

Interview with Elizabeth Vitullo
2/27/08, 11:01 a.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.

Elizabeth Vitullo: Graduate of full-time MBA program. Oversees eMBA program. Canadian from Toronto. Husband teaches at WVU in Sports and Exercise Psychology. Duties evolved over time. Recruitment, logistics, operations. Face of the program to students. Assist in preparing plans of study.

EV: In Fall 2007, on maternity leave. Contacted [about Bresch] when attending conference in Toronto with Jerry Blakely. Oct. 22.

RN: This was a conference in Florida?

EV: No, Toronto.

RN: If a student pays fees, and takes a course – who issues the bill and who collects the money?

EV: Since been in office, procedures have changed. Never collected money. Acted as a go-between with Extended Learning. Student enrolls in three, four courses – billed accordingly. Doesn't enroll in every class at the start. Takes classes one at a time. Classes are held for four to eight weeks. Before, Extended Learning would help students enroll and allow students to pay bill as semester went on. But now, students must pay all the money upfront. One situation with handling money – third party billing with ATK Tactical Systems from Keyser. Billed per credit hour charge. Billed quarterly. Send amount.

Michael Lastinger: What was the name of the company?

EV: ATK Tactical Systems.

ML: Is that the only one?

EV: That's the only one I've been involved with. Arranged through Office of Student Accounts. Created cohort with company. Only time collected money. Send invoice. Receive payment for tuition. Brought to COB's business office. Of 150 students in program, affects maybe 13 or so.

RN: What about graduation fees?

EV: Send student notification. Fill out application. Cost of fee - \$39. Provide check or bill student accounts directly. Often numerous reminders required. Hand walk paperwork to contact at A/R. Never take cash for anything.

RN: In past, would anyone have handled cash?

EV: Never seen or heard of. Oversee eMBA program, not full-time.

RN: Received CD – had your name on it...

EV: Had sent over. Bonnie Anderson was made aware of request. Disk was left with Vitullo.

RN: Do you know who created that disk?

EV: From Foundation lists.

RN: Disk was unreadable. Please provide another copy.

ML: Was Heather Bresch treated the same as other students?

EV: List of students. Familiar with newspaper reports. Had certain number of hours, grade on transcript; had list of students with anomalies.

ML: References BUE 23, pg. 2 of 2. Gives her [REDACTED] grade mod document to examine. Asks Vitullo's involvement in processing grade mods.

EV: Was on maternity leave. [REDACTED] hired as temporary employee. Alumna of full-time MBA program. Vitullo only has second hand knowledge of the situation. [REDACTED] worked with Speaker. Had classes on transcript that appeared as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. "Paul, in my opinion, had an amazing memory." Been in position on/off for 10 years. Had personal recollection of many students. "It was amazing. I was always struck by Paul's memory."

ML: Asks Vitullo for spelling of [REDACTED] last name.

EV: Doesn't remember when [REDACTED] started. [REDACTED] case – late August, early September. Worked closely with Paul. Was not staff who worked on that issue.

ML: You're a graduate of the program?

EV: The full-time MBA program.

ML: Did you consider the coursework rigorous, demanding?

EV: Some. Had easier time than some students. Program brings together students from various backgrounds. Came to program with exercise science background. Math and statistics classes came easier to me. Not much time to cover topics in the curriculum. Very time-intensive with group meetings.

ML: So there were differences depending on background?

EV: People eventually fell on the normal curve.

ML: There are differences between the full-time MBA program and the eMBA program. Do you think there were qualitative differences between the two?

EV: Programs were logistically different. Aimed at working professionals – eMBA. Demanding for folks juggling full-time jobs with families. People from variety of backgrounds. Had nurse in the program who had never before seen a balance sheet in her life. Faculty were great. Able to get through the program. Received guidance to complete assignments.

ML: How was that mentoring accomplished?

EV: Students go directly to faculty member. No traditional office hours. But for remote sites, instructors would get there earlier and stay later. Some even gave out their home phone numbers. Could call on weekends if having problems.

ML: Did you ever encounter a situation in which a student sought a compromise and was given a waiver for a course?

EV: No. May have been required to do independent study with faculty, but never to get completely out of a course. Generally, each student had strengths and weaknesses. Watched GPA in plan of study if danger of dropping below 3.0.

ML: If a student made a grade of C, was that perceived to be a problem?

EV: Required to have 3.0. Watched so there were no surprises down the line.

ML: Do recognize any other names?

EV: Ensured that Is and NRs were resolved. There were anomalies where students graduated with less than 48 hours. Reviewed class lists and identified students with NRs and Is. Problem – schedule of courses only goes back to 2001. Not sure if have found all classes between 1997-2001. Going to specific faculty to see if they can recall the NRs or Is have been fixed. Think we have every class that occurred. Found all eMBA CRNs and went back in STAR/BANNER to get grades. Then, went to faculty to see if the courses were resolved.

RN: [Refers to BUE 23].

EV: One name found that is not on BUE 23. [REDACTED]

ML: Students may have graduated with Is or NRs, but have you compared with fees?

EV: If enrolled in class, would appear on transcript. Student has been charged. University has become very good at "stripping" people from rosters.

ML: What happens if there's a problem?

EV: Faculty contact Vitullo. Can't see in system if stripped. Can see if enrolled at one point. Contact Extended Learning. Contact student. Never enroll student in class without speaking to them first, directly. There was a time when they would "blanket enroll" everybody. Assume because paying more tuition and fees now.

RN: What is the relationship with Extended Learning?

EV: Interesting. Technically off campus program because eMBA has off campus sites.

RN: How do you make money off the program?

EV: There's a specific tuition/fees chart. Students pay Extended Learning fee. Money part of entrepreneurial model. Part of money goes back to COB.

RN: Let's say a student signs up, doesn't pay fees, is stripped and completes course. Where does Extended Learning enter into this?

EV: Call Extended Learning to re-enroll the student rather than A/R. Have call center where students can enroll. Initially, students register on STAR/MIX. Extended Learning provides help to off-campus students. Provided IVN – Interactive Video Network. Worked with Chris Martin's shop on this. Radio/TV productions. Marketing efforts are closely tied with them.

RN: What would have been the case in 1997-1998?

EV: Doesn't know. Think would have worked with Extended Learning. 150 students – large volume. One person working in addition to director. Paul "was asked to step out" of the position. Vitullo assumed greater responsibility for academics. Logar went to overseeing the program. Vitullo assisted in completing plans of study. Not aware of other cases [like Bresch's].

RN: What didn't we ask that we should?

EV: "I've never see anything like this occur." Some students may have transferred credits from other graduate programs. Blakely is more rigorous about what classes can be substituted. That's a shift. There's a fifth semester capstone, that Paul would have

transferred other classes or credits. "But I don't believe Paul would have compromised the academics or the integrity of the program."

ML: You don't think he has?

EV: "No, I don't think he has. He would say something like, 'We'll help to get you finished.'" Never waived credits.

ML: Would he place a student into another cohort?

EV: "Oh, yes."

ML: Would that be easy if the student were in Morgantown?

EV: From my experience, yes.

ML: You've seen it happen?

EV: Yes, I've seen it happen. Students would get work assignment or would come back later.

ML: Was it seen as a standard practice?

EV: Since I've been here, yes. Some classes could be completed through distance education on the Web.

ML: How many directors have you worked under?

EV: Three. Speaker (when student), Logar, Blakely.

ML: You knew Speaker from a student perspective?

EV: He was not as involved in the full-time program. Attended major events in the COB.

RN: If a student misses a lecture, is there a way for them to make up the lecture?

EV: Yes. Currently, use IVN – streaming video broadcast. All lectures are saved at Wise Library. Accessed through secure Web site. Can be viewed the next day. Knowledge was that in the past, videotapes were available. Sometimes videos were sent in the mail.

RN: Do you know [REDACTED]?

EV: No.

Interview ending time: 11:46 a.m.