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Kim Jensen Interview 2017

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KJ: Kimberly Jensen

BR: Ben Roehrig

JN: Jack Nordby

AB: Alex Bell

GY: Gabriel Yanez

DS: Damon Solomos

2017 November 1

Gabriel Yanez: All right so if somebody could clap for me [clap, laughter]. All right.

Kimberly Jensen: Thank you.

Ben Roehrig: Okay, so it's November 1st 2017; this interview is for Professor Elizabeth Swedo's History 301 course. My name is Ben Roehrig, Jack Nordby, Alex Bell, Gabe Yunez, and Damon Solomose. We're here to interview Professor Kimberly Jensen. Professor Jensen, thank you for allowing us time for this schedule to this interview.

KJ: Thank you for inviting me.

BR: So question 1. When did you start working here Western and what were the circumstances that led you to come here to Western?

KJ: Thanks for asking. So I came to Western in the fall of 1993 which is a while ago. As I'm sure all of you know, we historians are very very lucky to have jobs so when you go through your Ph.D. program and you begin to interview you realize that there are several jobs out there so it's really important that you travel to the position. So that's what I did and I was also very excited because I thought that I really liked the department here and I appreciated that we were starting a gender studies program because my work is also in women's and gender studies history so I saw a lot of opportunity for that. So those were the circumstances.

BR: Okay. And have you had any other positions here?

KJ: Well I've always been a professor here but one of the cool things that happens when you're a professor is that you get to do different things and serve on different committees. So I've been department chair a couple of times, I've been the coordinator for gender studies--I'm always pleased to be an academic advisor and I've served on some interesting committees. I was once on the student conduct committee and we all took mediation training. The students and faculty were there and staff. So we could learn how to resolve conflicts in various ways and that was very fun. And I've done things like Faculty Senate and curriculum committee and so that's, that's been exciting because you, you get to see the University in different ways and get to contribute in different ways. So as a professor you go through a process of being an assistant professor and associate professor which means that you have tenure, and then a full professor, and I'm a full professor.

BR: Nice.

KJ: Thank you.

BR: Well thank you.

Alexandra Bell: I was wondering what is the most interesting experience you've had while you were at Western.

KJ: That is so hard. So I'm going to say one interesting experience. Okay? When I came and I was preparing to teach 20th century U.S, but particularly a class on the Cold War, I found out that Western had its Cold War-era civilian defense products and fallout shelter intact in the education building--in tunnels and that there were tunnels all around under campus. Okay? This qualifies as pretty interesting, I would say. The Physical Plant has always been very, very generous. I want to give a shout out to the Physical Plant. They've been willing to take us--classes and interested faculty and staff who are always hoping to come on these tours--to go on these tours for students to experience what it would be like to have to go to the fallout shelter under the education building. And, so, that building is no longer being used so I'm also very

concerned about making sure that we continue to have a way to experience that. And History 301 students are likely going to help us with that so I've been-- that's one of my interesting experiences. And I think that many students have commented to me that they found that to be a very powerful experience because it was--it's very creepy. It's very difficult to think about this being a location for people on campus but all of Monmouth who imagined in 1962 63--these are the dates of the materials that we have--that they would be down there for a long time. So it's one way of helping make 20th century history alive.

GY: What are your plans and goals at Western now and for the future?

KJ: My plans and goals now and [laughter] for the future, are I'm working on my third book. So I'm excited to be continuing working on that. I mentioned briefly our plans for the commemoration of the 2020 [Nineteenth Amendment] centenary, and I also just really feel that it's important for senior faculty to be active in things like Faculty Senate and other things as well. So my plans are, to keep trying to make trouble for as long as I can and to keep trying to enrich my teaching here with scholarship, the research I do.

GY: Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experiences working here?

KJ: I thought a lot about that too, and one of the things I feel very strongly about is that Western has a group of faculty who are committed to student success. And that's not just something that's on a brochure, it's really true. And also faculty that are really committed to being supportive of one another. And I feel very fortunate to be part of that, and to help maintain that, and help maintain those ideals, and I - there are other job options that I had, and one of the things that are important to me is that I don't want to be working with students in a class of 300 or 400. Where we are waving to each other. [laughter] Or maybe, right -- it's really important to me that I have, beginning at the survey level, a chance to really get to know students, and I have a number of students that work with me throughout that or, wonderful transfer students who start off and we work through that together. So, to me, that's a part of Western that I value very much, and sometimes students who come here think this is how all campuses are [laughter]. And so I just want to make that point that I think it's very important to recognize we have something very

special here, and that the size makes it possible for us to know one another and to really, you know, get those mentoring and advising relationships. So that's very satisfying part of my job.

Damon Solomos: Tell us about an interaction you've had with a student that made you glad you came to work that day?

KJ: You know I want--I'll speak generally so that I don't single out any one. But, one of the things that is very important to me when this happens is for students, when students are either in an office hour appointment with me, or in class, or they are doing some writing about an issue, and they say that they think about things differently because of things that we discussed in class, or things that we worked on together, and that they are finding their voice. To me that's one of the most important things we can all do. And it's very important to me to be able to create context in which students can do that. So, my perspective that's--those are experiences that really matter a lot.

DS: Tell us about an interaction you have had that made you wish you would have called in sick that day.

KJ: So I have been thinking a lot about this question too and there have been some times when there have been examples of disrespect, or individuals have not respected the views of others, or the experiences of others. And on the one hand my first reaction maybe that I wished I had called in sick that day. But on the other hand my view is how important it is to be there that day and to try to engage students, or support students, and to try to have a broad conversation. This is something that rarely happens in class. Sometimes we hear of examples of, you know, people not being treated well, or being respected. And so raising that as an issue in class and helping students think about why that's so important, and modeling that here. So that when we go out into the bigger, larger world that's something that we value. So, maybe initially wishing that I hadn't come, but then trying very much to make a difference because I'm here.

DS: Thank you very much.

KJ: Thank you.