered just lots of different things. That's one thing. I don't close any doors at all, but it's not like I'm out looking for something else. I could

easily go seven years down the road and retire from KSU. I would just be happy as I could be. But I could see a number of different options along the way. Who knows?

TS: I was going to ask you what keeps you at KSU? But I think you've really answered it both today and in the previous interviews with your kids still in school and...

KH: Yes. I mean, if I hated the university, I would be going somewhere else. But it is a great place here. I've been at, what, seven institutions in my career. It's dynamic. It's the combination of the university, the community, everything here. There is just a dynamic energy. What I love about the university here is that we have a portfolio approach to faculty, especially here in the Coles College, and I think across campus too. You can be what you want to be. If you want to be more of a researcher, or more of an instructor, or take a blended approach...

TS: Well, you've had those tracks in the Coles College for a long time.

KH: Exactly. And I love those tracks. Tim [Mescon] was the one who came up with a lot of [the policy regarding different faculty tracks], and I like that. I feel like I can drive my own ship and pursue my passions here. Plus, this is a great community. The kids love their schools. I mean, plus, plus, plus, plus. It just adds up to it's a good place to be.

TS: Maybe that's a good place to end the interview. Is there anything you would like to add?

KH: Not that I can think of. It's a new era of my life, and it's a beautiful thing. I look around the university, and I think it's in good hands. [The current leadership] is doing a great job.

TS: Well, we talked in a previous interview two years ago about your research on happiness, and it looks like you found your happiness here in this stage of your career.

KH: Yes, I think I finally listened to myself a little more. It's a good time.

TS: That's great. Thank you very much.

KH: Thank you.

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