

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH KATHERINE N. KINNICK

CONDUCTED BY DEDE YOW AND THOMAS A. SCOTT

EDITED BY JAN HEIDRICH-RICE AND THOMAS A. SCOTT

INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

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Interview with Katherine N. Kinnick

Part I: Friday, 15 October 2004

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Location: Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Sturgis Library, Kennesaw State University

DY: Good morning, Katherine.

KK: Good morning.

DY: It's wonderful to have you here. I know I've watched your career for a long time and seen how apparently wonderful you are in the classroom. That's just one of the things we want to talk about, but I think we want to get started with how did you get here? How did you get to be a college professor? Was that in your whole life plan? Is it there in your family background? Or maybe we could start with what was there in terms of your family and education.

KK: Well, my mother, Freya Neil, was an elementary school teacher, but I didn't plan to become a teacher myself. I was a journalism major in college and decided to go into public relations and began my career here in Atlanta with a public relations agency, Hill and Knowlton. I moved on from there to be director of communication for a non-profit organization called the Southern Education Foundation. Its goal was to promote equity in education in the South. It was an interesting position because I was essentially the white spokesperson for what was a black organization. They had a hiring process where they asked the candidates to write a public relations campaign plan and mine was apparently the best, so that's how I got that position. But I was surrounded by Ph.D.s in that career. It was a foundation that also operated programs and drew heavily on academics from the metro area and from the South who were doing scholarship related to educational equity issues. I had always enjoyed school. I was always a good student, and as I worked there I completed my master's at night at Georgia State and just . . .

DY: So you started there with a bachelor's degree then with your B.A. in Journalism?

KK: Correct.

TS: I noticed you got a bachelor's at University of South Carolina? Did you grow up in South Carolina?

KK: No, I'm an Army brat, and so that was an important influence on my outlook. I think some of the courses that I teach deal with diversity because we lived all over the world; I lived in very integrated Army base situations and attended very integrated schools at times when, particularly in the South, that was not the case. We moved to South Carolina when I was thirteen to a community that was very—

- what's the right word?—there were definite differences in the old time Summervillians whose families had been in that area for a long time. I mean, there were cliques in the high school.
- DY: Gentrified, is that it?
- TS: What period are we talking about? What year would that be?
- KK: This was 1976 when we moved to South Carolina, so my life had been very transient up until that point. I had never lived in one place longer than four years. This was a community where black students and white students in the high school really didn't have much interaction unless they were on a sports team together or they were in the band together. There was definitely tracking going on in the schools.
- TS: And in '76 they probably hadn't been integrated that long in South Carolina, maybe like six or eight years or so.
- DY: This is Summerville, South Carolina?
- KK: Yes. It's a suburb of Charleston. I think I've gotten off track with what your question was.
- DY: No, not at all.
- KK: But, anyway, I guess working at the Southern Education Foundation was my first exposure to Ph.D.s—what they were like and what they did. I completed my master's during that time period and so the obvious question was, well, what comes next after a master's? To this date in the State of Georgia, the only place to go for a Ph.D. in mass communication is the University of Georgia. So I eventually quit my position there [at the Southern Education Foundation] after six years.
- DY: And went full time as a student, as a doctoral student?
- KK: I commuted from west Cobb, where we live here, to Athens for two years to get my Ph.D.
- DY: And then what brought you to KSU?
- KK: While I was working on my dissertation, I taught here as a part-timer, and then I was subsequently hired. I had never been to Athens before my first day of classes. I had commuted to downtown Atlanta from Alpharetta first, and then from west Cobb. So I said, "How much worse could it be?" But it was actually two hours each way, and so that was quite an ordeal.

TS: You didn't go every day over there, I don't guess.

KK: I had to for two semesters because that was the only way they taught statistics—every single day of the week. And I had small children, Jordan and Owen, at home at the time.

DY: I was going to ask you, how old are your children now?

KK: My oldest is sixteen, my middle son is eleven and then the youngest son is four.

TS: You had to be motivated to handle all of that.

KK: Well, it was one of those things, now that I'm in and I've started this, I've got to see it through. So that's what happened.

DY: What did you teach part time at KSU?

KK: I taught the persuasion course, which is a course I still teach.

DY: And then when did you come on full time?

KK: The fall of '95.

TS: Which is right after you got your Ph.D.? Or a year after?

KK: A year after. [The degree was awarded in December 1994.]

DY: Was the department small then, Katherine?

KK: Oh, yes.

DY: That's what I thought.

KK: It was very small.

DY: It was you and John [S.] Gentile and . . .

KK: John Gentile and Joan [E.] Dominick, George Simcoe [VI] . . .

DY: Yes! Was he the chair when you came?

TS: Richard [F.] Welch?

KK: Richard Welch was there. No, Joan Dominick had just been made chair.

DY: In '95?

TS: So you came in right after the big blowup.

KK: Yes.

DY: Oh, she sure did. The Candy [Candace] Kaspers thing.

KK: Right.

DY: So then you must have been teaching part time with those part-time folks?

KK: Candy Kaspers hired me as a part-timer. In fact, the person who had been teaching the persuasion course was one of the people who sued and—

DY: Bari [R. Levingston]?

KK: Yes. She was very helpful to me. I met with her and picked her brain about how she taught the course, but yes, I knew the players involved in that.

DY: She's very dynamic. And then Alan, too.

KK: I didn't know him.

DY: Oh, you didn't know Alan? Alan Schwartz.

TS: So you must have gotten one of those positions when they upgraded from non-tenure track to tenure track positions. Did you have to testify in the suit at all?

KK: No, my understanding is that I was sort of replacing Bari because she had taught the persuasion course, and they were hiring me.

DY: Wasn't her name pronounced Lovington?

KK: I think she pronounced it LOVINGston, but it was spelled Levingston. [The department was] very small, and we got even smaller in the years following. There was a period of a couple of years where there were just four of us in the department, and three of us were new: Chuck [Charles F.] Aust and Jeff [Jeffrey F.] Anderson were hired the same year I was hired, and it was the three of us and Richard Welch for it seemed like a couple of years. Maybe it was just a year, but we were a bare-bones department. [chuckle]

DY: And a very, very dynamic one, too. I mean, you four were just fabulous. And so then the department began to grow, right? Was it programmatic or faculty first, or how did that come?

KK: To be honest, I don't know. But we continue to be chronically understaffed. It's been a catch-up game. Right now we're down five people. We should have sixteen full-time tenure track people, and we've got five full-time temps right now.

DY: Have you lost people?

KK: We had two resignations last year of tenured people and then. . .

DY: Who was that, Katherine?

KK: Keisha [L.] Hoerrner moved over to University Studies, and Lisa [J.] Lyon left the department. And then Jeff Anderson has been out on an extended medical-related leave. It's been a real challenge being in that kind of environment because the service loads become so great. I mean, there are so many committees that have to have representation from every department. That's been a challenge in all of our teaching. The service loads, that by default we've had to take on, cut into the time that we might normally devote to our teaching preparations.

DY: Exactly. And that's particularly true, I think, in our College [of Humanities and Social Sciences]. Our college does so much service in terms of the university. Why did you stay? What's kept you?

KK: I've just had a very positive experience at Kennesaw State. I mean, there have been some rocky moments. We've had difficulty with chairs in our department and have seen a succession of people.

DY: They move fairly quickly, at least. [chuckle]

KK: That's true! [laughter]

DY: I mean, as opposed to one staying there for awhile. It's kind of like a hurricane, just . . .

KK: Yes. But the teaching part of what we do is very rewarding and very satisfying, and that seems to be something I hear from my colleagues as well. You ask people what they enjoy most about their jobs; it's that interaction with students and the rewards that come from that. So I think that's been the biggest motivation.

DY: Have you found relationships within your department, with your peers, collegial? Have you enjoyed that? Do you all work collaboratively, I guess, is what I'm asking? Has that been part of it, or have you been left to sort of pursue your interests and given rein to do that?

KK: I think there is a history of collaboration. I've been involved in collaborations with a number of colleagues. In fact, right now I'm collaborating with a colleague who used to be here but now is at Berry College, and we're collaborating on some scholarship. There was a big service learning project that was a collaboration between myself and two other faculty members in the department. We involved students in three of our classes with high school students from three different high schools in the area that had varying degrees of diversity. We got our students to develop training modules that they delivered to the high school students dealing with anti-bigotry training and what to do if you hear a friend at your high school make a racist joke—how to handle the kinds of situations that come up in a high school environment with cliques and peer pressure and insensitivity to people who are different from you. So that was a big collaboration. More recently, I've collaborated with Len [Leonard] Witt, who is our new Fowler Distinguished Chair in the department, and the focus there has been on delivering training to non-profit organizations and grassroots organizations that need help telling their stories in an effective way to the media, and to funders, and to the public at large. These are people who have great stories to tell but sometimes are too busy to tell them or don't know how to tell them or how to get started.

TS: Or are too emotional or too aggressive?

KK: Or they can't find the hook that you need with media to make this interesting and newsworthy to media.

DY: You need to go to SRC, Southern Regional Council.

KK: Are you involved in that?

DY: My daughter Ruthie [Ruth C. Yow] did an intern this summer there. It's a wonderful civil rights organization, but they're really having trouble finding and articulating their place today. I mean, I think they're still strong, but it's a matter of promotion. Well, what do you think has been your most significant professional accomplishment up to this time?

KK: The Distinguished Teaching Award! I mean, that really is the biggest honor of my entire career.

DY: What do you think got you there?

KK: I think being enthusiastic about what I do, and being willing to invest time and energy, and coming up with classroom strategies that will engage the students, and being active in service learning. Professors who have taught public relations—which is my professional background and many of the courses I teach—we've always done service learning, but we've never had this buzz word "service learning" for it until relatively recently. Suddenly, this buzz word came

out, and we all looked at each other and said, “Hey, we do this! We’ve been doing this forever!” But I think to others on campus, this was something innovative, and I think more than anybody else in the department, I was engaging with some external constituencies. Our PR campaigns class chose a non-profit client each semester, and the students worked incredibly hard to develop comprehensive PR plans that that non-profit could take and implement. So the students and I were making connections externally with these groups who saw the value in what a university could offer them. Students, I think, learned more than just public relations but also learned something about the needs of our community and how citizens can help address these needs. So that’s been a very positive experience.

TS: I wonder if we could back up a little bit and talk about how you developed the interest in the community, for instance, or the involvement. Who were your mentors along the way who helped make you what you are as a teacher?

KK: I’m probably one of those anomalies in that it’s been one of the regrets of my academic career that I haven’t felt that I’ve really had a mentor. I certainly didn’t have one at the Ph.D. program. There were things looking back on that I say, “Gee, they should have told me this, and they should have . . .” I didn’t have that kind of experience as a graduate student. When I came here to Kennesaw State, I’ve got to say the most positive influence was another Distinguished Teaching Award winner who happened to be our chair at the time; it was Joan Dominick. She was extremely motivating because she was constantly giving you a pat on the back—sometimes when you didn’t deserve one—but extremely positive, giving you that positive reinforcement for the things you were doing. She recognized when you were going the extra mile to bring in top-notch guest speakers or to involve your class in service learning. She recognized and appreciated those things. I’m one of those people that, a few pats on the back, you know—I will go the distance for you if I feel my efforts are being appreciated. So that was very helpful. She gave me one piece of advice that I remember; it really stuck with me. I’ve used it and it works, and that was: “Do something different in the classroom every twenty minutes”. It truly does work. Actually, after she said that, I began thinking, “Okay, at this point I need to insert this activity.” I never had done a total sage-on-the-stage kind of lecture. I’d always tried to vary it, but this was the first time I had heard somebody articulate this as a strategy. And it’s been a very good one.

TS: Was your undergraduate degree in communication?

KK: It was in journalism with a focus on public relations.

TS: So you always knew that’s what you wanted to go into?

KK: I had been the editor of my high school newspaper and had won a journalism scholarship because of that. And my family—the family trend is really writers.

My father, George Neil, was an editor before he joined the Army of the *Princeton* [New Jersey] *Packet*, and his father, George Neil, Sr., was the general manager of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Then there were women in his family—he's just doing genealogical research now that he's retired—but we're discovering a grandmother and a great-grandmother who published works. One of them published children's stories in an anthology; one of them published in a women's magazine that was kind of the equivalent of *Godey's Lady's Book*. So I have to credit my ancestors with the interest in writing.

DY: That's fascinating.

KK: It is really fascinating. I feel like I got the gene from them.

DY: What time period was that, Katherine?

KK: Well, my dad is sixty-six, and we're talking about his grandmother and his great-grandmother, so we're back in the 1800s.

DY: That's what I'm thinking about, that time period.

KK: When magazines first became popular.

DY: Yes, and women were writing in them and had a venue there. How exciting!

TS: What did your father do in the military? Did he continue with journalism there?

KK: No, he didn't. For a large part of his career he was a transportation officer. He served two tours in Vietnam while we were young and coordinated the transportation of food and other things that were needed from one camp in Vietnam to another.

TS: Why did he make a career in the military given that—it looks like he already had a good job to begin with.

KK: It didn't pay well enough to raise a family. They had a nice life in New Jersey. They had a hundred-year-old farm house, but I was two years old at the time, and being editor of the *Princeton Packet* was not paying enough, so he actually got back in the military. He had gotten out, and then he got back in and made a career of it. I think he had regrets. His undergraduate degree was in British literature, and they gave him an opportunity after one of his tours in Vietnam to get a master's in literature and teach at West Point. He had met my mother in Hawaii for the R&R period, and they went to the University of Hawaii to look at the syllabi and see what does an English professor do? He was turned off by something he saw there and wasn't sure if he would enjoy that. But I think he's regretted that, and he's also regretted, I think, that he didn't go into law. His father, who was the general manager of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, was also an

- attorney. My dad is very good with written and oral communication and would have made a terrific lawyer. So he had some regrets, I think, about his career choices.
- DY: Did you ever flirt with that? With law school?
- KK: No. I'm a person who shies away from conflict!
- TS: What was your father's rank when he retired?
- KK: He was a lieutenant colonel.
- TS: Did he encourage you to go into communication or discourage you?
- KK: They weren't real active in encouraging; I think I just always sort of knew. I was the child who didn't need much prodding, I guess.
- TS: There was never any question you were going to college?
- KK: No, no. And they had seen me being editor of the school paper and having success in that. In fact, my dad was stationed in Holland my senior year of high school, and I refused to go. "You're not moving me again!" My senior year when I was going to be editor of the paper, you know, I wasn't going to leave. So I lived with a friend that year, and then they stayed in Holland several more years. Summers, I would go over. He was stationed at a NATO base there, so I wrote for the NATO newspaper, which was an English publication, one summer while I was there. I think they recognized that that was a strength and were glad that I was doing something that would be of use.
- TS: Why public relations instead of being an investigative reporter for *The New York Times* or something?
- KK: Well, being the high school newspaper editor kind of soured me on deadlines. I saw the stress of what those deadlines do to you, and I really had misperceptions of what PR people did. I thought my dream job would be working for Coca-Cola; I would get all the complaints and send people free cases of Coke and be the nice person to make them happy and smooth things over. So I had this misperception that this is what PR people do. Then, in fact, I discovered after I had the degree that, no, that's what they hire people without college degrees to do—customer service. But I had also been told that public relations pays more, and I thought maybe I would want to try a corporate environment where there were longer term deadlines than the kinds of daily deadlines you would have as a newspaper reporter. So selfish reasons.
- TS: Well, the Southern Education Foundation doesn't sound like the most lucrative PR position to be in compared to Coca-Cola.

KK: Well, this was the mid-'80s. We were in a recession, and there were no jobs in PR. It was incredibly difficult. I had actually gotten an offer from a hospital in Columbia, South Carolina, for \$14,000. I had no idea that you couldn't live on \$14,000. Then I came to Atlanta and interviewed with several organizations, and Hill and Knowlton offered me \$17,500. I turned the hospital down to take the \$17,500, and then discovered how not so far \$17,500 will go in Atlanta.

TS: We have had a little inflation since the '80s.

KK: Yes, things have gotten better.

TS: So when did you get married?

KK: 1987.

TS: So after you were in Atlanta.

KK: Yes, I had been working here for two years or so.

TS: And is your husband [Nile Kinnick] in public relations?

KK: No, no, he's in sales.

TS: So you met in Atlanta then.

KK: Yes.

TS: So then most of your graduate, well, all of your graduate training is while you had little children at home then, I guess.

KK: Well, no, I actually finished my master's before I got married and then started the Ph.D. program with one child at home. Then we had the second child—he was my dissertation baby!—and I was hugely pregnant finishing up my last semester of course work at Athens. I had this one older gentlemanly professor who taught mass media history, and I think he was getting very concerned. He knew I had this two-hour commute, and he offered to me, “You can stop coming to class and have another student tape record it for you.” I think he was really worried something terrible was going to happen to me!

DY: That you'd give birth in the middle of a lecture.

KK: Right. Or on the highway somewhere, and he would have that on his conscience.

DY: Well, that was thoughtful.

KK: Yes.

DY: What I'm hearing, too, along the way, your interest and your focus—when you say diversity, I also hear you wanting justice and people being treated fairly. Where did that come from? You said your background; I understand your background academically . . .

KK: Well, both my background and working at the Southern Education Foundation—my eyes were really opened. I didn't know much about the civil rights movement, and here I was working with people who lived it and had their own very powerful stories to tell me. I wrote a monthly newsletter for this organization, so I was interviewing people, playing the journalist role. I really was an in-house journalist for a large extent of my role there. I interviewed lots of people who had stories to tell about inequitable situations and what the schools were like in this poor, rural community that doesn't have a tax base versus other kinds of communities.

TS: Who were some of the people involved at the Southern Education Foundation?

KK: Well, Elridge [W.] McMillan was the president for years and he was a Regent.

TS: Still is, isn't he?

KK: In fact, he was Chairman of the Board of Regents [1986-87] while I was there, and I got to write his speeches when he was asked to give commencement speeches around the state.

DY: Interesting.

KK: In fact, when I graduated from Georgia State with my master's [1987], I wrote the speech that he delivered. So I was sitting there in my cap and gown with the script to make sure he was following my script. But I knew when I entered that graduate program that I wanted to do research about how the media covers social problems. We were very concerned with fundraising at the Southern Education Foundation, and we had these wonderful stories to tell of how funding inequities still existed. Yet, it seemed difficult to get people motivated to give and to get the average citizen up off of their couch willing to do something or willing to write a check. So my dissertation was about this phenomenon that had just become, I wouldn't even say a buzz word, but it was a word that was just being thrown out in the philanthropic circles—our professional association was the Council on Foundations—and it was “compassion fatigue,” in that people hear so much about all of the social problems in this country that they start becoming numb to it. They start becoming desensitized, and I could see that happening in the work that I had been doing at the Southern Education Foundation. I could see this being an issue with a lot of the social problems. You know, people don't want to hear about teenage pregnancy any more; people don't want to hear about these other

issues. So for my dissertation, I did a telephone survey of metro Atlantans—300 surveys—and asked them about their news-watching habits. Basically, I got from people that they will turn the channel, or they'll turn it off, or they'll choose mood-enhancing programming. I mean, one person said, "I watch *Gilligan's Island* before I watch the local news because I don't want to hear about these depressing problems any more."

DY: Well, people don't want to look homeless people on the street in the eye. It's the same thing. "This is not my world."

KK: Right. So it's a real challenge for non-profits: How do we break through this kind of jaded wall that people put up and make them care about something that they've heard a lot about to the point that they think—that they don't feel efficacy? "We've had this problem for years and year and years; what am I going to do to make a difference?" So how do you make people feel that they can make a difference and make them feel that efficacy? It's interesting, but in the Gender, Race and Media course that I teach, it is oftentimes at the beginning of the semester when you talk with students about racism. They think it's their parents' generation's problem—that kids like them today aren't racist and that this problem will vanish in our society beginning with their generation because they have friends, and they'll talk about it from their personal experience. They'll say, "Well, in high school I hung out with people of all different colors." But as we go through the course and we talk about a variety of ways that people are depicted in the media, we'll talk about when you see African-Americans on the news, what kinds of roles are they usually playing? And their eyes start to become opened. By the end of the semester, if you have the same conversation, they will say, "No, racism still is a problem in our society." And they see it in an entirely different way, a much richer way. They can see it from the other group's perspective much, much better than when they started that course and really had never been asked to think about these issues before.

DY: I really like what I'm hearing about it—you know, the balance of the intellectual and the emotive here, too, to make them look critically at a culture that they live in and know that culture acts on . . .

KK: Yes. I just went to a conference, and I had not heard this term before that apparently other people have known. It came from some psychology folks; it was cognitive affective learning or some combination of words with that kind of meaning. There are studies now that show that when you engage students emotionally, the learning is enhanced. It clicked for me because I see that happening in this course. They start becoming emotionally involved and more empathetic to others as we go through the course. They're exposed to documentaries, clips of *Amos 'n Andy* and old programming where they can see, you know, it's very apparent the racism or the sexism that's there. But that's still a controversial thing in the scholarship of teaching as I understand it because, as a professor, we're taught to always be objective. I try to be objective in the way I

present this very sensitive and controversial kind of material. Yet, if there is a way to present it so that intellectually all sides are represented and students can make up their own mind, but at the same time, they can't help but for their emotions to be impacted by some of the disturbing images that they see—that's a powerful combination. From what I heard at this conference, it's a new kind of trend that people are studying this connection and the impact on learning, and it's not always accepted everywhere.

DY: I can see how it would be threatening to some people in some disciplines, too. What was the conference?

KK: This was the Governor's Teaching Fellows' first annual conference where they brought back all of the alumni of the program.

DY: I guess we've got a transition here, at least I'd like to think that we do. How do you feel about the intellectual climate on our campus? And you can speak specifically to your area, or you can go as vast and broad as you'd like because I think that's what we've been talking about: Creating an intellectual environment for students to learn and what all goes into that mix.

KK: I think we have some challenges on our campus because of the kind of students that we've historically served and because of the demands on faculty on this campus. Most of our students come here not wanting to go to graduate school, seeing college as a series of hurdles they have to overcome to get that piece of paper.

DY: To make money.

KK: Right. So they come from a very pragmatic standpoint—not an intellectual curiosity—"I'm here to learn and broaden my horizons" kind of standpoint.

DY: Like we came from.

KK: Of course! [laughter] But you know, that's a very different environment from some other places. I think that it's a challenge for faculty to instill a love of learning in a student who's never thought of learning as something pleasurable before. It's been work; it's been hard. And at the same time, because of KSU's tradition as being very democratic with a lot of faculty input, we have all of these committees and this incredible service load which is felt, as I've said, in particular by the smaller departments. That really pinches the time that you can put into scholarship. So I think the intellectual climate is dampened because the kinds of scholarship you can do when your time is very limited tend to be less long-term. You know, more like, "What's a quick piece I can get out and get published quickly before my portfolio's due?" And maybe we're seeing quantity but not necessarily the quality that we would see if we weren't responsible for so much service.

- DY: Within your department or across campus, too, do you find that there's ever any time for any kind of conversations, not unlike the one we're having right now? Or do we have to just pick out a little piece and say, "This is what we're going to do; we're going to have a little lunch, brown-bag seminar."
- KK: Well, we attempted to do that, but it was really designed to help new faculty who had joined our department and give them a chance to get to know us in an informal way rather than focusing on scholarship. I think there are opportunities on this campus if you seek them out. CETL offers programs related to this. I was part of a group whose name I can't remember now, but we would read a book related to some aspect of scholarship, and then we would get together and discuss that book. That may have also been a CETL offering.
- TS: Yes, I remember that.
- KK: I don't know if that program is still existing. So there are opportunities, but I think people get into this daily grind of "I've got to do this, this and this before five o'clock when my class starts." I will say, I think it's pretty clear to everybody that right now we're in some sort of transitional phase of our evolution at KSU. We're moving from a climate that didn't emphasize scholarship so much to one that has higher expectations for scholarship, and I think we continue to get some mixed messages. I've seen mixed messages in my own department, you know—"You're doing all right and these kinds of things are fine." But somebody else is told, "Well, no, you need to be publishing in seminal journals in the disciplines." So it's kind of this awkward period, and it's difficult for faculty to sort out from these messages what's the standard I have to meet.
- DY: Why, because they haven't been codified by the administration yet? We've always been in flux with tenure and promotion, but I think you're right; I think the whole institution is in transition right now.
- TS: I think part of it is that the administration doesn't have one voice. If a department chair says one thing and a dean says another and the president says a third, or the vice president . . .
- KK: And then the faculty sitting on a T&P [tenure and promotion] committee have a different perspective . . .
- TS: Yes. What do you see as the relationship between good teaching and scholarship?
- KK: Well, obviously there should be an integration there. The scholarship should feed the teaching, and perhaps the teaching can feed the scholarship of teaching. You can share your successful techniques with others that way.

- TS: Have you been able to integrate scholarship and teaching, do you think, in your career?
- KK: I have. My resume reflects some of both, I think—the scholarship of discovery and the scholarship of teaching. But that’s another thing that we’re getting mixed messages about on campus: Is scholarship of teaching enough, or do we expect scholarship of discovery from all . . .
- DY: Yes, traditional academics.
- TS: Let’s talk a little bit more about teaching. By winning the award, I guess you’re considered a master teacher. What is a master teacher, do you think?
- KK: Hopefully, a master teacher is somebody who demonstrates best practices, who is innovative in the techniques that they use, who can demonstrate a variety of techniques in the classroom, and who is willing to share those things with others. There’s something in the connotation of master teacher that says that you teach other teachers. So I think that’s part of the definition.
- TS: What kinds of techniques have worked best for you?
- KK: I can’t get totally away from delivering some lecture notes, so I’ll give some content, and then there’ll be some sort of activity, you know, a self-quiz or role-playing exercise. I’ll have students come to the front, and instead of me telling them, “Here is the model of the communication,” I’ll say, “Okay, I need a volunteer, and everybody else in the class, you tell them what to draw to draw the model of communication.” In the persuasion class, we do a lot of role playing of compliance-gaining strategies and persuasive techniques. So I’ll give the students note cards that say “You are a door-to-door encyclopedia salesman” and “You are the person who answers the door” and “You need to demonstrate this particular technique in your sales pitch.” And so they’ll do that, and the rest of the class will have to guess which technique they used. Students really enjoy those interactive things. I also, in several of my classes, have students give presentations to the class where they are the teacher for five to seven minutes, and they present on a topic that supplements what’s in the textbook or provides examples of a textbook concept. Even though the quality of those will vary, on student evaluations the students consistently say, “I enjoy the student presentations.” They enjoy watching each other get up and convey the information.
- DY: I think they feel like we are honoring and valuing what they have to say and what they think. I use the same kind of thing. I call it “panel presentations,” and they present their ideas. But yes, they do like that.
- TS: Do you teach mainly majors in communication or . . .?

KK: Yes. I've never taught our Gen Ed [General Education] course, so the courses I teach draw primarily majors. In the persuasion class, we'll get some political science majors. I've got an accounting major this semester, and occasionally we'll get some others. I do teach public speaking, and we'll have a variety of students in that class; but I'd say the majority are communication majors.

DY: I want to go back for a minute and hear you talk about how you see us as teachers challenging students. What ways have we done that traditionally, and maybe are we changing ways in which we challenge students? I mean, clearly the fact that we are even concerned about and think about the standing and lecturing to people for an hour, as was done to us, as being not perhaps the best way to challenge or engage a student. So what do you think? How do you see that as a teacher you challenge them? In what way?

KK: I like to challenge my students by setting the standard high. In the public relations classes, I draw on my professional experience, and I say, "These are the professional expectations, and this is the bar you have to meet. Substandard work won't fly in the real world. You need to be able to produce something of professional quality while you're still in college, so you can show it to perspective employers as proof, as evidence, that you can do professional quality work." So that tends to be very effective for the public relations students who want to get a job and are pragmatically driven. In all my classes, I set very high standards for the student writing probably because that's . . .

DY: Your own background.

KK: Right.

TS: Have you found that students are better writers or not as good as they were when you started here ten odd years ago? Have you seen a change?

KK: They definitely haven't improved since I started here.

TS: Have not?

KK: I don't know that they've declined since I've started here, but now that I have a son in high school, I think I understand why they're coming to us with poor writing skills. It's not emphasized in the high school curriculum; literature is what's emphasized in the high school curriculum. They do very, very little writing. They take multiple-choice tests on the literature to see if they understand the meaning. It's a terrible shame because they struggle when they get a course like senior thesis, which I teach, and we count off three points per writing error. And we've had to cap it at a maximum of thirty points because we had students who would have zeros because they never learned comma rules, or they never learned that fragments are a no-no—things that maybe they got in elementary school, which was apparently the last time that it was taught. They've forgotten

or for some reason they've never learned, and it's a real struggle for some of these students. As much as I tell them, proofread, proofread, proofread, there are some of them whose writing skills are so poor that we've had to look at our curriculum and develop a gateway course. It's called Writing for Public Communication, which introduces them to—we have three tracks—the kinds of professional writing you would do in journalism, in public relations, or in corporate communication kinds of settings. They have to make a 2.5 GPA in that course plus our public speaking course. I think we're going to have to bump that up to a 3.0 because they've been somehow getting through that requirement, and then they get to senior thesis. Here they are one course away from graduation, and they're failing because of their writing problems, and it's a shame. I think I've wandered away from your question.

DY: This is fascinating.

TS: No, no, I was just thinking of a student I had just this last semester in the research class. I used to think that a comma splice was about as bad a mistake as you could make, but when you run two sentences together without even a comma . . . I don't know what that says.

DY: It's very disturbing that they lack these very basic skills. So they go through middle school, where it used to be that grammar, punctuation, and the rudimentary elements were taught—or even high school. But when they get here, they should at some point have gotten this.

KK: And somehow they're making passing grades in English 1101 and 1102 before they get to our classes. So I think there are multiple places where maybe we're pushing kids along.

DY: Dropping the ball. Yes, yes, I know since English is my home department. I know that one of the problems there is that we've had to just so extensively use part-time faculty, and there's just so little you can do there.

KK: Yes. Well, I think that part of the problem is many part-timers and even some full-time faculty never learned these skills themselves.

DY: That's exactly right, Katherine. That's exactly right.

TS: We've noticed that on promotion and tenure committees.

DY: Yes, we have. Yes, we have. It's astounding that you get a portfolio narrative, and there are errors in it.

TS: And it's really across disciplines—communication, English, history.

- DY: Yes. Foreign languages seem to be the ones who really don't have a problem. And I think it's easy to see why.
- TS: So maybe a general cultural decline in respect for the rules of grammar.
- KK: Well, I have one assignment in my Gender, Race and Media class where the students have to respond to questions that I give them each week that go into a response journal. I told the students if I can read your handwriting, you can handwrite these because it really is like a personal narrative and a personal journal. But I had one student who wrote in text message code, you know, how the teenagers use abbreviations when they're typing. I said, "I'm sorry; I'm not this hip. I don't know what this abbreviation means. Do not give me text message code." But when you look at technology and how little we're relying on writing any more to communicate with each other . . .
- DY: Yes, I wondered if that was an issue. It's certainly one you can address, and you're a wonderful ambassador for it. This is all great—the technology, media, et cetera—but that medium of literacy and writing, we can't forsake that.
- TS: There was a very good George Will column about six months ago where he was talking about punctuation. His central idea was that it was a way that you show respect for your readers by using the conventional rules. But let's move on to service learning. It seems to me if you can get students engaged, they're probably going to write a whole lot better.
- DY: If they have something they're interested in talking about.
- TS: Yes, if you're interested in what you're doing.
- KK: I think that a key to service learning is finding a client that really resonates with the students—something that they can relate to. Once the word gets out that there's a class at KSU that will do free PR campaigns for you, I will start getting calls from people saying, "Can you help me?" But if their topic is not something student-friendly, I will put them on the back burner and try to find something that really will be more appealing to students. I find that makes all the difference. One of the clients that we've used is Cobb Christmas, which is an unsung hero in the community. Nobody knows about Cobb Christmas—they've done a horrible job promoting themselves—but they collect and distribute toys for needy families. The year when we worked with them I think that they gave toys to over 4,000 families in Cobb County. These are families that are screened to make sure they're not getting gifts from MUST Ministries—from multiple social services. So four thousand distinct families. The students just really got on board with that. That was something that did have that cognitive affective connection that was just really successful. They were motivated to work hard for this organization because it was such a good cause.

- TS: You mentioned Samaritan's Purse in your Web site.
- KK: Oh, well, that's just kind of a personal thing I do. I don't tie that into my teaching at all.
- TS: But it sounds very similar with gifts for—what is it?—clothes and so on.
- KK: Well, that's my hobby. They asked us to say what our hobbies were when our department Webmaster was putting together our Web site. That has been my hobby over the last couple of years. When I find clothes or toys for children on sale, I have this one area above the garage, and I stash everything. Then you put together shoe boxes for certain age groups and genders, and Samaritan's Purse distributes them all over the world. This year I did 327 of these shoeboxes. My husband told me I was obsessed with this!
- DY: That's a wonderful obsession to have.
- TS: Who is Samaritan's Purse?
- KK: Samaritan's Purse is an organization run by Franklin Graham, who is the son of Billy Graham. They do a variety of things; this shoebox project they call Operation Christmas Child. It's just one of their programs, but they have other relief-type programs all over the world. The year before this one, I had put address labels on the lids of the shoeboxes, just to see if anybody would write me back because I said sometimes people do. I got two letters, both from boys in India. One of them was the son of the director of a Christian orphanage in this remote part of India, so we started this correspondence. Then his father could go to a computer center in the nearest city, and we e-mailed to each other. That's been neat to see a relationship develop that way.
- TS: I guess if it's Franklin Graham, he doesn't need a PR campaign.
- KK: No, they do quite well with their materials.
- TS: What are some of the clients that you've used for your class?
- KK: Let's see. MUST Ministries and Cobb Christmas, as I mentioned. The very first year I came here, we worked with the biology department and the American Red Cross to do a bone marrow drive on campus. We've done several on-campus clients. Continuing Ed offers children's camps in the summer, so we worked with them, and then they offer a senior university for senior citizens, and we helped them with that. We also did the City of Smyrna, which has been trying to attract more affluent home buyers. They have lots and lots of apartment dwellers who tend to be transient and don't invest themselves in the community. They've been doing some really interesting things in Smyrna. You may know about Smyrna's activities.

TS: It's amazing how they've rebuilt their city. They're a new city that looks like an old city.

KK: And they've become a model for other places. And what's interesting is, when they first approached me about working with them, the city manager said his model was Summerville, South Carolina, where I was from, so . . .

DY: Do you find yourself mentoring students in any significant way? You said that you missed that in your own academic [experience].

KK: I think I do. With the students, it tends to go in two directions. One of them is career advice for the students, especially those who want to get into public relations. I still have my portfolio from when I went on my first job interview, and I'll show them what it looks like and kinds of things you can put in it. I'll read their resumes and talk with them about what kinds of environments might be best for them in public relations. The other direction is the more scholarly direction. In our senior thesis class, we build in time for individual consultations. Each week there's usually one day when I am there during the class time, and they can come to me for one-on-one help. That's been a really satisfying experience, I think, both for me as well as for them. They're doing original scholarship and gathering their own data if they choose to do a research thesis. So they've needed that one-on-one assistance. They've never done anything like this before, so I enjoy working with them to set up the methodology—what is the strategy that's going to yield the kind of data that you want?—and seeing them through that process to completion at the end of the semester. There are two students that I'm working with right now. One of them has graduated, but she did a fabulous job on a study that became an interest of hers after taking the Gender, Race and Media class where she examined the lyrics of the top fifty songs in three different genres for the year 2003. She's cataloged all of the anti-social messages in these songs. It's a fabulous study, and I'd like to . . .

DY: What genres did she do?

KK: Rap, pop and country. I think it's a publishable study, but I'm struggling with where to tell her to send it because she was the coder. She didn't have objective coders where you would have inner-coder reliability and that kind of thing.

DY: Is she going to graduate school?

KK: No, she actually has a job with Laura [S.] Dabundo [Director of Kennesaw State University Press] now. She's Laura Dabundo's administrative assistant.

DY: Is this . . . ?

KK: Cheryl [K.] Miller.

- DY: Cheryl Miller. She was in our joint class [Regional Literature/Georgia History].
- TS: Yes.
- KK: So I'm trying to find some venues for her to get that published. And then I have another student in my senior thesis class right now with a really good thesis going whom I want to help in a similar way to get that published if I can. And from a broader standpoint, to me, mentoring is just giving students what motivates me, which is that pat on the back. Sometimes you can't be positive about every aspect of their work, but if you can point out a couple of pieces that are really terrific, then they can hear the bad news; then they can take the fact that they failed your test if they know that you think they did a fabulous job on their presentation. So I think sometimes teachers get so busy—we get in this mode when we're grading of looking for the bad things because that's what we have to mark—and we forget to make the positive comments and point out “great ideas here!” I have to remind myself to do that; that's so important. And when I do it, I see the rewards from that. So I try to make that a part of my mentoring.
- TS: I hope somebody will do an interview like this with you in twenty years because twenty years ago, I would have said that I didn't have any mentors in school. I was really kind of in revolt against everything they did, and my approach to teaching was not like they did, but how they didn't. But now I'm looking back and deciding, well, I think I got a lot more out of them than I used to think. So at any rate, my views have changed a little bit in time to recognize I really do owe them something, whether I thought so twenty years ago or not.
- KK: Well, I certainly owe my professors the content. There are things I remember from lectures as an undergraduate that now I find myself making those same points that were made to me. I may not always remember who the professor was, but I remember this little nugget. So I am grateful for that. But at UGA, I did work that, looking back, should have been published or presented at conferences, and I was so clueless to that academic presentation and publication issue . . .
- TS: And they didn't encourage you?
- KK: No. And there were some missed opportunities there that I regret.
- TS: I think the sad thing about graduate schools, and I don't think it's changed that much, is that instead of building students up they often tear them down. Graduate students are thinking, “Well, I just can't do anything.” Or they make you feel as though you just never measure up to their high and lofty standards.
- KK: I didn't feel that; I didn't feel that at all. But I think the program was so large that the students there really had to seek out a mentoring relationship. It wasn't something that automatically came with the program.

TS: So you weren't in total revolt against what you were taught.

KK: Oh no, no.

TS: Okay.

DY: I wonder, too, if gender doesn't have something to do with it. Now, I was there much earlier than you were, but I saw males being, "Okay, we want you to go here to graduate school, and you go here to graduate school." And I guess they thought, you know, "I'm sure she'll just find somebody and marry him." That was never said, but what I saw laid out in front of me. There were so few women who were teaching in the Ph.D. program. That's another thing, too.

TS: Yes. There weren't any in history at Tennessee when I went there. There had been in the past, but there weren't when I went through.

DY: There were three in the English department at Georgia.

TS: After I got through Gen Ed courses, I was taught entirely by white males.

KK: Wow.

TS: Many of them very liberal white males, but white males.

DY: Well, thank goodness for that. [chuckle]

TS: Didn't know what I was missing, did I?

DY: What have we not touched on?

TS: I think we've pretty well covered it. We've talked a little bit about scholarship. . .

DY: And mentoring and teaching.

TS: Most of those that we've interviewed are senior faculty well advanced in their careers or retired, and you've still got a long way to go in your career. Maybe we could ask you where do you want to go with your career, and where would you like to see Kennesaw State go? In what direction should we be moving for the next decade or two decades?

DY: Yes, that's good.

KK: I could see myself in several roles. I think I would be happy staying in the role of the faculty member and being one of the seasoned faculty members on campus. I have a lot of good role models on this campus of those kinds of individuals who

- have earned wonderful reputations and other people look to as role models and mentors. I would love to be thought of as one of those long marchers around here. I also could see myself at some point maybe going the administrative route.
- TS: What would you want to do in administration? Do you mean going through department chair, dean, that route?
- DY: Didn't you do a stint as interim chair?
- KK: Yes, and that was satisfying because you can get things done as an interim chair or department chair. You can lead a department in some new directions, and that's something satisfying. So I would be open to that opportunity if it should present itself. If not, I'll just stay in my role as a faculty member because I certainly enjoy that.
- DY: Well, if I can go on for just a second on just a little branch of that, what do you think that we need to do at this point for our senior teaching faculty? What do we need?
- KK: Well, I'm on the Faculty Development & Awards committee, so I'm seeing some of the new initiatives that are coming through. We've got proposals in our hands right now for two grant programs for senior faculty, one that will give them a travel stipend, which is the closest thing we have to a sabbatical at this institution—
- DY: That CETL is implementing? Those grants?
- KK: Yes.
- DY: Right.
- KK: And the other one is a restart grant to help faculty who haven't been active in scholarship to get restarted. I think both of those are terrific.
- DY: Do you see any way that we can create, build or—well, I say build because I don't know that we have a community of senior faculty; I don't know that senior faculty have any separate or distinct identity at this institution. It might be because we're such a young institution. I realize I'm being kind of hazy about this. I'm on this senior faculty advisory council that Linda [M.] Noble has cranked up, and it really is, I think, a problem and an issue for senior faculty who want to continue to grow. These grants are very good examples, but since you are in that growth mode right now, what feeds you? What keeps you going?
- KK: I think the time management issues for faculty are the biggest challenges right now. If there is a way to remove some of the demands on our time so that faculty

can focus on their own area of professional growth that they'd really like to pursue, that's a luxury that we haven't really had.

DY: I appreciate your phrasing it as time management; that's a nice way to put it out there. Colloquially, some others have always said we've been asked to make bricks without straw, and when you continue to have to do that, then you don't have the time that you need for reflection, for scholarship.

KK: Well, frankly, we're risking burning out our faculty, and then you're not going to have any senior faculty. There are a number of us who compare what our lives would be like had we taken a position at a Research I institution versus Kennesaw. I think there's a perception for new hires that somehow your life is going to be easier at a Kennesaw because there isn't the publish-or-perish philosophy. But we're seeing the ratcheting up of scholarship expectations and thinking, if I were teaching at UGA, I would have at most a two-two course load. I would have time to do all this scholarship, and because UGA is so huge, I maybe would be on one committee. I'm on five major committees; I'm chairing two of those. Scholarship is being ratcheted up, and my teaching load is heavier. I think if we want to continue to have fabulous teachers and solid researchers, we're going to have to address these workload balance issues. I think people have thought [they] are just a given, and there's nothing we can do about it. I've been pleased to hear Lynn [Lendley C.] Black [the Vice President for Academic Affairs] say he's looking at the committee issues and whether it's necessary to have all the committees.

DY: He said that two or three years ago, I think.

KK: And I'm on a new committee that he's asked me to be on.

DY: I've done the same thing, Katherine. I mean, when asked to be on these committees, I say yes simply because I think, "All right. Here's a voice; maybe I can make a difference." I don't know whether that's going to happen or not or whether it's the same old, "Okay, you spend your time on a committee and then what? Where does it go? What's the point here?" Thank you for articulating that. You're preaching to the choir.

TS: I think I've pretty well gone through my list of questions.

DY: Me, too. It's been so interesting.

KK: Well, thank you for inviting me.

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project

KSU Oral History Series, No. 16

Interview with Katherine N. Kinnick

Part II: Wednesday, 26 January 2011

Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott

Location: Dr. Kinnick's office, Sturgis Library, KSU

TS: Katherine Kinnick received the Distinguished Teaching Award back in 2003 and was the recipient of the Distinguished Professor Award in 2010. Katherine, we did a full interview with you about six and half years ago now, and that was right after you had won the teaching award. At that time I guess you were pretty much full-time in the Communication department, and you'd been interim chair for a while. Maybe a good place to start for today is what you've been doing since 2004 academically, especially now that you are over in the library with University Studies. I assume that you've got a joint appointment now with Communication and University Studies, and maybe you can explain that.

KK: In 2005 the position of Director of Pre-College Programs was created. Previously, Dr. Liza [P. Elizabeth] Davis who directs our undergraduate honors program had also been responsible for the Dual Enrollment program that allows high school students to come here to KSU. That's really more job than one person can handle, and so those roles were split, and the position that I currently hold was created. They had advertised for the position, and I applied and started in this role in 2005. It actually is not a joint appointment. I am housed here in the University Studies department.

TS: But you keep your old title as Professor of Communication?

KK: I'm still Professor of Communication. In fact, we're an interdisciplinary department. So within our department you will have assistant professors of English and people with their affiliations to their disciplines still, but their titles reflect program director or some kind of administrative role.

TS: You still teach some of the Communication courses though, don't you?

KK: I do. I teach one course a semester. Since I came here [to University Studies], I have been teaching primarily Public Speaking [COM 2129] and the persuasion course [COM 4429 – Persuasion Methods and Strategies], but I also taught our First-Year Seminar [KSU 1101] for a while.

TS: Why don't you explain exactly what you do in the pre-college program?

KK: I direct the Dual Enrollment Honors program, which allows academically accelerated high school students, juniors and seniors, to take classes at KSU in lieu of classes at their high school. It is a wonderful program that we have in the state of Georgia. KSU's program is distinctive in that it is an honors program,

which means that we allow these high school students to take not only regular college classes, but also our honors courses.

TS: We had a program, even back, I think, as far back as junior-college days that was called JETS, Joint Enrollment, something.

KK: Transfer.

TS: Right. But it was high school students.

KK: That's basically the same program. There are still guidance counselors and parents who say my child is "jetting"—or I have a student who wants to "jet." So that terminology is still around. After JETS it was the Joint Enrollment Honors Program. Last year the state started using different nomenclature. Actually, they probably started before last year and started using the Joint Enrollment term to refer only to programs at technical colleges. Now all of the two-year and four-year college programs are called Dual Enrollment, so we actually changed the name of the program here this past year. Instead of Joint Enrollment Honors Program it's now Dual Enrollment Honors Program. My role is a lot like running a one-woman university, I think, because I'm involved in every stage of the process from recruiting students, going to high schools, talking to students and guidance counselors, giving some talks at some public recruitment events that we have each fall—so involved from the very beginning when we're dealing with prospective students. Then to the advising process, we bring the newly accepted students in, and I lead advising sessions for the students and their parents. We help them select appropriate courses, and we get some of our honors faculty here at KSU involved in helping with that too. Then throughout the year we help the students navigate the college experience and deal with all sorts of State paperwork and bureaucracy that's involved in the collaboration between the college and the high schools and the Board of Regents and the Georgia Department of Education.

TS: How many students are we talking about?

KK: This year we have right around 150 in the program, which is a very robust number for us. In the past five years it's ranged from a low of eighty students to 150.

TS: So this is the high now?

KK: This is the high.

TS: You say they come from all over our service area, Bartow County and Cherokee and everywhere, including Cobb?

KK: Our biggest feeders are Cobb County and Cherokee County, as you might expect, but we actually have students from, I think, thirteen counties represented, so we have gotten them from Gilmer County and Bartow, of course, but also Fulton

County, DeKalb County, Douglas County, Paulding County, and we even had a student from Peachtree City, who lived in the dorms here because of that commute.

TS: I was going to ask if any of them actually stay in the residence halls.

KK: A few. Two to three each year elect to do that.

TS: All their coursework is here at this point? They're not taking anything at their high schools any longer?

KK: They have the option to come here part-time or full-time. Our population splits about half-and-half with half of the students choosing to take some classes at their high school and then come here for college classes, and the other half of our students decide they're done with high school. They want to come here for all of their courses.

TS: They could take a full load both fall and spring here and get a whole freshman's year of work done?

KK: That is correct. We have students who do that. If they start with us as juniors, the State recently became less restrictive in what high school juniors could take. They used to be restricted to only coming here part-time, and now they are allowed to come full-time, so it is possible. At some of the two-year colleges we're seeing Dual Enrollment students finish an associate's degree at the same time that they're graduating from high school.

TS: I didn't realize it was a two-year program, that it could be junior and senior year.

KK: That is correct. We don't have nearly as many juniors participating, I think, because the word hasn't spread so much for juniors.

TS: And they might have more stuff to do in their schools. I would think that they would still want to go to the senior prom or play on the basketball team or be in the band and those kinds of things.

KK: The kids can still do that. They can still participate in all the extracurricular activities at the high school, but they've got the best of both worlds because they can also write for our campus newspaper staff. We have one student who started with us as a junior last year who was the mascot at his high school, the Etowah Eagles, so he wore the Eagle suit. Well, he auditioned as a high school junior to be our Scrappy the Owl, and he got the job! As a high school junior and now this year as a senior in the Dual Enrollment program he is Scrappy the Owl at all the athletic events.

- TS: Do you go to the athletic events and know that that's your student out there as Scrappy?
- KK: That's right. I thought it was a paid position, but he told me no, he gets free hot dogs and free admission to the athletic events.
- TS: Well, that might be worth something in itself. You said it's an honors program. How do you determine, by SAT—well, I guess all of them haven't even taken SAT?
- KK: Well, no, they have to take the SAT to be admitted to the program, so they have to achieve a higher score than our traditional freshmen have to achieve to get into KSU.
- TS: Is there a cut off for it?
- KK: It's a little bit of a complex formula, but they have to have a minimum 530 on the critical reading portion, a minimum 530 on the math, but they have to score higher than that in one or both areas so that those two areas combined are 1100 or higher. They also have to have a 3.0 unweighted GPA in their high school core curriculum classes.
- TS: What does our average student here come in as? Not 1100?
- KK: The average Dual Enrollment student is rated at 1200; I think it's 1205.
- TS: Then what's the regular student?
- KK: It is considerably less than that, but I don't know off the top of my head.
- TS: Somewhere over 1000 maybe but not too much?
- KK: I think it is maybe around 1100 for KSU average [1083 for first-time freshmen in Fall 2010, according to KSU *Fact Book*].
- TS: So maybe about 100 points higher, which is good for us to get those students.
- KK: That's our hope, and the pattern that we're seeing is that more and more of the Dual Enrollment students are electing to remain here at KSU.
- TS: I was going to ask about that. We're getting some really good students that probably have a lot of choices of where they could go.
- KK: That's right. We had one student with a close to perfect SAT score in the days when the maximum was 1600. He had a 1470. Maybe that's not perfect, but exceedingly high, and he elected to stay here as a computer science major. His

- senior year they selected him as their top major, so we have a lot more stories like that now. We actually try to track them, and about 40 percent of the Dual Enrollment students are applying for readmission for summer or fall term. So out of those, we think about 35 percent actually remain here to matriculate. That's a nice pool of students to flow into the pipeline for the undergraduate honors program.
- TS: Thirty-five percent that we might not have gotten at all without this program.
- KK: Exactly.
- TS: I saw a commercial on television just last week. I was watching a basketball game. They were advertising that somebody had a perfect score on the SAT test, and he was going to University of South Alabama. The whole commercial was about this guy going there to school.
- KK: Well, I got a phone call from a former Dual Enrollment student who had gone to UGA. In November he called me and said, "I hate it at UGA, I want to come back to Kennesaw." This is a student with top scores, top GPA, so it's not like he wasn't doing well academically at UGA, but he really liked the culture here and the friendliness here. It's not so overwhelming as a big school like UGA.
- TS: It's good to hear that because we're a big school now ourselves with 23,000 students. I just wonder if from time to time we are tending to lose that spirit that we had when we were a small school.
- KK: I think UGA has significantly more.
- TS: I think they're in the thirties [34,677 in Fall 2010 according to the *KSU Fact Book*, compared to 23,452 at KSU].
- KK: It may be the compact nature of our campus that gives you the sense that it's smaller than it is.
- TS: That could be. Well, it's nice to have a program like this too where I gather you probably know most or all of the 150, and that kind of relationship doesn't exist everywhere on the big campus.
- KK: Right. One of the goals of the program is to ease that transition to college, so we have a special summer orientation program just for these students and really try to give them a heads up on academic expectations, what's going to be different from high school, so that there's not quite as much of a culture shock as what the traditional freshmen get. We hold their hands a little bit in that respect.
- TS: Sure. Do you continue to advise and mentor them throughout the program or do you have a bunch of advisors over here that are doing that?

KK: We require them to attend a mandatory advising session, and I'm at every one of those, each fall and each spring. The advising part, as you can imagine, is labor intensive. We need more than just me to assist this number of students because I also have teaching responsibilities and committee work and other things going on. This past year Dr. Joan [E.] Dominick and one of our staff members, who was a former Dual Enrollment student herself, have assisted me in the advising. That's been nice because I can train them in some of the nuances that are unique to Dual Enrollment students that our general faculty wouldn't be familiar with, and there can be some consistency moving forward.

TS: Right. Why don't you talk about your teaching? You say you teach one class a semester? Why don't you talk a little bit about what you teach?

KK: I teach Public Speaking, and this semester I'm teaching an honors section of Public Speaking. It's the first time that we've offered that, and much to my surprise the class filled up almost the first day. So it's been a tremendous experience already just a few weeks into the semester teaching an honors class. Much to my delight, when the students introduced themselves, I had two Eagle Scouts. I have two students who had been part of our President's Emerging Global Scholars Program (called PEGS), who had done a study abroad trip last semester to Brazil as a part of that group; a salutatorian of a high school class; [and] students who had been very actively involved in community service. So to have that many high caliber students all in one class is really going to be a delight I can see as we go through this semester.

TS: You had mentioned in the previous interview that you were already at that time doing a lot of service learning with your classes. Are you still doing that?

KK: Not to the extent that I was before I took this position because the classes that I teach have changed. The courses I taught then really lent themselves more to

TS: Public relations and that kind of thing.

KK: Correct.

TS: Is Public Speaking an upper level or lower level class?

KK: It's a lower level class [COM 2129]. It actually substitutes in the Core Curriculum for the Human Communication [COM 1109] course. A lot of students don't know that.

TS: What else do you teach?

KK: The other course that I have been teaching is the Persuasion course, and that's a course I've taught since the day I set foot on this campus. It's really an enjoyable

- course. I'm sure I mentioned this seven years ago or so when we talked, but we get into a lot of current events kinds of subjects because there are so many examples of persuasion going on in our world in the news stories we hear about in popular culture [and] in the advertising that we're all exposed to. There are so many ways to make it relevant to students' experiences; so that makes that course a lot of fun.
- TS: Persuasion through debate or persuasion through writing or what?
- KK: No, it's theoretical. The course is called Persuasion Methods and Strategies, but it's highly theoretical—various theories of persuasion. Some of them are more like those which would be found in interpersonal kinds of settings—sales situations [or] parent and child interpersonal kinds of interactions. Others of the theories relate more toward mass communication and techniques that we see advertisers use and techniques that we see politicians using.
- TS: It's kind of related to PR, I guess.
- KK: Right and we get a lot of public relations students in that class. It's an option that they can select to take.
- TS: I would think some business students could benefit from taking it too.
- KK: Yes, occasionally we'll get a few marketing students in that class, but it's kind of a tool belt course for a PR student [where] people are hiring me for my judgment and my ideas, and I need to understand what strategies might work and are actually backed up by research that say you will raise more money if you ask this way than if you ask that way. Even though it's theoretical, the applications of the theory are highly practical for any student who is going into sales, marketing, PR, anything like that.
- TS: Sounds like the KSU Foundation ought to be interested in a course on how to go out and raise money. Do you ever deal with them at all?
- KK: No, only on committees.
- TS: When we did the interview several years ago, you talked a lot about the kinds of community services you were involved in, not really campus related so much as the community. There was something that Franklin Graham had started, something about stockings or . . . ?
- KK: Oh, oh, well, that I just did on a personal basis outside of campus.
- TS: I know, and are you still doing those kinds of things?

- KK: For the past five or six years I have worked with a group called Amigos for Christ. Again, this is just in my personal realm, not related to my classes. I created the same Christmas shoe boxes for children in Nicaragua whom they work with. Last year we got up to 600 shoe boxes. I said, “Okay, I’ve got to retire from this”—because it was becoming a full-time job.
- TS: I know you’re still on a lot of committees on campus, including the Provost search committee that’s going on right now. Has that involvement increased, decreased or stayed about the same since 2003?
- KK: Because this department did not have that many full professors and not a lot of tenured folks when I arrived here, they were eager to have me to serve on all of the committees that required that someone be tenured. So I would say the past five years my service has been at the university level [and] at the college level primarily because those service positions require somebody maybe a little more senior who has tenure.
- TS: Seven years ago, six and a half years ago when we did the interview we were discussing the change in the campus culture moving away from where you could choose service or scholarship as your second area after teaching, and I think we were sensing, even back in 2004, that the campus was moving away from a focus on service to a focus on scholarship. Where do you think we are now?
- KK: Oh, I think there’s been a ratcheting up of that momentum that we can see in the kind of folks we’re hiring now. On this Provost search committee one of the things that has repeatedly come up is the desire is to build a national reputation. Whenever that is mentioned, Ph.D. programs and scholarship are mentioned in the same breath. I’m not sure those are the only ways to build a national reputation, but at least the thinking of the folks we’ve been interviewing certainly links those two together.
- TS: So with the new Provost we are going big time toward scholarship, do you think, at Kennesaw?
- KK: I think there’s a perception that to find a niche for yourself you need an area of excellence that will be a priority in terms of funding and staffing, and that it’s likely that program building will be focused around graduate programs.
- TS: You’ve been doing a good deal of scholarship yourself. I noticed in the news release after you got the award the discussion of you still continue to do scholarship on gender bias in the media and that you have gained a national reputation in that area. Could you talk about that a little bit?
- KK: I think I’m at that nice stage where people have started to contact me and say, “Would you like to contribute to this book, would you like to contribute to this encyclopedia of gender in media,” so I’ve been fortunate to have some

- opportunities for scholarship come my way through that route. I've also been collaborating with a colleague in Communication who coordinates the public speaking course, Emily [K.] Holler, and she and I have worked on a series of research projects related to the public speaking course. So we've had some publications from those efforts too.
- TS: Her name came up in an interview with Amy [M.] Buddie who got the Teaching Award this year. I forget whether she was on a committee with her or what, but they were doing something together.
- KK: I think they taught together in Learning Communities.
- TS: That was it, yes. So maybe I'll just ask what have you found about gender in the media? Is there still a big bias there?
- KK: I think it's getting better, but it's funny you should ask. In today's paper, in the *AJC*, there is a profile of the new CEO of the Cinnabon Company, the franchise at the mall that makes the cinnamon rolls. The headline is, "From Hooter's Girl to CEO," and the focus is not that this is one of the youngest CEO's in America—she's thirty-two years old. The focus is not what does this new CEO plan to do for the company, what is her strategic vision. It's that she started as a Hooter's girl, and look where she is now. I mean, that's one of the patterns previous scholars have identified as problematic in how the media talk about successful women, that sometimes it's a backhanded compliment. We're going to recognize this person because, my goodness, they're a high level CEO or they've just been elected to Congress, and yet we're going to constantly remind everybody that their sexuality matters.
- TS: That came up recently with Sarah Palin. Some major publication ran a picture of her in shorts and what-have-you. And even Sarah Palin—I shouldn't say "even"—but as a very conservative politician, she saw that as sexist.
- KK: That's been one of the long-standing critiques, that there's a focus on appearance or there's a focus on roles, that I am somebody's mother, I am somebody's daughter, I am somebody's wife, and that relationship is more important than my accomplishments. I mean, going back to the time, it really wasn't too long ago when the *New York Times* finally dropped using "Mrs." or "Ms." when referring to females, and they were one of the last hold-outs of not going just by last names and so
- TS: They thought it wasn't properly respectful, I guess, not to use the term maybe, I don't know, but certainly a bias there, if you don't use it for males.
- KK: Right.

TS: So if a story talked about a male going from being a football player to a CEO, it would be a different thing than a Hooter girl to CEO?

KK: Right, I was trying to think do we ever see something similar to this in the media about males.

TS: That's what I was trying to think when I was thinking maybe a former football player.

KK: Well, there was a Congressman from the northeast who had been on a calendar.

TS: Oh, Scott Brown, yes, the one that got Ted Kennedy's seat in Massachusetts that appeared nude in a photograph [for *Cosmopolitan* magazine at age 22].

KK: Right. He's the only example recently that I could come up with.

TS: It didn't keep him from getting elected.

KK: Right. But that was what the media wanted to talk about.

TS: Right. So it could happen.

KK: It could happen.

TS: But less likely. Okay, so you're doing that kind of scholarship and what kind of journals are you publishing these articles in?

KK: Well, recently several have been book chapters in books edited by other women's studies scholars. Then the public speaking work has been published in the *Journal of Learning Communities* and the *Basic Communication Course Annual*.

TS: As you well know, the Distinguished Professor Award emphasizes the integration of teaching, scholarship, and service. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about how you integrate what you do with your scholarly papers and what you do in the classroom and what you do with the Pre-College program and so on. How do you integrate it all together?

KK: I think it all comes back to a student focus. When I came here to KSU I was coming from the professional arena as a public relations person. I really wanted to help students make that transition to the professional world and tell them everything that I wish I had been told as a college student about what to expect. So that was a big motivation for me. Now in this role I want to again help students with that transition, but now it's the transition from high school to college. I guess I like being the tour guide or the person who can take you by the hand and help you with that. That's been a theme that has bridged my teaching and now my administrative work. The scholarship of teaching that I've done also

- relates to how do we best teach and reach these students and what are the most effective methods that you can use in the classroom.
- TS: So you're doing scholarship of teaching as much as traditional scholarship now, or more so? What would you say?
- KK: I would say it's about half and half.
- TS: When did that start for you? You were doing some scholarship of teaching even back in 2003.
- KK: All the way through.
- TS: You were talking about how Ph.D. programs put a greater focus on scholarship. Is our definition of scholarship likely to change more toward the traditional definition in the future, do you think, or do you believe that Kennesaw is going to honor a wide variety of types of scholarship? Some places may not pay much attention at all to scholarship of teaching or applied scholarship. Where do you think we are at Kennesaw?
- KK: I think there is strong support from the faculty for leadership that values all forms of scholarship. That has really come through in this Provost search committee. Everyone that we've talked to seems to recognize that we should be evaluating people as individuals and for their unique contributions.
- TS: When you say everybody we talked to, meaning the candidates for the Provost position?
- KK: Yes, the candidates—that one size doesn't fit all. The way that Humanities and Social Sciences and the Arts evaluate scholarship should be different from the way that they may do it in Science and Math. So it's a good thing to see recognition of that.
- TS: Do you think that bringing in a new Provost isn't going to change that but maybe will strengthen that broader definition of scholarship?
- KK: I think we've always had that broad definition of scholarship here at KSU, but maybe faculty just need to be reassured of the commitment to that on a regular basis.
- TS: Yes. I'm chairing a search committee now for the director of our Public History program and I'm hearing this all over the country. I talked to somebody at LSU yesterday, and different colleges around the country, and it seems like a lot of places are saying, "Well, you know, I value this kind of scholarship, but our colleagues don't. So I had to steer this student in a particular type of direction in

- his or her Ph.D. program.” So I think the whole country may be going through this kind of controversy, and maybe it’s a good thing for academia.
- KK: I think our shift to Faculty Performance Agreements (FPA) is helpful in this because we may bring somebody in a department, and we really need their role to be traditional research. But we may bring somebody else in, and we need their role to be different. We need them to direct a center and focus more on professional service. The FPA allows for those differences to be valued in the evaluation process.
- TS: Personally, I’ve always like the concept of Kennesaw being a metropolitan university. I guess I got a lot of this from Ed Rugg—the idea of a campus that engages with the community and not only teaches people from the community but goes out into the community and does service projects that meet community needs and does scholarship that meets community needs and is in effect a true public university. I guess, personally, I would like for us to continue to emphasize in the community at the same time we are trying to gain a national in reputation. I don’t know what you think about that.
- KK: I agree with you. I think that’s key to our visibility and to public support for KSU, I mean, it ties right into . . .
- TS: Well, in terms of persuasion it would make sense, wouldn’t it?
- KK: Our capital campaign and everything else we’re trying to do. If we don’t have the support and understanding of the folks in our backyard, I think, that puts us at a deficit.
- TS: You’ve probably answered this question along the way already, but what do you think it was that they were honoring about you when you go the Distinguished Professor Award this year? Why did you get the award do you think?
- KK: I think I was able to articulate better than I’m doing today how my teaching and service and scholarship are all intertwined and have all helped to serve students here. I think that they recognized the level of productivity in each of those areas. At KSU with teaching loads and service expectations the way they are, I think that’s not always an easy thing to do.
- TS: No, it’s not. Have you decided yet what you’re going to do with the generous amount of money that the Foundation gives each of the award winners for scholarship or whatever?
- KK: Well, I had to find an international conference to present at. So in May I will be going to Athens, Greece, and presenting a paper at an international media conference.

TS: That will eat up a lot of that money. Hopefully not all.

KK: That's the first thing. I'm still considering my other options.

TS: I know you did a commencement address in the fall, and, unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to hear your commencement address. Why don't you just tell me what you told the graduates in your address?

KK: Well, I wanted to focus on the students because unlike a lot of commencement speakers, I don't have an incredible life story or a high position that they would be eager to hear wisdom from me about. So I wanted to make it about them. I spoke at the commencement for the College of Science and Math, University College where I am housed, and the Coles College of Business, which is interesting because I'm teaching in Humanities and Social Sciences. I was addressing the students and parents whom I wouldn't ordinarily teach. So I e-mailed the faculty in business and all three of the colleges and said, "I want to hear about your students and who inspires you as a teacher."

TS: What students inspire you?

KK: Yes. Tell me about the students who inspire you.

TS: That's great. How many people responded?

KK: Not as many as I would have liked!

TS: Not that many inspired I guess!

KK: I had to beat the bushes for some of the colleges, but I did get some really nice anecdotes from faculty members who told me about students who have overcome a lot of obstacles to graduate or who are inspiring in other ways because of what they want to do with their lives, the humanitarians. So I was able to meld together all of their stories around the theme of being Scrappy. I talked about our mascot and why we might have come up with that name forty-seven years ago when the university was founded, and how many of our students are scrappy, and then I wove in their stories as examples of that.

TS: Scrappy is a relatively new name, I think.

KK: Was our mascot not always named Scrappy?

TS: Well, the mascot was just an owl to begin with.

KK: And they didn't give him a name?

- TS: I can't remember Scrappy until a decade ago or so. I don't think Scrappy goes back that far. The owl does. Dr. Sturgis said in the interview I did with him years ago that they chose the owl because of the concept of the wise owl—they wanted to emphasize academics here. I saw a story in the paper the other day of an owl that had swooped down and attacked this little Chihuahua, and the man had to hold on to the leash because the owl was trying to fly away with this little dog.
- KK: Well, I think maybe we should be the hawks here because it's uncanny but twice I have been walking around campus, and a hawk has swooped down right in front of me, once flying really low with a heavy squirrel in its mouth, and then the second time swooped down and was holding a squirrel. So it was quite the *National Geographic* moment for all the students.
- TS: Well, maybe you should make a case for changing to the hawks, although owls can be pretty dangerous too. At any rate, in the article, the man saved his dog but the dog was terrorized.
- KK: I bet!
- TS: I'll have to ask Dave Waples when Scrappy came in. It may have been earlier than I remember. Of course, we didn't have inter-collegiate athletics before 1982, so it can't be any further back than that.
- KK: Okay.
- TS: This sounds like a great commencement speech that you did. Can you say who any of the faculty members were who responded with these stories?
- KK: Shannon [L.] Ferketish, who is our advisor to Interdisciplinary Studies students. There were several faculty members whom I'd never met from computer science, information systems, and chemistry. Humayun Zafar [Assistant Professor of Information Systems] was one of them.
- TS: That's great. It sounds like you're doing a tremendous amount of mentoring. In the earlier interview you said that you really didn't have any mentors along the way. Do you think you'd say that's still true today, that you didn't really have mentors, and yet you've become a mentor?
- KK: Yes, in fact, I got an e-mail recently to give the keynote address at the American Association of University Women conference that's going on at our campus later in March; and they said, "When you introduce yourself, talk about your mentors and how you got to be where you are"—that sort of thing. I had to e-mail back and say I didn't really feel like I got good mentoring; and they said, "That's okay, you can say that too." But yes, I would still say that.

- TS: Well, I think I've run out of questions, but I think we've at least covered the main things of the last seven years unless you can think of some things that you've been doing that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to talk about.
- KK: I would just say that switching gears from being a full-time faculty member to having an administrative role like I do now has been a good thing. That's made me familiar with aspects of the university that I didn't interact with. I had never interacted with admissions or with financial aid or with the registrar's office before. Now that I do so I have a different perspective on the university from that experience.
- TS: You talked in the previous interview about at least thinking about maybe wanting to move in an administrative direction. Even in 2004 you were beginning to think you might be interested in it.
- KK: And I had no idea that this was coming.
- TS: What do you see as the future? Are you contented in the job that you've got now and want to stay doing this forever or do you have other plans for the future?
- KK: We'll see what doors open.
- TS: So you're open to other doors.
- KK: I'm open to doing that. I've always felt a lot of ownership for whatever I've been involved with. The thought of somebody else taking over what I've done is, I think, no, I can't let that happen!
- TS: Do you see yourself staying at Kennesaw for the rest of your career or are you open to opportunities there too?
- KK: For family reasons probably yes.
- TS: I was thinking that might be the case. At any rate we'll just have to wait and see. In all of the interviews we've usually asked folks why they stayed at Kennesaw. From the perspective of 2011 what keeps you energized being at Kennesaw?
- KK: This is a great university, it really is. The people here are so committed and so hard-working and work hard with a smile on their faces most of the time. I think we're just the right size where it's possible to know a lot of people here and make a lot of friends. That kind of culture has kept me here and keeps a lot of people here. It's fun to be a part of something that's growing. I think everybody has this sense of excitement about what KSU is going to do next and where we're going to be in five years. I just got an e-mail with a picture of the new master plan, and you want to stick around to see what new things can we build next.

TS: I had a retired faculty member speaking in one of my classes yesterday, and he said, “Well, I don’t really feel attached to this place any more. I walk around and have to ask people, ‘What’s this building, what’s that building.’” So get away a few years, and it’s a different campus. We still are growing. I saw one of Ed Rugg’s position papers about 2016, which would be five years from now, with the projections being thirty thousand students.

KK: That’s hard to imagine.

TS: It is. I don’t know where we’re going to put the additional seven thousand.

KK: Is his projection still on target?

TS: This was a projection he made last fall based on the percentage that we’re growing each year. So that’s what he’s saying. It’s going to be interesting to see what football does to our enrollment if we have football by 2014.

KK: I think the bigger pressure is the budget situation. How do you accommodate growth?

TS: You’re right. If we get a hiring freeze it’s going to be disastrous for us. I didn’t want to end on that sour note, but at any rate, it’s been fun talking to you again today. This makes a nice update to your oral history. Thank you.

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