

Interview with Jennifer Fisher
3/5/08, 12 p.m.
Cacapon Room, Mountainlair

Interview start time: 12:03 p.m.

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

JF: I grew up in West Virginia. Attended West Virginia Wesleyan for undergrad. Received grad degree from WVU in public administration. Worked summers in a youth crisis shelter. Finished Ph.D. in public policy in 2000. Work for staff support for various initiatives of the President's Office. Third president served. Official title is Executive Officer for Policy.

RN: When you worked for David Hardesty, what was your title?

JF: It was assistant chief of staff at one point. Earlier, was assistant to the chief of staff. Was chief of staff for year in transition.

RN: So you stayed on with Garrison?

JF: Not much changed. There were a couple of new people.

RN: Can you tell us what you know?

JF: It was a Thursday afternoon. There was an interview in the conference room with some real estate issues/land management. Craig Walker came into the meeting. Said someone had called from A/R. Could you call back and find out more? Stepped out, took the phone message. A call had come into the office. A reporter had called the student - Heather Bresch, and said that you don't have an eMBA. The call was to figure out if anybody knew what was going on.

RN: Who was the call from?

JF: I don't know. I went to the office, and called the main A/R number. It was not unusual to get that kind of call. Wanted to get bearings. Asked for Marilyn Potts. She was not there. Asked for Khoo. He was not there, but was reachable on his cell. Called cell. I wasn't sure if he got it [the call] or not. I left a message. I don't think I ever heard from or connected with Khoo. I thought B&E might have something. I called Paul Speaker, who had been associated with the eMBA program. I got him. Said that I got this weird, random message. Wanted to know if he knew anything. He said he was just talking to somebody about her, and that she was so close, but I [Speaker] don't remember if she graduated or not. He said he would look in his office. He knew she had been involved in a trial on the West Coast. He was changing out at that point as director. He

remembered that she was really close at the time. I asked if he could check in his office for records. Speaker said he didn't know what he would have; it was a long time ago. I was waiting to hear back. At the end of the day, I believe I talked to Paul Speaker. He said there was nothing in the easiest way. There were zip disks or something that could be helpful. It seemed so out of the blue to him. At that point, Craig Walker was out of his interview. I brought him up to speed. Craig Walker had talked to Steve Taylor.

Michael Lastinger: Did you know anything about her at that point?

JF: I knew that she worked at Mylan.

ML: Did you know it was connected to Manchin at this point?

JF: No. Craig Walker had talked to Steve Taylor. Received information. Decided to triage to Academic Affairs.

RN: You don't know who the call was from. Do you know who the call was to?

JF: The president.

RN: Who answered the call?

JF: It could have been a number of people – Gloria, Rita, a student worker.

RN: What is the procedure when that type of call comes in?

JF: A random call to Craig Walker? We would probably bump to Katie Utterback, the student advocate.

RN: So you triage calls?

JF: Yes.

ML: Could you recreate the chain of communication?

JF: The meeting was in the president's conference room.

ML: And he had a slip of paper that someone had given him. Do you remember what was on that slip?

JF: The name of student, that it involved an eMBA degree.

ML: Did Craig Walker give that slip to you?

JF: He probably gave it to me.

ML: Who was the next person that you communicated with?

JF: A/R.

ML: You contacted Marilyn Potts, and she wasn't there, and you tried Khoo...

JF: I reached him later. He called back. Craig Walker had already talked to Steve Taylor.

ML: How did Craig Walker get the charge to look into the matter?

JF: He came out after his interview.

ML: Did you ask him about it?

JF: I asked what was the issue with A/R? He told me he had calls out.

ML: So you both started...

JF: At that point, my responsibility stopped. He found information from A/R on file. He found the number of credits. It was no longer my issue. Moved to Academic Affairs.

ML: Did you note the number of credits?

JF: No. The reason why it was a Thursday – I remember that now. Jerry Lang taught on Thursdays. I will call to double check that piece of information. We would triage it there. Jerry Lang was in class, and where my office was, we could watch him from the front door and wait for him to come in.

ML: How did you know it was Thursday again?

JF: He taught on Thursdays. Mike Garrison also taught Thursday afternoons. Stopped to see what was going on.

ML: It was a Thursday in mid-October. Do you remember the date?

JF: I would have that interview on my calendar.

RN: Then what happens?

JF: My direct involvement is done. The next day, there were times that there were meetings in the chief of staff's office – on Friday. I was probably in/out of the office. They were gathering information. In the office – get interrupted every five minutes. On that day, looked at BANNER, payment records, classmates to talk to. B&E came over. I can't remember who. I know Cy Logar was one. Rita would know.

RN: Why was the meeting in Stewart Hall rather than the college?

JF: There were communications with the college. It was getting a sense of what information they could provide.

RN: Was this an extraordinary effort for a student to get this much attention?

JF: There were number of people in there [Walker's office]. It wasn't a huge length of time. On any given day, there are efforts to help out/facilitate, call meetings. It didn't strike me as unusual. When there's an issue with the media calling, it adds something. We had to make sure the right hand and the left hand were talking.

RN: At the point that Craig Walker has these meetings, you're out of the loop at that point?

JF: Pretty much. I received articles that included clips. Probably the last thing that I remember was on Friday afternoon at the end of the day. The President came in and Craig Walker was catching him up. B&E was looking, according to Craig Walker, for information. He said, 'Either she has it or she doesn't.'

ML: Who said that?

JF: President Garrison.

ML: Where did he say that? What was the context?

JF: Friday afternoon.

ML: After Thursday?

JF: Yes.

ML: Who was present?

JF: I was, Alex Macia – maybe. They came through the side door. He said, either she 'Has it or she doesn't.' That's the answer we call and give. After that Thursday, it was a simple issue. I heard recently that A/R didn't have a transcript.

RN: If you call today, if you call A/R, and check on Mike Lastinger's degree, to see if he graduated, what happens?

JF: I think they give directory information.

RN: What is directory information?

JF: I'm not exactly sure of the legal sense. It's my assumption – some students specifically ask that no information is released.

RN: With today's standard, even if you don't want information released, you can still say if a degree has been awarded?

JF: I don't think so. I'm not sure if it holds up in perpetuity. There are circumstances when no information is released. Baring those exceptions...

RN: Have you ever heard of degreeverify.com?

JF: I'd have to look at it.

RN: If you check on a degree, A/R will say, 'No, go to degreeverify.com.' WVU is one of the schools. You pay \$6.50.

JF: No, I haven't heard of it.

RN: Did we change the way we operated after this [Bresch's issue]?

JF: I don't know.

RN: Do you know a [REDACTED]?

JF: At the beginning of the administration, we were flooded with people writing e-mails. I sent those to Sara. People asking for appointments.

RN: Did he want a job?

JF: I remember his name somewhat in that form. Like, 'It was nice seeing you at some event.' At one point, we had a printed stack. We sent a campus-wide eNews asking about the Health Sciences search committee. That name sounds like it was there somewhat in that form, that he sent a resume.

Interview ending time: 12:26 p.m.