

Interview with Bonnie Anderson

2/22/08, 12:57 p.m.

Kanawha Room

Roy Nutter: Explained Jan Boyles' role as recorder. Also explained that information may be made public through Freedom of Information Act requests.

RN: Describe overview of service in the West Virginia University College of Business and Economics.

Bonnie Anderson: Worked at WVU for 25 years. Started in foreign languages. Worked there for two years. Worked in Dean's office – Arts/Sciences for five years. Worked as administrative assistant in English for 13 years. Worked with associate director of grad programs in B&E since August 2004. Helps oversee full-time MBA program. Responsible for recruitment, marketing, advising.

RN: Tell us what you know about this matter...

BA: At what point?

RN: Start in 1996 if you like.

BA: One of our alumni e-mailed announcement from the Charleston Gazette. Anderson asked for list of all full-time MBA students from WVU Foundation. Bresch's name was not on the list. Name listed as Heather Bresch in press release. Asked Speaker. Speaker told her to look for Heather Kirby. Looked and did see Heather Kirby. There were gaps in Foundation data.

RN: Where did you get the list from?

BA: Courtney Ludwig at the Foundation. List of all alumni. Has a file, probably too large to e-mail.

Michael Lastinger: Could you give us this list?

BA: Sure.

RN: How does the Foundation get the information for the list?

BA: Asked Steve Taylor. Told that after person graduates, A/R shares information with Alumni Association. Information generated by A/R.

ML: When does this happen? At the moment of graduation?

BA: From what I understand. When worked in Dean's office, everything was fed to the Foundation. Used to track alumni. Within English department, had own alumni database.

Speaker hired Anderson. Disagreed as to the value of Foundation records. On list, major codes – 2110 – full-time MBA; 2188 – eMBA. However, at one time, all MBA students, including eMBAs were coded as 2110. In 1999, the new eMBA code was established. Therefore, starting with 1995 – would need to look for 2110 students. 2149 – MSIR. Confirmed with Steve Taylor about Foundation data.

ML: Did you confirm how the list was transferred to A/R or did you ask about a specific student with Steve Taylor?

BA: Another case – ██████████ Month before Heather Bresch situation. Student called, said graduated in 2002. No record of graduating. No one knew about his circumstances. Had taken every class. Didn't process paperwork for graduation or pay his graduation fee.

ML: Which fee?

BA: The graduation fee.

ML: So ██████████ called in November?

BA: Late October.

ML: Week after the University was contacted about Heather Bresch?

BA: Around Oct. 25. Before newspaper stories hit. ██████████ father had died unexpectedly. Should have graduated. Made application for him. Paid fee. Transcript was marked.

ML: The only thing changed on the transcript was the graduation date?

BA: Yes. Office not staffed as much as was in 2002.

ML: But he had all the coursework completed?

BA: Yes. ██████████ was happy initially, but then grew angry. Sent e-mail to Neil Bucklew. Anderson e-mailed ██████████. He became "irate." For five years, he was touting that he had degree. Someone called, and was told he did not have a degree. Anderson has diploma on wall – other people are different. Ultimately, it's the student's responsibility to understand the requirements.

BA: Learned how to do things better. File paperwork, certify students for graduation. Mary Woods certifies students.

RN: Do you ever handle money?

BA: May 2008. Apply for graduation. Pay fee. \$30 or \$36. Fill out form: name, degree, year, name as would like to appear on diploma. Diplomas are mailed only to non-Morgantown addresses. Otherwise, would have a lot of returned diplomas.

RN: Do you take check or cash?

BA: Check with application. When processed at A/R, students can choose to have fee added to student account.

RN: Have you ever handled tuition?

BA: Elizabeth Vitullo would know. She was on maternity leave last fall. But not now.

RN: Can you explain what happens with payment?

BA: All students are self paying – except ATK Missile Systems. Company based in Keyser. Pays for students directly.

RN: They pay B&E?

BA: Check comes to us. Goes to B&E's executive business office. Liz Vitullo would know. 60/40 plan for students. eMBA is "high touch program" with extensive customer service. But students register on own and pay on own.

RN: Does WVU bill students who do not pay?

BA: Students are "stripped" for non-payment. Unclear whether students pay upfront for all classes in the semester because of different starting/ending times for classes. Used to be pay as you go.

RN: Would Elizabeth know?

BA: Yes. B&E does not handle billing. All conducted through Office of Student Accounts.

RN: Do you know how it was handled in the past?

BA: Sounds like a crazy process. Money was collected and taken to A/R.

RN: Who collected it?

BA: Not sure.

RN: Paul Speaker?

BA: Probably would have been. Would trust his recollection of how things were handled.

RN: We have asked Speaker. As of today, do you collect money?

BA: Don't collect. Except graduation fee and ATK check.

RN: The rest is WVU billing?

BA: Yes, through Student Accounts.

RN: When did you hear about the Bresch situation?

BA: First notification – don't recall if Steve Taylor called office or not...

RN: Would you get that call?

BA: Maybe.

ML: What did you see when you looked at her record?

BA: I saw [REDACTED] hours and [REDACTED] hours [REDACTED].

ML: Do you have a printout of that transcript?

BA: I do. In an envelope in my desk.

ML: Asks for transcript. So when you looked, you saw [REDACTED] hours. Explains on STAR indicators for "degree sought" and "degree awarded." Do you remember what was on Bresch's record?

BA: Didn't look at that screen, Mike. At some point, groups were called together in COB. Never attended any meetings on case. Asked to look on G drive. All records from Office of Graduate Programs were kept there. Informal, college-level records. Plans of study for each student. Internal documents. Shredding was conducted in summer – had limited storage. Given rules for everything to keep, discard. Wondered how long should keep documents. Understood that A/R was the official unit on campus for maintaining records. Would love to see the hard copy of Bresch's file. "It sounds terrible" about the timing of the shredding. Separate incidents, though.

RN: Do you know how many shredders were used?

BA: Documents taken away by document company.

RN: What next?

BA: Looked at transcript. Had interaction with Blakely. There was a college-level meeting with Steve [Sears], Cy [Logar]. Also, meetings at Stewart Hall. Went back and forth. Searched G drive for her name. Saw name on graduation list.

ML: Do you know kind of list that was?

BA: Name, year. Informal Excel document. Saw Kirby 1998.

ML: You remember 1998?

BA: Yes. Never evidence of another year. Saw other cohort lists. Fall 1998 – No classes, grades on Bresch's transcript. Matched trail at A/R. "There was one mistake that we did make." To the best of my knowledge, tried to match classes to what was on the G drive. Saw classes on transcripts. Month ago [January 2008], found [REDACTED] courses in Excel. On plan of study with grades, which were not at A/R.

ML: [Shows Anderson PS 6, pg. 3 of 4].

BA: Never remembers seeing 1999 year.

RN: At what point did you discover the other file?

BA: Month ago.

RN: Anything discovered since?

BA: "Anything that I didn't know about in October? I'm unclear what you're asking."

RN: You found this file. Did you find anything else?

BA: No. Matched records at A/R at the time.

RN: Didn't find a plan of study?

BA: Don't remember seeing. Names of others in cohort.

RN: This would be a spreadsheet with grades, page by page?

ML: Shows her BUE 26.

BA: Document produced when panel asked for list of names and 700 numbers. Names would not have had 700 numbers at the time.

ML: Who created BUE 26?

BA: Elizabeth Vitullo.

ML: Tell us more about these special cases.

BA: ██████ had baby. Case – ██████ hired as a temporary employee. ██████ was taking care of it.”

ML: Who does graduation checks in your college?

BA: Anderson does now. In 2004, probably Speaker. “Paul kept great plans of study on people.”

ML: What do you mean by “great plans of study”?

BA: Excel whiz. Had diagrams. Intricate plans of study.

ML: Your sense of the program is that these plans of study were executed?

BA: Speaker monitored student progress well.

ML: Would he make adjustments to the plans?

BA: He would. Work to serve the best interest of the program and the student.

ML: The plans would be changed to fulfill objectives?

BA: Knew student needs and worked with them.

RN: Heard that Paul Speaker was meticulous with records. Would he verify the plan or change the requirements?

BA: It was his call to say if a class could be taken in lieu of another...

RN: Would he document these changes?

BA: Yes, documented in Excel spreadsheets stored on the G drive.

ML: Would Paul Speaker waive requirements?

BA: “He was a champion of the student. He worked with people to make things happen.” Gives example of two ██████ engineers who wanted to enter the program. Paul let them in. Good students. One could argue their transfer credits should not count. Decided to transfer credits “to the dismay of Cy Logar. He [Logar] sees things as black and white.” Logar instituted a mandatory MBA workshop. “A total 360-degree change” under Logar’s leadership. May be losing people with the new way, but there may have been too much flexibility with the way before.

ML: But Speaker's flexibility didn't compromise the integrity of the program?

BA: No. "I'm not naïve. I'm a Paul Speaker fan." Learned a lot from him. Speaker continues to promote the program. Serves as mentor to current students. One of the most popular MBA instructors. Don't think he did anything to overlook the number of credit hours. "It was obvious that she [Bresch] had not graduated before October."

RN: How did it happen in October? How were courses changed on the existing transcript?

ML: [Shows Anderson AR 43].

BA: ██████████. Certified for graduation in summer. Applied for ██████████, and they called WVU. He was "horrified" that his transcript did not reflect what it should have. Classes were on his record and paid for.

RN: Were records found on the G drive?

BA: Official records showed ██████ and ██████.

RN: How did you verify those grades?

BA: Kristin researched with Speaker, instructors.

RN: Who signed the grade mod forms? Would you have those records?

BA: In office. Still have file. Instructors signed forms.

RN: [Asks for copies of ██████████ grade mods].

BA: Grade mod book. Mark date, name, professor, class. Don't check to make sure A/R actually changes grades. Assumed if worked 99 percent of the time, no reason to go back and check. Going to go back and check now. If the grade mods were processed under Speaker, he would have changed the student's plan of study.

ML: Is graduation certification based on college records?

BA: Could have been. Certification is performed twice. Calculated grades as numbers not letters. Tied to Excel master spreadsheet. Certify people for graduation based on information retrieved from A/R. In past, if a grade mod was changed from an I to a B, COB never confirmed change with A/R. Could argue that the grade mods were completed, but not processed.

ML: [Shows AR 65]. Who instructed to complete?

BA: From Jerry Blakely based on a decision from Dean Sears.

ML: How did you know to take the grade from an A to a B?

BA: Jerry told Anderson grades. "Based on my opinion, well, there was no method behind that madness." All writing on grade mods was Anderson's except the letter grades themselves. Consulted with Steve Taylor on what to do.

ML: You consulted with Steve Taylor?

BA: "Yeah."

RN: Why no instructor signature?

BA: Went back and searched. Not sure why no signature.

RN: Do you think there's anything more on the hard drive?

BA: Thinks they have "exhausted" the search. Found more information when responding to a panel's data request. Paul looked and found 15 files with the name Kirby. Some files were gone, and retrieved by IT. Very careful what touched. Never modified any electronic record.

RN: What about the Zip drives?

BA: In storage. Found floppies with nothing on them. Went through all the floppies. Some things in storage room. Problem was everything was "pitched" over the summer. Found one Zip drive, but nothing on it. "We want to find the answers, too." Dean talked to staff week after new semester started. Made his decision in short amount of time.

ML: Why do you think he made a decision with a short amount of time?

BA: Press was calling. Oct. 15-22. Not much more than a week or week and a half. It would be a tough decision to make.

RN: Has the process in the office changed since October in B&E?

BA: Many systems are already in place.

RN: Classes were offered on system different than a normal semester basis. Many folks troubled by the off-semester schedule. Should more onus be placed on B&E to make sure grades are in place?

BA: B&E would argue that they did their end.

RN: What processes or procedures could work better?

BA: What could we do better? Example: [REDACTED]. Instructor submitted all grades. [REDACTED] was missing. Added name to A/R. [REDACTED] transcript had an [REDACTED] that had not changed.

RN: Do you think things are falling apart at A/R?

BA: With the amount of volume, there are bound to be some mistakes. "We can tweak" procedures. Ultimately, it's the student's responsibility.

RN: Hypothetical -- course ends in March...

BA: No different than summer school. If take first week in summer school, grades don't appear until August. eMBA is like summer school. Grade may be submitted, but it won't appear on transcript.

RN: So the instructor reports the grades to your office, and then you submit to A/R?

BA: The instructor reports to both us and A/R.

RN: Through STAR?

BA: Ask for copy of instructor grades. Tell company that a student received an "A" or a "B" for reimbursement.

RN: So what happens with a class that starts Dec. 15 and ends March 1?

BA: There isn't a class with that structure. Starts Jan. 9 -- starts with rest of semester. Typically starts week before classes starts and ends week after.

RN: Ok. So a week before in January. Does the student register online through STAR? And receive a grade March 1?

BA: Do you mean can the instructor input them?

BA: I don't know. Think instructor can enter grades as soon as the class ends.

Interview ending time: 2:07 p.m.