

University of Washington Tacoma Oral History: Founding Stories

Narrator: Beckie Etheridge
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Interviewed by: Joan Hua
Place: Tacoma, Washington

Joan Hua 0:00

This is Joan Hua with the UW Tacoma Oral History project, and I'm interviewing Beckie Etheridge today. It's November 21, 2019, and we're in the Snoqualmie Building. So Beckie, can you state your name and introduce yourself?

Beckie Etheridge 0:17

Yeah. So my name is Beckie Etheridge. I'm one of the founding staff of UW Tacoma. And that means that I started in 1990, two weeks before the campus opened. I was here for 25 years, 1990 to 2015. And my last major position was director of the Teaching and Learning Center, and then I moved on and went to WSU Tri-Cities and worked for their GEAR UP program, doing a startup of their seventh-year programming.

Joan Hua 0:52

Thanks. And you're still living there now, right?

Beckie Etheridge 0:55

I live in Kennewick, the Tri-Cities, where I grew up. So it's going home. And I retired last year.

Joan Hua 1:04

Congratulations.

Beckie Etheridge 1:05

Thank you.

Joan Hua 1:08

So let's talk about that. You know, 1990, before the campus started. Can you talk a bit about your background before you came to UW Tacoma?

Beckie Etheridge 1:18

Sure. I was living and working in Seattle, and I was working at North Seattle Community College. I was a Media Technician there. I had worked there for about four years. And I was starting to get ready for a new challenge, a little restless. I had learned what I could learn at that position, and I started looking around. So I had heard about the UW branch campus project, mostly because my boss's boss was John Blake, who had just left about six months before the, I forget the exact timing, but he left earlier, and he was the, I forget his title, but he was the director of libraries for the branch campuses. So he oversaw ... so he was the director of the

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North Seattle Community College. And then he went on over to the branch campuses to be the director and to start up a library here. So he hired Deb Sunday and Cynthia Fugate.

So that's how I first knew about all that. And then, yeah, so that's how I first knew about that. And I saw an ad in the paper. I applied. And then I kind of forgot about it because applications take a long time. And I was getting ready to go on vacation to, for about a month, in Thailand to visit a friend. And I get a call the week before I'm leaving about this. They wanted to interview me for both campuses, the Tacoma and the Bothell. And I was like really surprised. But when you're getting ready for a big trip, you don't really care about anything but your trip. And I said, "Well, I'm interested, but I'm leaving in a week. So I don't know how that's going to work as far as the interview." And so they decided to interview me in Seattle. And I interviewed for both campuses at the same time.

Joan Hua 3:16

Did you have a preference, Bothell or Tacoma?

Beckie Etheridge 3:18

I actually kind of did. I've had a preference for the Bothell campus only because I lived in Seattle. And I didn't really want to move, and Tacoma seemed really far away. And Bothell's quite a ways away too, but it seemed closer for some reason, odd reason. So then I went on my vacation, and we had a plan, because John knew me. And he was going to call if I, either way, he was going to call my brother, who lived in town. He then, my brother, would call me in Thailand at my friend's house while we were out traveling, so it took a few days to get hold of me, and then they made me the Tacoma offer, and I was a little surprised. So, I kind of like, had to take a minute and like, "What am I doing?" And then I just decided, like, wait, it's my destiny. And so later I found out that Tacoma is the City of Destiny, so I always felt like it was a good choice. It might not have done a conscious choice, but it felt right. And I decided to like, you know, that was my, that was what was being offered, and I was really interested. And I don't think I had a clue of what I was getting into. I really didn't. I made the choice to stay in Seattle for three years. Or you know, I thought, "Well, I'll move when I feel like it's time." And so I ended up staying there for three years commuting, kind of in the off hours because campus classes were in the evening mostly. And so I was working more the swing shift, and traffic wasn't as bad as it is today. It would be impossible. And then one day I kind of woke up and had enough friends and things I was doing down here that my life had kind of moved down here. And I bought a house.

Joan Hua 4:00

So, you said you didn't know what you were getting into. Can you tell me a bit more about what you thought it would be? Or what a branch campus meant at the time?

Beckie Etheridge 5:13

Well, they didn't really explain what that was going to all be about. However, I had known. I think I knew people that had been involved with Evergreen startup, you know, in the 1970, '71, '70.

And North Seattle Community College started up about that time, too. So actually, my boss had friends at North Seattle who had been founders. And so I was ... and they always talked kind of warmly about the startup and everything. Everybody always talked warmly about it. So that part of it was really positive. And I thought, "Oh, it would be kind of interesting to do something like that." Start something from scratch. But I never believed that it would actually happen. And then when John hired, or when I first saw John, after he had hired me, he said, "You made a really good career choice." And I asked Deb [Sunday]. I said, "What does that mean?" You know, I don't know.

So I really didn't have an idea of how, you know, how much I would grow here, how the campus would grow so much, you know, that I would grow to really love the community and be so proud of it. I just, you know, and just the difference the campus would make to the area. I just knew the buzz words of, you know, we would provide education for place-bound students.

Joan Hua 6:33

And so, did you work with John Blake, or was he just in charge of hiring at the time?

Beckie Etheridge 6:40

He would occasionally come to the campus. We would talk about ... I didn't see him every time he came because Deb reported to him, but there would be times where I would see him and, you know, there was something that, like I was ordering equipment or because we were always ordering stuff, you know, to start up something new, you have nothing, and so you're always needing more. And so I would talk about budget issues with him or, you know, it was end of the biennium, what my wish list was, and there was distance learning kinds of activities. We would talk about that a little bit. When Deb left, and I forget the year that she left, he was over us for a short time, you know, whatever that time was until the new director was hired, which was Charles I believe. Charles Lord.

Joan Hua 7:35

And so would you say that you chose to take the job because you were looking for a change? Or were there some other reasons?

Beckie Etheridge 7:44

I think it was that I was looking for a personal change. I just was ready to grow. I like to learn and I felt like I had learned what I could learn where I was at. And so it wasn't that there was anything wrong with North Seattle Community College. I had a nice little niche. It was just that it was time to—I needed more things for my mind and something new to focus on, and yeah, the change didn't hurt either.

Joan Hua 8:18

So what was it like to work at UW Tacoma when you first started? How did it compare with, say, North Seattle College or some other places?

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Beckie Etheridge 8:28

Well, North Seattle was already established even though, you know, it was, what, 20, 30 years in, about, yeah. It was about 30 years and so it's pretty established. And so everybody was warm in both places. So I made a lot of friends in both places. But what was different is that I was so independent when I came into Tacoma. So I came up a couple weeks before it all started. The classrooms opened. And I made the trip down to Tacoma, which I had never really driven to Tacoma. And so that was all new. And I came into the Perkins Building, and I'm like, "Do I have the right place?" Because there's no signage—two weeks before, there was no signage. And I'm supposed to go to the fifth floor. So I go to library because I was working for the libraries. And I look around, and there's nobody around, you know, places, got a few desks, maybe, I don't recall whether they had computers yet. But there were no books. And I kind of looked around. I tried to find Deb, and I think she was on a different floor. So I went to a different floor. And it was very strange because it was almost kind ... there were ... and so that was my first day, and then there were no chairs or desks in the classrooms. You know, we're starting in two weeks. I think one of the first people, faculty, I met was Claudia Gorbman because she was getting pretty nervous, because she was the film studies faculty, and she needed an immediate person who could help her with her film orders and kind of identifying what she needed for her class and, you know, her requirements and everything. So I think she took me out to lunch, either that first day or that first week, just so we could get to know each other because we worked real closely together with her classes. So yeah, it was real different in that way. Let's see. You know, by the first day of classes, they had the sign up, they had the desks. We had, it was, in those days of low technology, we had TV monitors on top of carts that had to be moved between the floors. And so no video projectors that first year. Let's see, What else?

Joan Hua 10:59

And there were just a few students in that fall of 1990, or were there a hundred?

Beckie Etheridge 11:05

I think there were a hundred or two hundred. I mean, there were a couple hundred, I think, but only seven graduated. And those were students who had come and they were already seniors, you know, because the first graduation would have been in 1991, June of 1991.

Joan Hua 11:21

So those were the people who finished in one year at UW Tacoma.

Beckie Etheridge 11:23

Yeah. So they would have finished in one year. And the students who we saw at that point of time were mostly older students who, for whatever reason, stopped going to college. And so they already had their first two or three years taken care of, and they just needed a way to do it. This allowed them to work their jobs if they had a job, you know, that they were working on, and also to go to school and, you know, fulfill that dream. So there was a lot of people who never thought they would have that opportunity. And that was pretty cool to see that going on. So our students became our biggest fans in many ways, and they were from the community.

My first office was the control room for the video classrooms, because they didn't really think I needed an office. They kind of just imagined ... so this is kind of administrators thinking, "Well, she'd just be moving around." And, like, no, everybody has to have a space to work out of. So they put a desk in the control room, where there were control, you know, video control. At that time, we did oral presentations as a graduation requirement. But that got, so every student when they were to graduate had to do that as part of a class or independently. And so there were a lot of videotapes floating around by about the fifth year. And I think they realized like they couldn't continue that. It wasn't, because it was all on videotape, and so you had to have all this storage if you're buying videotapes, and who's going to review them? So there were a lot of questions about that. So I worked with the library staff and then I also worked with Tom out at Bothell, who was their Media Technician. And so a lot of times we would talk to each other at night after classes had started. And apparently, when they hired the two of us, they hired us based off of our skills. He was more techie than I was. And so he could help me solve problems. And a couple times he came down and installed things into the building. And then I was like more customer service and organizational, and so I was able to start up a lot of those processes and things. And so we shared a lot and compared notes, because in some ways, we knew we were the only two people that knew what we were doing. You know, because everybody else is focused on their mission to try to get their stuff started up. So that was kind of cool to have a comrade up in Bothell.

The building—I don't know if a lot of people talked about the Perkins Building, but if you were to write a book about UW Tacoma, you'd have to put a chapter about the Perkins Building, because it was so unique. It was an older building. And I actually—I don't know if you've ever seen.

Joan Hua 14:26

Oh, you brought a picture. A postcard.

Beckie Etheridge 14:27

Yeah, it's an old postcard and then that's just the, the old ... back in the old day. But it was just such a charming building in so many ways. But the elevator, even though it was a new elevator, it was always breaking down, and there's always somebody getting stuck in it. So I never traveled the elevator without a book. You know, and that was pre-cellphone. So you know, so you'd have to do the call button. So I always thought, "Gotta have reading material with me at all times in case I get stuck." And a lot of people got stuck. And there are just all sorts of stories, you know, if you want to call them horror stories, but I mean it was like, "Oh so and so faculty's in the elevator." And so the elevator became a person and all that. And then the HVAC never worked. So it was either really hot or really cold. And we had these distance learning classrooms that we used when nursing came along. About three years in, the nursing program started, and I worked closely with them. And they would write grants to do classes between Bothell and Tacoma. One summer, or maybe it wasn't summer, but it was ... the Bothell people were all in sweaters and and like jackets and stuff, and the Tacoma people were all practically

stripped of clothing. They were in shorts and tank tops, because our room was so hot. And so it was really weird to have such different climate zones going on. And at one point, they had me like tracking the heat in the room because we were renting, and so the manager didn't quite believe us or didn't want to change, you know, put the money into it, and so had to prove that, you know, it was very erratic. And they never could quite figure it out. So that was always kind of different.

Joan Hua 16:10

I imagine that would have something, some impact on the media materials?

Beckie Etheridge 16:15

Yeah, it was, I think it was okay. But the windows opened, and so you would hear traffic on the A Street there if the classroom was on that side of the building, because it got really hot, and there was no air conditioning. It didn't get hot frequently, but it would be a streak of heat and then it'd be really stuffy and it's hard to focus and everything.

One thing as I thought back about those early years that's significant is that technology was really, really different. When I came I didn't have a desktop computer at first. And it's hard to believe that not every person would have some kind of computer on their desk or a laptop or something to work off of. I ended up—because they were waiting to see—it was the last year of the biennium when we opened up. And so they wanted to see what our needs were before they, you know, filled out other things. And so I would go to the computer lab, which is on the floor below me, I believe, until, and use the computer until ... it was mostly to do printed documents of sorts, because I didn't have an email account at that time. And I think the first, I remember, the first browser—I was in a different office—when Netscape came along, and so not even the internet. So it was just really different. I mean, I can't imagine not having that now or, you know, processing the world without that. So yeah, it was different.

Those early days, sometimes it felt a little bit like the Wild West compared to another campus, because there were so many things that weren't in place. You know, if you had a problem, there was never a procedure for it or a policy for it. And I don't mean the Wild West in a bad way. It's just like, you had to kind of, like, be really reactive to things all the time and make responses to what the problem was, you know, talk to people, you know, at all levels, depending on what the problem was, you know. And so like, at first, I didn't have a place to put my equipment, and so I had to ask somebody. So, you would write these little memos on a little piece of paper. It was handwritten, because we didn't have typewriters. I think we had maybe one typewriter or something. But I didn't have, you know, it wasn't easy to access one. So I just handwrite like, "Can I get a storage space? You know, I'm running out of space." And so then, like, "Oh, yeah, just take that closet." And then I think after the first year in the control room, I was hiring student staff. And so it would be trying to crawl over each other because I had a couple of tables. It was a very, it's about the size of this room. And there were like five people trying to work out of it with a couple of tables. Nobody had desks or anything. And the students would just work during the breaks to move equipment and everything. And so I said, "I need a space." And they said, "Go

find one." So I found a small kind of study room or what was supposed to be a classroom, and I said, "This will work." And so they said, "Yeah, go ahead and take it." And so they moved me and my operations over there. And I think about that time. I got a second media technician working, so it was probably the second or third year that I did that. So you would just deal with things. You couldn't really plan for that kind of thing because they didn't know how it'd all play out. And everybody was worrying about their little area, about how to grow things.

Joan Hua 19:50

I know that you had the fifth to the eighth floor in the Perkins Building, and they were converted to storage or classroom, office space, type of thing already.

Beckie Etheridge 20:01

Yeah, I think the faculty were on the eighth floor. And the classrooms were on the sixth and the seventh. And the library was on the fifth.

Joan Hua 20:11

Yeah. And were their apartments below?

Beckie Etheridge 20:13

No apartments in the building at that time. That came after we left. They rehabbed that. So I thought that was kind of interesting.

Joan Hua 20:20

What was below this?

Beckie Etheridge 20:22

It was just different businesses, I believe. I don't think it was apartments. I don't recall people living there.

Joan Hua 20:28

I also liked how Suzanne said the printing press used to be, I think, maybe on the fifth floor—the Tacoma Ledger, the newspaper.

Beckie Etheridge 20:36

Yeah. Yeah. Isn't that cool?

Joan Hua 20:41

And so the floors were reinforced.

Beckie Etheridge 20:44

Yeah, I thought about that when I was thinking about the building because, actually, here it says that it was in that building.

Joan Hua 20:51

Can you tell me what it was like to work with Deb Sunday and Suzanne [Klinger]? I think they were in the library at the time.

Beckie Etheridge 21:01

Yeah, they were our first librarians. Deb was the campus librarian. I loved working for Deb. She was really supportive, and she knew I could be independent. She liked that about me. So we worked really well together. And so, she would just kind of give me minimal direction on things and let me go. She was very visionary about stuff. I really was impressed about how you got, how when we got to the end of the year, and there were things that the campus needed, and she moved money from the library's to like a campus need, a major campus need, and I forget what it was at this point. And that taught me that collaborative nature of wanting to work with others, you know, like, yeah, your job is to make sure that your unit is growing the way it needs to grow and that you've taken care of your needs. But it's also part of a campus project, and so I learned that from her. I also learned she taught me about hiring people, about, you know, the importance of having people from the community and different kinds of people and just really, you know, just was a great boss. I just can't say enough about her. She's really smart. And I loved when she would talk about: how are we going to move the library? And one of her ideas was, we're just gonna have everybody check out books. Everybody checks out 10 books, and then they bring them back into the new library.

Joan Hua 22:34

When you moved—

Beckie Etheridge 22:35

When we moved from the old campus to the new campus. So I thought that was pretty funny. So she had a great sense of humor, too. I think, yeah, a couple times she and Il [Oh], who was the computer guy, and I did some stuff, because in those early days, everybody kind of got along real well with each other. And, you know, you understood what the other people were going through. And then she also worked with the Bothell librarian and with John [Blake], and so she had those responsibilities, too. She was a busy person. But I thought she really could take the broad look of things, and she had a great experience that she brought to the campus.

And Suzanne. We became good friends, because she was the reference librarian at that time. And we, you know, just grew to know each other. We would do lunches, you know, periodically, and for the whole 25 years I was here we would do lunch every other quarter or so, and just kind of catch up. And because we had a shared experience of those early years, and we liked each other. So we kind of compare notes and have a good chat. And I'm gonna do lunch with her after this.

Joan Hua 23:45

Great. So, you talked about working with Professor Claudia Gorbman. Were you involved in the shaping of the media collection based on what she was teaching or shaping the curriculum in any way?

Beckie Etheridge 24:03

Yes, so Deb ... so faculty would come to me about what they needed for their classes. And so that was the primary purpose of the media collection for most of that time I was here, until there was a restructure and then it went over. It was based in the library, but she asked me to take care of Media Services. And so I did the collection development out of there, and so I learned a lot about collection development from both Deb and Suzanne. And then I took a class up in Seattle. And I talked a lot to the faculty, and I got really good at researching odd little videos because it was difficult to find things. Got to know all the vendors, you know. I think our first video series had already been purchased before I got here, but the first one was Eyes On The Prize, which was, what, VHS TAC-1, and that was for Mike Honey, Professor Mike Honey's courses.

I worked with Claudia. I learned a lot about films from her because it wasn't ... she had a very eclectic and ... just learned a lot about films and French films and comedy in films. And it was a real fun part of the job. And then I worked with other faculty as they would come in, because every year we would get ... so when we first opened, there were 13 faculty, were the original faculty, and then every ... I think we started the Nursing and Education program in the third year, I want to say. And then after that, we just kept adding, and we were adding faculty all the time. And so every faculty came with needs for films and videos. And we would use what Bothell and Seattle had. But our curriculum is unique in many ways. And so define what they needed for the classroom. And since they had to be shipped down, in those days, we didn't allow students to check them out because we wanted to stay real focused on what's going on in the classroom, because faculty needed to be somewhat flexible about what was going on. Because it was all new—the courses were new when they were teaching them; they weren't sure how fast they would go through the material. And every faculty worries about that. But it was especially true because they were working with teaching older adults, and sometimes there would be things that they'd have to spend more time on and so you had to be real flexible with when people needed their films. But that was really fun, to develop a film collection like that based off of the curriculum.

Joan Hua 26:55

Yeah, I'd imagine. And how would you describe the sense of community among your colleagues? You mentioned that a lot of you were very close.

Beckie Etheridge 27:06

Yeah. I would say that the folks that were there the first few years, there's just a sense of warmth there. Even if you don't keep in touch with them, if you see them, there's just this shared experience, unique shared experience that everyone has towards each other, and just real warm feelings, even if you're not best buddies with them or anything. I still see Anthony D'Costa

occasionally, because one of his former students, a student that was from 1993 is a good friend of mine. And so, and we were all part—Anthony, Claudia, myself, and Elaine were all part of the Tacoma Film Society for four years. And that was kind of, we would get grant funds from Liberal Studies at that time to—and this was before Tacoma had foreign films, and so it was kind of cool, a little scary, to start a film society and encourage people to go. And we had a small little following. We barely made money. But so anyway, we'd get together with Anthony once a year or so and, you know, compare notes, and I think he's working out in Alabama now. And they had to get-together this summer, but I had already been over this direction. And I don't like to come over two weekends in a row. And so, I had other things I was doing, and so I just, "Darn it," I said. Next year!

Joan Hua 28:37

Yeah.

Beckie Etheridge 28:38

But I missed the group get-together. So it's not formalized or anything. It's just, those are just unique relationships that people have.

Joan Hua 28:51

Can you talk about maybe working with students? There were other students who were memorable or relationships that you formed with students?

Beckie Etheridge

So I had student workers every year in different capacities. So when I worked in media services, I had students that would help set up things, equipment, and go pick up films for me, and help in those ways. And since we were in a one-room office, everything happened out of there, I interacted with them quite a bit and got to know them. And then when I moved over to the Teaching and Learning Center, I had a lot of tutors that I worked with. And we had front desk students, and so I got to know a lot of those folks. In the first, the really early years, you would get to know—there were so few students that you'd just get to know faces, and, you know, say hi to people and occasionally talk to them in interactions. Or you'd them at the Film Society or things like that.

In later years, when we were a four-year school, I worked more with first-year students, you know, the first-gen students, and taught in the Summer Bridge program for five years. So I had a lot of, and there were times where there were mentorships that I took on with students and continued to give them advice. And I hear from them occasionally. And I have two friends that were students here in 1993, who are very close friends of mine, who went on and did other things. One of them went here and went to Vietnam, came back, got her master's degree in TESOL, and then got her teaching certification back here at UWT, and now is running their program for ESL in the Fife School District. And my other friend went on to go to South Africa. Helped fight for the vote, you know, during the election there and ... and so, yeah, we ... it's kind of based out of those early years, but we have other interests and such, too.

Joan Hua

Those were students at the time?

Beckie Etheridge 31:17

Those were students, yeah. And then in year 2000, I actually went to school here and got my graduate degree, got my Master of Education degree. So I worked a lot with, as a student, which was a great, great fun. And it was kind of funny because I was doing projects with my mentor, my advisor, and so we'd have to change hats out of which hat we were wearing, you know. So, it's like whether I was in charge or he was in charge. You know, because if it had to do with my resources, then I was in charge, you know, about what I could and couldn't do. And then if it had to do with schoolwork, you know, he was in charge. And, you know, and it was a fun relationship because we wrote several grants together and just ... it was a great learning experience in that way, being from the student's standpoint, too.

And then I also, during those early years, because sometimes if I wasn't as close to the student experience I would go to the graduations and the commencements. And they always felt so special, especially when they were real small. And the first one was in the Perkins Building. So I think I probably was the only person that went to like 24 commencements, which is just appalling, because I would barely go to my own. But I went in so many different capacities. I went as a technician, I went as a producer of the video project, I went as—sat with the faculty because I was the Teaching and Learning Center director, and I went as a student. I sat in the stands one year, and it was just because it just always reminded me of what it was we were doing, you know, and how important it was, because everybody supported students, because their lives were complicated, and you just never knew what the student's story would be when they came to your door.

There was one student that came through, and her son had been killed in a terrible auto accident. And she was trying to just keep on top of something that she missed or something and like, "Let us help you." And so, I mean, it was just, you just never ... their lives were complex, the older students. And the younger students were more first generation. And so it was so important to welcome them and make them feel like they belong to what was going on.

Joan Hua 33:31

Yeah. Can you talk a bit about the first commencement?

Beckie Etheridge 33:39

Sure. So it was very, very small. So I think it was seven students. And it was in the Perkins Building commons area, which I think would have been on the sixth floor, maybe, I'm not sure—sixth or seventh. And there was this open area, where we would have ... you know, potlucks or, you know, students could sit there and wait for classes. There were tables scattered around. Anyway, so it was there. I think I had minimal audio resources. So I was working with kind of semi-automatic speakers. So it wasn't like a regular audio setup. So that made me really nervous because I couldn't do as good of a job in that area. The students, one of the students

had rented a big RV that was parked outside the Perkins Building, and they were like, kind of like, whooping it up, you know, like being really happy and everything before and after the ceremony and everything. And you know, Seattle, I forget who was the president at the time, and the Board of Regents came down, and so yeah. It was a small ... it was intimate because it was, you know, so small, but it was very joyous.

Joan Hua 35:00

Yeah, I heard about the RV a little bit. I'm hoping to find out more. I saw a picture too. What about when UW Tacoma became a four-year school? What was that like? It sounded like it had an impact on what you were doing. You became more involved with first-gen students.

Beckie Etheridge 35:24

Yes. So that was ... there were several schools in Washington state that the state asked them, the branch campuses—that were no longer the branch campuses—to be moved from four-year schools to two-year schools [*sic*]. And I knew that was going to happen because I remember Bill Richardson, Professor Bill Richardson, talking about that. No branch campuses stayed a two-year school.

Joan Hua 35:53

So move from two-year to four-year.

Beckie Etheridge 35:55

Yeah. So at that time, the research was that there was nobody that stayed as a two-year school. Everybody went on to be a four-year school, so I knew that that was in the future. But it was hard to do that because it's not an insignificant task to change a school from a two-year thinking to a four-year thinking, because there's all these supports that you have to build in for younger students, including student affairs and things to do. But also thinking more about basic learning, because they're coming out of high school. Do we get dorms? Do we not get dorms? What about the collection? What kinds of classes do we need? What's the best way to prepare them for the second, you know, their majors? What is that curriculum going to look like?

And so, the summer before ... was it the summer before? There wasn't a lot of lead time. Washington state never gives a lot of lead time for these, you know, these big, huge changes. And we spent a summer just going through, like: What is it all gonna look like? What are the needs? And everybody on campus was on one or two committees, where they had questions that they looked at and tried to get answers to based on ... and they would go outside of the committee if needed, and just trying to get the answers to things so that administrators had the information. And also it helped grow the staff and the faculty to understanding how it was going to change. It was kind of a process to help you understand that. And so, the first year, I believe the ... so when we got to the first year, Beth Kalikoff was in charge of the ... I forget what they called the program at this point; it was a different name than what they have right now. And she was very nimble at, you know, addressing all the needs and the issues and helping faculty teach

in different ways or, you know, giving them, supporting them, because it's a huge difference of what you need to do.

I remember telling, and there were problems at times, and I said, I remember telling her. I said, "You need a web page. You're not going to be considered legit until you have a web page that students can get information off of." You know, to figure things out, or even their parents, kind of thing. But, you know, that wasn't the first priority when, because everything was so fast. As far as getting started. I think there was a lot of team teaching, coordinated courses at first, and that was, I think, the faculty enjoyed doing that. And the students enjoyed it. I love the first-year students and first-gen students, because I remember being kind of lost when I went to college. But also, that first year, it's full of possibilities when you leave your parents, and you have all these dreams about who you want to be, and you don't know how to get there. And, you know, you think kind of large, but you don't have an idea of, you know, whether it's practical or not. In many ways people are still searching for themselves. And so it's a very, it's a great time to, it's a great opportunity, to have the opportunity to explore. But oftentimes, first-gen students are afraid of, you know, the protocols, you know, it can be really intimidating.

I worked with faculty so much that I always would be surprised when students would say that they were afraid of their faculty because they had PhDs. And I sometimes would tell faculty that, and they're like, "What?" They'd be so surprised. And so it was just, you know, trying to relate to younger students as a campus, trying to serve their needs, trying to help them navigate where they wanted to be in a lot of ways, trying to find the right curriculum. You know, when you had a bunch of different programs on campus, people had different ideas of how they wanted to see their students be prepared for their courses. So there were just a lot of changes. In the TLC, tutoring had to change. And we had to think about: how do we bring younger students in? And with time, we had this Summer Bridge program to help orient them to different services on campus, because that's one thing you always want to try to, you know, teach them the new world, because they have to be more proactive than they were in high school, as far as solving problems, and they're not great problem solvers at that point. That's a learned skill.

Joan Hua 40:39

So when it became a four-year school, admitting first-year students, the students were younger. There weren't as many non-traditional students that were just starting college?

Beckie Etheridge 40:50

Correct. Just every year, the first-year students, there would be more of them, and as time, the older students got younger and younger. And so then you started seeing students that had recently gone to community college and were transferring over. And you didn't, it was. In fact, within the first few years, there was a lot of talk about pedagogy for older students, adult students, because they need to make more choices about what they want to learn and do. And so people would talk about that. But when the first-year students came along, then people had to shift their thinking. And it wasn't a wholehearted effort. In the early days of the first-year students, there were some people that felt really strongly that we shouldn't have them on

campus. And so there would be some resistance, like any change, there was resistance. And I don't know where those people are today in the sense of how they think, you know, if they've accepted that change, or they'll always feel that that was the wrong change. But for myself, I just believe that it was a change that was going to happen, whether we liked it or not. And I kind of embraced it. I liked it. But it was starting, it became a whole new campus again. And that was one of the things about Tacoma, is that every year you brought in new faculty. And so I used to say it's a new campus, because there's new faculty, there's new staff, and there's new students with new ideas. Everybody has new ideas that they're bringing in and things, ways that they relate to what's already there. And, you know, either want to change or start something new, and it's kind of exciting in a lot of ways.

Joan Hua 42:33

So was the resistance primarily the idea that it diverges from the original mission of UW Tacoma serving upper-class students? Or was it a kind of a resistance toward growth or feeling that it's diluting the instruction in some way?

Beckie Etheridge 42:51

Well, yeah, I think there was a lot of pretzel making sometimes, which made it difficult, because it took resources from other areas. I don't know that the original mission was really ... it was, my understanding was, it was for place-bound students. And place-bound students in my mind would be any student who couldn't leave their home for whatever reason. And in those days, it would have been, in the early days, it would have been the older students. It was because they had jobs. Today, or, you know, later, it would have been students who couldn't afford to move somewhere else and live in a dorm. They would live at home and go to school, or they would stay in their community and continue to work, or they had a job here of some sort—maybe not what the older students had, who are more established. So it was a little different that way. And so I don't believe it was the change of the mission. I think it was more about resources. But it changed the way departments had to think about students, and it became a different campus in many ways. But that was inevitable. And I think, you know, there's nothing so constant as change. And on a growing campus—change, change change.

Joan Hua 44:07

And that was 2005, right? Or 2007, around there?

Beckie Etheridge 44:13

Yeah.

Joan Hua 44:13

And you were already at the TLC.

Beckie Etheridge 44:15

I was already at the TLC at that point.

Joan Hua 44:18

So if we go further back in time, can you tell me about the move to this campus? And maybe your involvement in that?

Beckie Etheridge 44:29

I was pretty involved in that because I was responsible for the classroom equipment. And so it became a huge part of my world. That year before we moved. We moved in 1997. And I think, probably starting in 1993, there was talk about moving, but it was always three years out. So every time it would be talked about, it'd be three more years, or two more years. You know, and so it never met the time deadlines. And then finally we got to the point where we were—yeah, we've got a campus. And so I remember visiting this site. The whole campus came over in a rickety old elevator, you know, a lot of the campus. And somebody said, "If this elevator goes down, it's taken the campus out." Because there were so many of us in there, just kind of checking the old buildings, going through the Snoqualmie building. There's pigeons living in there. So we took a look at it. And then we spent a year in planning meetings to come over to this campus. And there was, you can imagine, weekly planning meetings, you know, there was a lot of consideration about every possible thing you could think of. And we kind of dialed it down to, you know, like how it was going to play out. We worked with the movers and, you know, they were going to color code everything, and it was going to be really organized, how it moved. Well, the week that we moved, it was not very organized whatsoever. And by that time we had two buildings, and I had a few staff. But I mean, our biggest concern was that we had all this equipment and had all these people coming and going. And we were afraid of things being stolen and nobody noticing. And we had a lot of equipment, because at that point, we were equipping classrooms with video projectors.

And so, I mean, we had 10 new—I mean, I can't remember the number of new video projectors we had, but we had a lot of new equipment because it was end of the biennium. And so we had bought all the equipment for the new campus and put it into an old classroom or space. And it was like boxes up to the ceiling. And so we'd have to have somebody guard it when the moving was going on. And so you're running around between two buildings. And they're not going classroom by classroom by room. They're going according to what fits in the truck. And you're like, "Oh no." So it was pretty chaotic. And I remember the day that we—I kind of pulled the plug on everything because I was a good communicator, and I was really kind of concerned, like, what our faculty were going to think when we don't have any services for them. So I waited till the last minute, and then I had to pull plugs on, you know, we had to start uninstalling things. And so then, I said, you know, we're not having, you know, services are down or, you know, "We're getting ready for the move; we'll see you on the other side." And Mike Allen always used to make that the "move call": "See you on the other side," which I didn't really think of as so significant. I was just trying to be light, you know, and keep everybody happy. And it was summer, so most things were closed and down, but people still work during those times and, you know, have expectations for being able to keep their, you know, it was mostly the staff that were doing the moving, although faculty offices had to be moved too, and that was never fun. But I can remember being on this side, once we got over to this building, it wasn't really finished.

So there was still a huge punch list. And we had to move even though, I mean, I think in the morning the toilets weren't working. And by the end of the day, the toilets were working, but there were things that weren't labeled properly, or, you know, they were still doing a lot of work. But the moving vans were for a certain date, and there was no flexibility in the summer to move those. And so it was, I can remember, a lot of pressure from that that people felt. And then, one night I was here really, really late because I was waiting for the last truck to come from the one building to over here and to make sure that the stuff was secure. And so I was probably the only person up in the—actually, Media Services was in the TLC space up on the second floor in Snoqualmie. And I remember sitting up in the office up there, just kind of watching for the trucks. You know, like, "When are they coming?" You know, "I want to go home!"

It kind of taught me that, despite all planning, things don't always go according to plan and just to kind of move with the punches, to roll with it. And it was something. I'm kind of an organizer. So it was a challenge. It was a fun challenge, in some ways, was figuring out how you get all this stuff moved from one place to the other. And then the library was doing the same thing. They're trying to figure out how to get these books over, and how's that going to work? And, you know, when are we going to be able to open services again? Or, how fast can we do this? And then people are worrying about their personal offices and stuff, too, because you got to get your own stuff moved. And then when we first moved in, we had not had a facilities department before we moved to this building, but when we moved to this campus, we suddenly had a facilities department, that we didn't know the people, and they would come around and start working on stuff and became part of the campus. And I think I want to say that security expanded at that point. There was just all these services and supports that needed to occur to be in a larger space. You go from two buildings to three buildings in a different space.

Joan Hua 49:28

And you were living in Tacoma at the time already. You mentioned checking out the buildings and seeing pigeons. Do you remember what you thought of this location or what your reaction was when you heard that the campus will be in downtown Tacoma?

Beckie Etheridge 50:38

You know, I didn't have any of the baggage that a lot of people from Tacoma, that were raised here, had about downtown. Because my first ... the first time I was in Tacoma really was when I started work here. And so I heard a lot about, you know, back and forth about: should it be over by TCC—the community college—or should it be downtown? I remember when we came down to this area, I was very impressed by the buildings, even though it was hard to imagine how they were going to clean them up. But it reminded me of Pioneer Square. And I like that idea of like, kind of the historic buildings. And I remember, many years later, talking to Sandy Boyle, because there were always compromises we made with classrooms, when you're rehabbing old buildings, and she asked me. She goes, "Do you think it was worth it?" And I said, "Oh, yeah." Because we have just beautiful classrooms. And I said, "No classroom is perfect." But it was always a challenge to take these rooms with posts and, you know, brick walls. Sometimes it

would be not just the visual aspect of a classroom but also the acoustics. I started paying attention to acoustics more than I ever did, because some of those classrooms were really deep. So then how can faculty be heard in those. And so there were other issues when you're rehabbing old buildings.

But I've always loved how the campus has grown. It's just a beautiful campus. And I would have friends from Seattle come down and visit me, and they'd be like, "You're so lucky to work on such a beautiful campus."

Joan Hua 52:28

And so you started out as a Media Technician, and then you became the director of TLC. Can you talk about those transitions and maybe other roles that you had?

Beckie Etheridge 52:40

Yeah, let's see. So I worked about 12 years in the technology area, so it was Media Services, which started from a one-person shop to five or six, five staff. And then we started an academic technologies program, and I kind of shifted my focus to faculty development and teaching support. And then along the road I became the interim director of the Teaching and Learning Center and was also the Head of Academic Technologies. And at that point, they decided to merge the two departments because of some of the similarities but also because of budget. And so then I became—the two became known as the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology. And so I had a couple staff from academic technologies and then I had the instructional staff from the TLC in a unit, and then once the freshmen came along, we broke the TLC off, because there needed to be capacity in the TLC to grow the services out for what it meant to be in a four-year school at that point. So then I became solely the director of the TLC. So I think I was involved with the TLC for about 12 years. And then at my 25th-year point I moved on. And I already told you that I went to WSU Tri-Cities, that GEAR UP program, which was a good transition in the sense that I worked with first-year students, and I helped the rural communities like from 15 high schools in that area that we move students into eight partner colleges in creating programming for them as first-gen students.

Joan Hua 54:51

And my next question is, I'm wondering if you could talk about your sense of belonging on campus, and how that may be compared with other institutions that you've worked with?

Beckie Etheridge 55:05

It was hard for me to leave North Seattle Community College because I felt so at home there. I had so many good friends, and it just felt very comfortable. So imagining ... a lot with a lot of my student workers were new immigrants that were trying to learn English and find their place in the world. And so I liked providing such an important role to them, is helping them make that transition. And so when I came over to UW Tacoma, I wasn't sure what to expect, but I found that the early years bonded people in a lot of ways, and so there really was a sense of

belonging. And I think in my entire 25 years I always felt like part of the project, and even as more people came along, and there were more people that I didn't know, and nor had the opportunity to meet, and it became much larger campus, I always felt a sense of belonging and that there was something that we were doing that was important to Tacoma and to the students here, and it was making a difference. And so it made me feel good to be part of that.

Joan Hua 56:20

What about conversations on campus about representation or diversity? Do you remember things about recruiting more diverse students or certain student organizations that were working on things like that?

Beckie Etheridge 56:39

Well, in the early years, I think we just recruited. I can remember there was a Black Student Union group. And they were trying to do some activities on campus, and my staff sometimes would be kind of, "They didn't do it according to the rules." And I said, "Well, it's important for students to have, you know, we have to kind of roll with these guys, because we don't have policies or procedures for student groups. And so let's just make it happen and figure out what we need after that. Let's just make it happen."

And so, for me, it was trying to support students, diverse students, and making sure that they could do what they wanted to do as far as creating space for themselves. When we brought on first-gen, and so I don't think—I think we were just always recruiting. I think we were more conscientious with staff and faculty as trying to hire more diversely. I know when we brought—along the road with the TLC—as I would make efforts to hire more diversely and as that first year student body changed in diversity, it became even more important to make sure that we had more diverse ... I looked at a picture on the web of the new faculty this year. And I was surprised and delighted to see that they're hiring more diversely in the faculty arena finally, because there was always a smaller population but ... so I know that there was some interest to it, but I don't know what priority it was along the road.

Joan Hua 58:35

You just noticed that there was sort of a lack of diversity in faculty at some point.

Beckie Etheridge 58:44

Well, yeah.

Joan Hua 58:48

But it wasn't something formal that you were participating in a discussion.

Beckie Etheridge 58:52

No, no. And with staff, I think people, it was more of an individual thing. And I think Deb Sunday was really good, and she taught me a lot about hiring diversely and how to reach out and to be able to hire more diversely, you know, and advertising in places where there might be more of

an opportunity that somebody would see it or feel welcomed. And if I, at one point, I hired some, you know, I would hire somebody that worked for me as a student and then went on to graduate school, and I kind of recruited him as the head of my writing area, because I thought he knew what we were doing and everything, and he was interested, and so I ended up hiring him. But it meant—a lot of times when you hire diversely, it means kind of chasing after a little bit more to find the good people and letting them know you really are interested, and it's a place that they should consider.

Joan Hua 59:52

But it was something that you remember—Deb Sunday and you talked about that?

Beckie Etheridge 59:56

Deb Sunday, definitely, yeah. Because, yeah, we definitely had some conversations. And there was a ... in the, I think it was, the second year or the third year, there was a summer project where a pluralism institute that we went to. There was a group of faculty, and I ended up going—because I did collection development—down at Evergreen through the Washington—I forget the name, the Washington institute for undergraduate education? I should have looked that up. It was a 10-day, really intense diversity institute, where there was a lot of readings and discussions and such. And so, I thought that was really important to providing more awareness to the curriculum. I think they were very good about being thoughtful about the curriculum, but also to thinking more about what additional supports might be needed.

Joan Hua 1:01:06

And what was your sense of the relationship between UW Tacoma and the wider community in the city? And what do you think has been the impact of the campus presence here?

Beckie Etheridge 1:01:19

Well, I think the community was very excited to have UW Tacoma come to town, and they really did see the campus as something that was changing Tacoma for the good—is the impression I always got. It was so interesting being in Tacoma and like going to the dentist or talking to your neighbors, because they would ask you about UW Tacoma. I mean, in Seattle, that never happened. I mean, any place would never—that kind of stuff wouldn't happen, but they'd always—every time I go to the dentist, they want to know what we were doing and how great we were, and just would want to chat it up, you know? You're my dental hygienist. And then my neighbors would always ask, "Oh, I saw on the *News Tribune* you're doing this, you're doing that," kind of thing. And they'd always be asking me questions. People, if they knew somebody was coming here, they would connect me with them so that I could welcome them when they came.

So I mean, in that way, it just, it was very cool that the community just really embraced it. I got a front-row seat to watch the change because, you know, the downtown wasn't that great when we first moved down here. Even A Street was, you know, a little odd at times, and people

parked on Dock Street, you know, down the stairs there. I don't know if you've ever seen that. I used to call it the "UWT PE credit." You'd have to climb all those stairs, like nine flights or something, you know, and if you took a vacation, it became really hard to do it. But that was where the free parking was. And so, yeah, a lot of people doing that. But so just physically there was a huge change. But also, I think it's just remarkable to think, 30 years later, what a desired place Tacoma is to live. And that a lot of people are moving down here, and it's really blossoming. There was the Museum District. I mean, I couldn't believe the first time I was on the main street there—forget the name of it—Pacific [Avenue], and there was a tourist. I was just completely shocked. I'm like, "Oh my god!" You know, there was actually somebody, you know, people walking around, being tourists. There was never anybody walking the streets, you know, in the early years, and then it just kept changing and changing and changing. And so I think, you know, and then the educational aspect that folks were able to move on to better jobs and, you know, be hopefully, have, you know, a better life and the life of the mind, and just the wonderful things that happen when you have access to an education. So hopefully that's, I think that's been positive for people, make changes for people. So yeah, I think it's been wonderful what it has brought to this area. And I should say the South Sound, not just Tacoma, but to the South Sound.

Joan Hua 1:04:34

Yeah, I kind of get the impression that the fact that the university is here has definitely had something to do with the area blossoming or attracting, you know, other activities, and having the museums here and in the Theater District here at the same time.

Beckie Etheridge 1:04:58

I think the City of Tacoma was very creative and that UWT was very creative, and that they would partner on things, and they would talk and put their heads together and see how they could do things to improve. It was very smart, you know, on the city's part, and I saw that kind of creativity in Tacoma about making it a better place to live and making improvements.

Joan Hua 1:05:31

So what have been the most rewarding aspects about working at UW Tacoma?

Beckie Etheridge 1:05:37

Well, let's see. Being part of that original foundation and startup of the campus and what it's become is just really—I can feel a great pride about that. And so that's been real rewarding. Because what we were just talking about: it was so good for the students and for the community. And it was really, I didn't know it when I came here, but it is fun building something from scratch. And that's what I ended up doing for GEAR UP too. So there's something really fun about that. The transition from a two-year to four-year school was really rewarding for me because I got to be involved with that and help with that. Of course, working with the first-year, first-gen, and Summer Bridge students was valuable. I always loved the sense of collaboration here. I don't know if I was as good of a collaborator when I was at North Seattle. I think I was, but there were so many opportunities to do it that I found myself becoming a major collaborator,

because I found that you can solve two problems oftentimes. Or, you know, putting two different groups together, you can figure out how to make something stronger. And it was easier to do and more fun sometimes too. And then it was just a great place to live and to grow and just to be part of. And I made so many friends here. I mean, I come over here frequently, just because I have people always saying, "When are you coming next?" I'm like, "Well, I'm staying home because it's snowing." But yeah, I just have so many good friends that live here.

Joan Hua 1:07:31

So thinking about the evolution of the campus over time, from your point of view, do you think UW Tacoma has stayed true to what you hoped it would become?

Beckie Etheridge 1:07:44

In many ways it changed because it changed the community. It has provided education for so many students. It's surpassed what I thought it would become. I guess I thought of it as a smaller school, and it just keeps getting bigger with more programs, academic programs. I remember the days when there were fewer academic programs. And so they were always worried about having enough of the right mix. And then, I don't know where the ... I think in the early days, there was a lot of talk about interdisciplinarity and things, and I don't know that it maintained that, which was kind of a value of the early years, and I thought it was a good value, but I don't know that it continued. I think it does in some quarters. But I can't speak much more than that. I think it lost some of that. There was more co-teaching, I think, and that was kind of exciting, but it wasn't always practical from a financial standpoint. And then, I guess I think it grew in many ways more. I think it was ... it grew so big that it lost a lot of the smaller, homeliness that it had. And as new people came on, they didn't really, some people weren't that interested in the early years. And so you had to not talk about it. Because they were looking more to the future of what it could be.

Joan Hua 1:09:43

Do you think there have been missed opportunities for the campus?

Beckie Etheridge 1:09:49

I'm not really sure. It's been a while since I've been here thinking about it. I remember when the law school left the area, and I thought that was too bad because the area really needed a law school or a law library. But I know that it's not an insignificant thing to try to recreate that. I think the campus always thought of itself as a teaching campus, although it's a UW campus, so it's also in research—they're also judged on research. But I think there was always a desire and a need to, but not the money to, provide more teaching support for faculty. And so that's a missed opportunity, as far as strengthening that area. There's a lot of great teachers here, and people that care about teaching and learning to really provide more support for people that want to improve.

Joan Hua 1:10:55

So I know you haven't been working here in a few years, but can you tell me: what do you think has been the likely future, or what do you think is now the likely future direction of the campus?

Beckie Etheridge 1:11:11

You know, I'm not really sure. I mean ... it seems like it's still growing. And I'm not really sure. I'm not, yeah. I just read the *News Tribune* online like maybe once a week, not real frequently, you know, and so I'm not tracking things the way I did when I was living here. And I don't hear as much from people that I know that work here about the campus so much as far as new initiatives. I know that there was some strategic planning going on, but I didn't hear the results of that. So I'm not sure. I'd have to read that to be able to comment on that.

Joan Hua 1:11:54

That makes sense. Okay. I think that's all the questions I have. So can we end there?

Beckie Etheridge 1:12:02

Yeah.

Joan Hua 1:12:02

All right.