

10-22-2018

Marie LeJeune Interview 2018

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Recommended Citation

Marie LeJeune, interviewed by Skylar Acuna, James Owens, Maricela Martinez, and Jake Ruger, *Western Oregon University Oral Histories*, Hamersly Library, Western Oregon University, October 22, 2018.

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Marie LeJeune,
Professor of Education and Leadership
Western Oregon University
October 22th, 2018



Oral History Interview Transcript: Marie Lejeune

WOU interview transcript: Marie Lejeune
Conducted By: James Owens, Maricela Martinez, Jake Ruger, and Skylar Acuna
Date Interview: October 22nd, 2018

Interviewers:

JO: James Owens

MM: Maricela Martinez

JR: Jake Ruger

SA: Skylar Acuna

Interviewee:

ML: Marie Lejeune

Transcribed by: James Owens, Maricela Martinez, Jake Ruger, and Skylar Acuna

Audit/Edit: Maricela Martinez

JO: Okay, we are here today with Marie LeJeune [MLJ}, Division of Education and Leadership. Today is Monday, October 22nd, 2018. We are in the RWEC [Richard Woodcock Education Center] building, Room 114, being interviewed by James Owens [JO]....

Maricela Martinez: [MM]: Maricela Martinez.

Jake Ruger [JR]: Jake Ruger.

Skylar Acuna [SA]: Skylar Acuna.

James Owens [JO]: All right, let's get started: question one. When did you start working at Western [University]?

MLJ: I started at Western, Fall term of 2007.

MM: Okay, and for our second question: Would you give us an example of what kinds of work you do?

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ML: Well right now I serve in a variety of roles. So, primarily I'm a Professor of Literacy Education. So I teach classes, in variety areas: children's literature, young adult literature, and then I also teach content literacy methods to folks who want to be high school teachers. And then I also teach all of the Language Arts majors. So, anyone who wants to be a Language Arts teacher, I teach two classes in a row to those folks. And I also supervise some of them when their student teachers. So. But then I also coordinate the undergraduate Ed [Education] program here at Western. So I do a lot of advising, coordinating of schedules, and curriculum, and professors, and just supporting people who work in that program, and the students in that program. So right now I have about 120 people who are actually student teachers in the program. And we have about 800 Pre-Ed [Pre-Education] majors, who in some way, I might work with. And I am also the Division Chair for Education and Leadership. So. Some different roles right now. Pretty busy.

Jake Ruger: Okay. Moving along to question three: What is the most interesting experience you have had while working at Western?

ML: Well, I mean, interesting is--like thinking about the word interesting, right? But when I was thinking about the questions. I just thought about one of the things that I probably am most passionate about that I do here at Western, and find the most important is, you know, at Western we kind of tease that we don't let go of you once you graduate from the Ed program. We really want to stay in touch with our graduates. And you can't go into pretty much any school district in the state of Oregon and not meet people who are aren't Western grads. So, having been here almost a dozen years now, they're just so many people that I taught who are now secondary or elementary teachers. And so, one of the most interesting things I get to do now is to go back and work with people who were my students now that they're actually teachers. So doing research with them in their classrooms, including the work that they're doing as literacy teachers, and like presentations, and writing that I do so, that I'm really passionate about that. The year that I was on sabbatical, I spent an entire year working in Maryann Hill's classroom here at Independence Elementary School. And we co-taught writing all year, right now every Monday, I co-teach a

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class at the alternative high school in Corvallis, with a former student, former graduate student, who is the Language Arts teacher there. So we work with high school kids in a book group class, and that's really exciting to me because I am super passionate about young adult literature and children's literature. So, I think to me, the most interesting thing about Western, and the reason I came here is, because we are small enough that you know all of your students. You know them by name. You know them as people. But then, hopefully, you build a relationship that bridges even after they graduate because most of the people that I work with are going out to do what I did before I came here at Western. They are secondary teachers. They want to be literacy teachers. So, it's really exciting for me to get stay connected to them. So, that I think is the most interesting and important thing about working at Western to me, so...

SA: So, the fourth question is: what are your plans and goals at Western now, and for the future?

ML: Well, right now, and you can see when you walked into the building we kind of got a mess of books out here. So one of the things that I do, so like, my research is in children's and young adult literature. So I work on a couple national committees, where a publisher send me boxes and boxes of books to review for awards for literature. So right now, my immediate goal is, we are drowning in the books that I received. So I'm boxing up books to take to them out to high schools, and middle schools, and elementary schools. So, one of my immediate goals is just to plan to try and make sure that I have here at Western the books that student teachers need to work in classrooms, but also that those books are going out to classrooms of Western grads so that they're in kids hands, 'cause I'm really passionate about that. I want to continue working in children's and young adult literature research. So right now, I am on the Notable Children's Book Committee for American Library Association. I'm really passionate about that. I was really excited to start working with them, then 'cause my ultimate professional goal is to someday be on the Newbery committee, which you might remember when you were at school, having to reading a Newbery book. It's like the biggest award for children's literature, and it's from the American Library Association. So, I just want to continue to work with a few literature professional organizations and that plan. I'm only like two months into being the Division Chair. So I hope to learn how to be a really good Division Chair, because sometimes I feel like I'm not

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really sure what I'm doing in that job so. That's another interesting thing about being at Western, is we wear a lot of hats; so even though most of us were trained to be teachers and researchers, we do some administrative work, too. And I think I'm learning to be a good administrator, but it's not something that I trained to do. So hopefully, I'll continue to learn a little bit more about that. But, I'm excited about changes here at Western with the Gen Ed [General education]. I'm hoping maybe I get to teach more literature classes, to folks that maybe just aren't just Ed majors, even though I love Ed majors. It'd be fun for people who are other majors to realize why children's and young adult literature really matters, and to think about learning about that. So. I think those are some ideas. Is that good? Is that a good amount? [laughs]

JO: Lastly, is there anything else you would like to add about your experience working here?

ML: Well, let me share that I am just really proud to work at Western. When I came for my interview here, in 2007--I grew up in Washington taught there, then I moved to Nevada, taught there, and so when I applied for the job at Western, I actually--even though I lived in Washington state growing up--I had never heard of Western Oregon University. But I thought, "Oh, I love the Northwest. I want to move back there." I remember flying into the airport and renting my car to come to my interview. And saying to the person who was renting my car, "Oh, I'm going to Western Oregon University for an interview." And the first thing they said is, "Oh my gosh, that's a wonderful place to go to become a teacher." And I was like, "Ooo, that's a really good sign." And so, I'm just really am proud of the reputation that Western has for producing educators. I think we produce a lot other amazing majors too. But of course, I know Education [interviewer giggles] 'cause that's where I am. I'm really proud of Western's Education program. I'm proud of our graduates, and the things I see them doing in schools. I love the faculty who work here. I just think, it's a special place. I got my undergraduate degree at a private university, and I often tell people that I think students at Western get a private university experience at a public cost. Because we are so small, we know our students; I think it's very supportive. Actually, I have two boys who are in high school, and I wish that either of them were interested in a major that Western really was like an area to go to, because I think Western

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such a great school. But I don't know, I just, I do think Western is a special place, and I really love working here. So I'm glad I got to talk about it.

JO: Ya, well thank you very much ma'am

ML: Yeah, so...

[Recording ends.]

[End of transcription.]