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Interview with Jerry Blakely (full panel)  
2/15/08, 1:30 p.m.  
753 Engineering Sciences Building

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.*

JB: Came to WVU in 1989. Wife was member of the faculty back then. Received Ph.D. from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Worked in organizational management – looked at behavioral issues. Business school equivalent of psychology/sociology. After tenure, served as assistant director for division – encompassing marketing, management, industrial relations and management information systems. Served as assistant to director. Responsibilities included finding adjuncts, scheduling, permitting students into classes. Wife died after prolonged battle with cancer. Traveled back/forth to Johns Hopkins. Taught courses, but did not complete administrative work or research. When returned to WVU after his wife passed away, just teaching classes not conducting research. In May, “couple of close friends nominated” him for current position. Sears concurred with the suggestion. Assumed appointment in mid-July.

*Art Centonze: This was 2007?*

JB: Yes, this past summer. Didn't move directly to graduate studies office. Did not have furniture. Moved after received desk – sometime in October 2007. Found out about eMBA matter from Bonnie Anderson.

JB: Two programs – full time MBA and eMBA. Full-time program takes 13.5 months. Normally have 50 students. Starts in July, ends following August. eMBA takes 2.5 years. New cohort begins each semester. Taught using distance technology. Always have local (Morgantown-based) group and two/three remote sites. Uses fully-integrated audio/video. Students at remote locations can see the professor, and correspond back. “The technology isn't great, but it's gotten better.”

JB: Program started in 1995. Previously, there was a part-time program taught on the weekends by the COB's faculty, who would travel to remote sites. eMBA uses the same curriculum as part-time MBA program. Blakely did not teach in first cohort. Heather Bresch was member of second cohort. Jay Coats was integral in finding faculty for the first few years. Taught using MDTV – the Medical Center's technology delivery system. Struggled to develop curriculum. Coats asked Blakely to spearhead efforts to change the curriculum. Worked to develop one/two credit hour courses. “Wanted to force integration across the various silos of the college.” Classes offered as special topics.

JB: Did have Heather Bresch in class. Team-taught many courses. Taught statistics course – two hour credit. Bresch received [REDACTED]s. The other class, according to her transcript, was [REDACTED]”

JB: “I seriously don’t remember her, even after seeing her picture.”

JB: Received phone call in mid-October. Before the phone call, Bonnie Anderson had asked, “Did you know Heather Bresch?” Blakely replied, “No.” Anderson remarked that she had seen her name in paper, news release about Mylan job promotion. Blakely said, “I don’t remember her.” Sometime later, received “call from Steve or someone.” Asked by administrators, “What do you know about Heather Bresch?”

JB: Paper records did not exist, and were – for the most part – gone. In summer, a storage room was cleaned out. Was asked by Jess Mancini what should be done with paper files: Mancini asked how old the files were. According to Blakely’s recollection, Mancini stated that, “You don’t need them – just shred them.” Since then, Mancini now says – according to Blakely – that he never made that remark. Thousands of files remain on the college’s LAN. Started going through files with Bonnie Anderson to provide evidence. Did not find anything that was inconsistent with the [REDACTED] hours indicated on her transcript.

*AC: Did you find anything more that would indicate additional hours on her transcript?*

JB: Did not find any files that indicated that she had completed more than [REDACTED] hours.

*Lori Franz: Did anyone capture the transcript at that time?*

JB: Had spreadsheets. May have them on thumb drive with him. Thinks that panel has all documentation possessed by the COB.

*Michael Lastinger: Did you print out that spreadsheet for us?*

JB: Thinks so. Believes part of the second request for materials from the panel. In process of looking for records, found spreadsheet. Speaker directed Blakely to look on another part of the LAN. File created in either 2002 or 2005. Showed classes on transcripts. For some of the incomplete grades, letter grades were indicated.

*John Burkoff: Does the panel have a copy of that?*

JB: I can show it to you [refers to his thumb drive].

*AC: What exactly is this document? Asks for more detail...*

JB: It’s a spreadsheet.

[Panel members look for document Blakely is referring to].

JB: Asked Paul Speaker about grades for Heather Bresch. Had course with [REDACTED], in which Bresch received [REDACTED]. "Paul said at Stewart Hall that she knew she had [REDACTED] that course." Paul Speaker's memory of some courses were not recorded. Paul Speaker said she had [REDACTED] the course.

ML: Asks Blakely if the spreadsheet that he is referring to is BUE 11.

JB: Found classes that had [REDACTED] on Bresch's original transcript or weren't on her official transcript.

RN: Asks Blakely to examine BUE 11, pg. 2 of 3.

JB: Bresch had [REDACTED] hours of credit on her transcript. Had another [REDACTED] hours of [REDACTED] work. Included a [REDACTED]-hour credit in [REDACTED]. Course was [REDACTED]. "[REDACTED] stated he was sure she [REDACTED] because he had [REDACTED] in the course." [REDACTED] not listed as instructor of record.

RN: Refers back to BUE 11. Tells Blakely that the document is not a spreadsheet.

JB: Doesn't know if it was a spreadsheet per se. May have materials on his thumb drive.

RN: Asks Jan Boyles to help Blakely find file on thumb drive after interview's conclusion.

JB: Bresch had [REDACTED] hours on transcript. [REDACTED] hours were [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] hours came from [REDACTED] course [REDACTED] by [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] notified Jerry Blakely that he had found the file, which Bresch had faxed to him. Paul Speaker made comment on remaining coursework that "he knew she [REDACTED] the coursework."

JB: "At the time, there was no evidence" about the remaining incomplete. Found another Excel file -- dated 2002 or 2005, that had grades for Heather Bresch for the four credit hours.

*RN: Does the spreadsheet have CRNs?*

JB: Doesn't think so.

*LF: If student completed an independent study for a given course, would it be listed under the original course title or would it be registered under another course name (like independent study)?*

JB: Doesn't know.

*John Burkoff: Where did the spreadsheet come from?*

JB: Speaker's documents found on the LAN.

*ML: Does this spreadsheet have final grades or test grades?*

JB: Final grades.

*LF: Does this spreadsheet list students who started the eMBA, students who completed and those who had deficiencies?*

*John Burkoff: Is this a list for just her [Bresch's] cohort?*

JB: Yes.

*ML: The courses – simulation and communication skills – are marked 199705, but on BUE 4, they are listed as Spring 1997. Are these Spring or Summer 1997 courses?*

JB: At the time, courses were counted funny. At time, courses counted when they ended. Now, the University counts courses when they start. If a class starts in January and ends in May, then that's part of the regular semester now. But once, it was considered a summer class because of when it ended.

ML: If you look at the transcript of other students in Bresch's cohort, you will find that all students took simulation and communication skills in Summer I 1997. The same students took change management in Summer II 1997. Yet, it is marked differently on BUE 4.

JB: It's the same course.

ML: [Examines BUE 11].

JB: Blakely affirms that's the information (or spreadsheet) that he was referring to earlier. Says that the information contained on BUE 11 was found on a spreadsheet a few weeks ago.

*John Burkoff: In [redacted] taught course – [redacted] – for which Bresch received [redacted] That grade was changed to [redacted] Do you have any recollection as to why [redacted]?*

JB: "I have no recollection at all. I just don't remember her."

*John Burkoff: Did you have any records [on which to base the change]?*

JB: "I don't."

*John Burkoff: So what was your basis of changing the [redacted]?*

JB: "Paul [Speaker] said she had met all the requirements. I don't know if she completed all the requirements or not."

*John Burkoff: Why would you change her grade to an 'C' rather than any other letter grade?*

JB: "It was a flip of the coin. A mental flip of the coin." Steve [Sears] asked him "to prepare a document to get her [Bresch] graduated." Doesn't know why he put an 'C' on her transcript.

*John Burkoff: In what context was Sears told to get her graduated?*

JB: "Eventually, he was called or told in person – 'It's your call.'"

*AC: Who said that to him?*

JB: Not sure.

*AC: Was this conveyed at the Oct. 15 meeting?*

JB: I don't know.

*AC: Would this be the meeting with Lang, Walker and Sears?*

JB: If it was the last meeting, I was there.

*ML: Where was this meeting held?*

JB: In the conference room in Stewart Hall.

*ML: The president's conference room?*

JB: Yes.

*AC: Who was present at that meeting?*

JB: Sears, Cy Logar, Blakely, Craig Walker, Jerry Lang, Alex Macia.

*John Burkoff: Was Case there? Did he come in late?*

JB: No, he was not in that one.

*ML: So there were not people going in/out?*

JB: No.

*ML: Was Paul Speaker there?*

JB: Yes.

*LF: So this was the last meeting?*

JB: Yes, this was the last one.

*LF: There were other meetings?*

JB: First meeting with Walker and Macia. Press called, asked COB administrators to find what can about the matter. Next meeting with Jerry Lang and Logar. Doesn't think that Sears attended that meeting. People walking in/out. Unstructured meeting. Can't remember if Walker was there or not. Remember last meeting more vividly than others.

*AC: Was Sears asked to make a call?*

JB: Was not asked at the meeting to make call. Sears contacted Blakely sometime after the meeting. Occurred before Blakely left for Toronto. Sears told Blakely that it was his call. "Steve was pretty deliberative in retrospect." At time, a lot of "press hounding" the University. On the day of final meeting, went in with [redacted] credits on the transcript. Had [redacted] hours [redacted] were from [redacted] course. [redacted] were from [redacted]. "It was a mental flip of the coin, but I believe that she probably did get done."

*ML: Why [redacted]?*

JB: Student not registered during period. Don't know what the transcript said, [redacted]

*John Burkoff: What about the remaining [redacted] hours?*

JB: In the previous meeting, they...

*LF: Who does "they" refer to?*

JB: Lang, Walker – not sure who it was. Anyway, did not [redacted] or [redacted]. In last meeting, Walker said – not verbatim – "I talked with Heather Bresch last night and she said that you [Paul Speaker] told her that the last semester was taken care of." Speaker may have worked with her on [redacted]. Witness to meeting – Leah Summers. Walker said that Summers would testify that she had lunch and that she would tell or swear that Heather Bresch's recollection was correct. "Paul did not refute [those statements]. There was an unspoken consensus that this was the answer."

*John Burkoff: Was Craig Walker the only one to have a conversation with Leah Summers and/or Heather Bresch?*

JB: "I didn't talk to her." Paul has been good friends with Leah Summers. She used to teach in the eMBA. Was in previous cohort before Heather Bresch. "When I left the meeting, I assumed we had a new eMBA grad." Sears received call. Was told, "This is your decision."

*John Burkoff: Do you know who that call was from?*

JB: No. Getting ready to leave for Toronto. Told by someone needed to be at Stewart Hall 8 a.m. next morning. Asked to prepared document. Steve, Cy and Blakely met to prepare letter for Steve. Bonnie prepared letter. Signed and sent to Admissions/Records.

*AC: If it was unclear whether she finished the program or not, how did you decide on the courses that went on her transcript? And how did you decide to give [REDACTED] for those courses?*

JB: Courses in the eMBA curriculum. "We didn't use good logic there." Steve decided to accept this version [of Walker's account]. He decided that she and her attorney...

*AC: Was Leah Summers her attorney at that point?*

JB: Both worked for Mylan. Steve decided in favor of her [Bresch]. Maybe should have awarded [REDACTED].

*ML: [Refers to BUE 4]. Did Blakely construct BUE 4 because someone told him to? Who?*

JB: Yes, constructed because directed. Steve had "decided that she did meet the requirements for graduation." Asked to prepare paperwork to Admissions/Records to certify her for graduation. Steve sent paperwork to Admissions/Records.

*AC: Are you referring to your letter, dated Oct. 19?*

JB: Yes, prepared letter for Steve.

*AC: On that date, you gave her [REDACTED] credits. Someone took and created those courses.*

JB: Bonnie Anderson found spreadsheet with original courses. "She [Anderson] is in no way responsible for any of this."

*LF: In this meeting with Walker, where the lunch with Paul Speaker was discussed, did anyone question why years had passed? Don't you think that you would check and make sure the details have been taken care of (if you were Heather Bresch)?*

JB: "You would think. Paul is a very positive individual. He sees through rose-colored glasses." Never believed that he told her that we'll get you graduated.

*John Burkoff: Do you remember Paul Speaker making the remark that, "That is the one thing that we know did not happen."*

JB: "I don't remember him saying that. He could have."

JB: Paul was in the [graduate programs] office, trying to find information on Web server. Bonnie Anderson found another file with other grades that had not been recorded. Told Paul Speaker that "I never believe that you would have ever told Heather Bresch that she would get credit" at a lunch. Paul's reply: "Why do you think Leah Summers was at that meeting?"

*LF: You mentioned that you had meetings with the Dean. Did the Dean ever seek your counsel or anyone else's counsel?*

JB: Told him his opinions. Don't believe Paul talked to him [Sears]. Sears asked Blakely, "What do you think?"

*John Burkoff: What else did you tell Sears?*

JB: Perhaps a student fabricated a resume and got caught. Do have students who don't get diplomas. Other students were certified for graduation with "Is" or NRs on the transcript.

*LF: But were these students certified for graduation?*

JB: Yes. Let people walk across stage to graduate.

LF: Most students know that you don't get a degree by walking across a stage. That's pretty much common knowledge...

JB: "I don't think." At this year's December convocation, one student inquired about a classmate that hadn't completed work. Was upset that this person graduated.

LF: Perhaps someone see the ceremony as equivalent to earning a degree...

*AC: When the grades were changed last fall, were they changed in a matter consistent with University policy?*

JB: [REDACTED]." Bonnie filled out the grade modification paperwork to change the classes from [REDACTED]. Guesses Dean signed the paperwork. Have copies in graduate office. "Not sure if consistent or inconsistent [with University policy] because [REDACTED]"

*AC: Why do you think that Heather Bresch saw a need to bring Leah Summers to lunch?*



JB: "I don't know." According to his understanding of the matter, Heather Bresch was given the impression that she had completed the program.

*LF: University legal counsel was present at this meeting. As shared through Craig Walker, Heather Bresch assumes a commitment was made. A verbal commitment doesn't make something happen. Did anyone question this?*

JB: "I didn't hear anyone question it."

*AC: Was it Paul Speaker's style after he had that kind of a lunch to go back to the office and put a note to file?*

JB: An amazing amount of work was completed by Speaker's office with small staff. Never had enough staff. Very understaffed. Paul was "detail oriented."

*RN: In Fall 1998, there are faculty assigned to courses. How were the faculty selected for these classes [on the transcript]?*

JB: Instructors of record for the course. These classes were really being taught.

*RN: Asks Blakely to confirm that there were three meetings on the matter. One was with Lang. What was the location of meeting?*

JB: Conference room.

*RN: Who was present?*

JB: Walker, Macia and Case came in/out.

*RN: Was Lang there?*

JB: I think.

*RN: Sears?*

JB: There was one meeting where just Blakely and Logar attended.

JB: I may not have the number of meetings right.

*RN: There was one in the president's conference room and one in Lang's office with Logar and Blakely.*

JB: A few people came in and out.

*RN: And later, there was another meeting in the president's conference room. Attendees?*

JB: Lang, Walker, Macia, Sears, Speaker.

AC: *Is this the meeting where the Leah Summers' statement was made?*

JB: Yes, at the last meeting.

AC: *Did Sears make his decision quickly?*

JB: Within those couple of days.

ML: *Did you have a feeling about the decision [that was Sears was going to make]?*

JB: "It was clear the decision they wanted to see...wouldn't devote all those resources to one student with [REDACTED]"

AC: *Did anyone give a contrary opinion?*

JB: There wasn't other evidence to support a contrary opinion. Trust that Steve was being honest. "But it would have taken an awfully strong person to decide otherwise."

ML: *Why would it take a strong person to decide otherwise?*

JB: "Just my opinion." Ambiguous situation. "Would have to be strong to decide otherwise." Sears had no connection to state.

LF: *Do you think he was naïve to the state and its power connections?*

JB: Sears didn't believe Paul Speaker. Had asked him to step down one year before.

LF: *Do you think their interpersonal relationship clouded his judgment?*

JB: Didn't talk to Paul personally.

ML: *Do you have any recollection of a student -- [REDACTED]?*

JB: Paul worked with Kristin Gerdes. Liz Vitullo out on maternity leave. [REDACTED] is alumna of MBA program. Paul came into office. Said that he had completed program, even though incompletes or NRs remained on [REDACTED] record. Grades never made it to registrar.

ML: *Do you know whether or not he has graduated? And when he graduated?*

JB: I think he has.

ML: *When?*

JB: Not sure. But could find out.

*ML: [Referred to BUE 23, pg. 2]. Who prepared that document?*

JB: Blakely did.

JB: [REDACTED] had [REDACTED] hours of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

*ML: [REDACTED] hours?*

JB: Yes. Certified with [REDACTED]. But had [REDACTED].

*John Burkoff: Have you finished the internal audit of eMBA students?*

JB: No.

*John Burkoff: Are there any materials that you have supplied to Sears that we don't have?*

JB: No specific details. Just number of students with "Is" or NRs.

*ML: How does college handle incompletes?*

JB: Can't tell how were handled in the past. In October/November 2007, COB changed way handled "Is." Students must sign contract. Grade will automatically revert to F if not completed.

*AC: Does your office certify degree requirements?*

JB: Not sure. Don't know. Assumes that Admissions/Records certifies.

*AC: Does Admissions/Records double check the list submitted?*

JB: Don't know if they check to see if students indeed graduated. Students often get turned down for jobs when employers call Admissions/Records to see if the student graduated and the transcript says they haven't.

*AC: If no one was checking on the list in Admissions/Records, can you tell if there was an initial request filed for Heather Bresch to graduate with her eMBA?*

JB: No doubt about that. Could certify a peanut butter sandwich to graduate.

*LF: Is Heather Bresch's case similar to others with [REDACTED]?*

JB: Her transcript didn't show some [REDACTED]. There are others that show [REDACTED].

*ML: Did you look at her transcript in mid-October?*

JB: Don't think.

*ML: How did you know what courses to put on her transcript?*

JB: Relied on Bonnie Anderson.

*ML: Can you print out the spreadsheet? Is the spreadsheet consistent with data on STAR/BANNER?*

JB: No copies of Bresch's transcript prior to changes.

[Blakely searches for files on thumb drive. Cannot find them. Will send in campus mail to Jan Boyles].

Interview ending time: 2:36 p.m.