

Karen Patty-Graham, Academic Advising Office
Transcript of Interview for the History SIUE Oral History Project
Interviewed by Ellen Nore-Nordhauser
March 21, 2006

Ellen Nore [EN]: About asking... with your association with SIUE. I know you, you go far back in the records of...

Karen Patty-Graham [KPG]: I do?

EN: I've seen the records of the Chancellor's office. I've seen you back when they were moving offices from East St. Louis to the main campus.

KPG: Um, I've been here since December 6th, of 1976.

EN: Yes, I know.

KPG: So, it's coming up to be 30 years soon [EN and KPG laugh], and that it's hard to believe! Because that thirty years has really flown by.

EN: Uh-huh. And how, and what was your first job?

KPG: Well.

EN: You could just describe your job.

KPG: Um, well, sure. Okay.

EN: The work, that you did.

KPG: Well, um....

EN: That's okay.

KPG: Alright. You know, back in 1976, SIUE was on the Quarter System.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And the quarter didn't begin until towards the end of September.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um, my husband at the time got a job here at SIUE. We had just spent the summer at the University of Florida, and he got a job um...in the School of Education. And um, school didn't start until mid-to, mid-late-September. So, I had been a public-school teacher and...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... by the time we moved here, school had already started. So, I stayed home for a couple of months.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And um, one day, he brought home an advertisement for a part-time academic advisor.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: He said, "Why don't you, you know, why don't you go ahead and apply for it?" Um, and I thought, "Well, I don't know anything about SIUE and I don't know really anything about advising, but it's only part-time... and I can still do some teaching at Lewis and Clark." Or someplace.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And so, I went in and um, interviewed for the job and they were also looking for someone to teach um, a reading course. Well, readings my background. And so, I was hired by um, Dean Lovell.

EN: Yes.

KPG: Yeah, Dean Lovell and um, and uh... Vi [Viola K.] Daugherty.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Vi Daugherty, I think, at that time was uh, oh, you know she was probably an Assistant in the Academic Advising Office, and Norb [Norbert] Schmidt was the Chair.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um, and the Department Director. And so, they hired me to be a part-time advisor and to teach the one reading course that the University had at that time GSK 100, um, I don't know what it is....um....100B. GSK 100B.

EN: And that's the only

KPG: That was the only...

EN: ...developmental course?

KPG: Right.

EN: Wow.

KPG: At that time. Right! So, um, I was an advisor and taught the reading course in that office and had been advising until 1980 when I joined Miriam Dusenberry.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: In the Academic Resource Center.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And she was my boss for a number of years, and we went through a number of transitions. So, in, so I... I sort of traded from doing mostly advising, and teaching a little reading. I did a lot of teaching of reading and a little advising at that point.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: The, the advising was done in the Academic Resource Center...

EN: Okay.

KPG: ...for those students who were involved in the courses and so um, I, so it switched over there and then as the Academic Resource Center At that time, teaching of reading was done in the Academic Resource Center for those students who were involved in the courses. Then, as the Academic Resource Center changed, um, and the structure changed, um, with Barbara Teters...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And um, in 1983, I guess we became the Office of Academic Services.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And it combined a number of offices under Miriam Dusenberry. And uh... I was looking at a memo that I still have up on my Bulletin Board from 1983, [EN and KPG both laugh] when I was named an Acting Coordinator of the Instructional Services Component ...

EN: Oh.

KPG: ...of the Office of Academic Services.

EN: Oh.

KPG: And uh, yeah, along with Randy Rock, who was doing the um, Counseling part of it, and David Van Horne, who was doing Career Planning and Development [KPG laughs].

EN: Hmm.

KPG: And so, um, I, I was coordinating the um, coursework part of of what we did. Um, and then...

Q: What was, excuse me. What was David Van Horne doing?

KPG: He was the Acting Coordinator of Career Planning and Placement.

Q: Okay. And that was all the Career Planning had back then.

KPG: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Q: And all those were in Instructional Services and Academic Counseling and Career Planning and Placement were all in one office?

KPG: Uh-huh. Right, under the ah...

EN: Under Miriam Dusenberry.

KPG: Dusenberry... Dusenberry, Uh-huh...yep.

EN: Oh... Well, by this time, were you offering other courses as you were the coordinator Instructional Services, you had to expand it beyond reading or.

KPG: Well, you know, um [KPG sighs] initially um the courses that we had were were listed under um, some of the General Education areas.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: GSK101.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Was that English 101?

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Well, at that point there were separate sections of GSK 101 that were for students who needed to beef up their writing before going to regular Eng101.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And um, and then the reading course, there was also another reading course developed under Elementary Education.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Elementary Ed 051, that originally started out as being for Education Majors who, you know, needed to beef up a little bit...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ...before they got into their course work.

EN: Yeah.

KPG: And then, you know, I guess it became, more-or-less, used for anybody at the University who, who needed.... You know, who wasn't reading at college level and who really needed to have some additional work. So, the GSK 100B, the reading course that we had developmental reading.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Sort of became the course for students who were reading at college level, and the Elementary Ed 051 was forwas for students who reading below college level.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And in the English area, then, there were separate sections of English 101. Um, and then, in the Math area, you know, the Math Department managed...you know, there was Math 100 and Math 101 and um... Math 105. Well, at about, well in the 1981-'82 period um...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... these courses were renamed. You know, this was, this was one of those times when, you know, the Illinois Board of Higher Education was talking about, you know, getting rid of remedial work at the college level.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And I, I still remember a 1983 IBHE report that came that said that, by 1986, you know, they were going to be getting rid of "developmental" and "remedial" coursework.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: They didn't call it developmental. They read a remedial coursework at the four-year college level.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Well, uh, I guess SIUE made the decision that, you know, we had some students who needed...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG:developmental course work. And we were going to call it what it was, it was developmental coursework, and we weren't going to give it credit.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Whereas some other institutions at the time sort of hid their...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ...hid their coursework and um... added on extra hours to their credit-bearing courses or separate sections. But, at that time, then we created the courses that were called University College.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um... about 1981-1982. And so, the reading courses then um, became University College reading courses, the writing sections...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... instead of GSK101 separate sections, became University College writing courses. And you know, some of the Math courses, the Math 100, got renamed as University College.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um, and...and so, the courses sort of evolved out of the, you know, the Supplemental Instruction Program.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Which had been the program at the East St. Louis Center.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And then came to the SIUE Campus when a number of the people from the St. Louis campus came to SIUE.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Miriam Dusenberry was one of them. Janet McReynolds was another. Um.

EN: When they eliminated the Experiment in Higher Education?

KPG: Uh-huh. Right. Uh-huh. And so, the courses here on campus really...really grew in the, in the early 80s. Um...and then, when the Office of Academic Services [Recording stops and audio is inaudible from 10:25 to 12:45] ...but um, back into the evolution of my roles. I guess um...you know, I was the Coordinator of that program and then when Miriam um, retired and uh, we were reorganized again um, and the question was, “Well where do we go? And where should we be?”

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And um, we were moved into Admissions and Retention under Richard Dremuck.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And remained there until the College of Arts and Sciences was created.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And with the um, is it Creation College of Arts and Sciences - Academic Counseling and Advising and Instructional Services were moved into CAS.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: While um, you know, while Career Development Center and Financial Aid stayed with Admissions and Retention. And so, I've just been coordinating and directing and.

EN: And sort of ...

KPG: Fighting.

EN: ...having to fight off people who want to eliminate.

KPG: Yes. Yes, that's, that's always been part of um, who we are and what we are.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And unfortunately, you know, um, we're here to try to help students.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And, and yet, um, that's not always perceived as a positive thing.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: You know, we go through cycles of, “Well, students should pick themselves up by their bootstrap. And if... if they don't come in with stellar skills to start with, they don't belong here.”

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And um, you know, "If they can't do it on their own. Ff they need tutoring, they shouldn't be here." We went through a period when um, we were not allowed to have tutoring.

EN: Oh, really!

KPG: In our Department.

EN: When was that?

KPG: Um, that was under Richard Dremuck.

EN: And was that in in the early 90s?

KPG: That would be the mid mid-80s. Yeah, the mid-80s.

EN: Mid-8, right.

KPG: We were like um, we you know, the Math Department um, I feel like I'm kind of jumping around here.

EN: That's alright. That's okay.

KPG: Um, you know the Math Department, originally as I'd mentioned, had taught.

EN: Yes.

KPG: Math 100 and Math 101.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And they also had taught, you know, a course that was like an Intermediate Algebra. And and over time, the Math Department felt that it shouldn't be offering those courses, that those were not college-level math courses...

EN: Yes.

KPG: ...and they shouldn't be offered. Well, Miriam's attitude was if students need...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ...the kind of courses that we had and if Departments don't want to offer them...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ...we'll do it.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: We won't turn students down. You know, I think she never said, "No." You know, I think she...she...she was always willing to say, "We'll do whatever it takes. We'll find a way to make it work."

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And so, I guess, I, after having worked with her for so many years. I adopted her same feeling about that. And um...so, when the Math Department decided that it no longer wanted to offer Math 100 and Math 101, she took those on.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: In the Office of Academic Services. Well then, the Math Department decided that it no longer wanted to offer Intermediate Algebra, and that would be probably, well, let's see, that's right around 1990.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And so, you know, after having adopted her philosophy, you know, I approached Mr. Drumeck and suggested that we should take on Math...you know, Math 105. And um, and so, there was a trade made.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: We would take on Math 095 or Math at that point it was Math 095 but...

EN: Right, Uh-huh.

KPG: ...it was a zero-level course. We would take it on, but we would have to give up something, we would have to give up the tutoring.

EN: Oh, okay.

KPG: Because students didn't need tutoring then.

EN: Aw...

KPG: We were going to be offering the courses. They should be able to get whatever they need out of the courses. And so, we didn't need to do tutoring and we shouldn't do tutoring. And that's why our Tutoring Center became renamed The Math Resource Area. Because we couldn't have a Math Resource...we couldn't have a Math Tutoring Center um, but we knew that students still needed, still needed help.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: You know, whether they need help in class or out of class.

EN: Yes.

KPG: The more you can do to reinforce what students are doing in the classroom, the more likely they are to be successful.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: So, we had, we backed off the tutoring we were doing for you know, several different Departments and then we just focused on our Math courses and you know, our students in our Math program.

EN: Oh, yeah.

KPG: You know, his comments were, you know, "Sometimes less is more." and "You can't be everything for everyone."

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And so, "Retrench. And do what you can do well! And only do this part of it."

EN: Okay.

KPG: Well, uh, it's difficult to um, it's even more difficult to defend and to protect and to service the kinds of students that we have if we were only viewed as a remedial unit.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And teaching the courses was equated with remediation and um, in spite of the fact that we were also teaching three classes that carried elective credit you know.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: The Study Skills, the Reading Course, and the Career Planning Course. So um, we also um, provided um [telephone ringing]...sorry.

EN: That's alright.

KPG: I'll just try and ignore it. Um, the English Department didn't feel that it could manage the Writing Center.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And so, Miriam had taken on the Writing Center. And you know, so, we had the courses, and we had the Writing Center, and we had our Math Resource Area. And ah, you know, we

were trying to make sure that the students that we worked with had had good opportunities for being successful in the University. Well, we also saw that, once students got into some of their gatekeeper courses.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: You know, in Calculus.

EN: Yes.

KPG: And some of the Science Areas, that they floundered then! And it wasn't just students who had been in developmental courses. It was other students as well.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: So, we got involved in offering supplemental instructions, where we worked with the students for some of those gatekeeper courses.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: The courses that have the high D, W, and F rates.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And and offered assistance to those students. And, you know, offered workshops. Um, you know, I think if somebody said we needed help with something, we were ready to say, "Okay, we'll try to do it." Um, also as far as testing is concerned, you know, we were always involved in doing Placement Testing and ACT, but, you know, Education wanted some testing for their students. And Nursing wanted testing for their students and Proficiency Exams and CLEP [College Level Examination Program] and all those sorts of things. And so, what...what we have become, over the years...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... is, I think, an Academic Support Unit that cuts across lots of, lots of uh, class, classes.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Freshman through Graduate Students, and lots of courses, from Academic Development Courses through courses in Majors. Um, to try to um, help a variety of students be successful. Now, part of that, you know, I think is due to you know, just the variety of needs that students expressed. And faculty and Departments expressed. A part of it was also, I think, to say, "No, look we do many things for many students. Don't just paint us into a corner and say all you do is..."

EN: Yes.

KPG: ...teach these inferior students who shouldn't be here anyway.”

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And and we, and we do so many things for students. We give students access. We give students success. Um, we give students an opportunity...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... to be successful in their other classes.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And and it's very short-sighted to um, you know, to look at the negative...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... and to, you know, sort of hope we go away or wish we would go away.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Or to mandate that we go away.

EN: Yes.

KPG: Um, we're really here for the students.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: You know um, so our motto is basically, our mission is basically, "To help under-prepared students prepare, prepared students to advance, and advanced students to excel."

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And.

EN: That's a, that's a wonderful mission statement.

KPG: And I think our services reflect that. We're trying to help those students who come in short of reading or writing or math skills to develop those.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And, they come in short for a variety of reasons.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: You know. Least of which is that they're not capable...

EN: Right.

KPG: ... of being successful. You know, maybe they came from a school where they didn't get the opportunities.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Maybe they didn't know that they wanted to go to college at the time. Maybe they weren't paying attention. Maybe they went to a variety of schools, and so had gaps.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Maybe they thought they were stellar students and didn't realize the gap between their achievement in high school and the expectations in the University.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Any number of reasons that didn't, you know, that, they're not inferior students. They're bright students and good students. They're interested students, who need a boost.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And so, we can help some of those unprepared students, be prepared, then that's great!

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: We have a lot of prepared students who come in who want to get ahead. They're interested in proficiencies.

EN: Yeah.

KPG: They're interested in um, ah CLEP exams. They're interested in being good writers and so they come to the Writing Center.

EN: Yes.

KPG: On their own because they *want* to be better writers.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um, they, they go to Supplemental Instruction Sections ...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ...because they want to get the A's and B's in those Chemistry and Physics and MS...Management Science Statistic courses. Um, and and we have students who um, are advanced and want to excel.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: You know, we we try to work with students wherever they are. You know, whether it's taking a Psychology course or a workshop in APA style of writing.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Or whether it's they need tutoring in Pre-Calculus class, or whether it's they want to take a Proficiency exam for, you know, a history...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... class. Um...and that's when I think it was part of the struggle in the past thirty years.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Just trying to, trying to ensure that we can be here for students.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And I guess, you know, unfortunately [KPG laughs], over the years, I've had, you know, I've had people tell me, well, "That our people were just glorified, high school teachers. that our students were just dummies who don't belong here..."

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ... or, "We're just trying to protect our territory" or, "Trying to increase our territory." And and those kinds of comments really offend me, but, you know, that's part of what we've lived with for thirty years.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um, you know, and just keeping sight of the fact that we're here for the students I think has been what has really helped me to um...helped me to put the other stuff in perspective, as much as possible.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And try to keep um, try to keep my staff uh, feeling motivated and focused on their jobs. Um, I've had an incredible staff over these past 30 years.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um, you know, when I, when I hire people, sure it's great to hire people who have content knowledge.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: But maybe even more so, I hire people who have an interest, a real sincere interest in working with students.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Who are good communicators. Who do not just teach their subjects but really, first and foremost teach students and they teach students about their subjects.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And they empower *students* in those content areas.

EN: Yes.

KPG: And um, you know, I think that that has really kept people going, in that they have...they support each other.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: They encourage each other. They work well together. They share ideas.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: They share teaching strategies. They share concerns about students, and the focus is always on students.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And um, you know, I think that's that's probably one of the things I'm most proud of about this Unit. That it does focus on the students. Our people always keep students first and foremost.

EN: Do you, does your whole staff have regular meetings? And that's something you have been doing.

KPG: Absolutely.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Um, we uh, we meet as a staff three or four times during the term.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: We always have food. And, you know, we always, it's an, it's an academic event.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: In that we are having a meeting but it's also a social event in that it gives people the opportunity to visit with each other. Um.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Everybody is so focused on doing their jobs, that we need those kinds of opportunities to just, you know, visit a little bit too.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: So yes, we have, as I said, three or four meetings a term, plus in each of the content areas, we have an area head that rotates

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: On a two-year basis. And um, those people and their content areas get together on a regular basis...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And then, I get together with all the area heads about three times during a term. So, we have all the department staff meet three or four times a term. I get together with the area head three times a term, and then they get together with the folks in their contact areas on a regular basis. So, there's constant communication, and we don't have big egos.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: You know, I think that's one of the things that helps everybody sort of pull together. Um...we have strong personalities!

EN: Yes.

KPG: I don't want to mistake that, but I um, think people respect each other.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And respect the work that each other does. And uh, that goes a long way.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: I've had some people on the staff for twenty years or more. And that's been somewhat different over the last few, in that some of those people, who had been here a long time are retiring.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And so, now we're um, looking at a new generation of people in the Department.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And that's been an interesting challenge, to make sure that we assimilate them into the department.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And that um, they feel equally as valued in the work that they do as the old-timers, who maybe, you know, don't need to give them quite as... the old-timers don't need to be given quite as many, you know, reinforcers as the new people. So, I'm trying to remember.

EN: Are...are most of the new people specialists in Developmental Education? Uh, are you training in that?

KPG: Uh, a combination.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: A combination. Uh, you know, back when, it's interesting that you bring this up, you know, back when we got started, um, the field of Developmental Education was a very new field. You know, Developmental Education...

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: ...had been around...well, it goes back to Harvard in the 1600s [EN laughs]. Uh and there has always been that gap between uh, you know, whether it's those who didn't know Latin and Greek and were expected to be taught in Latin.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And Greek, and so they had to have some courses, some brush-up courses. In order to help them be ready. Um, but, anyway um, the the field, as a profession, has been, oh, I guess, over the last thirty to thirty-five years. Um, and so, when, when I started, and when a number of people in our Department started, they came to work with college students, from having been working with high school students or elementary students.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: Programs nation-wide that ah, prepare people at the Master's and Doctoral level for work in Developmental Education.

EN: Uh-huh.

KPG: And they didn't exist back at the [Recording becomes distorted and inaudible at 34:16 until the end of the recording at 35:24]