

Interview with Jerry Blakely  
1/17/08, 3:30 p.m.  
203 Chitwood

*Interview start time: 3:25 p.m.*

Roy Nutter: Explained Jan Boyles' role as recorder.

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

Jerry Blakely: Came in 1989. Wife was on faculty. Worked in management department. Within year, was appointed assistant director. Cy Logar hired him for position. Merged departments of management, industrial relations. Intention was to force greater collaboration, "less silo approach" – save money. Wife passed away. No administrative work, no research during her illness. Just teaching.

JB: In summer 2007 (May), Neil Bucklew and Cliff [Clifford] Hawley, nominated him to current position. Dean forced Paul Speaker to step down in fall [2006]. Logar became interim director. Blakely nominated for position without consent. Took position effective July 1, 2007. Didn't have office until October 2007. Used office on first floor. Moved down to graduate programs office. Job provided reason to stay busy. Intellectually interesting, challenging.

JB: Have great team in office. Bonnie Anderson – been there for 3-3.5 years. Liz Vitullo works on eMBA. Jane Armstrong – administrative assistant – been there for year.

JB: "We've been so involved in digging through and trying to find things." Before arrived in office, everything shredded. "Don't think they [the documents] would have shed light if they did exist."

JB: Kept computer backups on G drive, old G drive and old Y drive. All were on server. "There are literally hundreds, if not thousands of files." But "all the stuff is in Paul Speaker's head. Whatever transpired, there are only two people who know the truth of what happened back then."

*RN: Tell me more about Leah Summers.*

JB: Part when the program started. Old off campus MBA program offered classes in remote locations (Parkersburg, Wheeling). Not good retention rate. So Sid Stearns, Bob Maust, Jack Porter and Carol Henry worked on new program. Started development in 1995. Used old off campus curriculum. Delivered through MDTV – used by medical school.

JB: Leah Summers was in the first year cohort. Entered in 1995.

JB: In 1996, Jay Coats approached a group of faculty (Coats, Speaker, Dieter Schaupp Bob Brett) to teach. Coats restructured curriculum, integrated team teaching. Blakely helped redesign curriculum to offer one, two credit classes. In 1996, students followed new curriculum.

JB: Bresch got an [REDACTED] in the class, but doesn't remember her at all.

*RN: Was Bresch a student in Morgantown?*

JB: Almost sure she was. [REDACTED] Unofficial transcript had [REDACTED] but no hard copies or spreadsheets. Went back to look for grades and found nothing. "I don't have a clue if she completed the work for [REDACTED] or not."

*RN: Did you have incomplete contracts?*

JB: No, I don't think. When changes needed to be made, we completed a grade modification form.

*RN: Do you still do it that way?*

JB: This fall, after October – changed procedures. COB now has form that requires a contract. New policy instituted. Incomplete work must be finished by next semester or COB will manually change "I" to "F." Document was signed by the faculty.

[Shows Blakely BUE 4]

JB: Agrees that he wrote BUE 4.

*Michael Lastinger: Where did you find the grades listed on BUE 4?*

JB: On transcript. Changing [REDACTED] grades was "a mental flip of the coin." We were directed to provide documentation.

JB: Bresch had credit for [REDACTED] hours. [REDACTED] hours were noted as [REDACTED] Speaker said that [REDACTED] of the hours were [REDACTED] for a [REDACTED] that [REDACTED] Speaker said that he knew she had passed the class.

JB: A spreadsheet was found. Grades on spreadsheet that were not on University STAR/BANNER system.

JB: Paul [Speaker] talked at meeting at Stewart Hall. Maybe grade mod paperwork was never filed.

ML: Refers to BUE 4.

JB: "I have no clue whether she did the work for the class or not." Refers to BUE 4. For classes footnoted with ##, Blakely entered [REDACTED]. Directed by Dean [Sears] to enter [REDACTED].

*RN: Why did she receive grades for the classes?*

JB: Grades were entered according to what was said at Stewart Hall meeting with Speaker. Individuals present: Jerry Lang, Craig Walker, Alex Macia, Steve Sears, Cy Logar, Jerry Blakely, Paul Speaker.

*RN: Why were Lang and Macia there? Why were non-COB individuals involved?*

JB: "You'd have to ask them."

*ML: What was Paul's role in the meeting?*

JB: Not sure. You'd need to talk to Paul. "They said did you give/tell her that she had credit for those classes?"

*ML: That question was asked of whom?*

JB: Paul Speaker. Speaker had lunch meeting with Bresch. Allegedly told Bresch that "it was all taken care of." Paul said he might have told her that she had credit [REDACTED]. Individuals at meeting were told that Bresch "has a witness that will swear and testify that she was finished."

JB: Witness was Leah Summers. Works as attorney at Mylan. In meeting, Craig Walker said he talked to Summers. Summers relayed to Walker that "she will testify to what was said at that luncheon."

*RN: Summers was present at lunch, but not in same classes [as Bresch]?*

JB: Yes. Not in same classes.

*RN: Why was she attending lunch?*

JB: Not sure. Could have been friend of Paul [Speaker]. "Don't know how these relationships work."

*ML: What was the attitude of Craig Walker when he talked about his interactions with Summers?*

JB: "Don't want to assign motive." Was told at meeting that she [Summers] was witness. It was stated that, "Paul indeed told her that she was finished with the program."

JB: Left meeting. Getting ready to leave for Toronto a couple of days later. Called by Dean [Sears]. Told that Bresch had the requirements to finish the program. Asked by Sears to draft a letter.

*ML: Do you have the dates of those meetings?*

JB: Not with him. Thinks it was a Friday.

*ML: So Dean Sears called and asked you to get a memo?*

JB: Yes. Sears said, "I want a document to award the degree. I've concluded that she has met the requirements." Blakely says that Sears "firmly believes that it was a judgment call without any political pressure. There was time pressure. And I believe him – unless he's lying to me. But he's an honorable person."

*ML: Why would Lang, Walker, Macia go into meeting rather than student?*

JB: Never talked to student.

*RN: Where did request [to look into degree] come from?*

JB: At one point, ██████████ – who knew Heather Bresch – saw press release that she received promotion at Mylan. Listed as former MBA student. Then received call from paper.

*RN: Has she [Bresch] ever contacted COB?*

JB: "Not to my knowledge."

JB: Summers and Walker had talked. Walker said, "There's a witness. I talked to Leah Summers."

*ML: What was Paul's impression during this meeting? Did he remember her finishing the work or not?*

JB: Doesn't remember Paul responding at all. Doesn't recall him saying anything during meeting. He may have responded something like, "I might have told her that." But that's all Speaker said. Walker said that he had talked to Summers the previous evening.

*ML: When did this luncheon meeting between Speaker, Bresch and Summers occur?*

JB: Ten years ago. "The only person who knows the real truth is Paul Speaker."

*RN: In my mind there are three questions:*

- 1. Did she receive the degree or not?*
- 2. Are there others in similar positions?*

3. *What happened recently? Who said what to whom?*

*ML: Is there a concrete reason to change [REDACTED]?*

JB: "The truth is we have no clue whether she did the work or not. Honestly, I don't know." Was nine, ten years ago. Grades are gone.

JB: Typically, in Blakely's class there are three components: group project, paper, exam. Students who receive "Is" almost always get paper completed after fact. Guesses that's what happened with Bresch.

*ML: Why no paperwork to back up grade change?*

JB: Often found files with grade changes that never made it to Admissions and Records. Classes were taught off cycle. Started first of August. There were problems with payments off cycle. Most people finish incompletes though. MBA program was understaffed. "Amazed at amount of work that Speaker's operation got done." Nevertheless, some items "fell through the cracks." In terms of paperwork, "I honestly don't know. But there are no records."

*ML: Does the program have a time limit for adjusting grades?*

JB: Does not remember. But now there's a policy in place.

RN: Think policy mentioned in catalog. But not tightly adhered to.

*RN: Sears has requested audit to go back and see if there's more students with problems. What's the status of the audit?*

JB: Have started. Going one by one. So far, no problems. Starting with last couple years and moving backward. Office staff now very good. Before then, there were problems.

*ML: Questions process of audit. Why not start with beginning of program and work toward current day?*

*RN: Are the eMBA curriculum requirements written down anywhere?*

JB: Couldn't find any curriculum from back then. Looked on Web server. Nothing there. Contacted Mary Strife, Jonathan Cumming – can't find anything. Don't think curriculum was formalized at the time. Classes were offered as special topics.

*ML: Did the eMBA go through grad council or faculty senate?*

JB: Don't know. Jonathan passed along letter sent by Bob Stitzel. Wasn't in office in 1996. Digging through records.

RN: Part of the panel's charge is to see if there are other students.

JB: There are appendices about other students in materials submitted by COB. Working on "problem students." Some other students have graduated with "Is" and NRs on their records. Grades were never changed. Some students graduated with 44, 45 hours. But they are listed as graduates.

JB: We found two files.

1. List describing "Mylan connections." Lists Mylan alumni. Bresch's name is on the list.
2. Excel file with eMBA program grades. Bresch's name is on the list.

*RN: One week after graduation, [College of Engineering] takes commencement bulletin and prepares a list of students who did not graduate. Does COB have a similar list?*

JB: "You're asking the wrong person."

JB: Blakely's office is small, and the storage area is smaller. Found Zip disk, but nothing on it. It's readable. "Whatever archive was there, somebody tossed it." Were making room on the server.

Interview ending time: 4:06 p.m.