

Transcripts – KPU Oral – Skip Triplett
Faculty – MRKT; Director of Marketing; VP Academic; President

Interviewer – Roger Elmes, Dean Emeritus
Co-researcher – Alice Macpherson, Faculty Member

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[Beginning of transcript]

ROGER: So, I should just remind you that you can stop anytime you want. You can take a break because, you know, if we are kind of running too long, you might want to go to break, and if there is any point we get to something and I ask you something, and you don't want to talk about it, you just say, "Let's not go there".

SKIP: Yeah.

ROGER: And we'll edit that out of the transcript and out of the video. So, just that it's fair and you know. We don't want people to get tied up in things they don't want to talk about, right? The idea is really we are just trying to get people to share their recollections. Trying to get some of this on record because if we don't, there isn't going to be much of a record. There will be formal minutes for Board and Senate and EdCo, but not a lot more than that has been actually retained very effectively in the Archives. So, that's the idea of doing -

SKIP: Well, I remember when a former communications employee decided he was going to destroy the archives for some reason. [Laughs]. Make up space, I guess.

ALICE: We think that some of the subsequent marketing people have actually done that, so.

SKIP: This was for no other reasons. He just said that he needed space, so he got rid of a bunch of old stuff. [Laughs]

ROGER: A lot of departments haven't lodged stuff there either which is part of the issue. Anyway, that's where we are and so we want to try and capture as much as we can from people talking about their experiences and so on. So, we've interviewed one of our very early students, actually still in Douglas days, Frank Bucholtz.

SKIP: Yes, I know Frank.

ROGER: And we are going to be interviewing the first president of student counsel who is actually from the 140 St campus, but in Douglas days still. He was actually a Canadian Vietnam

vet [John Baker]. Arvinder [Bubber] is slated but we just don't have him pinned down to an actual day, but he's saying, "Yes, I'll let you know in a couple of days". And five, well probably more than that who had probably done close to eight faculty already and Gordon [Lee], Judith [McGillivray], Linda Coyle. Linda's already been in here. The others are scheduled so we are going to get a good representation of administrators, Board, well Board is a little,

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bit harder, but we'll get some anyway. We had scheduled Janet [Shauntz], but then she had to drop out because of something at the last minute. I'll try to follow up with her again and make sure she is doing okay but that she is maybe able to come back in because she was Chair for about four, I think she had a couple of terms as Chair. Anyway, we are trying to get a good representation across the institution and with support staff of course. That's the goal and then we'll launch this in a year.

SKIP: So, another student name and board name, I'll email it to you, but her name is Tana Plewes and it comes to mind because she was one of my students, eons ago when I was teaching marketing and she also later served on our Board. I think she was the first alumna representative, but she just recently wrote me asking about licensing [some KPU] curriculum and I said, not much of it going on but you could call the president and tell them you are a former Board member and an alumna, and I'm sure he will be willing to talk to you. So, I'll send that to you.

ROGER: Great, that's excellent. Because being out of it, I don't have any students lined up yet from Business so that will be very good. So, just to start, you started at Kwantlen in '81, '82?

SKIP: I think it was '83.

ROGER: '83, and that was at the Newton Campus and tied into the new tech program somehow.

SKIP: Yes, so what had happened there is, I think applied. I'm not sure if I applied or if somebody contacted me, but anyway, I was working as a consultant full time and had an interview with Gaglardi was his name?

ROGER: Ken Gaglardi, yeah.

SKIP: Ken Gaglardi, and I remember the interview went on and on and he decided he was looking for somebody full time and I said, "Well, I can't help you". At any rate, the interview went on and on and he said, "Are you sure?", and he wanted me for a block of time, and I said, "No, I just can't give you that much time". He said, "Do you know anybody that you could subcontract it to?", and I said, "Actually, I do", because this was for Human Resources Organizational Development, and I said, "But she's my wife", and he said, "That's okay". So, anyway, the two of us started simultaneously teaching in the business program part time which subsequently got him into endless trouble with the union.

ROGER: [Laughs]

SKIP: [Laughs] But I didn't know. I was just an outsider that he wanted. That was the only way we could make it work because my time was not as loose as it needed to be. Anyway, that's how it started. I became full time in '85, so I guess it was two years of that and they wanted to expand the

[0:8:32]

technology programs and include a Business Management program. So, he asked me if I would be willing to look at it full time, so long story short, I really enjoyed teaching, so I said, "I'm going to reverse this. I'm going to teach full time and I'm going to consult part time". So, that's what happened. But the interesting thing with that was during the interview with Ken Gaglardi around setting up a Business Management program, he said he wanted to clone Ryerson as closely as possible because the president of the day, his ambition for Kwantlen was to turn it into another Ryerson Polytechnic. I'm smiling for obvious reasons.

[Both laugh]

SKIP: Advance the clock by 25 years and that's pretty close to what happened. Anyway, so that was the beginning. The technology programs were kind of interesting because we had I think six different engineering technology programs. I may have the number wrong. There was a recession at the time and a lot of engineers had been laid off by their companies, so we were quite fortunate in being able to hire some very good engineers. Many of whom turned out to be pretty good teachers too. To fast forward a little bit, the technology programs started to decline pretty rapidly because they were too good, frankly. They were three-year technology programs. They were as rigorous as any of the engineering programs at UBC, I don't think SFU has one yet and potential students relatively quickly figured out I can go three years and be a technologist or for an extra year I can transfer to UBC and be an engineer. So, that's what started to happen. We lost enrollment because of a program that was more rigorous than it needed to be, and became victims of our own success.

ROGER: So that was kind of in the 1980s and Ken was there about nine years or something. Then he had a bad accident, slowed him down for a while.

SKIP: And by that time, I'd become full time. So, for me what started to happen because my career prior to Kwantlen was largely marketing and one president after another kept asking me to take a secondment from the classroom in order to market the college. So, that happened briefly under the replacement to the first president-

ROGER: Jack Newberry, the interim?

SKIP: Yeah, the interim. So, once under him and back to the classroom, then Adrienne [McLaughlin] came aboard [1987]. Same thing. Took her two years to let me come back to the classroom. Somehow got seconded to the federal government to organize a Royal Commission in British Columbia. Gone for six months. Back to the classroom by this time, Gerry Kilcup was

the president and wanting to move us to university college. So, out of the classroom, yet again, and into administration, he said, "Look, we need you in administration". So, I had a long talk with myself and figured, I either have

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to tell them to go away and leave me alone or get with the program, so I did the latter. That's kind of my history. It was interesting, I never had intended to become president. I was vice president of multiple things: strategic planning and continuing education and HR. One day, Gerry walks into my office because, Jacqui Thachuk [VP Education 1991-1997] had left us to become the president of Red River College and Gerry walks in and he says, "I want you to apply for Jackie's job", and I said, "Why would I do that? I'm already a VP. I'm perfectly happy with what I'm doing". And he said, "Because you could be my successor and you need that [position for your own development]". That's kind of what happened. I've never given it any consideration at all, but that's what I decided to do, and things unfolded.

ROGER: So, just to pick up on one thing, the federal thing you worked on was the Spicer?

SKIP: Officially, it was called the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future and unofficially known as the Spicer Commission. And so, an old Army buddy, way back from Officer Cadet days in the 60s was at one point in charge of [staffing] it in Ottawa and I got a call from him asking if I'd be willing to be a coordinator for British Columbia for a six-month period, so discussed it with Adrienne and decided that would be fun. So, that's what I did.

ROGER: I think you actually did an exercise - one with Richard Floyd's classes.

SKIP: Yup.

ROGER: Where they did talk with you about specifically the topic of the commission?

SKIP: Yeah, exactly. It was an interesting time. That time, Canada's future was very much in doubt. Quebec was an issue and I think this was an attempt by the federal government to talk to Canadians of every stripe in kind of a very loose fashion, very unstructured conversations around what people saw as Canada's future. Fortunately, I did not have to compile all of that stuff. I was just responsible for making sure that the consultations happened throughout the province of BC. Some interesting stories there. The funniest one was when I got the list of where the federal government wanted to carry out the conversation, it was very Lower Mainland-centric.

ROGER: [Laughs]

SKIP: They did have Gibson's in there because [Laughs] *The Beachcombers* was still on TV, so they knew about Gibson's [Ottawa wanted a few locations] in the North, but a whole whack of the province left out. So, I contacted them and said, I've got the list, but I said I think we have to re-look at it and they told me to just do what I was told and carry it out. For once in my life, I thought quickly because I looked at the list and so, "Do you want me to deal with the US

consulate in Vancouver or are you going to do that out of Ottawa”. They said, “What are you talking about?” I said, “One of those cities is in Washington State”.

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[Both laugh]

SKIP: Actually, it’s not quite true. They had [listed] Okanagan, but they thought that Okanagan was a city. [And there is an Okanogan city.]

ROGER: Oh, okay.

SKIP: And it is of course in Washington. So, at that point, they decided maybe they ought to listen.

[Both laugh]

SKIP: So, we managed to get a few adjustments. Anyway, that’s got little to do with Kwantlen. It was just an interesting experience. Yeah, so one of those consultations happened here.

ROGER: Yeah. It was great. It was written up in one of the internal newsletters.

SKIP: Right.

ROGER: And so, it was quite interesting to pull that out of the archives. So, then you kind of got involved with this whole push to get a permanent Surrey campus.

SKIP: Yeah, I wasn’t overly involved with that. I was mostly in the classroom in those days, but Adrienne was pushing very, very hard to that make that happen along with Rita Johnston who was a cabinet minister and good on Rita, she believed in it and so she was fighting her own cabinet colleagues to make it happen. Obviously, it did. I mean I do have some recollections of the ribbon cutting ceremony. This was all farmland and so on the day of the ribbon cutting, I’m out early making sure that the PA system is working and all of the rest of it and grabbing a shovel to get rid of all of the cow pies.

[Both laugh]

SKIP: So, the politicians didn’t have to step through it and then trying to get control of the student association president whose name fortunately I forget because he showed up very inebriated.

P2: Oh dear.

SKIP: Oh dear, so we had to contain him, but it all worked out. Somewhere in the archives, may be an aerial shot of the campus location and actually I was the pilot. I was a private pilot in

those days. I got a guy from PR to come along with his camera and take some aerial shots. I don't know if I still have a copy, but I think they're in the archives somewhere.

ROGER: Well, I have to make sure about that.

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SKIP: In those days, obviously no one was very specialized. [Laughs]. Everybody did what needed-

ROGER: - beat the drums just sort of send-off a near 100 feet and take a shot. It's actually quite interesting because there is a whole bunch of different sites that were looked at and including Surrey Centre at one point and Green Timbers which is what the City of Surrey wanted the college to go into which was always quite interesting. Then this site, I must sit down with Bob Lisson and talk to him about this in more detail because he was very much involved.

SKIP: Yeah, he can give you a lot more detail than I remember. I remember once this site was decided on and once we started to build or shortly thereafter, Bob Bose was now the [Surrey] mayor and he wanted us to buy what's now [the residential] development just to the south because at that time, it was all undeveloped and either the college or the ministry, I'm not sure which was not interested.

ROGER: I suspect the latter.

SKIP: Yeah.

ROGER: Because it was always money involved.

SKIP: It was always money involved. So, most of my recall about this campus, it was interesting working with TransLink, which I later served on the board of because we were trying to get them to organize bus routes, and they would have none of it. Well, they don't plan on plans. They only look at existing traffic patterns. So, that was the case in those days. So, it was build the campus and then we'll worry about bus routes. Couldn't get people to see the success of the campus in part would depend on those bus routes. In the early days, I think most of our students and faculty all [used] personal vehicles, because otherwise we were really hard to get to. It was really isolated. You'll recall we were in the middle of farms for the most part.

ROGER: Yeah. We had - Princess Margaret was there and a few houses along that part, but once you got up here and there was no, you're right, there was no transit really. Coming out here, it was quite amazing. But that was the reality for sure.

SKIP: So, the next campus was of course the Richmond one. Now I was back in the classroom for most of that one. So, can't give you much of an administration point of view, but we do remember one faculty member whose name I'm not going to mention, but he was apoplectic at the location because he was convinced that there was going to be a danger of an airliner crashing into the campus because we were too close to the YVR flight path. I don't know whether he

took that to the union as well or not, but it was interesting trying to convince him that the likelihood of that was pretty slim. At any rate, what I do remember about that location because as it was being built, I was back into one of my secondments, was the difficulty that we had with neighbours' concerns because that ground was

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very unstable and it had to be preloaded and prepacked for a few years. And once the preloading had settled, they started with the very technical term, 'pounding it in'.

ROGER: The big compactor.

SKIP: The big compactor. There was a lot of noise and a fair amount of vibration, but we got through all of that and basically there was nothing we could do about it. So, that's my recollection of that campus coming into being. Everybody I think was quite happy to get out of the old temporary locations.

ROGER: And that campus remained pretty static for right up to the last two years, but there was the addition on top of the cafeteria, but other than that, the footprint was basically there.

SKIP: Right. There was nowhere to expand. So, in the later days of my presidency, I was trying to work with the mayor of Richmond. He was onside and the Agricultural Land Reserve and some other parties, because across what is it No. 3 Rd, No. 4 Rd? but basically in between the campus and the military reserve armoury, that's all farmland which wasn't being used for anything. It's too small of a parcel but it's in the agricultural land reserve.

ROGER: That was the old antenna farm.

SKIP: Yeah. That was the old antenna farm, so we were trying to work with various people to say, "Look, we can put a horticulture campus there. That will satisfy the ALR. It will also give us new room for expansion because obviously it's going to take some administrative buildings". A whole plan was worked around that, but it never saw the light of day. Too many opponents from one place and another, but the concept was interesting because what we were looking at doing now was urban farming and that would've been the specialty. So, I guess that land still sits vacant.

ALICE: They eventually turned it into a park.

SKIP: Did they?

ALICE: They're working on that now, the City of Richmond. It's park land now.

SKIP: Good, well that's better than just-

ROGER: Better than just sitting there.

SKIP: Just sitting there. But you're right, that campus was very development locked. There was nowhere to expand.

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ROGER: And then you worked on something to the north of the site, where there was a theatre company, not a theatre company, but Cineplex or some kind of organization like that, a partnership. I don't remember the details of that.

SKIP: No, I don't either. It's kind of fuzzy to me.

ROGER: But the residences were-

SKIP: Yeah. I think it was going to be another complex that would've included a theatre complex, residences and some more campus, but it too didn't see the light of day. Frankly, I've forgotten why. The main thing about the Richmond campus, it was outstanding in its day visually, but at that time, when it was designed and approved, Bill Vander Zalm was the Premier and it was also his riding, but that was all Adrienne's doing and advocacy that brought that back to fruition, but it did become the very site of our very first degree because we were offering degrees but it was in conjunction with Emily Carr. Then once we became a university college and now had permission to grant degrees under our own name, and that one was repatriated. Not repatriated. It was never fully ours in the first place. That became our first degree and fashion were basically our flagship degrees. We were well known for interior design and for fashion. So, we used them as a lot of marketing ploy. I shouldn't say ploy but marketing presence because if you had a couple of programs that were well known and outstanding, perception tends to be that everything is also outstanding which most things were but simply not as well known. But they were easy to create some visibility around.

ROGER: And certainly, get a lot of visuals from them too. Not all programs can provide easily.

SKIP: Absolutely. So, I mean that legacy lives on. I'm going to fast forward now to three years ago, I guess, when I get a call from a head hunter because LaSalle College Vancouver was basically looking for a board chair because they were interested in offering degrees, and I knew the name because LaSalle or College LaSalle Montreal was major competition for us in fashion, not for students but in various national programs. So, I certainly knew the name but didn't know much about what they were doing here. But I started talking to the head hunter about what they were up to and it turns out that the lead for the fashion degree at LaSalle is Mary Boni who of course was an associate dean at Kwantlen, and Cosimo [Augustino] was one of the instructors along with one of our alumni, Nargas [Khabazha]. I've forgotten her last name. [Also Theresa Bishop] So, it was almost like coming home. So, I said, "Okay, I'm in". No worries about quality with those people in charge. It's funny how the world turns, and things keep turning up.

ROGER: Yup. And now of course they've got the Wilson School of Design, which has just been opened. Quite impressive property.

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SKIP: Yeah. I haven't seen that yet.

ROGER: Piece of building and philosophy and so on.

ALICE: Very worth touring.

SKIP: Yeah. I will.

ROGER: Yeah. We did one with the Retirees Association and walked us through the whole thing. Very impressive and interesting how it's been thought out. Talked with some students including paradoxically, the student who's dating my grandson, who's a student in fashion marketing there about the facility and how it feels in it and so on. Everyone talks about the natural light which is certainly in the daytime. It's a major factor for the building. But that's sort of the same thing, right? It's a school of design which was able to create enough presence and ultimately attract the Wilsons to pour some money into creating a building like that and then, you know obviously, the college or the university and the province coming on board as well. So, yeah, you're right. Having programs like that creating a presence is harder to do for some.

SKIP: Yeah. So, my current incarnation as the board chair for LaSalle, when people ask about it and its credibility, all I have to do is say, the film that won the Academy Award for visual effects, four of our graduates worked on it, and four of the other five films that were nominated also had graduates that worked on them.

ROGER: Wow.

SKIP: And that's it. So, then credibility for anything is no longer a concern. If you can get something that is highly, highly visible like that, you go a long, long way with using that as the flagship. So, that was my recollections of Richmond. Then the permanent Langley campus was interesting for different reasons, as we had a Langley presence in the very, very early days, but it was quickly shut down. I think for lack of attendance. Who was the VP that was responsible for that?

ROGER: Well, Ken Moore was at one point, designated as the VP responsible for planning the new Langley campus about six months before this shut down [1982]. So, I'm not sure if it was Ken that you're thinking of.

SKIP: No. I remember the old college days and for a while, as a university college we had two VPs of education. One was Gerry Kilcup. [The other VP was Bob Lowe.]

ROGER: Oh yeah.

SKIP: So, I think he was one that had to shut it down.

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ROGER: Mm-hmm.

SKIP: So, that did not sit well obviously with Langley, so when we were rebuilding, we had to try and re-establish connections with the community and rebuild our credibility. So, again, another flagship program with horticulture was very different. Again, I was faculty at that point when that first came on because I remember doing a marketing program for the Horticulture program and spending a summer, interviewing horticulture industries so I could understand their business better and build into casework, things that were relevant to horticulture and not just use generics. So, I remember the campus going up. I was not part of administration then, but there was a major attempt early on by University College of the Fraser Valley, then to take over the campus.

ALICE: Was it signed?

SKIP: Yeah. Adrienne had to organize the Board and drag them all over to Victoria and raise a big stink and save the day. So, we retained that. I think in the long term, I was very fortunate that she was able to do that because if UCFV had moved that close to us into the valley, it would've impacted Kwantlen's ability pretty heavily and our growth. But they were able to stop it. So, I was amongst the first faculty to teach on that campus. Actually, it was I was amongst the first on this campus as well. Part of the problem that we had for anything other than horticulture and music which I'll get to later for the more ordinary programs, Arts, Science, Business. There was a difficulty because we couldn't give students a full course load. There just weren't enough of them, so they had to take some of their courses in Surrey or Richmond. So, then it became a bit of an issue to convince them to do some of their course work in Langley. One of the saving features was courses were starting to fill up here [Surrey Campus] and students couldn't get seats in the courses of what they wanted and when they wanted them so they would shuffle off to Langley, but it wasn't all that happy an arrangement. Very inconvenient in terms of travel, but most people who worked on that campus or probably studied on it and liked it because the atmosphere was very rural. It was very different from here [72nd Avenue campus] or from Richmond. It has a real small homey feel to it. What other stories can I tell you that probably not much other than -

ROGER: Well, that was a very interesting situation you already described, and that was sort of Langley. You mean you're coming back?

SKIP: Yeah.

ROGER: Kind of reaction. Well Kwantlen never disappeared totally because, Hank McEwan stayed there with the Farrier program and there were some people teaching in Brookwood at night and so on, but the campus *per se*, other than Hank maintaining the Farrier program on it, had disappeared, and then the [Wark/Dumais 1890] family home was still there. But basically, it had disappeared, so there was this impetus

[0:38:18]

to... for Kwantlen to go back and create something that would link into it. I think Music was part of that because of the Langley School of Fine Arts.

SKIP: It was?

ROGER: Kind of trying to link into that part of the Langley community, but then the horticultural course, as you mentioned, because it certainly - Langley district is basically agricultural municipality to all purposes, so now it is starting to get built in.

SKIP: And also Trades. We put there. So it was the...so, well, I'm going to tell you one funny story first. So, we had one of the music faculty whose name I will also conveniently forget but she had a PhD, and as you know with the automotive trades faculty or students can bring their cars and have them worked on for free. I remember being there and picking up my car and she walked up to the counter and said she was Dr. So, and So, and was her car ready yet. And then I said, "No. I don't have any doctor's cars here". [Laughs]. Anyway, there was kind of a disconnect there. But it was an impetus for something else because when I was back in administration, one of the things that I started which I believe is still going on, maybe under a different name was something called the President's Ambassadorial Team, and that actually I stole from Sir George Williams University, now before I forget, because when I was there, they had something called the Garnet Key Society and to be a member of the Garnet Key Society, you had to have very good grades and a number of social skills and go through interviews and the lot. But Garnet Key Society members were outfitted in garnet/maroon blazers and slacks. Some wore skirts, depending. They were used in the community by the university. So, it was always members of the Garnet Key that hosted events ...that acted as tour guides and went out into the community and talked up Sir George. So, I started the same thing here with very close to the same criteria. You had to be a very good student, good social skills and the rest of it, and we used them to go to town council meetings, set up meetings with mayors. A large part of it was to reconnect with the community, for students are far more effective than administrators talking up the school. To reconnect with the Langley community was part of the impetus for starting that little endeavor.

ROGER: Well, then you had of course George Preston out there who was a major cheerleader ...

SKIP: Absolutely. Well, George Preston, as you would recall, he was something else. So, he was the mayor of Langley for most of the time and he had the car dealership, and he was also heavily involved with the Shriners. If there was any kind of community activity, George was involved with it and he was also on our Board, and he was a major presence in Langley. This isn't why he was so heavily involved with community. But I remember talking to somebody who said he always bought his cars from George. He said, because when you deal with a car dealer, you're never sure if you left

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money on the table but with George you didn't worry about it, because you knew it was going to end up somewhere back in the community. But he was very, very helpful to us and making the presence known in Langley.

ALICE: For all courses. For all the areas.

SKIP: Absolutely. And one of the things he did there - as part of his car dealership, he had an old school bus painted in his colours. He offered that to the community as a means of transportation for special events. So, when we were doing new board orientation, George would arrive with his school bus and would drive the new Board members from campus to campus, and it was actually George doing the driving. He was truly a man of the people and if you needed something done in Langley, talk to George.

ROGER: Yeah. Very approachable guy.

SKIP: Very, very approachable guy. Couldn't take himself seriously at all. And the final campus for me was the Cloverdale Tech campus.

ROGER: Before we go there, maybe a bit more about the Music department because I know we pressed you a lot on Music - for travel. For getting students to Italy. For doing all kinds of things to kind of create a sort of presence for the Music department because it was an uphill battle.

SKIP: It was.

ROGER: Being out in Langley despite the Langley School of Fine Arts and then Langley Music School, all those connections. Sometimes, it was almost competitive between the two as opposed to complimentary. Some of it was complimentary and some of it was competitive. But in order to create a sort of a presence, there was a lot of things that were kind of pushed for more performance time, student trips, student trips to music festivals in the UK, in Italy. I think there was a couple around here, up in the Okanagan. So, it involved a lot of travel and a lot of money to support it although the students contributed, also there was a lot of pressure brought on you to -

SKIP: Yup.

ROGER: To try to help them out.

SKIP: But we were able to do that with the university college funds and also with some fundraising. What is also interesting there is was our first failure with the Degree Quality Assessment Board is that it was called a slightly different name then, but we had applied through them for a degree in the Business of Music and again, we were a victim of our own success because it was turned down

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primarily by UVic who said it was a great idea, but we're going to do it because in those days, the board was dominated, it still is, but mostly by conventional universities in public system, but it's more diverse now. That kind of a thing wouldn't be allowed to happen. Basically, that's why we failed with the music degree. It was too good a concept.

ROGER: And it was a very different degree too, because the idea was, that you got maybe 10% of music performers who are out front, and the other 90%, maybe its 20/80, but you got this big group of people making a living in music, but not necessarily the brightest performers.

SKIP: Exactly! Or their primary living is something else, but they do gigs with a band or as quartettes, and you're right! That's where the bulk of it is. So, that was going to concentrate on entrepreneurship and music and the business of music. It was a great concept, so that was similar, to we were the first in business, the first university in Canada to offer a Bachelor of Business Administration in Entrepreneurship. And that was a direct result of Gordon Lee hosting lots of meetings with Chambers of Commerce and large accounting firms and the whole business community around what their needs were. Long story short, pretty much universally, they said the problem with business programs is that they train people to be middle and senior managers, but they don't start off there. We need people that are trained to be supervisors and also in this community, there's an awful lot of small businesses. It's the backbone of British Columbia and it's very different in many ways from working for a larger firm and nobody's dealing with that. So, Gordon Lee was the Dean at the time and brought that degree to fruition which also then tied back, now here's where it ties into music and its Business of Music degree. We were the first school in Canada to articulate trades with a degree. Gordon and I had traveled a lot of the world looking for similar programs. On one trip to Dublin, looking at other institutions that had degrees and trades and coordinated them, but for the most part, they were all just, you got basically your credit if you were an electrician and wanted to be an electrical engineer, you might be able to get a year's worth of credit for it. But our research in Canada and probably the rest of the world too, but nobody had gone to it. The normal career path for somebody in a trade, wanting a degree is because they'd become a supervisor or more likely have started their own business as a tradesman. So, we said the heck with trying to do engineering in a related field, let's move it in to entrepreneurship. As you know, we managed to create a direct path from a trades certificate into the third year of a degree program. Part of the reason for doing that too was not just a career path but was to deal with parents who would not want their bright young men and women to go into the trades. You know, you're smart. You got to go to university. So, this created another route so that potential students could convince parents that there's a different route to a degree but still a route to a degree, and that too was fairly successful. The interesting thing, the fight for the trades campus was through ... with a Social Credit government I wasn't in administration long enough, so I don't know if the fight started with them, but certainly

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with me it started with the NDP, and then the Liberals, and to various governments trying to convince them that the Newton trades facility was inadequate and many, many, many trips to Victoria. Lots of advocacy with various boards, various political organizations and political stripes announced and not announced and announced and not announced and finally, Cloverdale came to fruition, and now frankly I have forgotten whether it was under an NDP government or a Liberal government. I think it was an early Liberal government [sod turning to prepare land 2003; construction starts 2005].

ROGER: It must have been in the early Campbell years.

SKIP: Yeah. It was in the early Campbell years. So, we got that magnificent piece of land and I will say this about Gordon Campbell. Actually, I got along just fine with Gordon Campbell. I can tell you a couple of stories. Tell you about the nature of the man which is contrary to what some people think, but on the Cloverdale campus, at one point, we were needing funding in looking at the potential for selling part of that, and the ministry under Campbell's direction was no way, they're looking 40 years out, unlike most government administrations. They said eventually, you're going to need that, so it's not in the cards. Never going to be sold. The other one, actually had to do with another program that we started and Arvinder [Bubber] can give you more detail with this one. But it was the partnership with a couple of high schools around students at risk where we were going to take students at risk in their final two high school years and enroll them in some classes here and have joint efforts between their counsellors and our counsellors. So, the whole thing needed about a million dollars of seed money to start it, and Arvinder managed to get a meeting with Gordon Campbell and it was just prior to another election [writ] being dropped and we had a private meeting with him. No entourage that you usually get with Premiers and he listened, asked an awful lot of questions. Gordon Campbell, by the way, knew more about whatever you were talking to him about than what you did. He was very, very thorough. He can micromanage but he could also manage at a high level. At any rate, he liked what we had to offer and said, "Okay, we're gonna do it", and we thanked him profusely. Arvinder said, "Now make sure you get a lot of publicity out of this, and he said "you will not". He said, "I don't want any publicity out of this, because that will turn it political, and we are doing this because it's the right thing to do". Not part of his public persona, and never became part of the campaign but as you know it was a very, very successful program. I don't know whether it's still going on.

ROGER: Yeah. I don't know if it still is or not.

ALICE: I don't know either.

SKIP: At any rate, I quickly got into trouble with the Ministry because all of a sudden, they had

[All laugh]

[0:54:19]

SKIP: marching orders for a million bucks, and I said, what would you do? Advise you to turn it down?

ROGER: Yeah. With that kind of money.

[All laugh]

SKIP: It's my job to advocate.

ROGER: Yeah.

SKIP: Anyways.

ROGER: There was one part, and I'm not sure – I don't remember the exact year [1993-1995], but at one point, Tech BC sort of acquired the property. I'm afraid that was under the NDP but before the final decision was made, and then Tech BC eventually got pushed to Surrey Central, something like that.

SKIP: Yeah. Some more Tech BC starts, that one was interesting, and it was one of my mistakes. So, I'll take the blame for it. When they decided to fold Tech BC because it simply wasn't working out. It was very expensive, but the concept was good. They wanted someone to take it over and we put in an application alongside BCIT and I agreed to that with Tony Knowles and had since been told BCIT was in such disfavour that anything they were associated with was immediately disregarded. So, a lot of work went into that, but nothing came of it and it's my fault because I got into bed with BCIT because we couldn't handle that. At any rate, it is what it is, and Surrey [SFU] campus is now highly successful so if you look at it in terms of the people of Surrey being served, the outcome is just fine. So, that also morphs into part of the story becoming a polytechnic university. So, I'd been working on that heavily for a full nine years. It was pretty complex. It was also caught up with AUCC now, Universities Canada membership which we had applied for and a lot of politicking. A lot of controversy internally because there were some factions, part of the faculty association and some other faculty that wanted no part of it. I guess there was a fear that their social status might be in jeopardy if we became a full university because a lot of faculty only had master's degrees and I guess they figured, their careers would be in jeopardy, but there was some internal pressure to not go in that direction. My thinking was the old marketer in me again in that Kwantlen University College is finished if they don't become a university because University of the Fraser Valley, they will find ways to succeed in taking over our Langley campus. We will probably revert to being a college that would serve the people of Surrey. Not just Surrey, but the whole catchment area very well because I'm still a big proponent of this. That's why I'm still involved with post-secondary and private. The notion as you probably recall behind first Kwantlen University College and later KPU was we needed to reverse the business model if you will of an academic conventional university which is

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basically, one degree major for us is to prepare you for the next degree even though my statistics will be out of date, but in my day, it was something like 85% of baccalaureate graduates. That [the baccalaureate] was the terminal degree for them. I hate that term [terminal degree]. They would not return for another degree and yet everything was geared for moving people into the next degree level. So, our philosophy was to reverse that and let's prepare degrees for the 85% who are going to get on with their careers at the same time making darn sure that the 15% who go on to a graduate degree are well qualified for that, and we succeeded. If you actually will recall, UBC loved our site grads better than their own because they were better qualified for master's programs. We made that happen and I thought, I don't want that model to get lost by reverting to a college then the whole ability to push that concept and build on it will be gone. So, that was my personal motivation in pushing hard, hard, hard for university status. Now in truth, the other university college presidents and I had tried very hard to make the nomenclature university college work. Tried lots of different marketing models, but the fact was that in British Columbia, if the word college is in your name, people automatically assume a two-

year institution. Even in my final days as president, we had 21 degrees and when I would give speeches, the Chambers of Commerce or community groups, people were still astounded to hear that. They thought we were a two-year college. So, we were finally able to convince, probably it was Gordon Campbell personally, that we had done our best, we loved the concept, loved the model, but the nomenclature just wasn't working because, my big push in Kwantlen's case was largely Surrey that the number of people in Surrey who went on to university was well below the provincial average. And as I said to him, you know if you want to go to a university or if you want your children to go to a university and you don't think Kwantlen is one, I can't help you. And he got that. So, that was a large part of the motivation to create the special purpose teaching universities. But in the end analysis, part of this was confidential so, I can't give you the whole story, but at one point, I get called in to the minister's office in Victoria and told that Kwantlen is going to be Kwantlen Polytechnic Institute and we are to have the same mandate as BCIT and we need to drop all of our academic programs. So, long story short, we said, "Do you realize that I have 7,000 academic students. The reason we have an Arts degree is because we try to work with SFU so that our second-year students have got automatically in, but they can't do it". So, actually, they worked with us if you remember Roger, Bob Brown, [former multi-decade Dean of Arts at SFU] to create our own Arts degree because they can't handle it. So, what are you going to do with 7,000 students, not to mention the cost of the infrastructure involved in becoming another BCIT. At that point, Kathleen Casprowitz is the Board chair and so, we're working pretty closely and pretty aggressively to get this thing turned around. So, I'm in Victoria for, I forget if it was the opening of a new parliamentary session or it probably was, or budget. One or the other, when you're invited to be in the House in the background, and then there is a reception afterwards. So, in the reception, in the rotunda of the parliament building afterwards, and Premier Campbell spots me and comes charging over. I thought, "uh-oh". [Laughs] "I'm in trouble". But he walked up, and he says, "So, I hear you've got a problem with the word polytechnic", and I said,

[1:04:15]

"No sir. I have a problem with the word institute". And I told him off, and he said, "Okay, I will think about that". It must've been budget day because I'm on the same helijet flight as him. We're both going to the briefing at the Business Council of British Columbia because he's going to brief them on the budget. He's sitting in front of me. He said, "You're serious? You would have no problem with Kwantlen Polytechnic University". I said, "No". He said, "Done". That's how it happened.

ROGER and SKIP: [Both laugh]

SKIP: Ministry was furious.

ROGER: Yeah.

SKIP: Anyway. That's where Kwantlen Polytechnic came from. Again, that word was controversial internally, but as I said to a lot of people, "Look, what polytechnic simply means is the useful application of knowledge". And at that point, all of our degrees led to careers. So, where's the problem. It doesn't mean we have to build an engineering school. It's just the

useful application of knowledge besides which I thought at that point, we would be the only polytechnic university in Canada. And so, the old marketer in me is saying, “Well, I can make a lot of hay with that”. At any rate, I’ll come to the end of my story. I was flattered because the Board chair got a call one day from the Premier and he wanted to know when I was retiring. By the way, I decided to retire after nine years in the seat because at that time, we still had compulsory retirement for faculty. So, I said to the Board, “No, I don’t want another five years. I only want four because we’ve been very careful to treat ourselves no differently than faculty”. So, I retired before it actually happened, but he said he wanted to make the announcement while I was still here. And you recall that he did. So, it was while I was still in the president’s seat. I was again flattered. He was more personable than most people. I only knew him professionally. Ha-ha. There’s one more funny story and then I’ll end it. After he had left the government and became the -

ROGER: High Commissioner.

SKIP: High Commissioner for Canada in London, I was on vacation in Europe, and I either lost or had my passport stolen in Scotland and hustled back to London where we were flying out of. Anyway, I had to apply for a new passport, and he had just been named High Commissioner. So, the staff were very helpful. I’m going through the routine and the woman who I was dealing with, she says “I need at least three references”. She says, “The more you can give me, the better because I need to get a hold of three of them before we can make this happen”. So, I gave them a long list and she said, “Do you know anybody in London?”, and I said, “Yes and you’re not going to believe it, but Gordon Campbell, and he will know me”. And she said, “Yeah. Won’t help you because the passport’s out of

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Ottawa has got nothing to do with him”. I said, “I know, but he’s the only person I know who physically lives in London”. Anyway, within three days, I had my passport and she kept phoning me to tell me she connected with somebody and, “Don’t you go. Only one to go”. I don’t know if anybody, if that’s normal treatment. So, I did send him an email with her name saying she was extremely helpful, and I got a personal email back from him. I know it was personal because it had a spelling error.

ROGER and SKIP: [Both laugh]

SKIP: Thanking me. So, I mean, I only knew him professionally, but he was very helpful.

ROGER: Yeah. That was great.

SKIP: So, that’s my story.

P2: That’s amazing.

ROGER: Great story too. Maybe a couple of other things. Just follow up some things that I wondered about. Carver Policy Governance Model.

SKIP: Oh, okay.

ROGER: Did you launch that or did Gerry or was it your idea?

SKIP: No, it certainly wasn't my idea. I'm trying to [remember]. It was new. I think it came in just before me. Yeah. It had come in just before me and we made it work pretty well. I still do a lot of governance consulting and my model is loosely Carver based, although I discarded a lot. The main problem I had with the Carver model is according to it, you have to follow it precisely. No changes. Well, John Carver is not the world's only perfect human being. Anything can be adapted and so, we did. I was involved with orienting several boards to it and we had Carver consultants come in to teach the boards how to use it. What can I say? It worked.

ROGER: It struck me that one of its major strengths was that it sort of played out that the Board's role is policy. The Board's role is not management.

SKIP: Correct.

ROGER: and that that kind of probably helped adjusting, help separate the two roles more clearly. You hire a CEO and the CEO looks after the management's response to the Board, the Board sets the policy.

[1:11:26]

SKIP: Yeah. Exactly. That's one of the concepts in it that I like. So, right now the way I usually recommend people set things up, is there are three components to a Board's policy [manual]. The first is what I call it, outcomes or results policies, that was the last thing in Carver's. So, basically, it identifies what difference are you trying to make for who? Who are your target audiences? How are their lives going to be different because you exist? Or what results do you want for them? So, we clearly define those. So, obviously students are number one, and there's the ministry, then there's the community at large and so on. But you look at all your stakeholders and say precisely, "What are we trying to do for them?". And you turn them into policies that involve the university producing measurable results. So, that's the first and most important set. Then you add another set that I like to call executive parameters, Carver calls them executive limitations, which drove boards crazy because they got to turn everything into a negative saying, "You must not do this. You must not do that". So, I've lost that and just say, "These are the parameters under which you need to work and achieve those results. Stay within your parameters and everybody's happy". That's it. There's nothing else. And the third part of the board manual is the board's own operations and how is this going to put together an agenda, and that kind of thing. That could work very, very well. I know it had to get lost when we became a university, but I'm not quite sure why because if you work with it a little bit, and it can work under by-laws [By-laws can be part of the manual.] It's just another piece, but yes, it very clearly did keep the Board out of academic matters. So, as I used to explain to a lot of people, whether or not the university should have a Psychiatric Nursing program, that was one of

the things we were looking at towards my end and that's Board business. That's serving the community. What that program should look like is not Board business. That's Education Council and under the Carver model part of the operations of the university. So, I mean that still works just fine now. As I look at public universities, a lot of the problems that I see from the outside is there are not very clear lines between Senate and Board. Boards tend to get involved with things they shouldn't be, and Senates tend to get involved with things they shouldn't be. So, I don't know if that answers your question.

ROGER: I think it's important too, because you know, it did kind of alter how the institution was governed and how the role of management, the role of the CEO was clarified. I thought that it was good that that occurred because there had been some challenges previously at different times. The first EdCo which you were very much involved -

SKIP: I was his first chair.

ROGER: I think you were first chair.

SKIP: Yeah. I was faculty. So, that was Gerry Kilcup's decision not to be the chair I was elected by faculty to be part of EdCo and subsequently elected chair, but I think we were the only one that

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had a faculty member as chair. Most presidents followed a Senate model and the president was chair of the Education Council and Gerry said, "No, that makes no sense. It should be a faculty member. So, we'll let them decide". And that worked very, very well. It was tricky again sometimes with some of the people on the union who figured that I was the union rep and I had to say no, I'm not the union rep. I'm the faculty rep. The faculty and union are not synonymous. They're close but they're not synonymous and so I had a couple of issues with Jim Gillis and Maureen [Shaw] and a whole bunch of people and brought me out for supper one night to tell me how things ought to be, and I said sorry.

ROGER: It was pretty soon there, there were staff reps too.

SKIP: Oh Yeah. From the beginning, so, there were staff, faculty and students and administration. It worked well. I think it was set up and so that faculty had to predominate. They had to outnumber everybody else, but everybody else's voices were there. But as I said to the faculty association and eventually, I won either because I convinced them or because they had no choice. I don't know, but I said, you know, for the most part, there's not going to be friction between EdCo and the faculty association, but sometimes there will be. EdCo's got to look at a new program in terms of does it make sense academically? If the structure of that program creates some labour relation issues, that's separate. The point is we need the program and then we'll let you and the administration figure out the labour relations aspect. So, in my mind, that's the way that should work. That's the way I made it work. When I became president, that model had worked very well so we carried on with me delegating the chair to whoever was elected by education council.

ROGER: Yep. Alice do you want to?

ALICE: Nope. I'm the fly on the wall here. The technical person. It's very fascinating. I'll just leave it at that.

SKIP: Yeah. It's been an interesting ride.

ALICE: [Laughs]

SKIP: A lot of fun. You know. There were not very many days when I didn't get up not looking forward to coming to work.

ROGER: Well, you are very successful obviously in terms of all the changes that have occurred, and how you are able to put them in place and guide them. Be very diplomatic and adept to doing it as well.

ALICE: Mm-hmm.

[1:18:45]

ROGER: Because there were certainly some times, when things didn't flow so smoothly. Let's just put it that way. And there were certainly some people who had one term and weren't able to proceed further than that; whereas you, both Gerry and you were the first two people who were able to cover two terms. In fact, you were the first two internal people too.

SKIP: Yeah. That's true. So, first though. You're right. I was very successful, but that's because I believe in the parade theory of leadership. You find a really good parade and you get out in front of it. Meaning I was not the parade. I had really good people working for me. A lot of people that were smarter than me and my job was to run resistance for them, but the real team was working with me. I have been told many times, under several guys that I listen well and that I have a calming influence in a crisis. Probably that's all military, you know. You gotta be calm. Your insides are going like crazy, but the outward appearance has to be calm, no worries, and so I think if I brought something to the table, it was probably that and the idea that I needed people working with me that were far more "book smarter than I were". One of the things that I did in that regard was with my, I forget what I called it, strategic leadership team. Me and the vice presidents, was I would remind them that they had two parts to their title. One was vice president. The other was administration or finance or HR or whatever it was. But both were important. So, they had to operate, not just in their specialty but as a vice president of the university. So, every year or two I would change parts of their portfolio and that was the trick I learned from an American president, so that over time, the VPs all experienced a lot of each other's portfolios and at that strategic leadership team meeting, we met every week for a morning, but I'd make it very clear that the people would brief everyone on what their issues of the day were, listen to whatever comments or advice that their colleagues had to say, but at the end of the day, it was still the vice president's decision.

ROGER: Mm-hmm.

SKIP: Right? So, it was not SLT, made no decisions. It was just eye-level forum to listen to the perspective of your colleagues, but not a cop out. [Laughs]

ROGER: No.

SKIP: Back to Carver, it's one of the strong points of Carver. There's no cop out. You're the Board's only employee. If something screws up, it's your fault, either because you weren't keeping track of it or because you hired the wrong person. There's no way out. It's yours [the president's]. Under other models, it's too easy and many institutions to blame, no it's the senate, no – so at the end of the day, there's nobody you can corner.

ROGER: Yeah. Not, very effective.

[1:22:57]

SKIP: Like the captain of the ship. Yeah. If she has to sleep and if she happens to be asleep when the ship runs aground, it's still her fault.

ROGER: Exactly.

SKIP: She had the wrong officer on the watch.

ROGER: Yup.

SKIP: [Laughs]

ROGER: Or they weren't properly trained or so on and so forth.

SKIP: Right.

ROGER: But, no, that's absolutely correct and accurate. So maybe, we'll just shut off then.

ALICE: Ok.

[End of transcript]