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Kevin Hughes Interview 2015

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Kevin Hughes, interviewed by Corey Meehan, James Masnov, Max Norr, and Keegan Le Bleu, Western Oregon University Oral Histories, Hamersly Library, Western Oregon University, November 18, 2015.
Max Norr: We are here with Kevin Hughes on the 18th of November 2015, in the Physical Plant of Western Oregon University, and I am Max Norr.

James Masnov: James Masnov.

Corey Meehan: Corey Meehan.

Keegan Le Bleu: Keegan Le Bleu.

Max Norr: Okay. So for the first question, I wanted to ask you what led you to working here and working at Western Oregon University?

KH: I saw an application that really interested me in grounds keeping. I've never done that before, and I'm from an agricultural background and so I'm from farming to ranching to whatever, but this one really interested me and I love landscaping and things like that and so that's basically why I applied and actually I ended up applying three times before I got the job [Laughter], so that was back in 1989. So I have been here a few years but it’s been a great job, but that's what led me to it. I really enjoy working with people and also outside at the same time so its kind of the best of both worlds.

Corey Meehan: Okay excellent. Well what do you find yourself doing here on a day-to-day basis?

KH: Day-to-day basis? I'm the landscape coordinator here and I coordinate projects and outside projects whether it be new landscape, renovating old landscape, or parking lot maintenance, sidewalk maintenance. Day-to-day is mainly I meet with my crew and then I meet with our lead worker and he assigns the work and I meet with him quite often:
Dave. As projects come in to me, they go out to Dave and the rest of the crew. Right now we’re in the middle of leaf season so there’s no question what we do [Laughter]. So we’re clearing walks and parking lots, just trying to make it safe for campus for students and faculty and staff.

**CM:** Absolutely. To follow up, have you noticed how campus might have changed over the last few years in regards for providing resources for students and faculty?

**KH:** Providing resources? As far as numbers are concerned I notice the change in numbers. When I started here like I said in ‘89 it was only twenty-five hundred students something like that, but as we've grown we've also grown our infrastructure at the same time and you have to have that foundation, and that’s what I’ve noticed the most for student resources and different programs throughout the years, too, the infrastructure’s there to support the student programs.

**CM:** Okay excellent thank you.

**KH:** You’re welcome.

**MN:** So what is the basis for your job at Western and could you give us some examples of the kind of work that you do and what your typical workday looks like?

**KH:** My typical work day is I do a lot of email work, office work; we have a budget paper that we use that the crew signs in every day what they did, and we have certain numbers, allotted to the different areas on campus, so we can track that and budget accordingly, you know, if we’re spending too much time in this area or not enough time or whatever. So we can kind of balance that out, and plus, for a budget, for when we do a budget, whether we ask for more money or things of that nature so we can just maintain campus at a better level, the highest level if we can. And then actually I go into the field; I started in athletics where I did a lot of the painting and turf management and things like that so I always am checking the fields, walking the fields, all the athletic fields. Plus our lawns on campus, and just, you know, find out how we can improve them, and our plant beds, you know, there’s always something that needs a little help and there’s stuff that we try to enhance the flowers and things of that nature. So, basically I’m just kind of all over campus every day. You know [Laughter] it changes every day. But I try to do my office work first thing in the morning and then get out in the later afternoon, and stuff like that.

**James Masnov:** Okay. What are the most interesting things you’ve seen or experienced since you’ve been here at Western?

**KH:** Interesting… Yeah, that’s a good question [Laughter]. I’ve seen a lot of changes, building-wise, you know. That’s been really interesting to me because I’ve never seen anything move that fast before, you know. It seemed like every year, or every five years there was a new building and just recently it’s been quite a few buildings with the Health and Wellness or Ackerman Health and Wellness, and DeVolder, and now this new Education building. That’s just very, very interesting to me to see that, because it doesn’t
take long, you know, for a huge building to go up in a matter of time. I’ve seen another change is from natural turf fields to a synthetic field. We have a synthetic field out here for the rugby and lacrosse teams and club sports and that’s been a big change. You know, maintenance-wise, we don’t maintain the synthetic field, but just to be able to walk and play on it or to just observe it and then meet with the people who do maintain it is just pretty impressive. But it’s just a whole unusual change from actual turf where we’re always irrigating, mowing, fertilizing, you know, aerating, always doing all the renovations and stuff like that, so very interesting.

**Keegan Le Bleu:** What are your plans and goals at Western Oregon University now and for the future?

**KH:** Now and for the future, I believe I've reached my goal, as a landscape coordinator. As far as wanting to be here, I couldn't tell you how, how much longer I will be here. You know, I'm 62 years old now, but you cannot beat this place for employment, you really can't, and not only the type of job and the type of work I do, but the people I work with, you know, it's just, very impressive. And not only just the immediate staff, but also the faculty you're involved with, and some of these committees and things of that nature, and the other, campus staff that you're involved with. And we prepare for commencement, it's our biggest goal that we have, you know here for campus, and I'm on a commencement committee, where there's several of us all throughout campus on that committee to make sure commencement goes well. And that's our main goal, or my main goal, to make sure commencement comes off without a hitch, and campus looks its best as it possibly can. And so everything's on a schedule, but we always, you know, our lawns, we try to make them the greenest right at that day [Laughter], commencement, so everything's manicured and edged and cleaned, and it's a constant process, but it's a goal we all try to achieve every year, that's my main goal, which is commencement. Yeah, it's a great time of year, too. I mean shoot, everyone's happy, everybody's graduating, you know, it's just a great time of year [Laughter] to be involved in there. But yeah, as far as reaching my goals things that of that nature and future goals, like I said I just have commencement on [my] mind, and that's a year round goal that we reach. And it's all hands on deck when it comes to, before commencement, several weeks before commencement, you'll see a lot of new bark dust and new flowers and things like that, and then also, the day of commencement where we work the actual commencement, make sure all the graduates who see that, then once the graduation's over, we tear down all the staging and chairs and things like that, so everything comes down in less than six hours and, and we're back to normal again [Laughter]. But that's my main goal, commencement.