

INTERVIEW OF DR. VIRGINIA GORDON
APRIL 27, 2004

Q. I am William Studer, Director of Libraries Emeritus at The Ohio State University, here today, April 27, 2004, to interview Dr. Virginia Gordon, mainly about her 21-year career with OSU's University College, which closed effective June 30, 2001, but also about a few related professional activities. Dr. Gordon, you hold three degrees from Ohio State's College of Education, the B.S., M.A. and Ph.D., with emphasis on counselor education. What motivated you to come to OSU and then to pursue graduate degrees?

A. I always thought I would attend Ohio State. My father went here and I drove to Columbus with him many times over the years. It just never occurred to me to go anywhere else, even though I had a full scholarship to another college. As for graduate education, I always anticipated going on. It took me a number of years, but I eventually found myself in a position to return.

Q. You say your father was at Ohio State. Was that in the capacity as a student, or was he employed by the University?

A. No, he actually attended dental school here. He did a lot of research and so he had some colleagues at OSU with whom he worked frequently.

Q. You began your career at University College as a grad student academic advisor for students in the health professions, and then were hired full-time in 1973 and spent the majority of your many additional years with advisement of undecided students, retiring as an Assistant Dean in 1993. Please critique for us more

specifically what your responsibilities were over your entire career with University College.

A. When I returned to graduate school I was older, and as Bill Halverson said, they were looking for “mature people.” So they hired me as a graduate student. At the time I was in a Master’s program in counselor education. While I was working, I observed that no one was really doing anything special for the undecided students. At the time the Agriculture Coordinator had those students. I found that many of them ended up in Agriculture, probably because they weren’t getting much information about alternative majors.

Q. So the Ag Coordinator simply had undecided as an overload.

A. Yes, exactly. And of course being in counseling I could see all kinds of needs that these students had as far as exploring. And since it was about 20% of the freshmen class, it seemed to me that they deserved to be provided the kind of advising that met their unique needs. So I wrote a six page proposal for a Coordinator position for the General Baccalaureate Curriculum or GBC. And evidently it impressed them, so they hired me as a Coordinator. One area I thought was very important was the University survey course since it offered an opportunity to organize an exploration program for them. So that was one of the major areas that I concentrated on. The other thing I tried to do was train generalist advisors, so that students were exposed to many, many different academic areas. Research had shown that across the country, 60 to 80% of all freshmen are undecided. Some don’t admit it or they are thwarted in some way toward reaching an academic or career goal. Actually, what I was doing with the

GBC students probably carried over into some of the other CAP areas as well. I was also active in helping to write the University textbook, because when I came there was no textbook. I'm sure Tom Minnick has talked to you about that.

Q. Is this the book used with the course UVC 100?

A. Yes, right. In my opinion, at that time the course was in total disarray because the graduate students who taught it, even within a given CAP area, varied so much in the content, grading and how they presented it. There was little coordination among the advisors. There were some general suggestions given to everybody but not enforced. Some students really complained about how tough some advisors were. They were teaching the course like it was a philosophy or science course, while other advisors required little in the course. It needed to be designed in such a way that it was consistent across all of the curricular programs. The other thing that I was involved in was the training program for advisors. We had approximately 25-30 new staff every year, so the training program became quite important. I helped develop that. I also was very interested in research. I was one of the few people that I think did research in the college at the time. We established a research committee and I was chair of that for many years. As Assistant Dean I was mostly involved in coordinating research and some grant activities, the professional development programs, retention efforts and other duties as were assigned at the time.

Q. Were the graduate advisors early in their graduate careers, say their first or second year of graduate school? Were some further along?

A. That's interesting because one of the complaints was that graduate students didn't stay very long. Actually, some graduate students were there longer than some of the full-time professional people. And I found them extremely capable because we had so many graduate students apply for the position it was competitive. We tried to match the advisor's background with the CAP they were advising. We tried to find people who had an undergraduate major or were in graduate programs in their CAP area. So, for example, we matched graduate students who were science and math oriented to advise engineers. Some graduate students were around for quite a while. Others, of course, found positions in their own departments and left us to teach there or graduated.

Q. You served three Deans of UVC-- John Mount, Michael Curran and Mac Stewart. Can you compare and contrast their administrations or styles and their strengths and weaknesses based on your personal assessment and perspective?

A. I think John Mount was more of a directive Dean, and I think being the Vice President for Regional Campuses, he devoted a great deal of his time to that effort. So a lot of my contact when I first started was with Bill Halverson, who was Associate Dean. As far as Curran, I think he was more of a status quo type of a Dean. Nothing really new or innovative happened when he was Dean. Mac Stewart had been around quite a while, so we all knew Mac having worked with him. He was much more accessible. But again, he like John Mount was involved in so many University activities that Tom Minnick ran the day-to-day academic advising program.

- Q. Tom says he and Mac Stewart started in University College at roughly the same time.
- A. Yes. Actually Tom and I started full-time positions the same day.
- Q. Were there similar colleges at other institutions that you sought to emulate, or was OSU's University College considered a model? Did UVC staff visit other like organizations at other institutions, and did others visit OSU?
- A. We were definitely considered a model in the late 1970's and 1980's. I think in time we began to be recognized as the best way of approaching freshmen in particular. It's always interesting to me that John Gardner gets a lot of credit for inventing the first year experience program, but we were about ten years ahead of him. I know John quite well and I've been on his advisory board and to many of his conferences as a speaker. I'm always amused at all the credit that the University of South Carolina gets for this concept. As a matter of fact, Sam Osipow and I talked about having a national conference here but I couldn't get it off the ground. So if we had offered a national conference on academics and career advising like John, we might have received the same kind of recognition that they did.
- Q. So John Gardner was the mover of the program at the University of South Carolina?
- A. South Carolina, yes.
- Q. And became a national spokesperson for the movement?
- A. Yes. That center has now grown so much, it includes sophomores and seniors, not only freshmen. There was obviously a need there. The Conference Center,

their Journal, and other publications have had a great impact. The other reason that I think our program for the undecided students became nationally known was because at the time there wasn't really much out there. If any institution was doing anything special, they certainly weren't writing about it or presenting at conferences like I was. In time we became quite the national model. A lot of the materials that we developed were requested by many colleges, and a lot of people did adapt the innovative programs that we had started with that population. We won several National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) awards for that and our program was recognized as a national model. Nationally at that time many advising centers were being created. Academic advising sort of came into its own in the 70's and 80's. Not that it was new, but a lot of it was sparked by retention concerns. All of a sudden people decided that academic advising could be a service that might help retain students if done properly and that undecided students were an important group. So I think that's when we really became known as a model.

Q. And during that time Ohio State was notorious for the loss of freshmen students; the percentages were high.

A. And that's the other interesting thing. I recently wrote a history of academic advising at Ohio State. In going back over some of those materials, the first time advising was mentioned in written form was in 1902 and the "freshmen problem" was mentioned over the years. In 1928, I think it was, they created a system of junior deans. Every undergraduate college was given the money to create that position. They were responsible for the academic advising. So the freshmen

problem wasn't new when UVC was established. It had been mentioned throughout the years. When University College was formed, the freshmen problem was in the forefront again and those same words were used by the Board of Trustees and the people who were actually creating this new general college.

Q. Did others interested in the quality and the nature of the OSU program actually visit?

A. We had a lot of visitors, and we also had so many requests for our survey text and other materials. Back in those days of course we didn't have the Internet. So I was sending materials all over the country, and not having a secretary, it was quite a drag on my time. But I thought it was important to share what we were doing, including our training program. I mailed our training manual to many. We always ran a few more copies, because we knew we were going to get requests for it.

Q. Please describe your understanding of the role and mission of University College when you joined the College, and did that role and mission change over your tenure? What were UVC's essential and defining characteristics?

A. I don't think it changed at all. I think the role that we understood was to personalize academic advising for freshmen in a huge institution. If the students needed to know anything about the University, they had an advisor to whom they were assigned who they could contact to answer their questions or help them solve problems. To me, the role was to personalize. As I mentioned before, I think that was also the purpose of appointing those Junior Deans in 1928 to make sure that freshmen received the kind of academic advising they needed.

Otherwise, freshmen can get lost in this big place. It was hard for them to identify the resources that were there to help them. I think not only academic advising but one of the roles of University College was to provide accurate specialized academic information. If a student started out in pre-med for example, they were able to work with an advisor who was very knowledgeable about that program, could answer all the questions and guide them through the scheduling process. When they finally did select a major, they moved into the degree units if they met the criteria. I think the idea of the CAP areas, the Curricular Academic Programs provided the kind of specific academic information that students needed at a critical time.

Q. Did the 1988 move of University College offices from West Campus to central campus have an impact on the program?

A. I think it had an impact in that we saw more students. It was easier for them to see us. A problem with the busing to West Campus was that when the bus arrived, we'd be swamped. We were extremely busy in stages. When we moved to main campus, student traffic was more spread out. That was a definite advantage of being there. But also I think students saw us in a different light. We weren't those people out in that cornfield. We were there to help them with whatever problems they were having. It was also much easier for us to teach the survey course because most of the classes were held on main campus anyway. Many advisors had to go on the bus to teach their courses. There were a lot of advantages to moving to main campus.

Q. Tell us something about the organizational structure of University College during your over two decades.

A. As I said, when we first started over on West Campus, John Mount was Dean and Vice President for Regional Campuses. I think we had more administrators then because of that responsibility. When that changed, we had an Associate Dean for Orientation and one for advising and one for minority students. Then of course we had six coordinators. The number of advisors we hired depended on projections of the number of students that would select each curricular program. We would be assigned so many advisors, depending on those numbers.

Q. What were the roles of the coordinators?

A. The coordinators did the day-to-day work and closely supervised the academic advisors under them. Probably the most important job was as a liaison to whatever colleges they were responsible for. For example, the coordinator for Business obviously was very much involved with the administrators in the Business College office. They scheduled those people to appear in the survey courses. And during orientation they worked very closely with them in the orientation sessions for new students and parents as well. As GBC Coordinator my liaison responsibilities were different since I worked with all the colleges and departments.

Q. Is it more important in your view to have such a unit at a large comprehensive University such as OSU, say than a smaller or medium size institution?

A. I don't think there's any question that a large University has to have some kind of recognizable place for students, especially new students, to go for academic

advising and other kinds of help. And as I said, freshmen change their direction so often. If I'm a new student and change my mind about my major, I need the information and help that can assist me through this transition. In University College students could walk ten steps and be with an advisor in other curricular program areas. Also, I think that to coordinate not only the academic but the career needs of students was important. Since we were responsible for orientation and advising and teaching the survey course, we provided a coordinated effort that before was fairly fragmented. And it was more efficient and cost-effective to do it that way.

Q. A thought just occurred about the length of time that an undergraduate student in University College could stay there, in the sense of being required to move up or out.

A. That is sort of a misnomer. That was the prevailing thinking. Actually we worked very hard to identify rank three students. And we sent them letters inviting them to come in for help. Which leads me to something else that we created to advise these special students. We called it the Academic Alternatives Program. Part of our problem at the University and I think it's still somewhat of a problem, is selective admissions and students who cannot access their major because they don't have the point hour or don't meet the criteria that's set for that College or major. I realized that literally hundreds and hundreds of our students who had started out thinking they were going into a specific major, physical therapy for example, were not going to make it. Sometimes this became obvious early. If you're pre-med and you're flunking chemistry, you're going to have to

make a different decision. And so in creating the Academic Alternatives Program we tried to identify late sophomores before they became juniors and tried to assign them to specially trained advisors to explore alternative majors. We taught a special course through the College of Education for students changing majors. So we tried our best to anticipate these students. There are students who absolutely refuse to admit that they're not going to make it into their majors. They try again and again, but I think through this Alternatives Program we tried to eliminate students who reached their junior year without realistically facing the inevitable. And the other problem was transfer students, who come in with all kinds of credit hours, but choose a major where those hours aren't applicable. So on paper they were rank three, but actually in their major they might have been freshmen or sophomores. So I think there were a lot of factors that went into that perception of our holding students too long that people did not understand.

Q. To your knowledge, what was the relationship between the OSU administration and University College like during your time with UVC. Was the UVC administration supportive of both the College mission and how it was carried out? And did you have good support from the Office of Academic Affairs? Who were key supporters in University administration?

A. Well, first of all, I'm probably not as informed about this as Tom and John Mount, but my impression of ... Enarson as President when I started in University College was that he was supportive. I think Ed Jennings was very supportive of University College. During his years, I think we felt very, very good about our relationship with the higher administration. It was other people on campus who

really didn't want us to exist and this struggle was always interesting to me.

About every five years when a new UVC Dean would be coming up for review or a new one being appointed, the College of Arts and Sciences would make its move to take us over. When I read the history of University College and realized that in the beginning a general college was created that was under Arts and Sciences, I began to understand their perceptions. This seemed to hang over the heads of our administrators and in some ways prevented them from taking risks.

This is just my opinion.

Q. Kind of a tension in the air.

A. Absolutely.

Q. Were there Provosts that you recall that were particularly supportive and some that were sort of passively so?

A. Yes, I think that was true of some of them. Again, I was not involved directly, but I certainly felt that there were Provosts who were not too sold on UVC. There were Provosts who supported us. I think when Kirwan came he definitely thought about disbanding UVC because he had gotten rid of the University College at the University of Maryland. I think he felt the same thing should happen here. And I think that planted the seed for its eventual demise. Again, only my opinion.

Q. That's the first I had heard that a University College-like organization was dismantled at Maryland under his presidency?

A. I had some friends who worked there. It was quite a traumatic thing. Its name remained but its mission changed.

Q. At the University of Maryland?

A. Yes.

Q. These following questions you've addressed to a degree, but let me ask them anyway to see if you have something to add. Are you aware of administrators and faculty who did not support the purposes of the College, and if so, what do you think caused their negative opinion? How would you characterize the level of support for the UVC mission from the Council of Deans, both collectively and individually? Did some of the Deans feel that UVC separated them from potential majors?

A. When we first went to direct admissions years ago, there were some departments that absolutely did not want to take their students as freshmen, and others that did. And of course the ones that did like Agriculture and Engineering that traditionally had taken freshmen probably did a conscientious job with them.

Q. Roughly what year did the direct admissions come into play?

A. I don't remember exactly. We always had some form of direct admissions, but when it was discussed for many more students it was in Michael Curran's time, but I'm not sure.

Q. So it was in the 90's?

A. 80's.

Q. Late 80's up to 90's. How about faculty. Do you have a sense of whether faculty supported or were concerned or just passive?

A. I don't think they thought about it, except that when this came up I remember some of the Psych faculty were adamant about not taking freshmen. But other faculty in the Social Sciences where they needed more students wanted to take

them. To me, it was such a political football. I think University College was a political football from the day it started. It was just sort of tossed around, depending on who was in power and what their agendas were.

Q. I think you're the first one that's used that term, to characterize it in that way.

A. I wasn't high in the ladder. I was just observing. That's just my perception.

Q. But you were in a good position to observe. What characteristics were sought in UVC advisors? Was the College successful in filling positions with staff who met these requirements? In my readings a frequent subject of discussion seemed to be the value of full-time professional staff as advisors versus the part-time graduate student. Could you comment on these issues?

A. I think we all preferred to have had more full-time staff. Considering the budget, however, graduate students were cost effective. I have no objection to graduate students because I think they brought a certain amount of enthusiasm and were closer in age to the students. A lot of them were actually fairly experienced. We had so many applications that we could be very selective about whom we hired. We did extensive amounts of interviewing candidates. For the undecided students, I looked more for maturity and experience because I trained generalists and also because of the career content in the survey course and in our advising, we needed advisors who had more experience in teaching. We also looked for people who were going to be around at least two years and many were.

Q. So the issue really was principally one of economics, full-time advisors would have commanded so much additional salary resources, it would not have worked.

- A. Exactly. And for the number of students that we were dealing with, we always had between 6,000-7,000 entering students every fall.
- Q. Plus your carry-overs.
- A. Plus the returning students. We had between 12,000-15,000 students at any given time. That's bigger than most colleges across the country.
- Q. Absolutely. The issue of compensation for graduate students I think we haven't pursued with any of the other interviewees. Were your stipends for graduate students kept comparable with what they would have received had they been appointed within their department or college?
- A. I think they were not as high. To some, this was the only way they could even attend graduate school. They needed an assistantship. They needed some kind of support. So it was important that we supported them in this way. In fact I've often wondered with fewer graduate students being hired, whether the number of graduate students has gone down -- I know that was always one big plus for departments, the fact that we hired so many graduate students from many disciplines.
- Q. And thereby enable the graduate population to maintain its numbers.
- A. Yes. While we're talking about compensation let me touch on how poorly UVC advisors were paid compared to those in other colleges. This was a reflection on our budget, of course, but UVC advisors worked hard and were not rewarded for their efforts.
- Q. I think you've answered this to a large degree, but let me ask, what did UVC mainly try to provide to your students enrolled in the College? You've said that

on average you had maybe 12,000 students in any given year enrolled in University College.

- A. When we had open admissions, we saw many poor students. Actually I always thought we set up some students to fail because they were so poorly prepared for our academic rigors. Obviously with an ACT score of 15 students were going to have a very rough time. Those students needed all kinds of assistance, not only in remedial coursework but in study skills and tutoring and counseling. It took us a few years before we were able to get the money to provide those services. But I frankly don't think we ever did a very good job because of our limited resources. With the way admissions are now, we are getting much better students. But even then, I think some honor students have adjustment problems. Some don't know how to study. I'm not sure what resources are available now. Better, I hope.
- Q. How many Curricular Academic Program, or CAP areas were available for advisement purposes, and how were these areas determined?
- A. They were aligned with the degree units basically. There were nineteen, and then the twentieth one was the GBC area. In the health area, for example, the Nursing and the School of Allied Med, there would be advisors for each degree unit. There were pre-med, pre-dent, and pre-optometry advisors. The one CAP area that was not established when we started was law. Years and years later it was added. In GBC we provided information sessions about all majors. Every quarter we offered many of these sessions so undecided students could shop around. If students were interested in business, for example, they could go to a session where people from the Business College presented information. And we always

ran a session on law. People from the College of Law were very good about presenting a session. We would fill a lecture hall every time, since an amazing number of students were interested in law then. Students from many CAP areas attended our GBC information sessions.

Q. What was the response of first-year students to the UVC program, and do you believe that University College improved the early undergraduate experience?

A. I like to think we did. I'm convinced we did for many. There are always going to be students, no matter what you offer or how you offer it, that are not going to take advantage of the help. Some students saw their advisor every quarter and some not at all. We did some evaluations every year. At the end of the year we would ask students to evaluate their University College advisors, and it was always extremely positive. I thought the fact that they were so positive all the time was due to asking students when they came in to be advised. We would ask them to fill out the evaluation form at that time. So one time I selected a random sample and mailed the evaluation to a large group of students. The evaluations were still as positive. So after that we just relied on the one given in the office. A couple of years we asked students to do an evaluation on a computer that was set up in the waiting area. They were asked to answer ten questions on a computer program and that turned out the same positive way too. On the other hand, we always had a few students who had problems with our services. We weren't perfect. But considering the huge numbers of students that we advised, and the way we operated with limited resources I think we did a pretty remarkable job.

- Q. Given the human nature of students and that all of us are more inclined to complain than to give thanks, but did you occasionally get gratifying reinforcement when a student would come back and say, “You really helped me,” or a letter or a note?
- A. Yes, we did, many times. What was most gratifying was when parents would call and thank us. In fact, I think speaking of reinforcement, we probably were recognized and thought of in a better way nationally than we were locally on campus. I think we were appreciated more nationally as a model than we were recognized by some on our own campus.
- Q. Again, probably not an unusual thing.
- A. No, no, I’m sure that’s true.
- Q. What part did University College play in organizing and presenting the Summer Orientation Program for incoming students and their parents, and how important do you believe this program was? Did you have a role in the program?
- A. That was our main activity during the summer. We had a huge involvement in orientation, because it moved from being predominantly a student affairs kind of orientation to one with an academic emphasis. We provided three separate sessions where we did nothing but give academic information and scheduled students. The parent orientation was particularly critical. Some parents told us that they were still shopping around when they came to orientation. If they were impressed with the orientation program, that’s probably where their child would enroll. Of course, it’s very different now with computerized scheduling. But back then, it was very labor intensive working with groups on a one-on-one basis.

Q. Were there any issues related to minority students which the College faced during your time?

A. I saw the creation of the minority advising area when it first came into being under John Mount. And then, it of course evolved. It was a separate entity with its own coordinator and advisors.

Q. Would students of color or any other minority all be put in one category, no matter what their CAP area was?

A. Yes. Within the minority advising area one advisor would maybe have five CAP areas, which was not easy. The interesting thing to me, and I did a little research on this, there were very few undecided minority students in either the minority or regular CAP area for undecideds. I came to the conclusion after doing some focus groups and some interviews, that it was a cultural thing. They were expected to select a major. Like other students some of them needed to explore or change majors because they did not have the academic background. They really needed the concentrated attention they were receiving.

Q. Was the congregating of students of minority status something that the students themselves were urging, or something that University College thought was conducive to better success. It's almost a form of segregation.

A. It was. But I think it was done with the best intentions, that minority students were getting lost. They felt by offering them role models and providing very personalized advising, it would be an asset. And I think in some cases it was. There are people that are probably better equipped to answer that question than I.

Q. How involved was UVC in matters of recruitment? John Mount maintains that during his tenure recruitment was a significant effort, particularly for honors and minority students.

A. We had a great role in recruitment at first. Coordinators, for example, would go with the admissions people to high schools and help with the recruiting sessions. We would talk about the academic side of the University. I attended many college nights at high schools as a speaker or as a resource person. In the beginning we were very involved. And the admissions people were very happy to have us. We had a good working relationship. Later, I was on a committee that developed materials about OSU majors for high school guidance counselors. But as years went on, we participated less and less.

Q. Did you in a sense invite yourself to these presentations?

A. No.

Q. Or did you have high school counselors that were seeking your input?

A. Admissions people would tell us, "We need somebody for whatever night." It was in cooperation with the admissions people. There were a few times when principals would call me directly to talk to a PTA or for a "career night," but most contacts were through admissions.

Q. How did you view the importance and impact of the UVC-100 course? Did you participate in defining the course and its content?

A. To me, the University Survey course was one of the most important parts of our responsibilities. It was an opportunity to provide a lot of information to students as a group that otherwise we would not have the time to offer individually. The

vehicle itself was a great opportunity for us. The interesting thing about the course is that it started here in 1916. The Agriculture College was the first to teach such a course. And it's interesting to look at the description of the course back then because it's almost the same content as it is now. Basically it's helping freshmen understand what the University resources are, where to find academic information and how to schedule. All of the important information that they need about the University is presented in that course. Sometimes this would be the only way students had access to this important information. That's the good news. The bad news is, that anytime you require a course and you teach it for a satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade, students are going to resent it and they're not going to take it seriously. We went through Academic Affairs more than once asking for a grade. But when we added some readings to the textbook and when we required more writing assignments, Academic Affairs gave us permission to grade it A-E. We were required to teach some topics in that course because academic affairs wanted it. For example, in the early years we had to present AIDS information. We had to devote a whole lecture to AIDS. There were other topics required as well. The amount of time and the vast amount of material required made the course jam-packed.

Q. So you anticipated my next question. If I understand correctly, the change from a pass/fail one credit to a graded one credit, really improved the student's attitude toward the course.

A. Well, to me it improved the rigor and the content of the course. I think the students took it a little more seriously when they were getting a grade. But even

then, some students didn't care if they got an "E" in it. But those were students who usually flunked other courses as well.

Q. Does that hour credit count toward graduation?

A. As an elective, I think.

Q. What would you count as your major contributions and accomplishments during your career at University College, and by contrast, what were your major disappointments?

A. I know that the program we offered undecided students was certainly recognized as a national model as we said before. The other area that I contributed to was the advisor-training program. I wrote the manual and I developed much of the content. I also taught a lot of it as well. That became a model for advisor training as well. We presented at conferences about that program and we wrote a journal article about it. I think that we became known as a model for, not only the training program itself, but for the materials that we developed for it. One of my proudest accomplishments was establishing the Academic Alternatives Program. We established a separate advising area on the second floor of Enarson Hall. We did make a difference because we did several research studies that showed students who were advised by our program and worked with their specially trained advisor graduated at a better rate than people who were in the same situation who did not participate in the program. Even better than students in general. The graduation rate was better than any other group. That to me was a wonderful improvement in the way we handled major changes. We prevented

- sophomores and juniors from just drifting around. I'm sure we had an impact on retention as well.
- Q. Roughly how large was the cohort of graduate student advisors?
- A. At first about 80%.
- Q. In numbers.
- A. Eventually each of the CAP areas or the coordinating areas were given one full-time professional advisor. But the rest of the advisors were graduate students. More full-time advisors were added later.
- Q. I was wondering if they numbered in hundreds or 150 or something like that.
- A. Probably maybe more like 50.
- Q. Fifty or so. With a cohort of that size, I would gather there would be some variability in the quality of performance. How did you measure, and perhaps weed out those who simply weren't measuring up.
- A. That of course was up to each coordinator to determine. In the spring when we began hiring people sometimes that was a problem because you couldn't fire people. If I said, "This guy's terrible. I don't want him back," they had difficulty firing them.
- Q. Who?
- A. The Dean, Associate Dean.
- Q. They were the authority on dismissal or retention?
- A. That's right.
- Q. And it was very hard to get someone terminated.
- A. Right. We didn't have very many of those. And I know sometimes it wasn't easy

for them. It might be a minority person; it might be a disabled person. I remember a couple of instances in that regard. Some of it was, they just didn't want to deal with it. Other times we could understand why.

Q. What is your opinion of the contributions and impact that University College programs have had over the College's 35 years of existence, and what lasting influence on OSU do you think University College will prove to have had?

A. I wish I knew that. As I said before I think considering the huge numbers of students we were dealing with and the resources we were given, we really did have an impact on many students. What I hear from my friends who are still advisors at the University is that there is a hole. One thing University College did was have an impact on all the academic advising on campus, especially full time professionals. Most of the people who work at the University were trained by University College. There's no longer that kind of program. Each college is training its own people individually. Another group that I don't think is well served are the major changers. No central place for them anymore. There are some areas that University College covered that right now aren't being addressed. As far as the future, who knows? I think UVC's passing is regretted by some.

Q. The elimination of University College at the end of fiscal 2001 was apparently a Provostial decision, which did not have much if any discussion among academic constituencies, University Senate being a prime example. What factors and issues in your opinion caused the OSU administration to close the College, and could these factors and issues have been addressed within the framework of an ongoing operational University College? Did you feel that selective admissions and the

fact of ever better academically prepared incoming freshmen played a significant role in the decision? You've commented to some degree on some of these questions, but not all.

A. I think yes, the students coming in now are much better academically prepared, but knowing that many of these students will change their minds, I don't know how easily it's going to be for them to find new ways to explore or new resources to tap into without some kind of specific advising. Everybody's specialized now. I haven't seen any recent retention figures and presume they are better because of better students. I said before that politically I think that the Provost decided this should be done.

Q. The Provost we're speaking of, of course is Ed Ray, who has moved away from Ohio State to a university presidency. Do you think this was a very strong personal conviction on his own part, or was he acting as a lightning rod for, say a consensus of a lot of other administrative opinion that remained under wraps?

A. I think there was a group who had this on their agenda for many years. But I think he firmly believed that it should go. And frankly, I think some of it was UVC leadership. I think if we had dynamic leadership in University College, we might still be there in some form. I think that the leadership was paranoid in a way. After so many years of trying to do away with us, after a while I think you act defensively instead of innovatively. I firmly believe that UVC leadership over the years had a lot to do with what's happened. They were afraid to take risks.

Q. Do you think had the issue of retaining or closing University College been brought to, say first Faculty Council and then the Senate, which is the usual

progression for an open debate on the merits of why closure made sense or why retention made sense. And if faculty had been given an extended open opportunity to put their opinions into the mix of things, do you think it's possible there might have been a different decision?

- A. I think that if we had real dynamic leadership, and that we could prove how effective we've been, we might have remained as a division or in some other form. We never did enough research. In my opinion, that always was a weakness of ours. When I would push for research and more statistical help to the Deans, the Associate Deans, that wasn't their priority. Therefore, other than an annual student evaluation, no one ever attempted to show what it was we were accomplishing. I think in the end that was very much against us. We had no solid proof of what we were doing or what impact we had on students. Maybe it was time for the way University College was operating in recent years, to have a real evaluation by a non-prejudiced body to examine its functions and make recommendations as to what other form it should take rather than eliminate it entirely. I think doing away with it totally was a mistake. I think it could have been adapted to serve some needs that are not now being met as an advisory center on a smaller scale. I was really shocked when I found it was disbanded as you described it, that it was sort of a unilateral decision, recommended to the Board of Trustees with no discussion by the Board, and that was it. I know there were several committees who studied it, but it seemed to be either disband it or nothing. No consideration of how to improve it in another format.

- Q. Which is very counter and contrary to general academic procedure and policy. And yet it seems to have evoked no protest.
- A. The interesting thing too, is that when you look nationally there are many of these types of colleges or divisions that are being created as we speak. Others are being done away with. And the ones that were disbanded earlier, Michigan State is a case in point, have been reinstated in different formats because there were needs not being met. Eventually somebody is going to recognize that here.
- Q. The next question, was there a national trend in closing University College-like units.
- A. I don't think it's a national trend. They've been coming and going for years. We were one of the first to be recognized as such. They aren't all called University College. They may have different names but they serve similar purposes.
- Q. But this closure at Ohio State was not part of the national movement.
- A. No, not to my knowledge. I haven't heard that. I'm still quite active in NACADA, so I think I would hear if such things were happening. Many institutions are or have created "advising centers" which is really what UVC was.
- Q. Again, many elements of the following question have been addressed, but let me pose the entire question anyway. What do you think has been and will be the impact on OSU students without University College? Can the students needs of advising and introduction to the University be met now without UVC? Who will carry out the College's function and fulfill its mission? Do you feel that the individual Colleges can and will pick up the functions previously fulfilled by UVC and academic advising and instruction through a UVC-like course?

- A. One significant advance that's happened in the last decade is e-mail. I think a lot of students who won't physically make the trip to see their advisor can now sit down at the computer and contact them. A lot of advising is done that way now. In some ways e-mail has enabled advisors to reach more students. I'm told by some advisors that students will ask questions that cannot be handled through e-mail. They end up making an appointment for them to come in. The fact that there are more full-time professional advisors now on campus is a real advantage too. Students who are more academically prepared tend to use advisors more. I think a lot of things have happened at the University that have changed the way advising is viewed or perceived and how its delivered. But I still think there is a need for the one-stop shopping that UVC provided – where you could get study skills help, tutoring, academic and career advising. I think a general advising center, no matter what form it takes, might emerge in the future as a viable need here. But only time will tell. I know ASC fills that role now, but undecided students, for example, need to hear about engineering, allied medicine, business, and every other major on campus. Many others need to explore as well.
- Q. Well who knows? Something like University College within the next decade may be perceived by changing administration to be a necessity.
- A. Yes. It won't be a Dean again. It will be a Director I think.
- Q. History does repeat itself.
- A. Yes, it's already done that in several places.
- Q. Knowledge of the past also is very fleeting.

- A. Yes. Especially when you lose a lot of institutional memory as people leave and retire.
- Q. Do you have any other information and opinions about University College that you would like to share with us at this time that we haven't touched on?
- A. I can't think of anything right now. I think we've covered pretty much everything there is.
- Q. Stepping back just one previous question. There are eighteen or nineteen colleges, something like that. I wouldn't guess your knowledge is in depth about what is happening in each of those College, but my guess is that it has to be an uneven field about how they've picked up UVC functions, some much more so than others.
- A. I think the biggest area is the University Survey course, which is probably taught unevenly across units. There is no longer a common text, although I think most of them are still following the general content. That was always a problem before University College. Some students received excellent advising; some received the minimum.
- Q. You well know the Library took advantage of University College's receptivity to being part of UVC-100, and thereby we reached every student in the University with basic instruction which we felt dramatically improved the student's ability to negotiate the ever-increasing complexity of information literacy. And now our vehicles to deliver that kind of instruction have shrunken considerably without UVC. We don't have a partnership anymore; we just sort of beg invitations to come in.

- A. You would assume most students are computer literate but that's not always true when it comes to researching information for assignments and that sort of thing. Even outstanding students need instruction in how to use the University's library system most effectively.
- Q. You were very active in the National Academic Advising Association and served as its President in the early 1980's. You were also named Outstanding Advisor by the Association. Tell us something about your involvement and work with this national body, and were others on the UVC staff actively involved in the Association.
- A. I'm still involved actually. I'm on the Journal's editorial board as a senior editor and I'm national chair of the Advisor Certification Committee. And I still give presentations at the national conference. Some of our OSU advisors are active now in NACADA. There are over 25,000 members now and I was one of the charter members. So I've seen it grow and become an important professional organization. I think it's done a great deal to enhance advising and has made advising more important and professional across the country.
- Q. On campus in January of 1988 indicates that you established an OSU national clearing house for academic advisors. Tell us about that endeavor.
- A. What drove me to create the clearing house was that I was receiving constant calls and requests for information about our programs and the materials that we were using. So I began putting packets of information together, so they would be ready to be mailed out. There was a point when I realized that there was a real need for some kind of a central repository for academic advising information. So in 1987 I

applied to the Kathryn Schoen Award for funds. I had tried to talk the Dean into it before but it was rejected. So I thought if I got it started he might be more interested. I used that money to hire a graduate student for some hours, got some filing cabinets and pulled together and organized some information that would be easier to access. It became such a huge success that, finally I was given a half-time graduate student by the University College administration to help with it. Obviously there was a huge need because there was a great demand. When I retired George Steele took it over. It is now in the NACADA national office at Kansas State University. They have a full-time person doing nothing but research and making the materials available on the Web. It's amazing how that idea took flight.

Q. It is clear from your record of numerous presentations and articles and monographs, as well as consulting, that you are considered a national authority on advisement and related areas, and we congratulate you on this hard work and notable achievements. In closing, would you tell us a little bit about what has occupied your time and energy since retiring in 1993.

A. Let's see. I've published three books since then.

Q. All on the area of advising?

A. Two of them are, one is advising and career, one is about career exploration, and the other is a freshmen reader that Tom Minnick and I have published. We're on our third edition.

Q. He said that one has had some good success on the market.

A. Yes.

Q. Much more so than you had anticipated.

A. Oh yes. That all started with those readings that we put in the UVC text. The publisher saw those and asked us if we would put a reader together. That was in the early 90's. I mentioned the History of Academic Advising that I recently completed. I spent hours in the OSU archives researching it. It's 26 single-spaced pages. It encompasses an awful lot of what's happened to advising at OSU over the years, including University College's part.

Q. Thank you very much. I'm sure this will be of great interest.