

## TRANSCRIPT

**SCRC Series:** North Carolina State University Oral Histories – MC 00449

**Field Notes:** Alice Warren

**Interviewee:** ALICE WARREN

**Interviewer:** Virginia Ferris

**Interview Date:** Tuesday, February 23, 2016

**Location:** Raleigh, North Carolina

**Length:** Approximately 183 minutes

This interview was conducted in the office of Alice Warren in the McKimmon Center for Extension and Continuing Education at North Carolina State University. Alice Warren was born and raised in Dunn, NC, in Harnett County. She earned her Associate's Degree from Peace College in Raleigh, NC, and earned her Bachelor of Science in Education from Campbell College (now Campbell University). After earning her degree, Warren worked for a law firm in Raleigh and then for Wake Technical Institute (now Wake Technical Community College) before earning her Master's Degree in Education from North Carolina State University. While in graduate school, Warren was introduced to continuing education through an internship with the Workforce Development Unit in the Department of Public Instruction. In 1979 she began her career in the Division of Extension and Continuing Education at NC State as a Continuing Education Specialist, and currently serves as Vice Provost for Continuing Education in the same division. In April 2016, Warren became President of the National Continuing Education Association.

In the interview, Alice Warren discusses: her family and growing up in Harnett County, NC; her early career and education; earning her Master's Degree in Education from North Carolina State University; being introduced to continuing education through an internship with the Workforce Development Unit in the Department of Public Instruction; beginning her career at NC State as a Continuing Education Specialist in the Division of Extension and Continuing Education, where she currently serves as Vice Provost for Continuing Education; the legacy of extension at NC State; mentors in her career at NC State, including Sondra Kirsch; developing her leadership within the division and broader administration at NC State; observations on the evolution of extension and continuing education over her career; the importance of cross-institutional collaboration and partnerships; her experiences as a woman in a predominantly male work environment in the early years of her career; the value of increased diversity; supporting and mentoring other women in their careers; fellow Vice Provost and NCSU Libraries Director Susan Nutter; serving on the University Library Committee; leadership from the Provost; the increasing presence of women in positions of leadership in higher administration; and her advice for others beginning their careers.

### START OF INTERVIEW

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[Alice Warren]

Virginia Ferris: This is Virginia Ferris. I'm here with Alice Warren, on February 23, 2016, in Alice's office in the McKimmon Center. Thank you for sitting down with us today.

Alice Warren: Absolutely.

VF: So, if we could start just by kind of walking us through some of your early life, where you grew up, a little bit about your family and what eventually brought you to NC State.

AW: I'm a native North Carolinian, as you can probably tell by my voice and my dialect. I'm from Harnett County. I grew up in Dunn, North Carolina. I was born, raised in North Carolina, educated in North Carolina, and have had my thirty-seven year career in North Carolina.

My dad was a franchise Pontiac Buick dealer, and I was the only child, so I became the daughter and the son. I went through a lot of really wonderful experiences early on with dad, and traveled with him, and helped order cars and pick the accessories out, and that was always kind of cool. Back during those days, when you could actually order and have options. Now it's kind of you get it and that's the way the car is already equipped.

[I grew up in] a very close-knit family, a lot of cousins on both sides of the family. I spent a lot of my life down in Bladen County, at a lake called White Lake, so I learned to swim, ski, all of that, very early on in life, was just very involved with my community, you know Baptist, home church. A lot of the folks in my family are ministers, so we're a very faith-based family, but very close-knit. And I would have to say that my mom and dad, and my dad's parents, modeled really strong core values and hard work ethic, and

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kind of launched me off into what I believe that I've become now as an older adult, and set the tone and the pace for me as to what I would do with my life, and how they hoped I would live my life.

I graduated from Dunn High School, came to Raleigh, and went to Peace College, [as it was called] at that time – now it's William Peace – and really and truly thought that I would go to school for two years and then I would become a legal secretary. That was kind of what I thought I would be doing. Then, mother and daddy kept trying to impress upon me, “Well you're not getting ready to get married right now. Why don't you go on and get a teaching certificate?” Because all girls back then, you ought to have a teaching certificate. So I'm like well, okay, and so I ended up going then to Campbell College, now Campbell University, and got my Bachelors of Science degree in Education so that I could teach junior high, high school, and community college level, if I wanted to teach.

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I moved back to Raleigh, and that was in '74, and I actually went to work with a law firm. I worked with Governor Broughton's sons, and loved being in the law field, but just always felt like there was something else that I really felt like I should be doing, needed to be doing, wanted to be doing. I started pursuing more avenues, to get back into more of what I thought would be the educational world. My dad happened to meet at a golfing event, a fundraiser for Campbell, the president of Wake Community College, or Wake Technical Institute back in that time, and one thing led to another. I went out and met Dr. LeMay, and he ended up hiring me to be a member of his staff.

So that progressed me from the law firm back to the educational arena. I ended up spending two years, actually taught at Wake Tech, and I taught in a federally funded

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program that would bring young women back to school to learn enough skill sets to then be able to go back and work. It was along the concept of distributive education in high school, where you go to school and then you work in the afternoons. Because not everybody is designed, programmed, to go to college and get a four-year degree, but they can go and get a two-year degree and still have a very high quality of life. So I did that for two years and just fell in love with the teaching part of it, and I could see where I was making a difference in the lives of those young women that actually ended up in my class.

So it was like well, if you're going to stay in education, you need to get a masters degree, you know, that you need to keep moving yourself up the next notch, the next notch. So I'm like well, where can I go, and NC State was right here, right there in Raleigh. So I started pursuing what could I get at State, what kind of degree, what was there for me through the College of Education, and I ended up coming back to State. I left Wake Tech in the spring, started summer school, and I went to school full-time. I worked three part-time jobs, supported myself, because I was determined I was going to make it on my own. Mother and daddy had already gotten me through my Associates Degree and my Bachelor's Degree, and had really great work experiences and, you know, wouldn't have changed that year of my life for anything in the world because I matured, I grew up. I had great internships that kind of broadened my perspective, and one of them was with the Department of Public Instruction in their Workforce Development Unit, where we would go around and set up seminars and conferences for teachers that were already out in the field. That was sort of my first introduction to continuing education.

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While I was in my degree program at State, I met a fellow who was in my class, and he actually was an employee of our division. He was working on his doctorate, I was working on my masters, and just in the normal way of conversation, Dennis started asking me, "What are you going to do when you graduate, where are you going to be when you graduate?" And I said, well you know, "I'd love to get into continuing education," and he said, "Well we have an opening, or we're going to have an opening in our unit, why don't you apply?" So, I quickly got my resume together, noted all my work experience, found the job posting, ended up applying, and this was in the early spring of '79, and I ended up being chosen to be interviewed for a continuing education specialist position. It ended up being two guys and myself, the vice chancellor for extension and public service, [who] actually conducted the interviews. It was very different than it is now today, with a formal committee. Dr. Turner, who was our vice chancellor at that time, actually interviewed me in this office, where I now reside as the vice provost. So it's kind of like my whole educational career has come full circle, it's been a wonderful journey for me.

But I was hired. His administrative assistant was a Peace grad, so you know that whole thing about networking and it's all in who you know, and working those connections, really paid off for me. Obviously, I had to prove that I could do the job, but it's a lot of how you get your foot in the door and who you know, and using those networks. So I started in June of '79, and I have now been here thirty-seven years later. I worked my way up through the ranks of leadership through all these years and honestly, Virginia, I wouldn't trade anything that I've done, I wouldn't change my career path. I've been very fortunate. I have worked awfully hard. Part of those core values, I know,

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kicked in in those early years to set me on this course. I try to treat people like I believe I was raised to treat people. But it's been a very fruitful career for me, and I'm so proud of being at North Carolina State University and being an ambassador in this field.

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And for me now, another big turning point is the end of the first week of April, I'll be presented the gavel, to become the president of our national Continuing Education Association.

VF: Congratulations.

AW: Thank you. And to have been nominated by my peers across the country, at other higher ed institutions, and then to be voted countrywide from all the institutional reps that are members of this association, is just such a rewarding opportunity. I'm going to be very busy, going to be on the road an awful lot, but I've got a great team back here behind me to keep the fires managed here, so to speak. I'm looking forward to it, because not only will I get to showcase my leadership skills and my involvement in this field all these years, I'll be able to showcase North Carolina State University.

I went back to look, to see how many presidents we've had. The association is in its one hundredth and one year of being an organized group, and there are probably less than twelve women who have actually been a president. I can proudly say that Dr. Turner here, from NC State, and now me, are the only two presidents that have actually come from NC State. So here again, I'm just very proud of my work journey. I'm very proud of the impact that I believe that I've had in this field and here at NC State. I just feel very grateful to be able to come to work every day and do what I really enjoy doing.

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VF: That's quite a legacy, over the course of your career here. Were you aware of that sort of legacy of extension and what NC State did before you came?

AW: No, I really wasn't, and that was kind of the scary part of it, because I remember, after my interview with Dr. Turner, of course back then you didn't have cell phones and you couldn't text, you didn't have email. So I got home, called my mother and dad, because they said call us the minute your interview is over, to let us know how you did and what you think you did, and they were like, "Do you have any idea, do you have a sense, do you have a feel? Do you think you might get an offer?" And I'm like, "I have no idea," because the entire interview, Dr. Turner and I talked about the people I had listed on my resume, and the experiences that I had had. He didn't ask me the first thing about, "Can you put a budget together for a continuing education program? Have you ever written a grant? Do you know about the branding campaign for the university and what kind of logos you can use and not use? Do you know where the niches of opportunity are for continuing education, workforce development? Is it healthcare, is it engineering?" He didn't ask me any of those kinds of questions, so I'm like, "I have no idea, absolutely no idea."

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Did I learn a lot? Yes, I did. I was like a big sponge, if you want to know the truth of the matter, and it was like every day was a new day, because there was something I learned every day. I learned quickly, who to pair with, so that they could train me in this field and all that goes into this field and what we do. I had a lot of really good mentors. Did I fall, skin my knees? Absolutely. Did I learn other lessons along the way? Absolutely, but that's part of life. Did I correct and change behavior, change things that I

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would do? Absolutely. But I had great colleagues above me here, in this division, and at NC State University, that molded me. Then, as I got involved with our association, I met other colleagues from across the country, men and women, that became outside mentors for me. You know, you can learn a lot by just sitting and watching somebody, listening to somebody, watching how they lead, and like I say, I just soaked it up, because I felt like at some point in time, it would make a difference for me. And looking back on it now, it played out, step by step by step. It took me a while, but that's okay, because now I've gotten to where I really wanted to be.

VF: So who were some of those key mentors for you at NC State?

AW: Well, there were a lot of faculty members that I worked with while I was getting my masters degree. They have now retired, many of them have passed away, unfortunately, but then, in our division, Sondra Kirsch, who was a faculty member over in Parks, Recreation, Tourism, Management. She was chair of the faculty senate. She was actually the chair of the faculty senate when Ronald Reagan came and visited our campus. But there was a lot of things about Sondra that I learned, and she kind of took me under her wing. I did a lot of parks and recreation programs that were up at a place in Wheeling, West Virginia, at a park called Oglebay Park, because we were in a relationship with them, Oglebay Park and North Carolina State University. So I met a lot of folks in the park and recreation field. Jack Duncan, who used to be the director of parks and recreation. There are just folks, unfortunately, I can't think of all their names, across the country, but in that field, that molded me.

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Then, John Cudd, Dennis Jackson, who were in this chair, in this office prior to me. Mary Frances Hester. Ann Hargis, who was our business officer at one point in time, Sally Parker, who was our HR director. Other faculty, other colleagues in outreach and engagement across the field, across North Carolina State University. There are just far too many to name, but I just, here again, I watched them, I observed, I tried to model similar behavior. But then there came a time when I was sort of ready to step out on my own and put my own toe in the water and test my leadership skills. It was a little different than what they had done, but they supported me, they encouraged me.

Now, we actually had a luncheon last week. We invited all of our former employees to come back and have lunch with our current employees, and there was no program, there was no agenda. I hosted it and it was in part, because of the culture that we create within our division, and we become like a family. I had two or three of them say, you know, I'm so proud of your leadership what you've done, and it was a culmination of our ninetieth anniversary, that we actually started two years ago now, and we did a whole lot of events during the ninetieth year, but we couldn't get them all in and couldn't finish them all. *[phone rings]*

Excuse me. I thought I cut that thing off. So, we picked back up and tried to finish some of our ninetieth anniversary events, and this luncheon was one of those final events that we wanted to do, to bring former employees back, because we all care about each other. We work together but you're a family too. And we're also in our fortieth year of this building being in operation. So we've had some major milestones that we've been celebrating, and for those folks to come back and say, "Alice, I'm so proud of you,

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you've been the right kind of leader," you know, it just makes me feel good and honestly, it continues to fuel that flame, that passion that I bring every day to work.

VF: It's just amazing, to think that your original expectations for yourself were to become a legal secretary, you know?

AW: Oh yeah, how far I've come.

VF: This fire that you have in you, to pursue leadership, how did that kind of unfold when you first started here, and again, to kind of learn the landscape?

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AW: Well, it's interesting because sometimes you may feel – and I did, I felt like I was really ready to be more in a leadership role than honestly, I was really ready [to take on] – but here again, that's part of that dream, that desire, and you don't know you begin to test it. There were things in leading meetings that I'm like, "Oh, why did I do that? I would never do whatever that was again." But it's those kinds of experiences that you've got to begin to spread your wings and try. I supported a lot of boards, because of the programs that I ended up managing, and while I was a continuing education specialist, I had probably fifty programs that were my programs, and they were annuals and they came around every year. Many of them had board meetings midway through the year, so I would be a support person to the board. So I watched the chair and the vice chair, I had to give reports. So, I began to test myself more in those situations and began to see, well you know, maybe I have a knack for this or maybe I have a little skill set here that I need to keep polishing and learn more, keep working it, try things, don't try things, you know. So it was through those years of when I was a continuing education specialist that I really began to kind of spread out more.

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Sondra brought me upstairs and began my early years of transitioning me from just a continuing education specialist, to a leader within the division. John, when she retired and John was in the seat here, he gave me other opportunities to lead at the vision level, our activities committee anniversary events, and that included everything from planning it to marketing it to developing the brochure, to managing whatever the sum of money was designated for that event, because we are basically self-supporting as a division. So if we can't generate the revenues from our programs and the services we provide, we can't afford to do it. We get a very small appropriation, very small, and we have administrative fees that we charge for the services that we provide, through our programs and through other service areas. That's what helps pay for our staffs, salaries and the benefits of those staffs, and then gives us some seed money then to try new program offerings in new market areas.

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So it was a combination of a little bit of a passion, and that passion continued to get bigger, and a desire to lead and be a leader and lead differently, and an understanding of working with people and communicating, and helping, as you want to rise, then helping those behind me rise with me, so that I'm creating some sense of a succession, because to me, I'd love for someone else to come in, follow me, and continue on with the great things that we've been doing as a division for ninety—we're in our ninety-fourth year now, and continue on for us, because we are a separate administrative unit of the division. I don't report to one dean, one dean over the other. I report to the senior vice provost, Tom Miller, and Tom and I report to the provost, and continuing education should be aligned under the provost, because it is another type of education. It's not an

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academic. We don't do academic programs like you take in your undergraduate and your masters and your PhD level, but it's continuing education that makes people more prepared to do their job better, to pursue another job, to get additional duties and responsibilities, ultimately which will put hopefully, more money in their pocket each month and then enhance their quality of living. So, it's a very unique place to be, and just being branded and working with our faculty to deliver the content we offer is such a cool place, you know it really is.

VF: Yeah. So, how have you seen the model of extension and continuing education change in your time working here?

AW: Well, those of us who reside, if you will, in that third prong of our three-pronged stool at NC State. There's the teaching, there's the research, and then there's the extension, and the extension is a larger label for those of us who were in outreach engagement, continuing education extension, primarily in that non-credit space, if you will. On any given day, our staffs, our units can feel like we compete with other entities on campus, and to a certain extent we do, but when I first came here, there were respectful boundaries of where all the institutions in North Carolina, we all functioned and this is kind of our turf. When the Internet became the thing, we had no boundaries, so for Carolina to think we've come too far over to Chapel Hill, or for Duke to think we've come too far over into Durham, marketing and promoting our programs, or for East Carolina to think we've gone too far east, that doesn't apply any more.

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So that was a big shift, the whole Internet world was a big shift. It created challenges, but it also created opportunities, and for us, the opportunities come in

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partnering with others who bring another strength to what we want to offer, we being us as a division, we being North Carolina State University. But how cool is it for, say, you as a participant to come to a program that was built, put together, and is being taught by two higher ed institutions, that both have their own reputation. It benefits you far greater, in my opinion, than it just coming from North Carolina State University.

So for me, collaboration was a new idea, but I grabbed onto it really quickly, because in the earlier days, it could put us at a disadvantage if we were not smart enough to find people to collaborate with. Because then the Dukes or the Carolinas or the East Carolinas or the UNCG or University of South Carolina or Clemson, wherever that institution may be, in that market area that we go and try and to promote our programs, [they] could say, “Well why are you here? That’s not a strength of NC State University,” strength meaning a content strength. So for me it was learning very quickly, well, you know if NC State is not known for anything medical, that doesn’t mean we can’t offer something medical. We partner with Carolina or now East Carolina, and we bring in another piece that NC State is known for and we make a bigger program, we have a bigger area to market the programs to, and hopefully then getting those folks to come in and what a bigger experience do they end up having.

So, internally, with that mindset, it creates other opportunities for us to partner with other units across campus that are doing the same kind of thing, but very content driven, based on the college they reside with. For instance, we partner with what I used to call and they used to call, the Industrial Extension Service, IES, and it is a subset of the College of Engineering. So when there’s an opportunity for us to partner together, why wouldn’t we, why shouldn’t we, if it impacts the person who takes the class in a bigger

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way? So instead of always thinking that my counterparts at NC State are my competitors, I try to help showcase to our staffs that they're not your competitors, they're your collaborators, your colleagues, so find ways to partner with them.

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The same kind of mindset [happens] with the community college system. We've got fifty-eight of them across our state. In their mind and in our mind, we are marketing and promoting to the same individuals, be it at different places in their career path. Well, if we're going into a content area and we know that there is, or are, several community colleges in the area where we're marketing these events, why not find a way to bring a community college, or multiple community colleges, together in the delivery of the offering, because they are known for offering, and I don't mean this in any kind of negative way, but they do really good workforce development at what I call that really good introductory level. So then, let's make it a two-tiered process, two-tiered offering. Have them come in, teach the introductory level, and then NC State University come in with its faculty and its expertise, and we teach the next level. That way we're not directly competing with each other, we're supporting each other, and the individuals. If it were Virginia, you sign up and look at the bang for the buck that you've gotten, and how it elevates your educational path and your career path. So it's thinking a little differently, it's working and acting a little differently. That was very different than when I first came here, because it was more about, you take care of what's in our silo and we don't worry about what's in anybody's else's silo at NC State, much less anybody outside the borders of NC State University.

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VF: It seems like looking at things a little differently like that, you can make such a greater impact, focusing on the people that are in the class and what you can do for them in different ways. Did you encounter much resistance or kind of challenges?

AW: Along the way you do, you do, and some of it to me is territorial. You know, people feel threatened, and it may be because they already have issues with their own programs, their own offerings. We don't have the same business practices on a day-to-day basis, but we're all managed by the rules and regulations of North Carolina State University and state government, because we're at an educational institution which is part of state government. So we will have to pay our bills, we still have to get contracts approved the right way. We still have to have contracts for our instructors. I mean, they may go at it differently than we do, but you know, you have some of that tug and pull; who's going to be the bigger fish in this partnership or who's going to be the one that, you know... So you have to work through some of those perceived differences, but if you keep the end result in mind you'll get there. Our staffs, we've learned we have to yield a little bit if it's going to make a difference to that individual who is taking that program.

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We do a lot of events management through our office of professional development, and there are a lot of outside event planner businesses that could believe they're in competition with us. We don't openly promote that, but we have a reputation that people have seen, because they've been to an event and they start asking questions, "Well who managed this conference? Registration was so seamless," you know, "All the information was on the website. They were very courteous at the check-in desk. The meeting space has been phenomenal. There wasn't anything we needed or we couldn't

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get.” So a lot of that comes from our services, what we can provide, but then it also comes from how our employees provide that high quality customer service, and that’s part of what we talk about as our culture.

We’ve been very fortunate to manage some very large conferences, international, national conferences, but they don’t immediately generate that revenue flow, because they may be six to eight, a year, two years down the road, before that event will actually take place. So we’re a bit of a risk-taker every day, but we have to make sure we have the financial and the fiscal resources to live in that space. I don’t know if I’m making sense to you, but it’s kind of a cool place to be within the boundaries of the university, because we’re not driven by all the academic approvals for content, which makes it kind of nice for us. But then getting faculty to work with you, because they’ve got their teaching responsibilities, their research, and now you want to teach in continuing education? But a lot of times, once they’ve done it with us and they get that experience and they meet the individuals that come to our programs, it becomes a very rewarding experience for them. Then, when they realize they’ve got a support unit that will help take care of all those other logistical needs, then it makes the burden of what they bring to the offering much easier to manage, because we keep saying, you just bring the content, you get your slide deck together or you tell us what book you want us to order, we’ll do everything else for you, but we’ll ask you, as we’re going along the way, “Is this how you would prefer your room to be set up? How many screens do you want to drop down from the ceiling during your presentation? Do you want a wireless mike, do you want a handheld mike, do you want to carry the mike, you know, to be able to walk around in the room?”

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We like to think we know how adults like to learn, and we do, but we're continually learning ourselves. When online education started being the buzzword and the big thing, there's a lot of value in that. But a lot of what we do is still traditional, face-to-face delivery, because adults need to be comfortable. I don't know if you realize it when you go into a room, you probably walk into the room and you'll look around like, "Where do I want to go sit?" There's usually a side of the room that you traditionally select when you go into a room. Do you want to get on the end of a row, next to the aisle, or do you want to go midway through the row or do you go all the way to the far side? How far up in the room do you go? All those factors play into the design of how you set up a room, and the more comfortable you make adults, and when I say adults, I'm talking about the age that's traditionally twenty-five and older, the better they learn, the more engaged they are in the classroom. Now, do they like to see video clips? Absolutely. Do they like to see a website posted during the presentation that showed other information that comes into the content of what's being delivered? Absolutely. Do they like having the instructor or the presenter in the room with them? Absolutely. But do they like hearing from another authority that's brought in from another link or from another connection? Absolutely. So what we're seeing is a transition from pure face-to-face deliverables, to where it's more of a blended delivery, which creates challenges for us from the logistical, audiovisual side. You've got to make sure you've got all the right kind of equipment and you've got employees that know how to manage that kind of equipment. So it's not a space where you can become very dormant and static. It changes constantly. So, from when I first started in '79, to where we are now in 2016, there's a vast difference.

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VF: Yeah.

AW: However, there's still some of that basic underlining principles that still guide us every day, based on who we're serving, so.

VF: It's very representative of the broader university and kind of adapting and evolving with the needs of students, faculty, and the people of North Carolina.

AW: Mm-hmm. Well, part of what we try to do and the leadership that I try to model to our leaders of our division, many of whom directly report to me and our other employees, [is that] we need to be involved with campus committees. We need to go to open campus events, we need to be visible, they need to know our name, not just the name of the division or the name of the unit but the name of the individual. You need to volunteer, serve on committees, you need to network with your colleagues. We need to know what the pulse of NC State is all about, in all three of our mission areas, because then it makes us a more up-to-date, functioning unit and subunits, to then have better deliverables to the clientele that we try to serve. So it's not a place where you can come and just sit at your desk every day and think you're going to be on top of everything, because you won't be, you can't be, and I think that's another piece that makes us different from a lot of other units on campus. We've tried to manage our growth, you know, and part of our internal principle is that if we offer a program and it can't be self-supporting after that first offering, we come back and we discuss what did we do well, what did we not do well, what did we definitely did not do well and we need to change, and how would we change it for the next time around. Six to eight months later we'll

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offer it again, and if it's not standing on its own after a second delivery, we don't offer it again, because we can't afford to.

VF: Right.

AW: That's about as far as our risk will allow us to go. We've taken the time to invest in our employees, so we walk the talk of continuing ed. We have a large number of our employees that are certified program planners. It's a ten chapter self-study course that we get from another association that we're a member of, and it equips our employees who may only have an associates degree, and many of them have bachelors degrees, but they feel more confident when they go into a planning meeting with faculty members or other community leaders that they really know what they're talking about when they're asked a question, "Well what do you think we ought to do with this?" They can give very concise, informed answers, because they feel more experienced and more prepared.

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And then we participate, like I said, with our national association. We do regional participation, we do national participation. But part of what motivates them is if you want to go to the regional meeting in Dallas, Texas, in October of 2016, when the call for proposals go out you need to submit a proposal and you need to be on the program. Not just because you'd like to go to Dallas or you'd like to go to the regional meeting, but you need to be out there sharing practices, new programs, take a faculty member along with you. If you want to go to the national program – it's in San Diego in April – what kind of proposal did you submit, what kind of regional office do you reside in? You know, have you stepped up to be a regional leader, are you on that internal track to expand yourself as a professional member? So here again, it's just trying to manage our

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resources and manage it very well, and then work with our colleagues at NC State and then outside the borders of NC State.

VF: So, can I ask you about your experience moving into these realms of leadership and increasingly higher administrative levels – in a time when there were not very women probably in that space with you – how that shaped your experience and what sort of challenges or opportunities you found in that?

AW: When I first started here, at the continuing education specialist level, there was one other female. All the rest of them were all males. So I made female number two. All of our immediate support staff were all women, and in those early years, I dealt with a lot of the jokes and the—I don't ever think it was truly intentional, but some of the conversations that now, I would go in and say, "Whoa, whoa, let's don't go there." But back then, I being a minority, being one of only two, but also then being the female, you just sort of sat there and kind of watched and let them talk and say whatever they wanted to say. They were always very nice to me, don't get me wrong, but some of the conversation would, you know, go down paths you probably wouldn't want to go. I'd stop it at a certain point in time, say "Guys let's talk about something else," or "No, we're not going there," or "If that's what you all are going to do after this meeting is over, I'm going back to the hotel." I just learned and knew when to make different decisions.

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As I have moved along and the workforce internally here has changed to where it's more women than it is the men, and we've become more diversified in our ages, in our race, our color, our ethnic backgrounds, it's made me be a better leader, because I've become more sensitized to all of that. So now, when I know we're putting search

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committees together, I always ask our HR manager who's on the committee. If they're all white then it's like, "Whoa, whoa, wait a minute, you've got to have some diversity here." We've all been to diversity training, we're all trying to embrace and appreciate and model that kind of behavior. So I would say the early year experiences for me have now molded me in how I try to lead, in being respectful, being kind, but also being appreciative of what other people bring to the table, be it from another race, be it another age, be it another ethnic background, be it another career path.

When we do awards, and we have two division awards that we present annually, I empower committees, they go off, do the task, but then the chair of the committee comes back and presents the results – you know, who's in the running, this is how the committees voted, for these reasons – you know, I try to make sure that it's not the same race every year, it's not the same gender every year, because there are too many other people out there that can be recognized. It's just [that sometimes] the committee didn't search far enough and hard enough. So I try to impress upon the chair of the committee, "Here are my expectations, for these reasons." So there's been a lot of change, I've seen a lot of change through the years, but I think it's made us better. Do we always hit the mark? No. Do we learn from what we do? Absolutely. Do we try to do it differently the next time around? Yes, ma'am.

Personally, and it may be because I'm getting a little older, my patience wear out when I hear people trying to come in, division level, and I think give me excuses, and I'm like, "Time [out]. Don't sit there and tell me that, Virginia. You need to go back, I'll give you another two weeks. You all go back out there and do something better, this is not getting it."

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[00:45:09]

And it's funny, I have the opportunity, a lot of times, to meet all of our new employees, it doesn't matter what position. The HR manager sits right outside my door and I have the opportunity to meet a lot of new employees, so I invite them to come in, and of course they like it into going to the principal's office, or you've got to go see the principal today, that kind of thing. So I just visit with them, find out what brought them to us, why they were even interested in any position we might have to offer, where do they see themselves in three to five years. And most times, I will end up saying, at the end of three years, if you are not committed to our field of continuing education at North Carolina State University, then I would encourage you to start looking for a different job. You know, you get this startled look, deer in the headlights kind of expression. And the reason I do that is because it ends up shortchanging themselves first, and it shortchanges us, and then that shortchanges the clientele, be it internal campus, external, and the participants that come to our programs. Because you can tell when an employee – especially here at NC State University – you can tell when they're a committed employee to the unit they work for. They're a different kind of employee.

So I spend five, ten minutes trying to explain why I'm telling this newly hired employee, "If you're not going to stay committed to us after three years, you need to be moving on. You need to find another position to go to, because it's not fair to you and it's not fair to us." So many times, the employees will say, "Well this was not the conversation I was expecting to have," and I went "Well, this is the mother in me and the leader of the division, and I'm taking time to let you know what our expectations are, because we have seen it happen too many times." You get people and they will just hang

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out, it's a job, it's not a career. If you're going to come here and work with us, let's work on making this your career, to where you go home very satisfied with what you've done every day and you're not just "Oh, where's the clock," you're not just watching the clock. Five o'clock, close your books, grab your bag, you're gone. You come in, eight oh-one, seven fifty-nine, you know, the moment you can take a morning break, you take it, the minute you can take lunch, you take it. It's a very different mindset and it's a strong team environment around here and we need all hands on deck, we need all team members on deck. So, when I have an opportunity to kind of be a mother figure – which is kind of different, some people probably wouldn't do that – I take the liberty to do that, because I'm thinking of them as an individual first and then what we ultimately would like to have in the way of an employee in the long run.

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We are very sensitive to the diversity, to all of those issues now, that back when I came to NC State were not talked about, were not put on the table, were not addressed. So I've seen a big change, a big change for the better.

VF: And you've talked about some of the mentors, like Sondra Kirsch, that you learned from when you were first starting out. Did you develop any kind of a network of other women administrators or faculty that you were supporting?

AW: Over the years, I've belonged to various women leadership groups across campus, in part because you have the opportunity to meet other women who could be your counterpart, your age, your career path. But then you meet a lot of younger women who are just getting started, that are just like me back then, the big sponge, and you're just trying to suck it all in and figure out which direction, how you're going to make your

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mark, where you can get the most satisfaction for what you believe you want your career path to be. And to me it is such a compliment when a younger female in particular – but I would also say now, males – will come to me or email me or call me and say, “Alice, do you have a few minutes? I’d like to visit with you. I want to run something by you. I’d really like to meet with you. Can you give me an hour of time? And I don’t want to meet at McKimmon, because I don’t want anybody to wonder why I’m coming to you.” You know, “Well sure, sure, where do you want to—you know, I’ll meet you wherever.” For them to come and want to get my advice or get my guidance or get my feedback on whatever it may be, to me that’s a huge compliment now, at this point in my career, to feel like they see me as the kind of leader that they would trust, they respect, and they would appreciate my feedback – whether it’s what they want to hear or not. To me that’s another one of those—and I don’t like the way it sounds—but a feather in my cap, that I truly value now. And I would like to think that it’s also made a difference in how I’ve tried to help raise our daughter. I was an older mother, had her when I was forty-two, she’s twenty-one, I’m now sixty-three. Most times, somebody my age would probably already have one or two grandchildren. I’m just waiting for her to graduate from college this spring. Would I change it and do it differently? No. I’ve been a very hands-on mom. She gets the letter of the law lectures from me many a time, but I also use experiences that I’ve had here, through my career path, to try to share with her as to why I’m advising or giving her feedback on what I think you should be doing.

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She did something I thought was very special. She’s trying to get into grad programs now and, you know, you go through that application process, you wait for that



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envelope or that first call. She's trying to get a grad assistant position. She's had two telephone interviews and what did we do? She wanted mom to role play with her, which was very rewarding for me, because then I could say okay, well here's a list of questions we normally ask with our searches within our division, but then get me other questions that are more specific to your career path as an athletic trainer, and I'll merge the two. So we role played and role played and role played, and then she said, "Mom, do you mind if I come to McKimmon to do my phone interview?" And I'm like well, no, and I said, "Are you going to sit in the office with me?" "No, no, may I go in that little conference room that's right outside your office?" And I said, "Well sure, if nobody else has reserved it. Why do you want to do that?" And she said, "I want to be in a business environment. I don't want to be distracted by being at home, hearing dad downstairs, having the dog at my feet, you in the kitchen. I'd rather do it in a business setting," because she said, "I think it will make me on my toes, better prepared." So here again, I may cross the borders and the boundaries a little bit with mothering, whether I'm mothering my twenty-one year-old or I'm mothering an employee who has asked for my feedback, but I see that as an opportunity to help them grow. I don't ever go in those places where you shouldn't be, with an employee. I know when to stop and they know when to stop, but when there's something there that you need to say because you are a mother, have been a mother, and you've earned that role with being a mother, I preface it and then I say what I believe I need to say. I've had a lot of employees, especially when the former employees returned, who came back up to me and said, "I'm so glad I watched you do such and such. I'm so glad I picked up that habit that I heard you talk about doing." So, here again, you know, at this point in time in my career, I feel like I've touched a lot of people, I feel like I've

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mentored a lot of people, but I learned it from those who were before me. You have to make that effort to learn it. It ain't going to come to you, you've got to reach out and ask for it.

[00:54:23]

So yes, I've been involved across campus, I've been involved in the community, I did Leadership Raleigh, I did Leadership North Carolina. I still stay in touch with folks who were in my Raleigh leadership class, with my Leadership North Carolina class. I've been involved with, like I said, with our national association. I've been involved with the other two associations that were also professional members, but I have focused on UPCEA, because there were a lot of men and women there that mentored me. But it was a conscious decision and it's something that I've worked very hard to get to this place in my life. Do I learn? Yeah, I learn. In fact, I learned a lesson yesterday, but that's part of life, and I don't feel like I know it all. So it's been a cool journey, it really has.

VF: What would you say is one of your proudest accomplishments or most memorable projects?

AW: Well professionally, being recognized at the regional level with an award or two, and then certainly at the national level with a national award, and now going in as the national president, are major. But here at the university, I got awards for excellence one year as the leader, through one of the provost units. That was really kind of cool, but programmatically for me, one of the programs we offer in our office of professional development is a sport fishing school. It seems really weird. You would offer us fishing school? What can you teach people about fishing, other than you need a rod and a reel and some bait, and you go stand on the pier or you stand on the beach and you cast it out

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and you hope something hits? Well that's a piece of it, but there's a whole lot more to the whole educational part of it, and one of my colleagues who managed the fishing school, was beginning his rise in our division and so his program load was sort of up for grabs. He came around and gave me the heads up, that he'd been in and talked with the director and had said, "This program I think needs to go to this specialist on our staff. This program needs to go to this one. And I think Alice ought to take the fishing school." Well, having grown up at White Lake I could swim and ski and all that other kind of stuff, I'm sure I could do it. At that point in time, I knew very little about fishing, but I can learn that really quickly. But being around the water and boats and all that, was kind of a natural thing for me, so when Dennis left my office, I immediately went into Dr. Mayberry's office and said, "I'll take the fishing school, I'll take the fishing school."

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When I took it over, of course then the guys had to plan a fall trip, to take me to Hatteras, to introduce me to everybody they worked with locally. It was five guys and me, and here we all go, we go out on a boat, we go charter fish and we have a great time. Our mate was seventy-eight years of age, and he could out-fish the other guys. I caught one of the biggest fish, which really put the rest of the guys to shame. It's the first one I ever caught. And then when the school came to me and I started working the school, being single and being a natural blonde at that time, there was the perception that the wives of the tackle reps who were our instructors were worried that I might be interested in their spouse. And I'm like, "No, wrong. They could be my fathers, they could be my brothers, my uncles. No, no, that's not where I'm coming from. I'm here because of the program. I'm here because of North Carolina State University."

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So that was a bit of a challenge, and then being accepted into the community of Hatteras. They're a very close-knit community. Here again, being a blonde, being single, being a woman, they weren't used to that, and I made some very close friends that took me about two years to work at, but to me that was a huge accomplishment. Fishing school is in its sixty-third year of offering. I managed the fishing school for thirteen years before I started moving up through the ranks of leadership. Those were thirteen of the most rewarding years of working with phenomenal people locally, in Hatteras, and the people that came to the fishing school. We closed the fishing school because the numbers were dropping, it was getting more expensive than we were generating the revenue to make it run, and I had so many people from the community contact me, "Alice, we need that economic impact of when that school is in session and those folks come to the school, because they eat in our restaurants, they stay in our hotels, they shop in our shops, you charter our boats. We need that economic engine back in our village." And I'm like, "We need to find a way to get that fishing school going again."

So, I ended up working with the director of our office of professional development and our coordinator, who had been managing the fishing school. We brought in one of the captains who wanted us to bring it back, we brought another gentleman who's a big fisherman and he agreed to be the program chair, and we re-launched the fishing school a year ago. When we re-launched it, we had fifty participants, and I'm like, "Yes, we're back with the fishing school."

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So for me, even though the fishing school for NC State University seems kind of odd, it's the right kind of program. It's one of our best kept secrets of programs that we

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offer, but to me that was—and I'll go this year. I went last year, I'll go again this year, and I go and work it, just like I'm one of the regular worker bees, not the vice provost of continuing education. I go and I'm hands on. I don't take it away from the coordinator, but I go to help her manage it, because I choose to. But I listen to what the participants have to say, I network with them, I find out, "How did you find out about the fishing school? Do you think the price is about right?" I go and do some of that additional research that then we bring back when we debrief about the school, and it may be that we'll make a different decision based on what we offer next June, based on what we experience this June. So the fishing school has been a big one for me.

I did the maintenance management school in parks and recreation, up at Oglebay, for about thirteen years as well. I love that whole field, all those folks across the country that I've met in the parks and recreation area. And I think that's another reason that I love being outside and love doing outside kind of things, is because of that experience and that exposure with that school.

I managed our income tax schools. We do ten days of income tax schools in ten locations across our state, and we've been doing our income tax schools for sixty plus years, and here again, I managed them for about thirteen years. So there have been various programs that were part of that unit that I first started with, that I always go back and think so fondly about.

We did a photography school for a week in the summer, and we worked with the professional photographers of North Carolina, and we bring famous photographers from around the world, and they'll come in and teach basic portraiture, advanced portraiture, weddings, retouching. Now they're into all the digital work, because the whole

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photography field has changed, but that was such a rewarding program. So for me, it's been a lot of the programs that we've done. The awards, obviously, the recognitions, have been phenomenal, but it's those programs that I still go back to, I still go back to. So it's been, and I keep repeating myself, it's been a great journey.

[01:03:00]

It's made me, I think, who I am. It's enhanced my core values, it's enhanced my leadership, it's tested my leadership. And please, don't get me wrong, there are days when I have to make final decisions that are tough, but it's like I tell a lot of my leaders that report to me, "You have to take the personal out of the decision. It has to be a business driven decision." We're dealing with something right now that's going to impact two employees, and I hate it, but it's a conscious business decision that we're having to make. So those are the hard times, but there are opportunities there to be a good leader, be a strong leader, model the right kind of behavior. You do what you have to do, and I'd like to think that people would say, well she's always done what she needed to do.

I actually had the opportunity of going through my first five-year review this year. You know they do them for a lot of the leaders across campus, the deans, and certain leadership positions and above, all the way up to the chancellor, go through this exercise, and I'd never done that. So we were notified, back in the fall, that it was going to be my turn in '16, and in talking with Tom Miller, who I first report to, I said, "Tom, I've attended these. I went to yours, I've been to others, and I think I know what I need to do, but just walk me through it to make sure that I don't miss any of the elements that I need to plan for." He said, "Well you need to showcase five years across the programs, financials, evaluations, your vision for the future, all of that, but Alice you'll be fine,

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you'll be fine." Well, that's good, to have somebody say that to you, but then you go back and actually have to begin to build the slideshow that you're going to present.

So the day of my five-year review, there were close to seventy people that came. I was stunned, first of all, that that many people came that wanted to be in the room with me to support me, but to also hear about what we had done in the last five years, because they partner with us, they believe in what we do. But I had so many people come up and say, "Wow, wow. I knew you were busy but I had no idea this division was what it is." So, there have been three surveys that go along with this process, there have been three different entities of groups that I helped build the distribution list. Those folks were invited to be in meetings with Tom Miller and the provost, react to questions from them about me, my leadership.

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So April the—not tax day, but I think it's maybe the eighteenth, I have my debriefing meeting with the provost and Tom Miller, and I've been told I'm going to be given a three-ring binder with all the summaries in there, which I'm really looking forward to getting, and I'm excited to see what people are going to say, what suggestions are there, because I'm hungry to still make a difference, and to tweak or change whatever people may perceive to be a shortcoming of mine. So I'm really looking forward to that experience, and it will be interesting to see what's said and what I might be able to change to make a difference in how I continue to be this leader, until I decide it's time to retire. So it's kind of cool.

VF: Yeah, it's just amazing to see what you have accomplished in your time here, and starting from a very modest place.

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AW: Yeah.

VF: So, what kind of advice do you have for others who are coming in as a minority, in whatever space they are working in, for whatever identity, that could be—to be taken seriously and to accomplish what they set out to do?

AW: I would say be true to your core values, and hopefully you already have a set of core values that were built into you as you were growing up, from either your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, guardians, whatever your walk of life may be, those people have already influenced you, and hoping that they've been the right influence to you. You're here now, so my guess is you've made some decisions, you've eliminated some of those negative factors in your life and you're trying to embrace what are the positives, because you see how it's made a difference in who you are and where you've gotten yourself. Stay true to those core values, continue to model those core values, because people are watching you, people are learning from you, whether you know it or not. Always project yourself as the professional. You don't always have to be the first one to speak, because you're listening, you're watching other people in the room, but make your voice heard. Don't be the wallflower in the meeting. Don't go into a meeting and never say anything, because that's worse, because then they wonder why are you even on the committee or why are you even part of this group. So you need to have a voice. You need to know how to use your voice, how to communicate, how to write, and a lot of those, what I call the old-timey traditional business practices. You need to know how to write a thank you note. You need to always thank people, for either meeting with you, providing something to you. Acknowledge your appreciation back, because it will build a relationship with that person that you may not even realize initially.



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You've got to be able to speak, you've got to be able to write, you've got to be comfortable in having your voice heard. You need to maintain your core values and stick to them, don't cave in, don't be influenced by other negative factors, and you've got to be strong enough to say if, "I go down that path and do that, these are the ramifications that I might experience." You need to anticipate and then you need to make a call. Is it worth the risk? Work hard, prove yourself, have a passion for what you do, volunteer to take on more responsibility, more duty, more task, but when you do that, deliver. Don't do it just for somebody to recognize that you agreed to take on another program or you agreed to support someone with their program delivery. Don't do it half. Do it whole, because it will benefit you in the long run. You've got to understand, there is a long game, there is a long game plan, and you've got to be committed to playing the game. Be kind, be sensitive to people, because everybody comes to work every day with some kind of baggage that you don't see, you don't know, and there's a way to engage with people when somebody may come in a little snippy. You know, "Just hold on Virginia, just take a deep breath. Something is not quite right, I don't think it's me, but what I'm sensing from you is you're really agitated about something. If I've done something please tell me, because I don't want to continue to do that. If it's something you've brought from home or something that happened yesterday, in fairness to me and out of respect for me, I'd ask that you leave that outside the door, because it's going to come across in how you and I engage with each other." But you've got to be comfortable in saying that, you've got to be comfortable in approaching somebody with that, because it can backfire and if it backfires, then it takes a long time to level out that ground again and make that

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connection again. But there are polite ways to stop somebody when they're speaking to you, talking to you, engaging with you, in a nonprofessional manner.

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Being kind to someone and being respectful, to me are key, and honestly, I think you need to be respectful to your elders. I mean, one of the ladies on campus that I think so much of is Susan Nutter, and I know that you're part of her team, but I sit there and listen to her every time I go into a meeting, and there's something with her leadership that I come out of with another nugget, to bring back over here to use. Susan and I have very frank and open conversations with each other, we're very supportive of each other. She's one of those women that I could pick up the phone, send an email, and say, "Susan, I need fifteen minutes of your time. Can I call you? I've got an issue and it's bothering me and I've tried everything in the world I know to do to resolve it, answer it, figure it out, and I'm at the bottom of my barrel." There are men on this campus that I could call and do the same kind of thing, but I think a lot of that is because I've always tried to be respectful of who those individuals are. I take the time to try to engage with people, and know a little something about the person and maybe not all business, because you need to be able to come in and exchange a little small talk, and then you can get into whatever you need to be discussing, whatever the matter might be. But that, you know, that's ten items or less that I think anybody needs to model, needs to keep in their wheelhouse so to speak.

Then, I guess the last thing I would say is don't make excuses. If you know you didn't prepare for this interview, then don't come in and try to make me believe you did when I probably can see you might not have. Or don't go into a meeting where you know

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you haven't done all you were tasked to do, and give excuses. I mean come on, we've all got them, I don't need to hear them. Fess up. I didn't have time, I didn't make time. In the long run, I think you'll be more respected by admitting that you're not fully prepared or that you didn't fully do your responsibility, but I promise, by tomorrow afternoon, you'll have that information for me. But then make that deadline. Don't tell somebody you'll do something and then you don't. So I think excuses would be the last thing that I would include in my little hand here, of pointers. Don't make excuses, because people after a while get tired of that, and I don't think it will take you very far in the long run.

VF: And as a vice provost, you and Susan [Nutter], you're women in this very important realm in the university. How long have you all been connected in that way?

[01:15:13]

AW: Well, honestly, I met Susan not long after she first came to NC State, and I could tell, in just hearing her, wow, our libraries are going to start changing quickly, the whole space of NC State Libraries, her leadership is going to shine pretty quickly. She has always been very supportive of our Connecting in North Carolina (CINC) tours, when they were five days. She's continued to support the one-day, two-day tours. She's usually one of the first leaders on campus that I will hear from, and she will have at least two or three people that she always wants to send, you're a result of that, you know that. She's always been an advocate for keeping her employees well-trained, well-prepared, and any time she can get them to understand the bigger picture of what NC State is all about, she's a huge advocate for that.

I don't see her socially, as much as I wish that I did, but I immediately started trying to get on the university's Libraries Committee, one of the standing committees,

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and tried and tried and tried. You know, it's kind of the luck of the draw, you only fill out the survey and hope that your name will rise up somewhere. And the lady who was trying to fill the committee, there had been a committee member who had to step away, and so there was an expired term, and the lady called me and she said, "Alice, I know you've been trying to get on the Libraries Committee, would you like to finish this two-year term?" "Absolutely, put me on it." In the next meeting, she had already alerted Susan that I would be joining the committee, and so when I went to the next meeting, and of course you go around the table and everybody introduces themselves and talks about what unit they represent. When it came my turn and I introduced myself, Susan interrupted the going around the room and said, "I just want you to know how long I've been waiting for her to get on this committee, because I want her voice heard on this committee because she represents the non-credit side of what NC State is all about." So for me that was like wow, that's kind of cool. There's Susan, being an advocate for who I am and what I represent. So it's a lot of supporting, supporting kind of thing.

Obviously, I contribute to a lot of the fundraising things that go on for the Libraries, so I go to a lot of those events and I have the opportunity to see Susan, and I just have the ultimate respect for her. She's just one of those women that endears you to her, and I so think, if I could be like Susan, but yet be me too – you know, I don't want to lose me – but if there are elements of Susan's personality that I could embrace or enhance or buffer or be more like, to me that would be a huge compliment. She's been a great mentor for me and you know she's a good model.

[01:18:24]

VF: You're both really incredible models...

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AW: Well thank you, thank you.

VF: ...For leadership within NC University especially.

AW: It's not an easy place to be, honestly, when you get at our level and you go into the provost cabinet meeting. The last time I counted, there were about thirty-two, thirty-three of us, that are part of this bigger space of this committee, called the provost cabinet, and so we meet with the provost typically the first Monday of every month, for an hour, hour and a half, and when you go in this room, there are a lot of men, but now there's about as many women in the room as there are men, and it's a very safe place to be, because everybody feels supported by everybody else that's in that group, and I attribute the provost to setting that example and setting that atmosphere. It's a very respected group of leaders across this campus and I can honestly say there's not one of them on that committee that I would hesitate to reach out to say, "Can you give me some advice, can you give me some reaction?" Even though they're not in my place and they don't do what I do, but they bring other perspectives that maybe I'm missing. So here again, that cabinet is a reflection to me, of the provost, so here again there's that model behavior that you, I, try to learn from.

VF: So, to kind of start wrapping up, what would you say is your vision or your hope for the future of this division and your role?

AW: We are challenged as a division, and I see it going on across the country now, in that state budgets, as you all know, across our campus, you hear it every week, to where the funding from the general assembly is going to continue to shrink and shrink. Well, fortunately for us, we get a very small amount of funding, so we know how to stand on our own. The problem though, becomes when other leaders start looking at entities

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that perhaps the university doesn't need to keep in its bigger wheelhouse, because it could redirect resources – staffing, human capital, physical resources – into other areas that tend to be growing and be perceived as more important. So, keeping our stake in the ground for continuing education is going to be critical for whoever follows me in this seat. That individual is going to need to network, know the deans, know the executive leaders on this campus. That individual is going to need to make sure that we are constantly reviewing our internal processes and our practices, to make sure we're staying at the top of our game, be it our marketing plans, be it how we set our registration fees, where are we sensitive to price points and what the public can afford to come to our programs. Who are our competitors, internal or external, community colleges, other institutions in North Carolina and beyond. This individual is going to need to stay engaged professionally and benchmark against our peer institutions, programmatically and service wise. I do that frequently.

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The individual in this seat is going to need to network with his or her counterparts in the UNC system. Right now, I'm organizing a phone conference with all of my counterparts at the sixteen institutions that have con ed units, just so that we can all know each other, we can all call upon each other for advice or support, or what are you hearing in the way of potential budget cuts, how do you think you're going to take any cuts if you're told you have to cut 5 percent, where are you going to take it from? You know, we learn from each other because we all function in different atmospheres on our campuses.

With the change in challenges come a lot of opportunities, a lot of opportunity to step out of that traditional box. How can you have deliverables that are different, that are

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cutting edge, that mirror the content expertise of the institution that you represent? How can you collaborate and partner, because a lot of times collaborations are what will save you, versus cutting you off?

But then the big piece, and the big piece that I think is going to be really important. We need to know what our stories are, what our impacts are. And it's more than outputs, it's more than our division as a whole, last fiscal year, offered over three thousand—I know this because of my five-year review—three-thousand three hundred and thirty-two programs or events, across the eight units of our division. Over all of those events, we served over 241,000 people. You've got to know what impact you're making, not just output of, "Here's how many events, programs. Here's how many attendees." But you've got to go further than that. What difference are you making? You've got to be able to answer that question. You've got to be able to do it at the unit level, you've got to be able to do it at the division level, and it sounds kind of self-serving but that's kind of where we've all gotten to now. The numbers get you in the door but it's the stories they remember. It's that one person that writes back and says, "If I haven't taken that maintenance and reliability certification program that took me six months to finish, I wouldn't have just now gotten a promotion. I'm getting more money and I have more responsibility." What a story. But you've got to take the time to measure that, it takes time to do it and do it well.

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Those would be the, if I had to count it out, the five or six things that I would tell, hopefully, the person to come in to follow me. These are the things you're going to have to do, but you've got to benchmark. I learned very early on, with the provost, that any

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time he asks you to do an assignment, he wants you to benchmark it against the peer institutions to NC State. So when I have a task to do and I need to report back, I go back and I will survey peer institutions to the university, to NC State, but I will also survey my counterparts across the UNC system. So I kind of do a twofold piece, so I get a double barrel shot of information, to be able to talk about our difference and what our impact is and what our outputs are. But you've got to be willing to work it and take it beyond just numbers. You've got to be able to tell those stories, you've got to have it up on your website, it's got to be in your promotional materials, it's got to be in your annual report. You've got to have a strategic plan that mirrors the strategic plan of the university. I've got to be able to say, in my five-year review, that we touch all the five goals of North Carolina State University and its pathway to the future. I know we do. Not all of our units touch those five, but the majority of them touch those five. You've got to know your business and you've got to be able to demonstrate and report how it connects back to the university, and you've got to be able to fight for it.

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One of the battles that I have continued to have to deal with is the potential loss of this building to another unit on campus that believes that this building is just a meeting facility. I argue that this building was built to be a continuing education facility, that's back in the history, that's not something I'm making up. That's part of the history of why this building was constructed. We are an integrated division, this building is one of the eight units of our division. It is the home where most of our administrative units reside. It is the home of where we deliver most of our programs. It's not a facility that you can put up a website and have clients go to the website and reserve the space. We engage with our



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clients, we interview them, we ask what their needs are. We don't tell you what room we're going to put you in when you book one of our rooms. We don't do that until about a week out, when we get in all of our setup sheets and we say okay, Virginia thought she was going to have a hundred and unfortunately, she only has fifty, so she doesn't need to be in a room that will accommodate 125 people, because it's going to make her program look like something didn't go quite right. Why aren't there more people here? So we will move you and put you in a room that more likely accommodates fifty-plus people, because then it's going to send a different message to the people that come to your meeting. Wow, I'm glad I came, everybody else came too. But if we had put you in that room and your program was lost in a bigger space, you're going to have a different impact with that program. That's why we don't tell people what room we put them in when you book with us. It's different, it's a different way of managing a facility. It's another reason we have 89 and 92 percent occupancy.

So, I fought the battle twice, and the last time the provost said, "Alice, I hear you, I hear you." I said, "I know you're hearing me. I just need to make sure you're understanding." He said, "Absolutely, and I think I have dealt with that and I'm hopeful that we're done with this battle. So now what we do is try to demonstrate, we don't feel threatened by the Talley Center, we don't feel threatened by the arboretum, we don't feel threatened by any of the meeting space that's over at the Hunt, or over on Centennial Campus or the new hotel that's coming to Centennial Campus. If anything, it's going to make our business better, and then what we'll do is be able to send business that we can accommodate, we'll send it to these other entities on our campus, to try to give them

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business that maybe they might not have otherwise had. So it's an opportunity for us, it's not a challenge or a negative. We're embracing it as wow, it just makes us better.

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So it's a lot of that sort of stuff, if you will, that this next person is going to have to deal with. But across the country, a lot of our con ed colleagues, their units are being closed, the employees are being let go, they're not being seen as a vital component of the mission of their institutions. And that's where I come back around and say you've got to network, you've got to be visible. The executive leaders have got to know you, when you're sitting in the administrative leadership meeting every other month, and the chancellor looks my way, I don't want him to look beyond me. I want him to look at me and say oh, Alice—in his mind, Alice is here. Because the group is small enough that he can just about pan around the room and see who's there every other month, and in his mind he's clicking it off in his rolodex.

So, you know, the funding is always going to be a challenge but here again, if you can document, if you can tell the story, you're making a difference. I think your lifeline will be a whole lot longer, but if you fall short with those kinds of things, this person in this next seat, they're going to have a completely different ballgame to be playing in. Challenges create opportunities, and I would say embrace those opportunities and rise to the occasion, learn from the occasion, but make wise decisions of how you financially and human capitally manage it, or offer it, or get engaged with it. It will be a fun time for anybody that really wants to sit on this car and go on this roller-coaster ride. They'll embrace it, they'll do it differently than I've done it, than anybody prior to me has done

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it, but I would encourage somebody to apply for it. It will be a very rewarding career if they make it, if they make it that way, just like any other position on campus would be.

VF: Well, whenever that happens, they'll have big shoes to fill.

AW: Well, thank you, ma'am, you're very kind, you're very kind.

VF: Well, Alice, this has just been tremendously enlightening and enriching, and such an honor, thank you so much.

AW: Thank you. Oh, you're very welcome. I hope I haven't talked your ears off.

VF: Not at all. Are there any other last things you would want to add before we wrap up?

AW: No. I just would like to say that I am so honored to have been asked to be part of this process. Here again, it just warms my heart to think that somebody has seen it, has realized it, has valued what I hope that I've brought to my job every day, and I'm in great company with those who have already been documented and will be documented after me. I just feel so lucky to have spent the majority of my professional career at NC State University, and to be a voice for our institution, but to be a greater voice for those people that I believe we've tried to serve. So, thank you.

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VF: Thank you so much.

AW: Oh, you're very welcome, very welcome.

[01:33:32]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcriber: ATC

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