Q: (00:00:20) This is an interview with Barbee Myers Oaks. She is currently the Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion at Wake Forest University. Barbee, would you like to briefly talk about your family background (00:00:30) and where you grew up?

A: I grew up about thirty minutes from here, in a small town called East Bend, North Carolina. I joke with a lot of people that I actually have evidence that the Earth is flat because there’s nothing beyond my family’s farm. So, when I came to Wake Forest in 1976, I was one of the first African-American students from my high school to attend Wake Forest and even though East Bend is geographically less than thirty minutes away, it really felt like I was entering a different world. At that time, we had very little segregation - very little integration at Wake Forest and I don’t know if you’ve spoken with Beth Hopkins, if she’s told you what it was like. She graduated a year or two before I entered Wake, so it was a very different time. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I stayed for my masters. I was the first African-American student in the master’s program in health and exercise science and then I went on to University of Tennessee in Knoxville for my doctorate.

Q: (00:01:35) How did you end up at Wake Forest?

A: Ok, that’s an interesting question and I think the story there just speaks a lot to actually the passion for the work that I do today because I was invited to Wake Forest for what they call then Future Freshman Weekend and it was at the very beginning at the time when they were actually aggressively recruiting African-American students. So, I came for that Future Freshman Weekend, went to a football game. Oh, I had the time of my life and the young men and women - I think - probably all of us ended up coming to Wake Forest, but it was funny because I applied early decision. I knew nothing about the admissions process, when I applied to college. I was a very bright student in school that my guidance counselors encouraged me to apply to Wake Forest. I didn’t really know that much about Wake, I knew nothing about the college admission process, but I applied anyway and then three weeks later I received my admission letter for early decision and I remember, this is the honest truth, I went up to the barn and I sat up there and cried because I had been accepted to college, had not told my parents that I had applied had no idea how to pay for it, I didn’t know what it cost or anything and I thought they were going to be so angry with me because I’d gotten them into a situation and we didn’t quite know what to do. So, when I think back now, just you know, just the place that I was in and how much I did not know about college and because I was first generation college student, but of course, I won scholarships and came on here and the rest is history. So, when I came back to Wake Forest on the faculty in 1989, I was again on the faculty in health and exercise science for the six years and then our former director of minority affairs left the university during the summer
and I was asked to be the interim director of the office for a year and I told them I would do so under two conditions. One, that they changed the name to multicultural affairs because when the office was originally created it was for African-American students because that was really the only ethnic minority student group that we had here, but by ’95 we had started - had an increased number of Asian and Hispanic students and I realized that it was time to expand the scope of the office and it was harder for people to embrace a new vision for the office with a name change so they agreed to that and I also was made the offer that if I decided that I didn’t want to stay in the job that I could go back to my academic department and I thought, you know, I’ll try it, it sounded like a new opportunity. When I came into that office, within a month I knew that I was in my new home because even though the students at that time, we had a much larger number of African-American students and Asian and Hispanic, but a lot of the direction, just sort of like how to navigate the college experience at Wake and how to really maximize the experience too. I think of it as thriving, not just surviving. Now that was absent and so I found, as much as I miss teaching in the classroom, I realized that the work that was needed around helping students learn how to navigate the culture was just as important as the work I had been doing in the academic department and I just sort of intuitively knew what to do and so before the end of the fall semester, President Hearn told me that if I wanted the job it was mine and they weren’t even going to do a search and I never looked back and I think, you know, too just kind of reflecting at that time, it was important to me to be in a position to do that work because some of the same questions and fears and challenges that I had in 1976 when I came here students were still experiencing some of that isolation and at that time we were still, we were really beginning to increase the number of first generation students and students from low income families so it was a good opportunity for me to be able to help students who really didn’t know, they were extremely academically gifted, but just in terms of learning how to fully leverage the experience here, I felt that I could help them do that.

Q: (00:06:12) How do you think that your experience in the (00:06:15) mid-1970s as a first generation student, how did those experiences that you had, how did that affect how you do your job now?

A: Well, there were a number of ways that I think I could probably answer that question. One was when I was here in the mid-70s, racism was much more open, I mean, there were a few - I do know of at least, I’ll just say one because I heard with my own ears, one professor said “nigger.” So, it was a very - now, you just think “No one would ever say that openly in the classroom,” but what I did find was that even though we don’t have the type of overt issues around race and discrimination that we had then, there’s a lot of - still a lot of challenges with stereotype threat, that underrepresented minority students were experiencing, especially African-American men, so just the expectation that students were not - are not always able to perform at the level that they’re - that we know they’re capable of doing was important. I was involved in the admissions process, so I saw the academic potential of all students coming in and I knew that we were not admitting students that were not capable of doing the work, so I have to be honest in saying that much of the work that I did in multicultural affairs was around helping students, one, position themselves for success, but also working with faculty to help them understand the real academic gifting of students here. Sometimes men of color were,
especially again African-American men were considered to not be as academically gifted because the first question they were asked is “Are you an athlete?” and for them that was code for the fact that, if you’re an athlete, you’re here because of a scholarship, you’re probably not as smart as the other kids and so to walk into a classroom with that kind of a negative stigma could be very damaging to students. So, some of the work that I did was around - sure, it was around fostering cultural competence, you know, one of my greatest sources of pride was the relationships that I helped develop between African-American students and Asian-American students. When I first came into the office, that was one of my missions and so building cultural competency among ethnic minority students was important. We did not have the resources to really work more on the campus wide, you know, cultural competency issues, but we really did a great job of building the competencies and just the comfort and understanding of differences amongst students from different religious groups and also from different ethnic minority groups. So, that was important, but also the ability to help young men and women succeed and to teach them how to counter the negative stereotype threats and when I read your questions asking about some of my greatest accomplishments, I would have to put at the top of the list, for me, the fact that by 2006-2008, we had a 92% black male graduation rate, 98% black female graduation rate. That - in 2006 we were one of only four universities in the country that had a higher black student graduation rate than white student graduation rate and I felt that that was directly attributed in many ways to the passion and the commitment of our staff at multicultural affairs because we work with students to manage financial problems and, you know, family issues, deal with cultural climate issues and anything else and also just to help them continue to believe in themselves when they were going through what I call the “Sophomore Slump” I think any student knows that that second semester of sophomore year can be one of the hardest times at Wake because some of them are a little disconnected from the lower division advisor, they’re not really connected with their academic major, they’re taking all these basic divisional requirements and they wonder why in God’s name would anyone have to take philosophy or anthropology, right? And so, just feeling a little bit lost and so, I think that for a lot of young men in particular it was important to have someone really stay close to them and help them stay connected to the larger vision for their lives. Helping students redirect, you know, what happens when you come here and you decide that you don’t want to go to medical school, but now you have to explain to your parents that you want to be a sociology major. You know, what do you do with that? So, just helping students understand how to, one, be in charge of their lives and their futures, but still stay connected with their families, I think that was important, and so again, when you were asking how does it connect to my experience when I was an undergraduate student. When I came here, to Wake and I was a health and exercise science major and taking anatomy and exercise physiology and all of that, I was one of those pre-med students, but knew that I didn’t want to do that, but I wasn’t really quite sure what I wanted to do, (00:12:00) since I wasn’t going to medical school. So, I understood some of the angst that students felt when they weren’t quite sure how to have those conversations with the family, but also just being the first. I was always really sensitive to the fact that sometimes students who are first in their family to go to college or students who may be from lower income families, I have to deal with a lot of psychic stress when they’re here because your families want you to come to a school like Wake Forest because they want you to grow and they want you to be better and to change and to have a better future, but then when you come here and you change and you grow and you learn
more, when you go back home for vacations there can sometimes be a disconnect, so now they’re feeling “Who is this new person?” You’re feeling a little bit out of your comfort zone because now you don’t know really where you belong and so helping students navigate that - I think sometime during that summer after that first year can be a really challenging time for students because just finding your place, I think, and finding that place that you belong. So, now in the work that I do as the assistant provost in working with diversity inclusion issues more across the campus, I have a different perspective about the importance of that because you think about the fact that now we have -

(Video 1 ends at 00:13:28)

A: (continued at 00:00:00 of video 2) many of our students are first generation. They come into this institution changing in many different ways. I mean, we’ve had students who come from a family of four with parents there and both parents working, but their family income is twenty eight thousand dollars a year, but we were able to make it possible for these students to spend a semester in Italy or Japan or anywhere else around the world. When that student goes home, how do they even begin to talk to their family about what it was like to spend a semester in another country and so helping the students to understand that. So then they feel the stress, they don’t really quite belong at home in the way they used to, so it’s just not acceptable for them to return to a campus community that’s supposed to be their home and also feel that they do not belong. So, I think just that need to help people feel that they belong here drives a lot of the work that I do and I never forget, one time, Miss Nikki Giovanni came here to speak and she made a statement that just resonated with me and I share it with students any time that I have an opportunity to. She said “Somebody dreamed that you would be here.” and I later understood the importance of that in my own life because, when I finished my PhD at University of Tennessee, I was the first African-American woman to get a doctorate there and the first one in the American colleges for medicine and once - so my first job as an Assistant Professor was at Penn State and one Sunday we went to my paternal Granddad’s house in a little town called Tobaccoville that’s close to here and Grandpa had this rocking chair on the front porch, you know, that’s where you’d always find - he was either in his rocking chair in the house or in the rocking chair on the porch and we’re just sitting out there and he said “You know, girl. When they first moved that university here from Raleigh, I helped them clear the trees on that land and I never would’ve thought that my granddaughter would end up going to college there one day. I’m just really proud of you.” And I thought “What?” It was just sort of randomly he shared that story. I’ve never forgotten that because at the time that they built the university here, the school system was still segregated for more than another ten years. Wake Forest was still segregated. So, my own father who was a high school student then finishing high school would not have been allowed to come to Wake Forest even if he had the academic credentials to do so because the school was segregated. So, it - that’s another thing that I think has really fueled my passion for this work because he paid the price and paved the way. Literally cleared the path for me to come here and he couldn’t even dream that I would’ve been here one day, but someone did. So, I’ve always felt that it’s important to do all that you can to foster the success of students. Have the realize the enormity of their potential when they’re here and then to pave that way for someone else one day and so I did that for fourteen years of multicultural affairs. I
continued to do that through the work of the offices that worked with our diversity and inclusion initiatives, the multicultural affairs office and LGBTQ center and the women’s center and through diversity education, but also working with the Deans and the Vice Presidents to increase more diversity, you know, in the faculty among the staff, among the administration. It’s important to have increased student diversity, but when students are in the classroom, they need to see people that look like me, that look like them. When they go to administrative offices they need to see people that look like them, reflected in the faces and the experiences that they’ve had, because there’s just something about knowing that you can go to a place and there’s some - someone there that makes you feel like you’re at home and I’m not saying that you don’t get that from the majority people, however, majority is defined. It’s not just race or ethnicity, but however the majority is defined, sure you’re going to find that in some, but there’s still just nothing quite like being able to go into a place where there’s just a instant level of comfort because you feel that there’s someone who really knows your story and shares your experience.

A: (00:04:50) At this point in your time at Wake Forest, what would you say are the major issues in terms of the cultural climate?

Q: OK, well, in the - in the late 90s, early 2000s, when - especially when we implemented the plan for the class of 2000, there was a dramatic increase in the tuition because that’s when we, you know, decided to give all students laptops and printers and that was fantastic, but when we had that huge increase in tuition, that was the beginning of the decline for middle - for students from middle income families and because I was so closely involved with the admissions process for African-American students, I could see that because we had a lot of scholarship money, but because the, you know, the parental contribution or the amount - the loan burden that students had to take if they were from middle income families continued to escalate. It just - it wasn’t realistic for them to come here. We were seeing students who - you know, from middle income families that were leaving Wake Forest with $50,000 or $60,000 of debt for a four year degree and that was just not acceptable because as academically gifted as they were, they could get full scholarships to many other really good state schools and go and so, you know, when you look at the fact that Wake Forest is this wonderful school, I mean, I think that students, overall, get the best training here that they would get at any institution in the country, but if you come from a family that earns 50 or 60 thousand dollars a year, you have no idea how challenging it is to pay back a 50 thousand dollar loan, with just a four year degree. So that would - I could begin to see then the change within the campus community because I could see that the students from middle income families were really like the social glue on campus. They could, you know, they knew how to - they were comfortable working - er, interacting with kids from upper income families and from lower income families, so they really were the bridge and when we lost that bridge, lost that connection, you saw more and more balkanization of the students into these different groups. So, we’ve never had a lot of integration with the majority of fraternities and sororities, but it still did not have the same kind of an impact on the campus culture as it has now. We just don’t have enough kids from middle income families and even a lot of the students of color who have gone to these elite prep schools, they still do not have much of a sense of identity as people of color. So, they’re caught in this - they don’t really know where they belong.
either. So, I think just that the - one of the biggest challenges to campus culture has been the absence of the - or the slow decline of the middle income kids here on our campus. That's part of it, but secondly, just quite frankly, now I think a lot of the problems that we’re seeing around our culture is that - is just, we’re mirroring what we’re seeing in Washington D.C. The disrespect, the lack of civility, you know, I think a lot of that - when students see that demonstrated at the highest level of government, why should they show any respect to people that don’t look like them or don’t share their belief or don’t share their political views or whatever? So, I think that that’s, you know, that those are some of the challenges, but then also I do know that a lot of the problems that we see are - I’ve thought about this a lot because I do believe that you have to understand the “why” before you can get the “how” right. So, I really try to dig in to figure out what is happening within our campus culture at this time and so part of what I’ve learned is that even though there are a lot of conscious and overt acts of bias and hate and evil. A lot of what we’re seeing here is because we’re in this transition. Any time you’re making a transition from a fairly homogenous community to one that is a lot more diverse, what happens is that a lot of the policies of the prestigious and the rules and guidelines that were developed when we were a homogenous campus were appropriate, if your goal was to treat everyone equally. Make sure that spaces and all of this were allocated, but when you get a more diverse community, the goal cannot be equality anymore, it has to be equity because first generation students have very different needs than students who come - who are from, you know, children of billionaires, we have those kinds of students at Wake Forest. So, when you - with diversity and the shift to equity that means that a lot of the rules have to be changed, the policies, the procedures, the guidelines, that has to be - a lot of those have to be changed. It takes time, it takes money, it takes space, it takes resources and so we’re in that shift right now. I think that we’ve increased diversity in many ways before a lot people in administration truly understood what the needs would be in order to provide an equitable environment. So, now we’re playing catchup and unfortunately, people that are here from diverse constituencies in many ways are having the same kind of struggles that I faced when I was the first black woman here and the first - but I - and every faculty position I’ve had Penn State, Arizona State and Wake Forest I was the first African-American woman on the faculty. When you’re first you pay a different price because again someone has to pave the way and it’s harder I think for students from underrepresented groups, again whether we’re talking about religion, sexual orientation, race, whether you’re international or domestic, however diversity is defined, the students who are here now have not had the kind of experience - because I was in that first wave of integration. I understood that this would be the climate that we - that I had to deal with. Students grew - now, they don’t know that, they don’t understand that and so it’s harder to accept it. On the other hand, we have a lot of students from majority cultures and especially some of the white students who are here, they come in and they are the direct beneficiaries of the privilege that they didn’t create. So, they walk into a system that’s designed to favor them, they didn’t make the rules and they don’t understand why people are angry at them because they didn’t do anything and that’s true. They didn’t do anything and so, I don’t quite know how we’re going to be able to bridge this gap to help students and faculty and staff understand what’s happening with our campus culture, but I do believe that if we can find ways to begin to build some trust that at least that we are all willing to work on these issues together that we want to honor the diversity and create an equitable environment. We’ll begin to see a change, but right now we’re
just in a tough time and we have to, as I said, you know buckle your seatbelts and hang on because we’re just in a state of transition right now and until we can get some of the policies and the procedures and the guidelines and all that changed and really make space for the diversity that we’ve brought into our campus community and help students learn how to communicate -

(Vide 2 ends at 00:13:26)

A: (Continued at 00:00:00 of video 3) those differences, then, you know, it might be tough for a bit longer.

Q: (00:00:06) Given the multitude of issues that you deal with, I was wondering if you would be able to describe a day in your life and (00:00:15) what happens during that day and what issues you deal with, who you talk to, what you think about.

A: Well, let’s just look at the last 24 hours. I received a text at 2:15 AM from someone saying “We really need to talk about this situation with Imam Griggs.” and I thought “Yes, you’re right, but don’t text me again at 2:15 in the morning, because there’s nothing I can do right now. OK?” But, I - it’s not unusual for me to receive early morning texts to start the day alerting me to, you know, something that has happened. So, then I’ll get into the office between 7:00 and 7:30 and then try to catch up on the 200 emails, you know, from the day before, before starting in on meetings and I think that in this past year, especially the past year or two, my role at Wake has shifted more. I have ended up in more of a advisory capacity for a lot of people - for my own staff because all of my directors are very, very strong, but their young in their roles, so I spend a lot of time mentoring my own staff, but also as a part of the provost leadership team, just trying - you know, working with him and the other members of the team on strategizing on how to deal with some of these complex issues because the reality is that no one has the answer. Working with campus life, the new Dean of Students, Adam Goldstein and I have spent a lot of time together in working on a lot of these different issues. As do Vice President Rue and I. I will spend at least, probably an hour in the last day or two working with our Diversity Education Manager, Shayla Herndon-Edmunds, on the proposal for police training to address some of the issues of unconscious bias and coordinating that because part of it is in finding the right people to do the training, but then the other - the critical part of it is: what is the best strategy to approach the issues? When you talk about unconscious bias training that can include a lot. So, when you look at our programs like the Gatekeeper's diversity education and Safe Zone training, we’ve had people who developed those programs who have really studied the culture, the institutional culture and they developed the training and the education programs around the real issues that we deal with on our campus community and I think that’s one of the reasons that the work that we’ve done has been positively received because we spend time talking, but it takes the time to work with people on these issues. Yesterday, I probably spent two hours working with a group of students who have been working very hard on some of the campus culture issues and a meeting with them to just talk about what are their recommendations. The one thing I learned when I was in multicultural affairs that has been invaluable to me is that it’s difficult for us as the parents age or in that role of administrators to always understand, even
though we want to do the right thing, that means something different to students than it might mean for us, so working with students in the role of how - what do you see as the vision and what are some of your priorities, just in terms of the work we need to do to begin to shift the campus culture I think is important. Let's see, yesterday I probably spent an hour or two working with - working on a proposal from a committee that we established early in the fall through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. It's a collaborative campus climate working group so we've worked with more than - between 30-35 faculty and staff over the whole fall semester, met every Monday for at least two hours throughout the whole fall semester on working around these of student engagement, how do we really begin to foster student engagement, the deliberative dialogue came from the work of that subcommittee, working on some of these policies and procedure issues. So, the work that we've been doing to change some of the party management and, you know, with the Barn and looking at the policing, that committee is working very closely with the Dean of Students and he is a part of that group. We've had a group that's worked on faculty engagements, so, right now we're looking at not only what do we need to do to strengthen the experience from the cultural diversity requirement, but also how do we add more diversity into the whole - the total curriculum. How do we equip our faculty with the skills to navigate and facilitate those difficult conversations in the classroom because faculty come here trained in their academic discipline. They don't necessarily know how to manage and facilitate these difficult conversations. So, what kind of support do we need to start providing them to make sure that they're ready to manage those kinds of conversations and encourage those conversations and to be the support network for students who may be experiencing some challenges in any way during their undergraduate experience and how do we really make sure that students are getting the academic training that they need to be the leaders in the world. You know, I've never thought of Wake Forest students as just being the everyday ordinary person. It takes a very unique student to come to this school and to be successful and so I believe then that our students are supposed to go out in the world and do really fantastic things and that means that they need to be sharper and smarter and brighter and better equipped than students that graduate from other schools and we have the potential to do that. One of the things that I'm really excited about right now is the potential that we have to truly build a global learning community here at Wake Forest. Now that we have nearly 10% of our students as international students, we have 10% first generation students, we have 25-35% ethnic minority students, you know, we have students literally from - I don't even remember the number of countries around the world, but with the kind of diversity that we have within our campus community and the fact that we have a three year residency on campus, there's absolutely no reason that we can't do a better job of leveraging the experience of all of the diversity that we have here and create a more of a global learning community, but before we can do that we have to do the work that it takes to make sure that the students from all these diverse constituencies feel that they belong. So, I think that that's some of the kind of work - those are the kinds of conversations that I have. I spend an hour with Christy Buchanan, who is the Associate Dean who manages lower division advising, talking about how can we begin to introduce these issues of cultural competency, emotional intelligence, teaching students how to be allies to the LGBTQ community. How can we begin to shift the first year orientation so that we're introducing students to that - those kinds of concepts earlier in the day. So, I think that when I have to think about how I spend my day most - a lot of it is in - just in conversations, mentoring my staff, the
directors of these centers working with colleagues across the university, the business school, the divinity school, the law school, literally all across the campus community, just in conversation or through email trying to develop some strategies to both, one, enhance communication about the work that we’re doing, but also developing the strategy for - to develop initiatives that will really make a difference. I don't think that - I’ve never worked with anyone who was comfortable with just coming to work just to get a paycheck, you know, you can’t do this kind of work - you can’t stay in it if that’s your motivation because it takes too much of who you are and I think something else that we will have to start doing a better job of is taking care of the people that do this work. So, I did spend time with my team checking in with them. “How are you doing in all of this?” Because I think sometimes when you - when you’re doing the work of diversity and inclusion, sometimes, you know, you have the great rewards on the days that, you know, when we had our Dignity and Respect campaign, we had Doctor Maya Angelou here and, you know, Doctor Wilson and Doctor Johnnetta Cole, you have these wonderful days and experiences like this, but then you have other days when you see the very ugliest side of human nature and so that takes a toll on you and unfortunately, with some of the challenges we’re having in our campus climate right now, we’ve seen too many of those day. So, I think if I had to talk about a day in the life, I’d have to talk about at some point in my day I’m going to touch on all of those kinds of issues.

Q: (00:10:30) Well, I have to ask because you mentor so many people, who has mentored you at Wake Forest?

A: Well, in my early years as a faculty member, Paul Ribisl was one. In fact, I have to say Paul Ribisl is the person that is most responsible for me having a PhD. He encouraged me to go to graduate school. I really - when I decided I didn’t want to go to medical school, I wasn’t quite sure what was next. I had not really thought about staying here for - to get a master's degree and he came to me one day and just said - and asked “Why haven’t you applied to our graduate program?” and “Well, I don’t know.” Honestly, I hadn’t thought - it seems ridiculous when I look back at it now, but at the time because no one was saying it wasn't as common for young black women from, you know, lower income families to go on to get graduate degrees, I didn't know a black woman that had a PhD, so I never - just never thought of it pretty much and so Ribisl was a great mentor to me and then when I came back as a faculty member, Paul was a really, really wonderful mentor to me, but then, you know, Doctor Ed Wilson has a constant, all throughout - I knew him - I didn’t really know him as an undergraduate student, but when I came back on the faculty because we had so few African-American faculty, I was instantly involved in a lot of different university committees so that’s how I started interacting with him more as a young faculty member and Doctor Wilson has always been a great mentor and remains one today. If I’m, you know, just sort of grappling with an issue, I can send him an email and go over and just sit in his office and talk to him. I think, just in terms of, sort of like navigating the complexity of the work that I do, Doctor Angelou was my greatest mentor and the fact that I can even say that she was a mentor to me is still unbelievable, but I just adored her and she was a strong supporter of the work that I did and a real cheerleader and a champion, if I had some of those times when I wondered “Am I doing - I can’t do this any longer!” or “I can’t find my way!” you know “I’m not quite sure what I’m doing here.” or “I don't know how to make people stop doing
mean ugly things.” and, you know, I could just go to her and have those conversations and she’d always say something to encourage me. Well, both, one to help me figure out the way - the next step, just - how do you make just the next step, you know, and then also just to make - to remind me of importance of the work that I do, so she has been -

(Video 3 ends at 00:13:26)

A: (Continues at 00:00:00 of video 4) one of my greatest mentors here, but then I’d have to say Dean Harold Holmes. When I - When I came into the role of Director of Multicultural Affairs, I’d never managed or supervised anyone and, you know, I’d been in a faculty position for ten years between Penn State, Arizona State and Wake Forest, but I had never been in a managerial role and Harold was phenomenal, just in helping me learn how to be a manager and be a director and to do strategic visioning for an office even, you know, but then also just a real friend. So, he helped me grow a great deal as a manager, as a colleague and he is a great friend - I will always treasure the fourteen years that I spent under his leadership and just his quiet, soft way of dealing with issues. I think - this is sort of a funny story. I had a meeting with him one day, I messed up on something and - not intentionally, but you know, I had just really messed up and so he called me in and we had a meeting and when I left the meeting, sometime later I realized “Oh my god, he was - he was really like, letting me have it. Fussing at me, but it was in just such an easy, gentle way, it took me a minute to even realize that I had been sort of called to task, but that was Harold. I just adored him. I just think he is a wonderful person and just the passion and the caring that he demonstrated for students, no one will ever know the hours that he spent working with parents, all times of day and night, just the care that he showed to students in the judicial process because he wasn’t interested in punishing them, he wanted them to change their behavior so that they’d be the kind of men and women that we would be proud to see as Wake Forest graduates going on into the world. So, I think that those were my most important and most valuable mentors.

Q: (00:02:17) What do you think your greatest contribution to Wake Forest has been?
A: I don’t know - I guess, probably over the span of my career here, the awareness that I have been able to bring to the university community about the importance of diversity and inclusion, that the work the build a more diverse community, but also to help people understand the importance of making people feel that they are included in that community. I think - I know that people now regularly think about issues of inclusion, when ten years ago, they probably never even gave it a thought and so, overall, maybe that would be it.

Q: (00:03:20) In conclusion, are there other experiences about your time at Wake Forest that you would like to share, that you think are important?
A: Well, I think, just going back to my undergraduate years, I loved being in school here. Back then, I had as many white friends as black friends and the school was smaller, so there was much more of a sense of community among all of us and the friends that I made then, they’re still some of my very best friends today. I still think that this is one of the greatest academic communities in the whole country and I think as much for the education as for the friendships
that people develop. The faculty here really care about the success of students and so do the staff, you know, just the care that people show towards students, faculty and staff, I think is something that I would have to acknowledge and it’s what’s kept me here. It honestly is that care in the community, so we’re in a rough spot right now in many ways, but we will get through this because of the determination of people. No one is happy when we have people in our community that don’t feel that they belong and because we love this school, we’re committed to doing the work that it takes to change that. So, I think that that is important for me to speak to because that is what gives me hope. If I didn’t have that hope, I just couldn’t come to work every day, but it’s the hope that the collective, good will and caring that’s in this community will overcome and override any forces of negativity that try to tear the fabric of this place apart.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: You’re welcome.

(Video 4 ends at 00:05:34)