

S: My name is Judy Sproles and I am interviewing Dr. Winnie Cooke for the Oral History project. We are in her office in the teaching center at southwest Broward Hall, University of Florida campus, and it is April 26, 1991. Could you tell us your full name, please?

C: Winifred Elizabeth Buchanan Cooke.

S: And could you tell us your date of birth?

C: April 30, 1944.

S: Where were you born?

C: I was born in Harmony, North Carolina.

S: So your family is from North Carolina?

C: My mother's family is from North Carolina. My father's [family] is from Pennsylvania.

S: Could you tell me their names, please?

C: My mother was Ruby Daire Speece, and my father was Ralph Willard Buchanan.

S: And they were both from North Carolina?

C: No. My father was from Pennsylvania.

S: Oh, that is right. Did you go to school in North Carolina?

C: I moved to Idaho when I was two years old, and I came back to North Carolina for the fifth grade.

S: And then you went through North Carolina schools?

C: Then I graduated from high school in Lumberton, North Carolina. [I] went to various schools before graduation. Then I went to college in Missouri.

S: While you were in grammar school and high school, you went to various schools. Was that from moving around?

C: My father was a minister.

S: So you moved from church to church.

C: Right. We relocated three times in North Carolina.

S: Was that the Idaho years, too? Was he a minister there?

C: He was a minister in Idaho. He was what we would consider [a] home missionary. He started church among the Indians.

S: The Indians of Idaho?

C: The Indians of Idaho and the Indians of North Carolina.

S: Of what denomination was he minister?

C: Assemblies of God.

S: So you chose to go to Missouri for . . .

C: My undergraduate.

S: For undergraduate work. Which university did you go to?

C: I went to the Evangel College. It is a church-related school [with emphasis on] liberal arts and sciences. I majored in biology and minored in chemistry.

S: Evangel College is in what city?

C: Springfield, Missouri.

S: So your major was biology.

C: And my minor was chemistry.

S: What did you do after college?

C: Well, I really had planned to go into research. This was in the early 1960s. When I talked to my advisor at Evangel, he encouraged me to also pick up some education courses on the side, sort of as an insurance policy. He thought that I would get married and not be mobile. I could always teach, and he thought that I probably would not be able to go to graduate school and do research. That was bad advice, I think, looking back, but at any rate, I did pick up my education courses. When I did my internship, I found out that I was a good teacher and that I loved it. So when I left Evangel, I did marry, and I went to Fayetteville, North Carolina to teach chemistry.

S: OK. I was wondering if we could get some dates in there. What date was your degree?

C: I graduated from high school in 1962. I graduated from Evangel in 1965.

S: And then you got married [not long after graduation]?

C: I got married to my high school sweetheart the summer after I graduated [from Evangel].

S: Did he follow you to Missouri?

C: He did not. [laughter] At any rate, our relationship was on and off during college, but I came home to marry him. So then we moved to Fayetteville, and I taught just chemistry for three years and coordinated the chemistry department my last four years. I taught in public schools [for] five years. The first three years I taught just chemistry; the last two years I taught chemistry and advanced biology. I was coordinator of the chemistry department the last four of the five years.

S: At the high school.

C: At the high school. It was Terry Sanford Senior High. It was an excellent high school. I enjoyed it immensely. [There were] very, very bright students, and I had to run to keep up with them.

S: We did not get your husband's name.

C: Charles Lynn Cooke.

S: You taught at that high school for five years?

C: Yes.

S: Were you pursuing graduate studies at the time, or were you just working?

C: After three years of teaching high school, I received an NSF [National Science Foundation] grant to further my studies in science. So I spent two summers at University of North Carolina, and one summer at Duke. Then I spent a full academic year at the University of North Carolina. I went to both Duke and Carolina trying to decide where I wanted to go for my master's work, and chose Carolina.

S: So you completed your master's at Carolina. Did you go full time then?

C: I went full time for one academic year, and spent three summers.

S: You got your master's in what field?

C: A master of arts in college teaching, which was a forty-eight semester hour master's. It was designed for you to get your degree in an area. So my subject area was biology, but I got forty-eight semester hours because I was training to go into the community college as a teacher. It is not the same as the MAT [Master of Arts in Teaching], which is what most education colleges give. This one was a master of arts in college teaching.

S: After the master's, did you get a community college job?

C: I did. In fact, the reason that I decided to leave the high school and go to the community college was I wanted to have a family. I thought that I would have a more flexible schedule because my high school position was pretty demanding. I thought, "Well, I could work part time at the community college and have children and stay home and care for them."

When I took a course on the community junior college at Carolina, I was introduced to a whole different concept of education. I had always been a good student. The students I had at Terry Sanford Senior High were superb students. [They were] all college-bound. I worked with very few poor students. So when I went to the University of North Carolina and was introduced to the community college philosophy, which was to provide access to higher education to anybody that wanted it, or wanted to try to build their basic skills, I really was motivated by that. Also, I taught a botany class at Carolina, and was amazed at the range of difference between the top students and the students who were still passing, but not the top students.

It just amazed me that there was that much variety because I had always been the student myself, and even at Terry Sanford, my students in high school, were performing much better than the lower students at Carolina. That was my introduction to the philosophy of access for all to higher education. Originally, I was going to graduate school [and] planning to stay in the high school educational program, but after taking the course, and thinking some more about it, and thinking about my children, and those kinds of things, then I made the switch and I did go to community college.

S: What year was that?

C: I graduated in 1971. I did not graduate until the end of summer, and there were no community college positions available at that time, not within commuting distance of my home, and I did not look elsewhere. So I took a position teaching new math and earth science in a middle school, while I looked for a community college [position]. I

got a community college position in January of 1972. So I started in community college mid-year.

S: So you had not had children to this point? You were deciding to have children?

C: Right.

S: I know those could be markers for events happening in your life.

C: Well, first of all, my husband did not want me to go to college. He just wanted me to get married. I told him I had to go to college, that I wanted to, and I might not always have him. And so I chose to leave him at home and go. So then, when I got out of school, by then he had matured enough that he was willing to say, "OK, yes, you do need to get some experience before we have our family; otherwise, it will be hard to break into the work force." So we thought, "Well, I will teach three to five years." So I started, and the three-year mark was when I started going back to graduate school, [and] at the five-year mark, I enrolled in graduate school full time, so it had to be postponed. Then, when I got my degree for college teaching, I knew I had to get into the college or I would not [get any experience]. So we postponed our family.

S: So you are teaching now at a community college. Did we get the name of that community college?

C: Southeastern Community College.

S: In what city?

C: Whiteville, North Carolina.

S: You taught what courses there?

C: I taught an environmental biology course, zoology, [and] chemistry for nursing.

S: So you were still in the biological sciences and chemistry at that time. How long did you stay there?

C: Until 1981. I guess 1981 is when I came to the University of Florida.

S: I wanted to ask you about coming to UF. Did you go to graduate school here for the doctorate program? What prompted your decision to come to UF?

C: Well, a lot of things happened between when I went to Southeastern and here.

S: It is almost ten years.

C: First I went as a classroom teacher. We had faculty, but we did not call them professors in North Carolina. All community college teachers are called instructors, so I was an instructor. In 1974, I guess, our president was fired by the board. There were a lot of internal politics going on, and the person who had hired me was a favorite of the president who was fired. So he left following the president because he had been involved in some of the politics and things. Somehow I made it through all of the difficult times of an unpleasant two years.

The new president asked me to take over the direction of the resources for student learning. Actually, it was not called that at that time. He asked me to take over a program that was for students who were high-risk. And we also taught reading and orientation to all students that came to the community college. So I got involved in administration.

After about a year of being the director of Resources for Student Learning, which is what we named it, we received several national grants. We were recognized as one of the top ten in the nation for working with high-risk students. I started consulting nationally, and training people to work with high-risk students. As a part of that process, I met Dr. Jeanine Webb. She knew that I would like to go back and get my doctorate. I enrolled in the doctoral program at N[orth] C[arolina] State, I already had too many hours for them to give me credit for all of them. So they started only giving me S/U's. So I was interested in the subject matter, but I was not enrolled in the program.

Dr. Webb, who is here at the University, knew that I was interested in getting my doctorate, and my husband was saying (contrary to what you might think, knowing the beginning), "Why don't you make something out of this? You are taking the courses. Why aren't you applying so you can get credit for it?" So he really was very supportive of my returning to school. By that time, we had had children, also. In fact, I mentioned that at five years, we were saying that I had to get some college experience. So by the time I had my college experience, Charles and I had just decided we would not have a family at all. We had been married about ten years, and made the decision not to have children, and I got pregnant. [laughter] At any rate, now I have two children, and my husband was very supportive of me going back to school. Dr. Webb had an assistantship that she could grant me, and so I came to the University of Florida to get my degree in higher education administration.

S: That is through the College of . .

C: College of Education.

- S: What year was that?
- C: 1981.
- S: So you went to graduate school here [at the] College of Education, full time, under the assistantship?
- C: I had a three-quarter-time assistantship, and I went full time Summer A, but the rest of the time I always had a three-quarter-time assistantship. I would take nine hours of whatever.
- S: When did you receive your doctorate?
- C: In 1986.
- S: Could you tell me the title of your dissertation?
- C: I do not remember. [laughter]
- S: Well, I can look that up.
- C: I researched Pat Cross' model for staff development, and I looked into why faculty would be interested in staying current, and what encourages them to participate in professional development activities, and that kind of thing.
- S: That is what I was reaching for, that you were researching topics that you were working with, in other words, the administrative end, and the training end of higher education. Those were your interests then.
- C: Right. I was interested in knowing how to inspire people to continue to grow professionally.
- S: Starting with your directorship at the resource center in North Carolina.
- C: In fact, in North Carolina, my job expanded greatly to include not only the developmental program that we got the national recognition for, but I also directed the adult high school learning center. I directed staff development activities for the entire institution from the president down. [I] designed three- and four-day workshops for the whole college (except for the skeleton workers who would have to stay to man the phones) to go to the beach for professional development. So I was involved heavily in professional development, within the institution and nationally.
- S: It was at a conference or a consultation on the subject that you met Dr. Webb, who is the director of Office of Instructional Resources.

C: Right.

S: Was she the director of O.I.R. here at UF when you met her?

C: Yes.

S: So you are here at UF, and you have completed your doctorate. Then what did you do? What was your first position after you received your Ph.D.?

C: Within the Office of Instructional Resources, they had a line called assistant-in, which is a support faculty role. You are faculty status, but you are considered support faculty; it is a non-tenure line. So they advertised for the position, and I was invited to apply with many others. They had quite a few good applicants, and for a little while, I was uneasy, but I did get the position. So initially, I was assistant in Office of Instructional Resources. Now I am an associate in Office of Instructional Resources, and assistant director.

S: So you are director here at the teaching center, but your official title is assistant director of O.I.R.?

C: Right.

S: OK. Now that brings us to the teaching center. When did you first come to the teaching center?

C: In the summer. It would have been in July of 1981.

S: The teaching center was located where then? Was it here?

C: It was here in Broward Hall.

S: Could you tell us about the teaching center and what you have been doing as its director? [Can you tell us] what its goals are, and that sort of thing?

C: When I came in 1981, I was called the coordinator because I was actually a graduate student at that time. I did not become the director until after I graduated in 1986. When I first came, the services for minority students were arranged very differently. Minority students came in the summer, and they had separate classes for minority students. By minority, I mean primarily black, almost exclusively black. So I came in the summer, and we had separate courses for them. We sent tutors to those courses, and the tutors then held a discussion section each week.

Well, during the summer it was a little different, but in the fall and spring, you did the same thing. Again, they were in separate sections of history, biology, psychology.

Whatever subjects they were going to put the students in, they were in separate sections. You sent tutors with them, and the tutors conducted study sessions, and then they continued to tutor on a walk-in basis anytime that the students needed to be tutored. That is how it was arranged. So we served almost all black students at that time.

S: In the early 1980s.

C: This is in the early 1980s. As time progressed, the number of students that we served increased. I was not faculty yet, so I was not involved in all the planning. Some of the administrators on campus, especially out of Minority Affairs, were interested in integrating the students into the regular classes. They wanted the students to go mainstream. So that changed the nature of our program then. Now we would take in students in the summer and have small classes that were primarily minority students. But come fall and spring, the students would not have special sections set up for them. They would just go into the regular classes. We would still provide tutoring for them on a walk-in basis, but since the students were then scattered across all courses and all sections, then there was no way we could hire enough tutors to go to class with them, and then come out and conduct a discussion section for them. So we had to set up alternative methods of meeting the minority students' needs.

S: Was that while you were still coordinator? You were not director [yet]?

C: I think it happened at about the same time. I think it happened in about 1986. So I think that we were making the changes together.

S: So you worked [as a] three-quarter time T.A. for five years to finish your Ph.D. You finished in 1986, and you were hired as director of the teaching center or associate director.

C: Well, it was called assistant-in, but as far as my role and the way I signed letters, I was director of the teaching center. That just made it clearer in terms of the idea that assistant in does not mean anything to anybody.

S: From 1986, then, under your direction, the teaching center has expanded from minority students in one class going together to what they call mainstreaming.

C: We really had expanded some before that because during the regular year, while we sent tutors to class and had discussion sections for specific classes, we also had other walk-in tutoring. We would hire tutors for a variety of courses to support the minority students in, let us say, engineering courses or calculus courses. So we had that already in place for walk-in tutoring. Another thing that we did that I had not mentioned was that most of those sections of classes subscribed to a mastery

learning concept, which allowed the students to repeat tests. So we had a testing center here as well. Students would come to take, let us say, a biology test. They were allowed to take the test twice. They would take it on Wednesday, and then they had to take it again on Friday. They had to skip a day in between, so that theoretically, they could study and be tutored, rather than just taking the test twice in a row. So we generated tests from test banks and administered tests to them until the two times we gave them for mastery of the material. So that was going on, too, and that drew the students here. They had to come here because there were so many activities going on.

The number of minority students who frequented the teaching center, in fact, had never really filled up all the times of the tutors. We had other students on campus who were asking for the service. So, rather than turn them down, we allowed them to join the minority students. Not only was it more effective use of the tutors' time, but at the same time the people in the Office of Minority Affairs were talking about not wanting the minorities segregated on campus. They wanted them integrated into mainstream. One way of integrating them was to allow the non-minorities to come in with tutoring. We wanted to avoid any stigma [such as], "I need help and I need help because I am black." We wanted [each one of] them to see that they were not the only one that needed help. So we opened up the services and allowed any student to come in for tutoring that wanted to. Minorities have always been a priority, though, so that even now, while we really are totally integrated as far as our walk-in tutoring goes, minority students can apply for special appointments where there would only be minority students being tutored, and it would be a standing arrangement that they would come in each week. That [arrangement] is not offered to our non-minorities.

- S: Was the minority focus at the teaching center in response to funding or a court [mandate]? I heard that there was a court mandate about UF being an integrated institution.
- C: I do believe it was the Adams case. At any rate, the University of Florida, like other institutions in the South, was under mandate to integrate. So the Office of Instructional Resources was responding to recruitment and retention efforts for minority students when they established the teaching center. The teaching center has expanded for all student services, but there are still minorities being served as special appointments.
- S: Is there any special order to serve minority students, or is that just part of the educational facilities now at UF?
- C: There is no special order. It is just that that has been our original priority. It is just that our original charge was for minority retention, and we have maintained that as our primary role. We are committed to all students, but to the minority students

especially. We have not had any problems in serving the minority students. In fact, I think the minority students appreciate not being segregated. We have not had to turn away non-minorities either, except for an occasional request for an appointment. They usually understood when we turned them away.

S: So you are approaching ten years here at UF, all centered around teaching center activities.

C: Right. Our activities have been expanded in other ways too that I should mention. While I still see that as our primary focus, we have a really good track record for tutoring. We maintain records of our tutoring.

We inherited a course that the math department considered remedial and did not want to teach. It was Math 1033. It was taught using the mastery concept. They used computer-generated tests similar to what we were doing. I do not know what year that actually came to the teaching center. O.I.R. [Office of Instructional Resources] was doing it even before it came to the teaching center, but I think it was about 1984 when we picked up what we then called the math lab. Students came and received individualized instruction. They had programmed books that they worked through with tutors present and were tested repeatedly for mastery. They had to have 90 percent mastery before they received credit. This was done jointly with the math department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. They granted credit to the students once we certified that they had passed a certain number of units with 90 percent mastery. This was Math 1033; it was to prepare students.

As I said, the math department really thought that they did not need to teach that course because most of the University of Florida students were beyond it. We definitely saw a need for it. But the legislature passed some legislation that said universities would no longer remediate. That was the job of the community colleges. So the math department decided that that was a remedial course so we would no longer teach it. We continued to tutor it, though. So the materials are still available to students.

We now can talk about systematic math review. We do not have a whole lot of students that take advantage of it because they cannot receive credit for it. Most students go over to Santa Fe [Community College] if they need that kind of remediation. But at any rate, we were doing that for the math department. We were giving them good records. Some individuals in the math department said, "Hey, we are trying to run these tutoring labs over here. They are running good tutoring labs over there. They are hiring competent tutors and they are training them. They are monitoring them. We are not doing as good a job ourselves as they are. Let us see if they will do it." So the math department gave us funds to run their math labs. We started with just pre-calculus. Over time that has expanded so that now we do tutoring for Pre-calculus, Calculus 1, [and] Survey of Calculus 1, specifically at the

request of the math department, while we also tutor all the higher maths, but that was not at their request. We do not tutor the higher maths in the same numbers that we tutor those three basic math courses. So we do that, and we also work with student athletes, and follow them through their freshman and sophomore years for any of them that enter through special admissions. We also work with the training of teaching assistants.

S: Do you feel that there may be awards coming to this teaching center because of its great expanded services and it is perhaps like a model center? I mean, you would hope so. I know you would hope so.

C: I would hope so, but I do not think so. The way the center is organized here is different. We are a tutoring center. We do run the summer program. But the university has fractionalized the overall program. The program at Southeastern was centralized so that faculty within departments had joint appointments. They were appointed to Resources for Student Learning, and they were also appointed to biology. Or they were appointed to Resources for Student Learning and mathematics. So they had joint appointments, and all of the services were coordinated through one unit. I coordinated peer counseling and peer tutoring. I coordinated the faculty as it related to the program. So there was a unification and you could talk about a complete program with a consistent philosophy and those kinds of things. The University of Florida is so large with so many interests and territorial lines that that is really not possible. The University of Florida has been recognized as having an exemplary program. And this teaching center was recognized as being exemplary in the area of peer tutoring. It is more difficult for us to present a unified front because we are fractionalized. We try to coordinate, but it is not the same.

S: You mentioned that the math lab is part of the teaching center. Then you mentioned the higher maths that are also tutored. How is that set up? The math lab is at one location and the teaching center is another? What is the current set-up of the teaching center and its current goals?

C: The teaching center sees itself as a support to the students and faculty on campus, and there are a variety of ways that you can describe our organization. You could describe it in terms of the groups of students we serve. We have talked a lot about serving minority students as one of our primary interests. And minority has been expanded now to include not just blacks, but American Indians, Hispanics, Asians, [and] there may be some others [as well]. We also serve any student who came in through special admissions. That would include very talented musicians or artists, theater people, [and] athletes. [Special admissions includes] anybody who was recruited by this institution but had to enter through special conditions. So then we have that target group.

We also have as a target group any student who is in Pre-calculus, Calculus 1, or Survey of Calculus 1. For those particular three classes, there are target groups. We work very carefully with the ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] units on campus, especially targeting there the minority retention, but retention in general in helping them keep their GPAs up in ROTC, at the request of ROTC. I mentioned that we work with athletes. I am trying to think of any other target groups. That is it, primarily. We will, from time to time, have different groups come in and ask for special services, which we provide if we can, and they become a target group at that time.

Another way, then, of talking about our services, instead of looking at it in terms of what groups of students do we serve, would be the functions that we perform. We do tutoring. We still do testing, especially with handicapped students. And [in the] Math for Elementary School Teachers [course] (and some others) we still do testing. We do study skills advisement. We do training of teaching assistants. We do discussion sections for athletes who came in through special admissions. We do test reviews for a variety of subjects. So you can look at it in terms of functions or target groups, but you can see that it is an umbrella title when you talk about the teaching center.

S: What do you see as the goals that you would like to accomplish with the teaching center? Do you see any changes, or just [a] continuation of the program, or expansion or reduction of services? What do you see?

C: Currently, we are expanding to accommodate the Hispanic population. We are anticipating a very large Hispanic participation in Summer B this year. This will be our first year with the Hispanic population. We will also have some Asians and others, but in a larger percentage than in the past.

S: Is that the Hispanics for the special admissions program?

C: Yes.

S: And they would then also qualify with the same minority tutoring?

C: They would just be considered one of our minorities. Because of the Adams case in the past, the Office of Minority Affairs and Tigert has been saying to us that we were to direct our focus toward blacks. They have just allowed us to broaden it to include others. So that is one of the things that is happening--we are definitely expanding our services in that area. We are looking for ways to expand our follow-up [in the] fall and spring because right now our big push is Summer B. We continue to follow up with the athletes because the Athletic Association has asked us to do that. But we do not do much follow-up. We do have reading and writing courses that are available fall semester for any students who could use a little more help after the summer. But other than the walk-in tutoring, our offices are not involved that much

with follow-up for the other students, unless they come back to us when they need to pass the College Level Academic Skills Test [CLAST]. Not many of our students have needed that. We have done such a good job of remediation or of catching them up in the summer that not many of them have had to come back for the CLAST. We are looking, then, for ways to continue to support the students after the summer experience. [We] have had a couple of planning meetings this spring to talk about how it should be expanded.

S: So you want to emphasize the follow-up more on the target groups, while still maintaining tutoring for all students?

C: Right. Our emphasis is towards retention. We think what we are doing in the summer is good. It is a really good jump-start for the students, but I think that a little more needs to happen. We used to have a two-year follow-up: one year was separate courses, and then the second year we followed up more than we do now, even for the first year. So [we are] moving back more to that.

S: [Are there] any other things about the teaching center that you think would need to go into the Oral History archives on the history of UF, about the teaching center's past or your projections for its future?

C: We are an integral part of Office of Instructional Resources, so we take direction from the director there, and we share a lot of our responsibilities with the reading and writing center in Turlington. And [we serve] other functions. [For instance], the faculty support center is also a support role for faculty. We really have not talked much about that. I have not been too organized. I should have outlined what I was going to say. I can see us increasing our role in terms of faculty support, especially as it relates to teaching assistants. So I think that in the future, we may have a stronger role with that. We now conduct workshops for teaching assistants, and teach courses occasionally for teaching assistants. I can see it expanding there.

I think that in the not too distant future we probably will change facilities, and hopefully we can get the reading and writing support staff in the same location with the math, science, business, [and] engineering tutoring that goes on in the teaching center now. So I can see us expanding in that way. Another thing that is to happen this fall, and I am glad I get to tell you about it, Judy, is that I think we will again have discussion sections for minority students for various courses. So I think that we are going to change our priority a little bit. It has not been approved. But I think we will change our priority from walk-in tutoring to more [of] what I call "targeted tutoring," as a part of that retention effort for minority students. So the Office of Minority Affairs I think will supply us with the names of students if they have as many as eight in a particular course. Then we will try to hire tutors just for them, to lead in the discussion section, similar to what we are doing for athletes now. So we are going to try to do more in the area[s] of follow-up and retention. The only reason we ever

discontinued that in our center was because another unit on campus was going to pick that part up, and wanted the reorganization. But we are going back to it because we see it is needed.

S: That is good. I wanted to ask you some follow-up questions of things we did not cover. We did not get the names of your two children. I am sure that you want their names on the history as attached to you.

C: Actually, I had three, but I lost one. Valerie was my first child, and Charles Ryan was my second, and Elizabeth Daire Buchanan is my third.

S: So Elizabeth has four names.

C: She gets to choose which one she wants to drop: Daire or Buchanan.

S: That is good. I appreciate you talking with me about the teaching center for the history of UF, the archives. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy day.

C: One more thing I would like to say is that it really is rewarding. It is challenging. Sometimes it is frustrating, but it is also rewarding to work in the teaching center. I have been blessed with a lot of good help. I think it is a fun place to be. That is why I am still here.

S: Thank you very much.