



Winthrop University  
Digital Commons @ Winthrop  
University

---

[Browse All Oral History Interviews](#)

[Oral History Program](#)

---

4-15-2015

## Interview with Sam Foster

Sam Foster

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/oralhistoryprogram>

 Part of the [Oral History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Foster, Sam, "Interview with Sam Foster" (2015). *Browse All Oral History Interviews*. OH 142.  
<https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/oralhistoryprogram/299>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History Program at Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Browse All Oral History Interviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. For more information, please contact [bramed@winthrop.edu](mailto:bramed@winthrop.edu).

**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview #142  
FOSTER, Sam**

**FOSTER, Sam**

Former educator, legislator, and member of the Winthrop Board of Trustees

*Interviewed:* April 15, 2015

*Interviewer:* Rebecca Masters

*Index by:* Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard and Rebecca Masters

*Length:* 00:59:57

Abstract: In his April 15, 2015 interview with Rebecca Masters, Sam Foster rates the Presidency of Anthony DiGiorgio and recalls the evolution of Winthrop. Included, Foster shares his opinions on Winthrop's strengths and weaknesses and what challenges Winthrop may face in the future. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Presidents, Board of Trustees, higher education, public education, Winthrop history

**Interview Session (April 15, 2015): Digital File**

**Time      Keywords**

00:00:00 *Start of Interview*/Interviewer's Introduction

00:00:15 *Question:* Roles in the community and Winthrop? *Answer:* Grew up in Chester and moved to Rock Hill in 1958. In public education in first, then served on the General Assembly from 1980-1992. Served eight years on the employment security commission. Retired in 2000. Appointed to the Winthrop Board by the state superintendent of education, Jim Rex.

00:01:55 *Question:* Winthrop's strengths and weaknesses when you were appointed to the board? *Answer:* Strength: willingness to change. Transition to coeducation. SF talks about the struggle that comes with change.

00:04:00 *Question:* How does Winthrop fare today? *Answer:* Winthrop has come a long way. Part of its growth/success has to do with DiGiorgio's Presidency. SF talks about DiGiorgio's work with the legislature and how important it is for a President to communicate with the legislature and having a relationship with the delegation. SF recalls being invited to Winthrop, because Winthrop wanted to update the science

- building. SF mentions the lack of bond bills and how that negatively affects universities.
- 00:08:25 *Question:* First impressions of DiGiorgio? *Answer:* SF does not recall any prejudice against DiGiorgio. SF mentions there may be some prejudice in the south toward outsiders, in general. SF says DiGiorgio had a vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- 00:10:39 *Question:* What were some of the biggest challenges Winthrop faced when you were on the Board? *Answer:* The challenge has been finances. SF says financial support has been dwindling for years. SF talks about the negatives of statewide support. Finances have been a sore spot in public higher education.
- 00:14:20 *Question:* When have politics impacted Winthrop? *Answer:* Dick Riley –Education Improvement Act. SF recalls an argument over establishing kindergarten schools/classes. When SF served in the General Assembly, he says there was more civility. SF continues talking about the Education Improvement Act. SF talks about the lack of communication between Democrats and Republicans and the division in politics.
- 00:20:55 *Question:* How was Winthrop perceived by the African American community. *Answer:* When it was segregated, the black community didn't have much to do with Winthrop. Cynthia Roddey and Arnetta Gladden Mackey. The black community raised funds to help them pay for their tuition/expenses at Winthrop. SF talks about the positive feedback he hears from the black community about Winthrop. SF talks about Clemson and its Board of Trustees.
- 00:24:55 *Question:* University of South Carolina? *Answer:* Has a good image. SF would recruit USC teachers. Winthrop has a good name for teacher education.
- 00:26:30 *Question:* Does Winthrop's origins as an all-girls school impaired support from the General Assembly? *Answer:* SF doesn't know if it impaired Winthrop's ability to compete. Winthrop had a good name in the General Assembly when it was SF's district. There were more negatives about the University of South Carolina.
- 00:27:55 *Question:* What would Rock Hill be without Winthrop? *Answer:* SF talks about Chester, South Carolina. The Celanese Plant had interest in Chester. SF says there isn't much happening in Chester, and it has leadership problems. Winthrop's relationship with Rock Hill has grown.
- 00:30:20 *Question:* Did the relationship grow with DiGiorgio? *Answer:* SF says DiGiorgio did a good job reaching out to the community.
- 00:31:10 *Question:* Thoughts on Knowledge Park? *Answer:* SF has some skepticism. The

- revitalization of downtowns have failed everywhere. SF talks about past attempts to revitalize downtown Rock Hill. Problems with leadership and economics.
- 00:33:15 *Question:* How Winthrop's reputation changed over the years? *Answer:* The vision was to enhance programs to make Winthrop viable. Business school. The education department drew in lots of people. The expansion of the business school and making Winthrop a self-sustaining school has made it change.
- 00:35:15 *Question:* Football at Winthrop? *Answer:* Some people still think Winthrop should have football, but the reality is it is too expensive. Basketball is relatively inexpensive and Marshall made Winthrop basketball competitive. SF is personally not in favor of having a football team at Winthrop – it takes too much money and talent.
- 00:37:30 *Question:* Any interaction with President Comstock? *Answer:* SF only met her. SF says the board made a mistake – refers to President Comstock's personality traits. SF talks about the challenges of the next President having to follow DiGiorgio. SF says he has three questions for any candidate: 1) What's their personality and does he/she work with others? 2) Financial background? 3) What are their projections for the future? SF not on the committee to select President Comstock. When SF met her, SF says she was cordial – from this meeting, SF did not feel like she was a bad match for Winthrop.
- 00:41:40 *Question:* How long was Comstock here before you met her? *Answer:* A few months. SF was surprised by the news about Comstock. Caused SF to wonder how Comstock was selected. SF talks about what it takes to hire someone. SF speculates about the interest to select a female President.
- 00:45:11 *Question:* What does the community expect from the new President? *Answer:* The President needs to keep on track and only make changes as needed.
- 00:46:30 *Question:* How many years should the next President stay? *Answer:* This question should come up in an interview, says SF. You want someone with tenure. When interviewing, you have to get long-term projections from interviewees. The next President needs to take time to establish a record of what they've done.
- 00:48:29 *Question:* Gale DiGiorgio? *Answer:* SF says Gale loved everyone. Gale was involved in the community. SF not sure what the expectations for the next spouse of the President should be. It depends on their abilities.
- 00:50:20 *Question:* How will DiGiorgio go down in history? *Answer:* SF didn't know many Winthrop Presidents. SF knew Piper well – says she did a good job at Winthrop. SF speculates that Piper did not have the vision DiGiorgio demonstrated.

- 00:52:15 *Question:* What was the community saying when DiGiorgio had problems? *Answer:* SF's opinion is the faculty was trying to usurp DiGiorgio's ability to run the institution.
- 00:53:40 *Question:* Were you surprised DiGiorgio stayed after those difficulties? *Answer:* No. SF perceived that DiGiorgio had staying power.
- 00:55:15 *Question:* Any other experiences you want to mention? *Answer:* Winthrop evolved into a real asset to the community and South Carolina. It's evident that Winthrop has worked toward becoming a viable part of higher education in South Carolina.
- 00:56:55 *Question:* Charleston? *Answer:* SF says they're jealous of everything. SF wonders why students are so attracted to the College of Charleston. SF's son went to Baptist College and lived in Charleston.
- 00:58:50 *Question:* Final words? *Answer:* DiGiorgio did an excellent job for Winthrop, and he improved its overall image.
- 00:59:57 *End of interview*