

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH NANCY S. KING

CONDUCTED BY DEDE YOW AND THOMAS A. SCOTT

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for the

KSU ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. 42

MONDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2006

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project  
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Monday, 13 February 2006  
Location: Kennesaw Hall, Office of Vice President for Student Success & Enrollment Services

TS: Nancy, why don't we just begin with you talking a little bit about your background: where you came from, where you went to school, and things of that sort?

NK: Well, my background—we were saying a minute ago, that we're very southern. I grew up in South Georgia, in Valdosta. That's about as far south as you can get in Georgia. I went to undergraduate school at Mercer University, and did a double major in English and psychology. I found my way [here] through marriage—we landed in Atlanta. We outgrew our house, so we had to move outside the perimeter [I-285], and ended up in Cobb County, in Kennesaw. We were driving around one afternoon—because I had thought I had come to the end of the earth—and stumbled on this little two-year college. I had been a high school English teacher, and I thought—I had three small children under the age of five at the time—I would like to keep my hand in teaching. Since this is a two-year school, I think I'll call and see if maybe there's any way I could do some part-time teaching. I called and talked with John [C.] Greider, and John said, "Oh, your call is just perfect because I just had one of my English faculty tell me"—Mary [E.] Rogato, remember Mary?—"she wants to go down to Georgia State and work on a doctorate, she thought, and she wants to take a leave of absence, and I'm looking for someone to fill in for her. Would you come out and interview?" So I came out and interviewed with Dr. Greider and agreed to do this one-year appointment—I had to work out all the babysitting details, and all of that. This was back in 1972—at the end of the year, Dr. Greider graciously offered me a full-time job, and I said, "No," because it was too difficult keeping the babysitters going. I said, "I'll be happy to do some part-time teaching." So I was a part-time English instructor until I came on full-time in 1979. That was *years* of part-time work. Charles would take care of the kids at night; I did the teaching at night.

TS: Charles is your husband?

NK: Yes. So I've had a real relationship with the University since it was a two-year school. I remember, while I was a part-time instructor was when the word came that Kennesaw had received four-year status, and there was just this absolute spur of the moment celebration in the old Humanities Building. I had come in to teach my 5:30 class, and I got there a little bit early.

TS: This is Willingham Hall today.

NK: Yes, the place was just erupting because word had come that we were “four-year.” So, I’ve seen some moments like that from the conversion from two-year to four-year to university status.

TS: I’ve got you getting your bachelor’s degree in ’64, but you got your master’s then from Georgia State [University]?

NK: Yes, while I was pregnant with child number two, I believe it was. I missed the graduation because she was born in May.

TS: You want to name those children, one, two, and three?

NK: [The] first child is David [David A. King], who of course, is now teaching here in my old department, and Lisa [is] child number two, and Allen [is] child number three. I did my master’s while I was expecting Lisa. David was just a baby, and I was pregnant with Lisa, and she was born in May. I thought that my formal schooling was probably over, but then once Kennesaw became four-year and I came on full-time in ’79, it became pretty clear—in fact, Dr. Greider was very clear—that if you want to remain in the department and you ever want to be considered for tenure or promotion, you need to go get a doctorate. Well, I didn’t have a lot of options at that time. I was married with three children, so I had to do the commute thing, back and forth, to Georgia State.

DY: You and several others did that.

NK: Yes. Dot [Dorothy H.] Graham did it, Barbara [J.] Stevenson, Cary [Carol L.] Turner], I mean, there were a whole bunch of us that did that. It gave me a new benchmark for what it means to be busy. In fact, I have thought many times when I think I’m overwhelmed in this job, I think back to that time because I was teaching in the department and going to school.

TS: You were teaching full time throughout that period when you were doing the doctorate.

DY: And how old were your children at that time?

NK: At that point they were—

DY: In 1980.

TS: They were teenagers by then, weren’t they?

NK: Not quite, but all involved, not really driving, and so they were involved in the soccer and baseball and dance lessons and piano, and so I was doing the driving.

DY: You had to haul them around.

NK: It was a scheduling nightmare. That was back in the days when we were still very much in the business of developmental studies, and Dr. Greider helped me out enormously because he gave me—back then it was quarters [quarter system]—some 099 [classes] to teach which, after you do that a few times. . . .

TS: That was less time consuming than 101?

NK: It was much less time consuming than doing, I thought, the 101.

DY: Well, you don't have the preparation. I know because I did that at Georgia before I came here. And also with the Regents Remediation class you could finish after the Regents exam.

NK: Right.

DY: That's sort of what everybody got when they were pregnant [laughter].

NK: Yes, that was the "pregnancy class," right [laughter]. So, Dr. Greider was very accommodating. I've often thought that I owe him a great debt because had he not been willing to work with me around scheduling issues—given the institution that we are today, I don't think that kind of thing would be possible.

TS: So you're still doing class work after 1979.

NK: Yes.

TS: As well as doing a dissertation.

NK: Yes!

TS: What did you write your dissertation on?

NK: Well with my dissertation, I made a shift because with my master's degree I was in seventeenth-century poetry with John Donne.

DY: I didn't realize that!

NK: Oh, I've got to give you the title of my master's thesis, and then contrast it to the title of my dissertation. The master's thesis was "The Influence of the Ignatian Meditation on the Songs and Sonnets of John Donne." Doesn't that sound exciting? I loved it.

TS: And what was it all about [laughter]?

NK: Well, it was really the Catholic tradition of the Ignatian meditation and the role that played on the sonnets that John Donne wrote.

DY: You weren't raised Catholic, were you?

NK: No.

DY: Because I know that David is Catholic.

NK: Well, we have a very ecumenical family. My family came over on the boat; they were all Baptists, and I have remained Baptist; but David converted to Catholicism. Lisa is Methodist, she and her husband, and Allen and his wife are Episcopalian, or as David says, "Catholic Lite." [laughter]. So we're very ecumenical.

DY: That's wonderful.

NK: I was interested, and it all goes back to teachers—when you have professors who are able to just ignite this spark. William Sessions was the person who did that for me.

TS: Well, mentors are certainly one of the things that we have been very interested in, in these interviews—who influenced people to become what they became.

NK: Well, certainly William Sessions, Dr. Sessions, was a major, major impact. And then when I went into my doctoral program, I became very interested in nineteenth-century novels and decided that I wanted to switch off and do something different. So I did Dickens [Charles Dickens], but Dickens with a twist. The topic of the dissertation was "Dickens' View of Female Sexuality."

TS: Oh my goodness.

DY: I knew it was Dickens, but I didn't know—weren't you just right out there on the cutting edge!

TS: Well, what was Dickens's view?

NK: I actually had to do a lot of—as I know you know, the nineteenth century, even though, on the surface [was] very repressed, very puritanical; but underneath this was probably the most active, sexual time in the history of the world, in England, at that time. There was a lot of pornography, and that was the unpleasant part of doing the research. You had to get into some of the Victorian pornography. But on the surface, you know, people think of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and *The Christmas Carol*. They don't ever think of Dickens in his own right, though.

TS: Are you saying Dickens was a dirty old man?

NK: Well, no, no [laughter]. But it was fascinating. There hadn't been a lot done about the female characterizations in Dickens.

DY: And his females are fascinating characters.

NK: And specifically with the sexual side. My mentor for that project was Dr. Biles [Jack I. Biles], and he was a real Dickens scholar. He and his wife would have me over for dinner, and he spent an enormous amount of time with me. So, he was the mentor for the dissertation. I don't think you ever outgrow the need for mentors, I really don't.

DY: I don't either. At every stage of your life.

NK: I had two very good ones.

TS: So were you thinking about doing nineteenth-century English literature at Kennesaw?

NK: For the rest of my life, yes, that's exactly what I had planned. I had finished the degree and loved teaching. That's what I always wanted to do my whole life was teach, and Betty [L.] Siegel, called me over—because it seems when people are successful in teaching they get other opportunities, which I'm not so sure is a good thing sometimes. But she convinced me that what I really wanted to do was to make this move into administration. To my credit, I did say, "No," to her on a Friday afternoon when she called me into her office, the old office. . . .

TS: The old Administration Building?

NK: Yes. I said, "I'm very flattered that you would want me to do this." What she was asking me to do was to move over part-time into the CAPS Center [Counseling and Advising Program Services Center] and create an advising program, which at that time didn't exist. She brought the concept of CAPS from Western Carolina [University].

DY: Was Ruth [G.] Hepler running the CAPS Center then?

NK: Ruth had just stepped down, and—remember John [J.] Stathas.

DY: Yes, I do.

NK: He had moved in as the director. So she had asked that I work with one of the counselors so that there would be somebody from academics and somebody from, at that time, Student Affairs. The person that was identified was Chuck Goodrum [Charles L. Goodrum, Jr.]; he was a counselor. I knew Chuck in passing, but you talk about two different styles, two different planets [laughter]! I became very fond of Chuck and we subsequently became great friends, but at the time I thought, "I don't know how this marriage is going to work!" When she first proposed it, I said, "No, I'm really not interested, I'm a teacher." She said, "Well, you come back and talk to me on Monday." She just wouldn't take no for an answer. So I went back, and she convinced me that there are other venues to teach—so that's why when I went back on Monday I said, "Well, I'll do it, but just give me one course off, and I'll do it in that." And then Dr. Stathas was dismissed rather quickly, and that's when I was asked to step in as acting director. So

that's how I made my way from the academic side, where I thought I would be happily teaching nineteenth-century novels for the rest of my days.

TS: Was this right after you got your doctorate?

NK: It was pretty soon after, yes. I did have some time teaching in the English department and I loved that, just absolutely loved it, and sometimes longingly think of the days when I was teaching. Understanding that that side and that job, you know, there were problems with that too. Frankly, I had graded so many freshman essays that I thought, I'm just about burned out on this.

TS: Right. I guess Dr. Greider at that time was chair of the English department and George [H.] Beggs is the dean?

NK: Yes. Well, I was here for that whole restructuring too; there were divisions—when we made the move from divisions, and George was the head of the Social Sciences division and Dr. Greider was head of the Humanities—and then when we were organized into schools, which later became colleges, Dr. Beggs was named dean of the whole division that included social sciences and the humanities.

TS: Right. Did he play any role in your moving into administration?

NK: You know, once I got over being terrified of him, and I have known George and Rosemary for a lot of years because they go to the same church I go to, Marietta First Baptist—John Greider actually goes to that church; it's sort of a Kennesaw outpost. I had known George, even though I would never, at the time, have called him George. You just didn't do that. And I still to this day have a little bit of a problem.

DY: I can't do that. I have to call him Dr. Beggs.

NK: But he was instrumental. He sort of helped to underscore what Dr. Siegel had said to me about, "Just because you're a teacher, you can teach in administration, you just have a different classroom." He was very instrumental. He was always really supportive of me, very supportive. I was blessed to have people to work with that always helped me along with whatever I needed, and that made it easier.

TS: This is your jump to full-time administration when you become the acting director of CAPS?

NK: I became the acting director of CAPS, still holding onto the thought that once they did the search and had a full time CAPS director that I would go back to the English department. So, I considered myself on loan to CAPS, and Chuck and I put together this advising program.

TS: You must have learned to work together, then [laughter]!

NK: Oh, we learned to work together, and we were always the odd couple because—I'm very task oriented and very detailed, and he's just all over the map. It drove me crazy, initially, and I'm sure I drove him equally crazy because I would come in and say, "Okay, we've got to map this out; we've got to have this done by this date." And he would say, "Oh, Nancy, that just makes my head hurt. You've just kind of got to take it as it comes."

TS: He's almost stereotypically what you would expect a counselor to be.

NK: Oh, absolutely. On the Myers-Briggs [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator], he's a very strong "P," if you know anything about the Myers-Briggs; he's off the chart with the "P," and I'm off the chart with the "J."

DY: Me too.

NK: I just am. But it was a real educational experience for me, and it actually prepared me as I moved up in administration and had to work with so many different types of people. I do think those days of working with Chuck were good for me.

DY: Not to mention John, I mean, it's baptism by fire; you've just got all these personalities.

NK: Yes, and George Beggs. They're all very different.

TS: How many years did you run the CAPS program?

NK: Oh goodness, they did the search.

DY: Did they bring anybody in at all, Nancy? I don't remember that they did.

NK: I don't think they did because the staff over there said, "Things are going really well; why don't you just let Nancy stay?" Dr. Siegel called me in and said, "You've started some really good initiatives over there, and I just want you to stay and carry this out."

DY: Who was your staff then, other than Chuck?

NK: Chuck was there; I had a woman in the career placement, and she just didn't work out.

DY: Was that Sybil [Meyers]?

NK: No, Sybil is not until much later in the Student Development Center. No, this was Cynthia somebody, she just was not what we needed. She was there, Chuck was there, I actually hired Bob Mattox [Robert J. Mattox], he was not there.

TS: Was Inez [P.] Morgan still there?

NK: Inez was there—and Inez is just a dear, dear soul. Part of the reason, I think, that Betty asked me—I’m being brutally honest in this interview, I hope that’s okay.

TS: That’s wonderful.

NK: Inez had never really gotten her head into the idea of the CAPS Center; bringing counseling in with advisement and placement. She wanted it to be a pure counseling center, and so none of the candidates, I think, were acceptable to her. She and I had a very good working relationship, and as long as I was there, it seemed to be she was able to work within the CAPS Center.

DY: You let her preserve the integrity of counseling, which is fine.

NK: Yes. And I have great respect for her, and probably more now than I ever had because I see so many students that I am convinced we desperately need counselors. Who else was over there? John Bauman was there for a time. That didn’t work out well, either. He predates you, I know.

DY: No, I was here with John Stathas.

NK: You remember John Stathas?

DY: I remember very well going through all of that. Oh yeah, I sure do.

TS: I guess Frank [F.] Wilson was long gone by then.

NK: He was gone.

DY: When did Bowman [O. Davis] kick in? Was that when we started KSU 101?

NK: Bowman—and Cary Turner—was really very instrumental. Let’s give credit where credit is due here. Cary and Ruth Hepler were on the very front wave when Betty came here and said she knew John [N.] Gardner, and she said, “I really want to look into this—back then it was the “Freshman Year Experience.” So, Cary and Ruth went to one of John’s workshops and came back all excited. And then I went to one, and we went to one of the first Freshman Year Experience conferences. In fact, I was just looking at my calendar this morning, or actually Lisa had asked me to baby-sit; and I said I’m not going to be able to do that because that’s the night that the twenty-fifth anniversary gala for the First Year Experience is going to be at the Carter Center, Sunday night, February 26<sup>th</sup>, twenty-five years. But I was on the front end of that and Bowman was very—and he was teaching in the biology department. He was very interested in doing research on KSC 101, to see if it really did make any difference. So Bowman and I, while I was still in the CAPS Center, worked together on the KSC 101. I adored working with Bowman Davis. He is a wonderful teacher and cares deeply about students, he really does. So that was a good chapter in the CAPS Center. And as I sometimes tell people, because I became very involved with the National Academic Advising Association and served as their

president, and really as a result of that have been very fortunate to go to a lot of campuses and speak about academic advising. I often say that advising was the bridge that brought me from an academic department, the English department, into administration. It was academic advising. Otherwise I would still be in the English department, which might have been a good thing. But I thoroughly love the diversity of what I've been able to do, and I have thoroughly enjoyed being able to go to so many other campuses.

TS: How far back does your involvement with the National Academic Advising Association go?

NK: I joined the same time that Betty put me in CAPS, and said, in Betty's inimitable way—she's not a patient woman—she said, "I want this advisement program up and running in the fall." This was spring. And I said, "But you don't understand; I know nothing about creating an advising program." She said, "Well, I'm going to do two things: one, I'm going to bring in one of my friends"—who at the time was the president of Emporia State [University], where Lynn [Lendley C.] Black came from, Robert [E.] Glennen was the president. His area of interest, and really his research, had been in the field of advising. They had built a wonderful advising program at Emporia State. She said, "I'm going to have Bob Glennen come in and tell you everything you need to know. And then he will tell you what the National Association for Academic Advising is, and that's how you'll get up to speed." Bob Glennen came, and Bob who had also served as president of NACADA—and it took me a long time to figure out how they got National Academic Advising Association, the acronym NACADA. I'm still not sure I thoroughly understand.

TS: National—AC for Academic . . .

DY: Who created those acronyms [laughter]?

NK: Dr. Glennen did tell me, "As a matter of fact, the national conference is in Kansas City this year, and you need to go, you and Chuck both." So Chuck and I went to the first—and that was back, gosh, it must have been the late '80s; and after the conference was over we rented a car, and drove to Emporia State.

DY: Was this when Chuck sat in the half-lotus position?

NK: Yes, I looked over and there he was in the lotus position. I said—and this was before cruise control or any of that—I was terrified, absolutely terrified [laughter]. But we went and saw the advising center at Emporia State, and really the CAPS Center was modeled, to some extent, after that model.

DY: Oh, a physical location and place.

TS: I've got you down, off your website, as public college representative from '87 through '89.

NK: I was, right out of the shoot. That first meeting I went to, I made the mistake of going to one of the orientation sessions for new members; and there was a woman who was getting ready to retire from Georgia Southern. She was an old English professor and she was heading up their advising program. She sort of befriended me and took me under her wing.

DY: That's mentoring for you!

NK: And she said, "By the way, I'm nominating you for public college representative" [laughter]. I said, "But Barbara, this is my first meeting, I don't know anything." She said, "Oh well, you'll learn." So I was nominated, and then imagine my surprise when I was elected. I went to my first NACADA board meeting and from there just became very, very involved with that group. I remember, at the conference, being so incredibly impressed with the diversity of people there—and diversity—I'm using in the sense of where they came from: there were faculty members, there were administrators, there were graduate students. And the thing that struck me most—and Dede will know exactly what I'm talking about—I come out of the SAMLA [South Atlantic Modern Language Association], where people weren't nearly as generous about sharing their ideas. When I think about all those SAMLA meetings, I think about going in to hear a paper; and people would make a big display of packing up and tramping out of the room, and this poor person who is standing up there reading a paper, and people are just tromping out like, "You can't tell me a thing I need to know, and I'm so bored, I'm leaving." The culture in NACADA was so different; it was a very sharing, very—

DY: Interdisciplinary, I bet.

NK: Very interdisciplinary and very civil. I was struck by the civility. SAMLA was a wonderful, wonderful organization, but the culture is different; and it's very much focused on the one discipline, or a narrow range of disciplines. And NACADA was all over the map, with liberal arts, business people, the sciences, social sciences, math English, everybody. It was a nice change.

TS: So already at this point, maybe out of desperation, your scholarship is changing, and your trying to learn how to . . .

NK: As I'm trying to learn how to do what I—talk about applied research [laughter]! This was about as applied as you could make it. And when Bowman and I were tapped to head up the KSC 101, it became very important that I get up to speed on research in the field of freshmen. I've been doing some research, lately, with millennial students, and I'm thinking back to those days . . .

TS: Millennial students mean what?

NK: Those are the current . . .

TS: Oh, those that have come into the college since the turn of the millennium?

- NK: Yes, the ones that we're seeing now as our traditional aged freshman; it's a different group. It's a different group from the Gen X. I guess I found that very fascinating, and if you're going to have a program for first-year students, you do need to know something about the students that you're serving, so Bowman and I spent a good deal of time.
- DY: Where did KSC 101 come out of? Was that birthed there where you were?
- NK: It didn't have an academic home at the time; we sort of attached it finally to the Communication Department. Then after Bowman and I worked with it, I think Hugh Hunt was the next one who came in; and Hugh headed it up for awhile. But without question the first movers, so to speak, were Cary Turner and Ruth Hepler.
- DY: KSC 101 had already been established when Ruth and Cary stepped in and began teaching it?
- NK: No, it had not. They established it, and then recruited me and people like me—they brought John to campus to do one of his famous—back then it was a two-day workshop: it was all day Saturday, Saturday night, and Sunday.
- DY: Oh, John [N.] Gardner.
- NK: John Gardner. It was the first one that he did here. I remember going and thinking that this is just a whole new world; I feel like I've landed in a different. . . .
- TS: Now this is happening simultaneously with you developing the advisement program?
- NK: Yes, and see the two dovetailed nicely. Then of course CAPS was also involved in creating the orientation program for new students; so all of this just fit together like pieces in a puzzle: orientation, advising—the focus in CAPS, as it remains today. We changed what we called the students; back then it was the “undecided,” or “undeclared,” now we call them “exploratory” because that has a more positive connotation. “Undecided” sounds like you can't make up your mind.
- TS: I wonder if we could explain for somebody who is listening to this tape a hundred years from now or reading the transcript; we've always done advisement where we've had five million students coming in, and we'd help them make out their schedule and that kind of stuff, but you're talking about something very different, aren't you?
- NK: Very different.
- TS: Can you explain how it's different?
- NK: In fact, there's been an evolution even since the time that I'm going to describe. At the outset at Kennesaw, advising was synonymous with scheduling; we need to pick out your courses for what you need to take, when. That was very much a clerical function. And

you may remember in the old gym we had tables set up, and people would come up, and it was a very clerical function. One of the first articles—and it was this seminal article on advising—by Crookston [Burns B. Crookston] is the man’s name—and Crookston had written an article about something he called developmental advising, and it has nothing to do with developmental studies.<sup>1</sup> What it means is that advising—and if you’re familiar with Arthur [W.] Chickering, and Chickering’s “Seven Vectors of Development”—students come into college at different levels, different stages of maturation. Some of them need more help, more assistance; others come and they pretty much know where they’re going: what their goals are, why they’re here, what they want to do. But the great majority of college students, particularly college freshmen, do not have a clue. They don’t come in with this stamped across their forehead, “Who am I.” But the whole idea of their identity—they just know that college is where most of their friends were going after high school and that their parents wanted them to go to college. The idea of why am I here: what is it that a college education is really going to do for me, what are my goals, and how do my career goals, my personal goals—how do those match up with selecting a major? How do I get in the right major that fits with my aptitudes, my interests? So developmental advising really is about helping students develop intellectually, emotionally, and not telling them—it’s a partnership. It’s a shared partnership; the advisor is not telling them, but working with the student to help the student really assume the responsibility.

DY: So there’s a counseling component there.

NK: There’s a strong counseling component.

DY: You’re not there with the clerical.

NK: The way advising has now evolved in the next level, if you will—we went from just seeing it as purely clerical, and frankly, in a 1969 handbook of college and university administration, academic advising is defined as assisting students in selecting their courses. It centers around periods of registration, period. Obviously, faculty aren’t real interested in that; why would you be? So there’s a shift from seeing it as purely clerical scheduling to a developmental function, which has more of a mentoring, counseling view. The new development, the new phase, currently—NACADA, which now has close to 10,000 members, so it’s one of the largest professional associations in the country—the shift is to seeing advising as a companion piece to teaching. What advising really is, is teaching. I’ll give you one specific example. Students, particularly freshmen and sophomores, don’t see any connection among the courses in Gen Ed [general education]. They don’t see that that has anything—what does English possibly have to do with history, how is that related to science? I think they sometimes think we just put things in a hat and threw it up in the air and what fell out on the table that will be Gen Ed. Unfortunately, a lot of advisors have played into that image, and they’ll say things to students like, “You need to get these Gen Ed courses out of the way,” not really realizing

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<sup>1</sup>Burns B. Crookston, “A Developmental View of Academic Advising As Teaching,” *Journal of College Student Personnel* 13 (January 1972), 12-17.

that Gen Ed is the foundation. But the teaching component in advising comes in in helping students understand how skills in one of these areas carries over and how it all fits together. Another example of the teaching component is helping students get outside themselves to see that there's a much bigger world. It's always troubled me to hear some of our students say, "Well, I never cross the river," meaning the Chattahoochee [River]. The advisor, as teacher, is really now what you read about a lot in the advising community.

DY: This is a wonderful timeline. Okay, '69 is the sort of clerical thing; when did Crookston's article, when was that published?

NK: Crookston's article was '72, and so it was in the '70s that the shift was occurring that there is a developmental component to advising. And it was really in the '90s that people were looking more at advising as teaching. The advisor as teacher is somebody who is coordinating a lot and helping students understand that there are a lot of experiences like Study Abroad, like co-ops and internships, like extracurricular activities.

TS: Service learning and all that?

NK: Yes, but they're not simply something to pad a resume; you're really learning things from those experiences. The advisor, as teacher, helps them coordinate all of these learning experiences.

DY: I've got two questions here and I think they're very separate: one is, the connection with our KSC course that has evolved into what we have now with KSU Learning Communities [KSU 1102]—maybe that's a good way to chart where we are as an institution in terms of this—and all of this is under your guidance.

NK: Well, we came light years from—well, one thing we did right though—and we were Bowman and I—and I remember Cary was very strong in this—a lot of schools, when they put in those freshmen seminars, they put them in as a pass-fail, maybe as a one-hour course. We said, "No, if it's worth enough to be in the academic curriculum, it's got to have some rigor to it." Back in the quarter system it was a five-hour course—well, you can't just be giving away five hours. One of the things that Bowman and I worked very hard on doing was pulling together a common syllabus—meaning that there were certain components: there needed to be a research component, the library component—now keeping in mind that I came out of the English Department, so it was really important to me, and Bowman out of sciences; we cared very much about students being able to read and write, to have some critical thinking skills. Those were the kinds of things that we thought this course needed to do, as well as give students the tools they needed to be successful college students. Of course, it would not have been the great success and the overnight sensation had Bowman or I written it; but if you're familiar with Richard [J.] Light—a wonderful book—you really need to read this book; [it's] excellent. He is a Harvard professor, and about five years ago he had been doing a huge research project and had lots of graduate assistants working with him. They were interviewing college students, not just the Harvard students, but community colleges, thousands of college

students; and the research ended up in a book. The title of the book is *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* [published, (hardcover) March 19, 2001], and it is for anybody who is teaching college students today that would be an essential book to read.

DY: Maybe I need to do that through CETL.

NK: Yes, absolutely.

DY: Do a CETL book study.

TS: When did this book come out?

NK: In 2001, five years ago. I went up to UGA [University of Georgia]; he was one of their distinguished lecturers. Because he's a Harvard professor, he, of course, had far more credibility than somebody from Kennesaw State or UGA; and he took to the speaking circuit; and he was, as I say, the distinguished lecturer at the University of Georgia. David and I drove up there to hear him, and I was so impressed, not only by what he said—I had already read the book—but by his demeanor, and his presentation skills. I went up to him afterwards and told him that I thought he really needed to be a keynote speaker for NACADA, which he ended up doing the very next year. But one of the things he said in that lecture, and he says this in the book, is that going into this research about what matters most—what do students really get out of college—he made the statement that he always thought, dealing as he does with Harvard students, that advising would be worthless, because any student who is smart enough to get into college can pick up a college catalog and read and see what you need to take. After doing this study, this research over a period of years, he said he came to the conclusion that a truly good academic advisor is perhaps the most critical link for a student being successful. Now, the advisor, who is also the teacher, who is also the mentor—I'm not talking simply about advising as scheduling, but when you get to know your students and you are able to help them see the value of a college education—that this isn't just, as Betty [Siegel] so often says, a ticket to a trade. This is a much broader and enlarging view of your life. So Richard Light was very instrumental in more modern times, for me, because I have gotten to know him by way of bringing him to NACADA, and he's just a wonderful, wonderful guy. The things that the students told the people who interviewed them—one of the things that seems to make the biggest difference in whether or not a college student is successful has nothing to do with your SAT scores; it has everything to do with if you learn how to manage your time well. That's another thing that an advisor/mentor can help students understand. He also says to Harvard freshmen right out of the gate, "Your assignment this first year is to find a faculty member that you can relate to and that you can identify as a mentor. From a practical standpoint, down the road you're going to have somebody to write you a letter of reference; but you're also going to have someone who will help guide you through, teach you how to make decisions, help you put all these experiences together, and see what this is that you're getting."

DY: It's absolutely true.

NK: It is.

DY: I know that from Ruthie [Yow] and her cohorts. Those who found a mentor—and it often happened in the classroom.

NK: It makes all the difference.

DY: The teacher that they connect with intellectually—yes, oh yes.

NK: And then I was also very blessed—as part of my role in NACADA I got to know Virginia [N.] Gordon; she's now retired from Ohio State University. She has probably written more about academic advising—in fact NACADA named an award after her, the Virginia N. Gordon Excellence in Advising Award, and she's just a phenomenal woman, and she took me under her wing. I've just been very blessed to have a series of great mentors. From my own experience with that, I think I understand why that's so important for our students.

TS: You actually won the Virginia Gordon Award.

NK: I did, and I was so thrilled. That's, I think, my favorite award of all time; simply because I know her. She didn't have anything to do with the selection; it's done by a selection committee—but she just exemplifies—when I think of someone who is a true educator, very intellectual, but at the same time extraordinarily approachable. I've heard John Gardner say before: she probably knows more about college freshmen than anybody who ever lived. She really does, she's just phenomenal.

TS: You were president of NACADA, for two years I guess, '97 to '99.

NK: Yes. Nobody told me this, but being president of a large, national association is like having another job. Especially in the days when e-mail was very much out there, and in my column in the newsletter I always included my e-mail address. People would just feel free, [from] all over the country, to e-mail me, and say, “What are you going to do about this? My president doesn't get it.” But it was a good experience, it was. For someone like me, who, because of personal circumstances, was very place-bound—I was not mobile; I could not have left Kennesaw—so for somebody like me, being so involved in that national association, and then also after my presidency being part of the consultants' bureau—and going to lots of campuses—I've lost track of [how many]—for somebody who was so place-bound, this gave me a wonderful opportunity to really see other [programs]. I frequently will do an assessment of an institution's first-year experience programs, and Betty [Siegel]'s been very supportive of my doing that because she says, “What you do, yes, you're doing it for that institution, but you always pick up things that you then bring back here.” So it's kind of what she calls “boundary monitoring.” It's really true; you go out there and you see things and you bring them back.

DY: Sure.

- TS: Absolutely. Plus, you're getting Kennesaw's name out to the world too.
- NK: Well, you know, I do think being mobile like that has been a good thing, and certainly the person who wrote the book on that is Betty Siegel. How many times do any of us go to a conference or anywhere and . . . "Kennesaw State, oh, that's that school that . . .?"
- TS: Right. So going back fifteen or twenty years back, you started out with CAPS and you got into that through advisement, and then you moved from there to the First Year Experience.
- NK: And, then, I guess the next pivotal point would be the year of the "New View of the Future" [New View of the Future Strategic Plan] and that I believe was in '96. What Dr. Siegel decided to do—you know, her first View of the Future when she first came to Kennesaw, and she had Helen [S.] Ridley head that up.
- DY: We interviewed Helen and got the whole scoop.
- NK: She did all of that. This is "Son of View of the Future," the New View of the Future. Betty decided that instead of having one person head this up—because, keep in mind we had grown from the '70s to 1996, '95 or '96.
- TS: '96 is when we got university status.
- NK: Yes. But I think that was also when we were doing New View. So the people that she asked to head up New View—Flora [B.] Devine was not here at the time, but she was an ACE [American Council on Education] Fellow.
- DY: Right. Was she an ACE Fellow here?
- NK: Yes, she came to us from Georgia Perimeter [College]. Most ACE Fellows go to another school to do their work. Well, I had just been named an AASCU [American Association of State Colleges and Universities] Fellow. And AASCU, likewise, you usually go to a different campus. Well, keep in mind, I'm not a real mobile person here, and so when I was selected for this, I said, "Well, Dr. Siegel, I don't think I can just pick up and move off somewhere." She said, "Oh no, I want you to stay here, and I already know what your project is going to be." I said, "Okay, would you share with me?" She said, "You're going to work with Flora Devine." I never had seen her before. "She's an ACE Fellow who will be based here, and you and Flora are going to head up the New View of the Future—which is a year-long strategic planning for future directions." She later then pulled in Kurt Daw [Curtis D.] who was a Presidential Fellow. So the three of us—I've seemed to have had an interesting time of working with people who are very different from me and bringing new things to be. You remember Chuck Goodrum? Well, Kurt—
- DY: Wasn't he an ACE Fellow?

NK: No.

DY: He was a Presidential Fellow?

TS: What does ACE stand for?

NK: ACE is American Council on Education. AASCU is the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. So you've got these three fellows, and what we did, good heavens, was we ran more focus groups than you can ever imagine, and wrote up a report based on the input we had had from focus groups. We ended up with five themes that we thought were going to be very important for the future. One was an emphasis on student success; that was what we were hearing from everybody. Really, why we exist is to help our students be successful—not only in the classroom, but to prepare them to go out and be successful in the real world, successful citizens, all of that. So that was one of the main themes. Another main theme was that we really need to pay attention to technology. A third theme was diversity, and by diversity we said we needed to expand this; it's not simply black-white, it's that the world is going to become increasingly global. So, we were a little bit ahead of our time on that.

DY: I'm hearing the strategic plan coming through now.

NK: Yes. And then another emphasis was on community service and being engaged in the community. Is that four?

DY: That's four.

TS: You've got student success, technology, diversity, and service.

NK: A fifth one was leadership, an emphasis on leadership. You're hearing the seeds of ILEC too.

TS: ILEC meaning . . . ?

NK: The Institute for Leadership, Ethics and Character. So, unbeknownst to me, we're putting forward this plan to the president, which she very much liked.

DY: These are the same concepts that came through in our interview with her.

TS: So I guess maybe something for the historical record: do these things start with Betty Siegel, or are these ideas that your New View of the Future is presenting?

NK: Actually, they bubbled up in all of these focus groups, and we did focus groups with faculty, students, staff, administrators, and it went on for months. So these were the things we were hearing. Well, she wanted to set about—and many of these things we now have, really, they've become part of the institutional culture. And along

with this, at the same time that this was going on—you may remember that our Division for Student Affairs, you remember Paul [A.] Benson, the vice president for the division—he did not come out of an academic background. So, what Dr. Siegel started, and this was her idea, she said, “You know, what I really think we need to do, we need a division that pulls together not simply . . .”—Student Affairs at that time was pretty much—it had student life, it had the clubs and organizations and all of that; but it didn’t really connect with anything on the academic side.

TS: When you say he didn’t have an academic background, what do you mean?

NK: Well, he obviously had degrees, but his Ed.D. was in Higher Ed [Education] Administration; it was not discipline-based, so I don’t think he had the same appreciation—

DY: That English and history people do [laughter]!

NK: In fact, I know not! So there were some issues. He was having his problems too, at the time, and subsequently was sent over to work in Athletics. Dr. Siegel—it’s history repeating itself here—much as she turned to me after Stathas left the CAPS Center—she said, “Will you just be a place holder, and be the acting vice president; just until we can do a national search?” Because we had to do a national search.

TS: About what year was this?

NK: This was probably ’97. So in the interim she had decided that what she really wanted to do was some restructuring and do away with this old Division for Student Affairs, and make it more centered on one of these themes. The number one theme that came out of the New View of the Future was an emphasis on student success. So she said, “I’m going to name this new division Student Success,” and then at the same time there was a gentleman who came in and did a workshop on enrollment management. One of the things that he also did was an assessment of our enrollment offices; and one of the things that he noticed right off—and it wouldn’t take a rocket scientist to notice this—we had done something not very smart. We had our Admissions office reporting in Jim Fleming’s [James A.] area, Advancement; we had our Registrar’s office reporting in Academic Affairs; we had our financial aid office reporting in Student Affairs. They never talked to each other; there was no coordination whatsoever.

TS: What was the logic of having Admissions report to Advancement?

NK: Well, I wasn’t around when that was instituted. That happened while I was happily in the English Department. I think Jim Fleming wanted it; he wanted admissions, and so that’s how it happened. Well, it made no sense. So what this consultant recommended was that we pull our key enrollment offices together—a novel idea—so that they could talk to each other, and be on the same wavelength.

- TS: How is it at other colleges?
- NK: Now, today, you're seeing more and more VP's for Enrollment Management and they have all those grouped together.
- TS: It just sounds so commonsensical that you wonder why we didn't.
- NK: We don't always do things according to common sense in Higher Ed—y'all know that; we just don't. So much of organizational charts in Higher Ed have to do with personalities and politics, and that's not in the best interest. So, two things were happening here. This consultant that had been brought in to look at how we were—because we already knew that enrollment was getting ready to just go through the roof, and how do we do this in a logical way. Out of that, Dr. Siegel came up with this new division, which was Student Success, which brought in all of the things that had been under Student Affairs, but then folded in the enrollment offices. One of the key things she put in the ad was that the person heading this division needed to have an academic background and to have had time in Academic Affairs, but also time in Student Affairs. Now, keep in mind I had no interest in applying for this, really. But I had been doing some of this in the short-term interim; mainly what I was trying to do was prop-up Paul. But when it was advertised, and the way the ad was written, it sounded fascinating. With some encouragement from some of the people in the division, they said, "You know, you really need to apply." But that was a real national search, and they brought in four people, in addition to me, to interview.
- DY: That must have been so stressful!
- NK: It was horribly stressful. And when we were in the old Administration Building, they would bring the people in to show them the office and of course, there I sat [laughter]! It was very stressful, it really was. But, I ended up getting the job.
- DY: Of course.
- NK: No, it was not a shoo-in.
- DY: Oh, I'm sure it wasn't. But you were so clearly perfect.
- NK: There were very few people in the country—most people I have discovered, either have a pure academic background or they have a pure student affairs background, and there's also some real tension on most campuses between those two. The student affairs people sneer at the academicians and say, "They can't get their heads out of the clouds. They don't know what life is about." And the academicians look at these fun and games people and say, "What do they know about higher education?" So you get this tension.
- DY: This was an issue when we first began the CAPS Center, wasn't it, where it would be placed, Nancy?

NK: Right, it was.

DY: And Ruth [Hepler] wanted it under the academic side of the house?

NK: Right. And somehow it ended up on the Student Affairs side, but then when I moved into it, in establishing this advising program; what I decided right out of the gate, the best way to run this was to get faculty to come to the CAPS Center and work a few hours a week. My lure to them was we will do all the clerical stuff, we'll make all the appointments, we'll have the advising rooms filled with every resource you could possibly need. All you need to do is to show up with your expertise and work with our students. Where I thought I was going to lose it was when I said to them, "Now, we are going to evaluate this." They looked at me like, "Well, first you tell me you want me to come over and give my time to do this, and now you're telling me you're going to let these students evaluate me?" So I struck an agreement with them and I said, "Nobody will see these; they'll go to you, and then I'll get a copy." The end of the story is they were so incredibly good that they would come to me and say, "Nancy, I want you to send a copy of my evaluations to my chair and my dean, and oh, by the way, why don't you just send them to the president." Because students were so pleased to have somebody sit down in this room with them for thirty minutes and give them undivided attention that they just gave glowing evaluations. Glowing! So that, I think, was the real success of the CAPS Center early on was having the advising program staffed with faculty.

DY: Do you remember who some of your key faculty were?

NK: Oh, I do, of course I do. Beverly [F.] Mitchell was an absolute jewel—she was there every single [opportunity]. Bowman did it. Joanne [E.] Fowler was just a regular, Chris Ziegler [Christine B.], and I remember being so pleased, I didn't know she was doing this; but you remember that *Reaching through Teaching* publication we had? I opened it up one day, and there was an article by Chris Ziegler that she had titled "Hats Off to CAPS." She talked about how if she had not gone over there, she would never have known about the resources that are there; and [she] talked about her experience being trained as an advisor for CAPS. I made it clear to these faculty: I don't intend you to stay here till death; just cycle in for a year or two, and then cycle back to your department, and we'll get a new bunch. So there was turnover, but then I had those absolutely indispensable people, like Beverly Mitchell, who is just a wonderful advisor.

DY: Well, isn't this the model of the business school?

NK: Yes, it's the model that the business school used; science and math have tried to put it into place, but the business college has been very successful with that. Nancy [A.] Prochaska advised with us in CAPS. The idea was, they then take it back and create their own.

DY: Well, we sure need some in the English department. We're still back there in 1968 with the clerical model.

NK: Well, David [King] mentioned to me the other day that Mike Tierce [Michael T.] had said something to him about wanting him to get more involved in advising in the department

DY: Well, that's a good thing to hear.

NK: David told me, "I'm going to live your life!" That's not a bad thing.

DY: No, that's not a bad thing.

NK: But yes, advising on this campus is still very uneven and spotty. We've had those faculty who are just absolute saints, and who draw students to them like magnets; and then we have people—well, I'm frankly of the opinion that not everyone needs to be advising.

TS: Right.

NK: Particularly freshmen.

DY: Well, students will select.

TS: What's a profile of a good advisor, do you think?

DY: That's a good question.

NK: I think the characteristics are, as I frequently say in presentations that I do on advising: there are three things that students really care about it, and then you can transpose it into three questions. If you answer these questions right—the first thing they care about is accessibility—if they can't find advisors . . . . The second thing they care about is knowledge and correct information, because an advisor can do a student great harm if they're giving out wrong advice. You can add years to their degree, and money, the whole nine yards. The third thing is they want somebody who really does care about them, who listens and who cares. So, the three questions become, "Are you there, do you know, and do you care?" Any one of those things taken out of the equation—you can know everything, and if you're cold as ice, nobody's going to come see you. Or you could be warm and fuzzy and a delight to talk to, but if you don't know anything or you're not there, so what?

DY: Or if you're the only one students have access to, and they don't remember your name when you go back . . .

NK: That's right. So that's the three—when you ask what makes a good advisor, it's being accessible; it's knowing the institution; knowing your field. What becomes particularly important for advisors of upper level students is that, obviously you know your field, but you know something about career opportunities, [and] that you know about graduate schools. You've got to know what lies on the other side.

DY: That's what they really need.

NK: Yes, they do. And they need help much like first year students need assistance in coming in and acclimating to college. Students that are leaving us need to be acclimated and need help with the transitional issues of graduate school, the world of work, that whole thing.

TS: We didn't have the facilities we have now; the whole time that you were directing CAPS were you on the second floor of Pilcher [Building]?

NK: Yes, that's where I was.

TS: That's where the History & Philosophy Department and the Human Services Department are now.

NK: Right.

TS: I guess I didn't think about it back then but that one-story Administration Building that we used to have must not have been real attractive to people coming in to apply for jobs anyway.

NK: No, we were like rats in a maze.

DY: Back then with the bushes too, it was dark.

NK: It was not a pleasant environment.

DY: It was fun in there, though; I mean the energy was nice.

NK: Where my office was, as you first walked in the door, my office was the first office on the right; so we became sort of the information center for the entire university for everybody who walked in the front door. It frankly took some adjustment, on my part, when we moved over here [Kennesaw Hall] and up on the fourth floor. I thought, "My Lord, I'm just cut off from the world." I was always used to everybody stopping, and you have to work to find this. This isn't right inside the front door.

TS: What you did with advisement and the First Year Experience, would you say those were the main things that came out of your time and direction?

NK: Yes, the orientation program and also one of the other things we did, and I thought this was a good thing to do—the old term "placement"—universities don't "place" students in the job market any more; and so Career Services seemed to me to be a big enough deal to sort of put it free standing. Still, and even today, it's down on the second floor. CAPS is here, and Career Services is right next to it because the counselors do a lot of career counseling and administer a lot of the surveys and interest inventories, and all that; but

the Career Services Center actually does the—I hate to use this term—but the “real world” part of it. You know, they’ve got the contacts with employers; they have the intern and co-op sites, and all of that.

TS: When did Karen [B.] Andrews [Director of Career Services Center] come in?

NK: She’s been here awhile [since 1988] and has really done a very good job. It’s been over sixteen years because she told me the other day, she’s now the oldest Career Services director in the system because the woman at Georgia State is leaving.

DY: So the cycles have gone almost in decades, haven’t they?

NK: Yes.

DY: Well, is this a good time to ask where we’re headed—our “where are we headed” question?

TS: Sure.

NK: Where are we headed, who knows? Where are we headed from—let me clarify—do you mean the institution?

TS: Well, why don’t we just say where are we headed as far as Student Success and Enrollment Services?

NK: Okay. I’ve got to back up three years and say three years ago is when we started our new trajectory, and you’re right, Dede, it’s been in kind of decades. The new trajectory was when we made the decision to add Residence Life. Residence Life has, in all my years here at Kennesaw—and I’ve seen a lot of changes, and I’ve seen a lot of things that had great impact—nothing has impacted our enrollment and the campus culture like adding Residence Life. Particularly, now, the first year that we added it (and I still can’t believe I let them do this to me; I just cannot believe it; I must have been stupid), we added no professional staff. We were told, “Well, Nancy, you and Kathy [Katherine E.] Alday [Director of Student Life Center] can just do this.” We added not one position, and it just about killed me. That was the hardest year of my career because opening housing—and one of the areas in my division is the judiciary; and one of the things that we had to do right out of the gate was have a hard line, or it would have gotten away from us. We had high school students, we had Georgia Tech students, people thinking this is party central. So, we had to really establish a hard line. I was averaging six or seven hearings a day.

DY: You had time to do nothing else.

NK: Oh, it was horrendous. So after that first year, we just lived through it; I was working 24-7 and I said, “I can’t do this any more.” We did add—and I now have, I think, the best director of Residence Life in the entire university system. Michael Sanseviro is solid gold.

DY: He's wonderful. He comes down to our CETL stuff.

NK: My life has been so much better. And he, of course, has added some assistant directors—coordinators and we now have fifty-plus RAs [Resident Assistants], and so we have a real staff like you're supposed to have. But what has changed in the culture, and the reason that has made such an impact, is that we have moved to the Learning Communities model; and the Learning Communities are a perfect example of collaboration between Student Success and, specifically, Residence Life. We also have a CAPS counselor, who lives on-site up here at the University Village with the freshmen, which has been so helpful. So it's a collaboration among our side and University Studies and Academic Affairs. I mean, it's like you just can't tell where one starts and the other one leaves off. Well, three things had happened that have changed the student body here. One, in an attempt to do something about the enrollment that was a runaway train, we did raise standards. And what that did was begin to bring in a better-prepared student body. We phased out, all but totally phased out, Developmental Studies. Now, we still have remnants for the non-traditional students; but that's a thing of the past, so if I were going to do a doctorate today and said, "I just want to teach English 099 [0099, Writing for Academic Purposes]," well, good luck, because there are not enough courses to teach. So, that happened, and then the Learning Communities in Residence Life. What we're seeing is that's made us much more attractive to a traditional market. Students that normally would not have given Kennesaw a second thought, they come out here, they see the campus, the housing is phenomenal, and they see that we've raised standards, and they think, "This would be a good place to go."

TS: It must be affecting even those that don't live in the residence halls.

NK: Oh it is because it's more like a real university experience.

TS: To be on campus twenty-four hours a day is to be the real experience?

NK: Yes. So we're seeing—in fact, I was meeting with Joe [F.] Head just this morning, and he was telling me about the increase in freshmen applications. And he said the thing that's really striking is that they're applying so much earlier; and it's because they're afraid if they don't get their stuff in, they won't get in, or they won't have a place to live. And so the days of, "Well, if I can't go anywhere else, I'll go to Kennesaw,"—those days are gone. That's very exciting. That's the next wave. You said, "Where are we going from here?" We will add more housing, so we will become more residential. We will always have—and I'm very partial, not partial—but I love the non-traditional students because I remember teaching them and how they are just so dear. You have a handful of the adult students, and it makes all the difference; it just makes all the difference. So, we'll always have those, being in a metropolitan area, and I've given them my word. We have a group called ALSO that's the Adult Learner Student Organization; and I have given them my word that we will always remember them. And that's one of the big things that comes out of the Student Development Center that Jerome Ratchford directs. The Lifelong Learning Center and the Adult Learner Programs—absolute national model,

it really truly is. You mentioned Sybil [C.] Meyers—she was over there for a while; and she really helped start the Adult Learner Programs, that was her great passion: older students. Valerie Jersey was there for a while. Now John Selmon, who actually did his doctorate and his dissertation was in the area of adult learners. He's head of that now and he's just phenomenal.

TS: Who was the one before John Selmon?

NK: Valerie Jersey.

DY: John Selmon? I don't know John.

NK: He may be in his second year. He's an African-American man, probably forty, but just incredible. And another area over there, another young person, younger than John, Nicole [A.] Phillips.

DY: I know Nicole very well. We've done a lot of work this year.

NK: She's over there and she's really done a good job, she's wonderful. That center over there has been incredibly good for support services for specific populations.

DY: It also models diversity at this institution.

NK: For international students, the minority students, the adult learners, the disabled services, all of that. So what's on the horizon? I cannot even fathom the culture shift that will happen on this campus with a new president because a president sets the tone; and this university, just by virtue of the length of her tenure, bears the stamp of Betty Siegel more than any other college or university I can think of. You might say, well, Georgia State when Noah Langdale [Jr.] was there. We're going to have a completely different—and I think now though, what we are already seeing and hearing; and it's kind of funny to me because it's the things that we've been talking about and thinking about and working with in the Division for SSES [Student Success and Enrollment Services] the whole time we've been in existence. But it's like the legislature and the Board of Regents and the central office suddenly discovered this thing called *retention*; and our retention rates are really pretty good for a university like Kennesaw. Where we need help is in the graduation rates; those are not. So we're going to see more emphasis on the accountability of getting students out of here; we're going to see, I think, a growth in the athletic program. I don't know when we'll have football, but if you've been to a basketball game—I used to think there wouldn't be anybody over there; well there are, it's amazing.

DY: They're wonderful.

TS: It's a pretty place to hold a basketball game.

NK: And with the new Social Science building, if you just look at the physical plant, I mean the English building, we were all just cramped up in [a small facility]—so if you just look at the physical facilities, I think that has mirrored what has happened. We’ve come from a very small, little two-year school when I was riding around that Sunday afternoon and stumbled on virtually three buildings, and thinking, “Well, I’ve taught high school English, so I can teach there. It doesn’t look any better than my high school where I taught.”

DY: Where did you teach high school?

NK: I taught at Lakeshore High School in College Park. This was pre-dating the years when they hired “special-ed” teachers, but they had a class like what we would call now, “special-ed.” This was my first year of teaching, and four weeks into the year the teacher in that class had a nervous breakdown, and had to leave. And the principal, rather than look at who has the most experience in working with students like this, [looked at] who has the least seniority, you know, last hired, and it was me. I mean, I was a child. I graduated from college three months ago. So he put me in that class. I probably learned more about teaching in that year than I ever had, because what I had planned to teach, and had these wonderful lesson plans in my head, and thought, “Here’s what I’m going to teach”—the problem was they were the wrong students for that [laughter]. So I had to totally scrap what I had planned to do, sort of meet them where they were, and re-adjust my thinking to what I need to do. It was a huge learning experience.

DY: So it’s a paradigm for you, isn’t it?

NK: Yes. Here I am, I don’t know anything about doing this, but I will learn on the job. And, “Oh, by the way, “You will be in charge.” I guess that’s kind of been how this whole odyssey has developed; I’m a fairly quick study. But I also think—and it sounds like a Hallmark greeting card, but it just happens to be the truth—if you get good people around you, and you have a team approach to things—if I’d been doing this by myself, I would have been a colossal failure; I would have fallen on my face. But if you get people that know their pieces, and you put them all together, and this person helps this person and it becomes a team effort, it really does work.

DY: I would also say that you’ve been following your bliss, too.

NK: I’ve had a great time.

DY: You’ve always loved and cared about students.

NK: I do, I love students. Now, unfortunately, I do have to interact a good deal now with students who have problems, because of the judiciary. I’ve handled academic dishonesty cases, which are on the rise. I don’t enjoy that, although, I try to use that as a teachable moment. It’s not just about handing down punishment; it’s what can you learn from this experience. Also I work closely with student government, I work with SABAC.

- DY: Remind us what SABAC is.
- NK: That's the Student Activities and Budget Advisory Committee. They budget the student activities fees and approve new student organizations, so SABAC is an advisory committee to my office. I work closely with them. I work closely with the International Student Association, with AASA, with ALSO, with the Honor Societies.
- TS: Are you still working with the Golden Key [National Honor Society]?
- NK: Yes, I am. I was a chartering advisor to that group, and I just haven't been able to let them go. They're such good students. I still have a lot of student contact, and that pleases me. Then I get to do a lot of the guest speaking in classes, and particularly KSU 1101s, and I also work with the RA group. One of the things I'm most proud of—and this feeds into what is next in the future—we just set up the newest center in the division, which is sort of a visual of something that I am very committed to and always have been, which is the collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs. You would understand why that's important to me. Well, we have a visual, a person; we set up the center for student leadership and Brian [M.] Wooten is the director; but he's also a faculty member in University Studies on the tenure track. So, part of him is academic, but part of him, the Center for Student Leadership, is in SSES. He's working with the students and the fellows in that center, and the LINK [Leaders IN Kennesaw] students—they are phenomenal, unbelievable students. I also work with the Presidential Fellows. Charlie Bowen [Charles E.] is another example, he's Dean for Student Success, but he's also a faculty member; teaches graduate studies in the Ed. [Education] Leadership Department in the Bagwell College. I think that's important, and I hope when I leave this position—the thing that I would really not want to see is somebody come in and try to reshape this into a true student affairs division. That would just break my heart.
- TS: It's going back to what it was.
- NK: It's going back, and I would not want that to happen.
- DY: Well, you have to have the marriage with the academic side, or you're not going to have faculty buying in.
- NK: Well, that's right, and that's the heart of the institution. The major mission of any university is teaching and learning, and the faculty are at the heart of that.
- TS: We need to mention your son, David King, in the English department.
- NK: He was my child, not my student, but I did try to instill in him a love of learning and literature and the written and spoken word. I'm pretty confident he's a better teacher than I was.
- DY: I think he's a wonderful teacher.

- NK: He is. I've got to tell you a quick thing. It was a year or two ago, and I was standing in the line over in the student center at lunch-time, and you know what a madhouse that is, and I heard the name Dr. King, so I instantly thought they were talking about me. And then I hear, "The best teacher I ever had." And I'm thinking, "Hmm. I wonder when I..." And then the pronoun, "he," and it hit me like a ton of bricks. They're not talking about me. They're talking about David, and it was just one of my proudest moments. I thought this is so wonderful that somebody is saying about my child, "He's the best teacher I ever had."
- DY: Did you run over there and say, "I'm his momma" [laughter]!
- NK: Apples don't fall far from the tree [laughter]!
- TS: You've been here, now, since '72 so that's thirty-four years.
- NK: With a long hiatus between . . .
- TS: You were talking about how the culture is changing, with higher entrance requirements, and residence halls, and students coming here right out of high school as their first choice. How would you compare the students from the '70s and students from today? How have they changed on our campus over the years?
- NK: Well, there have been some changes—I went through that whole time period when students would come to class bare-footed and dressed like they just got out of bed—virtually "no clothes," really. They were very much more activist; they seemed to care about things that were happening beyond the campus. And then we evolved into this period of everybody was button-downed and dressed to the nines and very conservative, politically, just a different more rigid mindset, to now what we're seeing—and I guess the biggest difference with these students, and we see it at orientation and we see it throughout and it's very typical of the millennial students—they're extremely close to their parents, extraordinarily. Years ago on this campus, if a parent had tried to come to orientation or come to an advising session, the kid would have been horrified. Now—we had a mother call our registrar's office last semester, I think it was, and say, "My daughter is missing. She always calls me right after she gets out of this particular class, and I haven't heard from her, and it's been thirty minutes." So you see them on their cell phones, and a lot of times they're talking to their parents.
- TS: I wondered who they were talking to.
- NK: So that, and then obviously the change in the technology. These students are constantly, you know—and if you want to be pretty horrified, or find out a lot about our students, if you take a look at Facebook, I mean, that will curl your toes.
- TS: The what?

- NK: Facebook, it's like a blog, only individual students put up their pictures and give information about themselves [www.facebook.com/].
- DY: They encourage graduates to be on Facebook. How do you describe it? It's not necessarily dating.
- NK: No, I think it's a security issue because they put things out there; they talk about where big parties are and who had how much to drink. But the instant messaging—they're constantly hooked into something—the cell phones—I'm not sure they're as good at interacting on a one-on-one personal basis because they had the game boys in their crib, and it's just a different mindset.
- DY: But they can sure organize anything, like that! They can get on that cell phone, and they can have a gathering in an hour.
- NK: You're talking to somebody who is technology challenged. They can do all this stuff, and I sense they're becoming a little less involved. At least now in addition to Young Republicans we have the Young Democrats, and so it's more of a two-party system. There was a period there—and part of it is that we're in Cobb County, and Cobb County is a very conservative, Republican county.
- TS: Although changing.
- NK: Yes, but one of the best things I think that we've had here, one of our very best gifts, is that we've had such a large international population. It's good for the international students to study in this country; but I think it's incredibly fortunate for our Cobb County students and Cherokee County students to have exposure to people from other parts of the world. It opens their eyes.
- TS: How would you assess the intellectual life of the campus, faculty, as well as, students?
- NK: Well, I think that's changing too. I think a lot of the new faculty that we are hiring are people who have done a great deal of research, and so I think there is a shift. The emphasis when I started teaching here was, frankly, on teaching; and I hope we don't ever lose an emphasis on teaching, but I don't think the two are exclusive. I think you can be a scholar and have your research interests and also be a dynamite teacher. In fact, I think if you're not staying current in keeping your own mind challenged and interested, how are you possibly going to be challenging or interesting to the students in your class? The only thing that concerns me a little bit, and it speaks to something we were saying at the outset: I guess it's just natural that the newer people that are coming on don't seem to have the same investment or the same sense of place. They may see this as one step in their odyssey. They'll be going on to somewhere else. I think what made Kennesaw very special is that we did have a lot of people—you're an example—somebody who really had a strong sense of place, and who intended to be here, and therefore they were going to put their souls into it. And it wasn't just a place to show up and get a paycheck, you know, put in your forty hours or however much. This was a place you really became

invested in. I think those of us who have been here—and we have—that we have an enormous sense of pride in how far the university has come that I don't think you get at a lot of places. I really don't. I think that's something we ought to be proud of. We invested in it. I think you could drop in here twenty years from now, and we would be astonished because they're predicting [in] all the demographic studies that the board's been doing—they are saying like 45,000 students.

TS: Forty-five, I hadn't heard that high. I'd heard 40.

NK: Oh, yeah. The 2020 report said 45,000 students. I hope that somewhere buried in that huge university will be some of the same values that we have cared so much about. And I guess being such a young school, we don't have the traditions of a UGA or UVA [University of Virginia], we just don't have that; but I think we have made our own tradition. And part of that tradition is, yes, we're young, but, no we aren't well funded, and we don't have the resources that a lot of places have, but, somehow we've been able to make things work, and that's pretty amazing. We've had some of the best teachers, I think, on this campus that you would ever . . . and I know that because I hear from students who tell me.

TS: I really wanted to ask you about that with all your work with the freshman experience, I know when we started here, and I started in '68—but going back to those days when we were a junior college, we put our heart and soul into teaching freshmen and sophomores. And then when we became a four-year school, a lot of us transferred our heart and soul to upper level classes; and I think for many of the new ones coming in, their heart and soul may be in the next book that they're putting out. I wonder also, and of course, we didn't use to have all the part-time people, except for you, maybe. . . .

NK: Well, see, I have a soft spot in my heart for part-timers, since I've been one.

TS: They may be the most exploited group in the academic world these days.

NK: There are some wonderful—you know, you asked about the freshmen and the sophomores, and, yes, the senior faculty that moved on to teach upper level students; and understand, as I said earlier in this interview, I was getting burned out with the freshmen essays. But Dr. Siegel—and this is just one little example—but every spring we do something called the Freshmen 4.0 luncheon. And what this is—I love it, it's one of my favorite events of the year—we invite freshmen who have made a 4.0, and we invite them to this luncheon that Dr. Siegel and I host; and we ask them to bring with them, to invite a faculty member, or staff person, or somebody that has really been instrumental in their first-year success. I will tell you that a lot of the people that they invite are instructors, they're part-timers; and it's because that's who they've had, and some of these people take an incredible interest in these students. Now, I will say we also get some senior faculty too, but it's just very interesting. The departments that seem—and I haven't kept track of this; I wish I had done this over the years—it would be no surprise if the KSU 1101, because they bond with those. But the English department, and oddly enough—and this has just always blown me away, the math department—some of those instructors

and adjunct faculty in math . . . . What we do—the format for this: after they have lunch, the student stands up and introduces himself, or herself, and then introduces the person they brought with them and says very briefly why they selected this person. Then the faculty member stands up and says something about the student. So you really get to see the interaction between them, and it's just wonderful. So, while it does sadden me that we're losing a lot of what John Gardner always talked about, front-loading, and putting your best in those freshmen classes, and we just have not.

DY: Do you think we're moving toward, and I think specifically about the English department, well, history too—are we moving toward a tiered university in which senior faculty will be teaching upper level courses?

NK: I think we are. I guess I would be okay with that if we specifically hire people and we say to them, when we bring them in, "Your job is to be an absolutely stellar teacher. You are expected to advise, you are expected to mentor, you are invested in the success of these students. Because if they're not successful there, they're not going on to be in the major classes; they're not going to be here." But I suspect that's kind of what we're doing.

DY: Well, especially in the development of graduate programs when more senior faculty are sucked off into teaching those.

NK: I do think that's something else that will change, to your question about the future. I think you're going to see the growth in the graduate area. And with the addition of doctorates, that's going to have a whole different—you know, we're going to have graduate assistants that we have not had in the past. And then, I think, we've got to be very careful that we don't just put a TA in a class with freshmen; and the TAs are much more concerned about their own research, and getting their own degree, and this is just something that they're doing. And I think we sell our students short when we do that.

TS: You seem to be suggesting that you think that we really are, I guess, treating the first year students right as far as what's going on in the classroom, as a whole.

NK: Well, at least with the really good ones. Our students—and I've worked with a lot of students out of class, and I know how they think—and there are some students who are much more assertive, and they are going to get to know their faculty; and so they're going to get what they need, and they're going to be successful. The ones that worry me are the ones that are just kind of there. They're the ones that don't say anything in class, and they're not really seemingly engaged. Those bother me because many of them do have the potential of succeeding here, but unless somebody kind of takes an interest in them and helps steer them, they're very high risk.

DY: Well, that's the idea behind the Learning Communities and KSU 1101 is that you catch those students who might slip through otherwise.

NK: Yes, because they can't hide and they get through the 1101 and the Learning Communities [and] the faculty get to know them, so they don't fall through the cracks. Without that though, it's very easy for some of these students to just fall through. The other thing that worries me—and I've been looking at the latest stuff coming out of NSSE, the National Survey of Student Engagement, and maybe this is a sign of my age—but I remember when I was in college being very excited about the intellectual climate of the institution. And if you believe some of the stuff we see coming out of the surveys, students aren't as intellectually engaged. It's more of a, "I need to get what I need to get here, but I'm really on my way to my career." I think that misses the point of a college education.

DY: Well, it concerns me because of the liberal arts losing out and the focus on. . . .

NK: Right, the professional schools. I have nothing against professional schools, but much like I said about the Gen Ed being a foundation—I think liberal arts needs to be—how can you be an educated person—there's the liberal arts, and then there's the skill-training for jobs. That's fine and we certainly need that; I don't want an accountant that doesn't know anything about accounting, but I would also like somebody who has some heart and soul. George Beggs used to tell the most wonderful story, and I have told it all over the country, and I love this. He grew up in Tifton, and he was an historian, but he had a friend who was going into farming, and this friend majored in philosophy. And people would always say to him, "You're going into farming; why would you major in philosophy?" This man would always say, "So I will have something to think about while I'm farming." It's just one of those "aha" moments. I sometimes say to students, "Well, yes, you're going to have a career, and you're going to take courses in business, if that's your major, but you also need something to think about, something to make you more interesting and interested." And I think that's what the liberal arts major do, but I'm preaching to the choir.

TS: One last question from me. You had just mentioned speaking all over the country, why don't you talk a little bit about how much you speak and consult, and are you writing, as well, as presenting?

NK: Yes, I am. In fact, I just agreed the other day, I wish I hadn't but I did, to edit a book that Jossey-Bass [Publisher] is putting out on the role of faculty in advising. I've written chapters and some other articles, so, yes. I haven't had as much time to write as I would like because I have to keep my day job going, but then I really do enjoy—for example last weekend I was down in Florida; I was on the faculty for an administrator's institute, and you get to meet people from all over the country and share ideas about what they're doing. And so I find that very interesting; I really do. I look back and I think I would have been happy had I ended up having a career teaching in the English department. I know I would have been happy, but I've been happy doing this. I basically choose to be happy in the work that I'm doing, and otherwise, how could you show up every day and do it? This has been fun. Thank you so much.

TS: Thank you.

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