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Rebecca Chiles Interview 2018

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Chiles interview HST-301 2018

Eddie Semanski: So, today I'm going to be interviewing or we are all going to be interviewing, I'm just starting out. We're going to be interviewing Rebecca C—

Rebecca Chiles: Chiles—

EC: Chiles, today. The interviewees, interviewers, go ahead:

Matthew Capellen: Matthew.

Brant Cheeley: Brant.

ES: And Eddie. We'll be interviewing on October 18th, 2018, at the Public Safety Office. I'm gonna go ahead and start with the first question. The first question is, what did you--when did you start working at Western?

RC: I started working at Western in, well, let's see, it was February 2nd, 2015.

ES: Okay, were you, what were you... Oh! What were the circumstances that led you to uh work to come to work at Western?

RC: So, I've got twenty-two years' experience total now of campus law enforcement. I've been at three previous universities, and so I was at the third one, and just, I'm from the South as you can tell by my accent, and so that's all I'd ever been before was the South; I'd never really been outside of there and lived anywhere, and so uh, my partner and I just kind of started looking at some other places we could maybe go in the country. And so she would send me job announcements from HigherEdJobs.com, and I would research them the place, and the university, and the town, and so I would look at the geographical area, and how much snow they would get ('cause she doesn't like a lot of snow), and how much-- what kind of poisonous and toxic and venomous animals are there? Because basically in the South, everything will kill you, I mean there just you know-- so we were looking for something a little less deadly. And so then, nothing; I mean I'd x-ed them all, all of them, just no, no, no. I don't want to live in Indiana; I don't want to live in western Oklahoma; and I don't-- you know, just all that. And I'm sure those are fine places but not for us. [Clears throat] And this one popped up, and we said hmm, well let me look at this, and so I did all the research on it, and I couldn't find anything bad about it. I mean I was like: "This place look like, like a fairy tale land." I mean it was really just pretty amazing sounding, and also at the same time, there was a position open for her job here, which--

she is a licensed professional counselor--and so we were like, we kind of got to do this; we have to apply for this. And so, we both got a job. That was the only thing that we applied for was here, 'cause that's just kind of where we set our sights on that we wanted to come to. And so we just, we did that, and made the, made the move, came and interviewed and made the move and that's, the rest is history.

ES: And this kind of--you've kind of answered some of this, but have you had different positions here? Oh, I guess, have you had different positions here and if so, what were they?

RC: So when I first started-- so I've always been the Director of Public Safety, and I've always been the Emergency Manager, and I was also the Risk Manager but that's changed since I've been here. I'm not the Risk Manager anymore, but I'm over parking services; so kind of swapped that out 'cause it just seemed to make more sense when they were doing some restructuring administratively. They said--well it kind of makes more sense for you to have parking, and maybe legal services to have the risk portion of it, and so they did that. But "public safety" is a term; it's really just a big umbrella where all the stuff that we do, 'cause we do environmental health and safety with hazardous materials, and we do occupational health and safety, and plus public safety responding to calls, plus parking, and all these other things, emergency management, too.

ES: Thank you.

RC: Mm-hmm.

BC: What is the basis of your job here at Western and elaborate on that if that's not entirely clear is the meaning behind your job or the foundation for it?

RC: Yeah, sure. I mean, really it's to provide safety and security for the university. I mean if you want to simplify it to that statement so--I mean that's it at its simplest, it's providing a safe and secure environment. And that's part of our--kind of our mission. A safe and secure environment for people to live and to work and to learn. And that's what we strive to do here, is to have a place where--because all those things are occurring at any given time. Where you work, you live. Some people do all three. Our students:- you know, if you live in Heritage Hall, and you work in Valsetz, and you go to school--you're doing all of those things, so all of your time is spent right here. And it should be a place of safety and security where you can do all those things safely.

BC: So what would you say an average day of work looks like? And maybe some examples with that?

RC: Oh goodness. [BC chuckles.] I have meetings. Anybody in a position of director above--you just--you have a lot of meetings. And so, the rest of that is--I try not to get into too much of that--the rest of it is just all the daily stuff. The--I'm sure y'all have heard this from other people, it's the emails. The amount of emails that you get and the questions. So you answer those things on a constant basis, even at night or whatever. But yeah, come into work at 7:30 or so in the morning and start off with what reports were done during that time. This is--we've already--we've had an increase just in September; from September last year, we've tripled in our number of reports. Just from September this year to September last year, we've tripled. And we saw so much activity there, just that first week of school, New Student Week, and the weeks after that even.

When I came in on Monday morning I had 11 reports waiting and--so I have to go through those detail by detail. Because this are--they've become a public document, so they have to be, be grammatically cor--I'm not an English major. [Brant chuckling.] But they have to, have a certain look to them and just have all the information. So you go through all those, and that's a time-consuming process. And maybe, go to meetings and just--deal with the kind of stuff that just pops up. We call it "putting out fires"; I mean you're a firefighter most of the time because it's just little stuff that pops up, and you have to just go jump on it, take care of it, right at the end. But you don't have anything to show for that. You don't have--It's not written down maybe or it's not in your calendar, or any of those things. But it's just--you get to the end of the day and you're like, "What have I done today?" [Interviewers laughing.] I know I've been busy, but I didn't get anything on my list marked off because I keep a running list. Yeah, it can get hairy sometimes.

But the typical day, just meetings and stuff like that. Other times, when we have events planned--we had the Shakeout drill planned today. We didn't do a huge event around it, but that was most of the morning, testing our communications systems. That's what we really wanted to test today is all the different ways we put emergency communication out on campus. And so just getting a really good understanding of making sure all the systems work.

BC: Okay. Well, what would you say is the most interesting experience you've had while working here? Or maybe the most interesting story?

RC: Oh, goodness. Well, so about three weeks after I got here, we had a bomb threat. And I'd already been sent to Washington, D.C. on a trip for a grant that we were part of. And so I'd just gotten back from--drove in from the airport at 2:00 AM, this was a Friday morning now. Got back at 2:00 AM, and I was living in the Barnum apartment when I first got here for about four

months. And so I get in here and get there and sleep a few hours. And then I stumble over here about 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock, something like that, and then I get up and over here.

And that afternoon, early afternoon, we get a call that somebody found a note in a bathroom at Natural Sciences, said that--something to the effect of: "There's a bomb and the building is going to blow up at 3:30 on today and on Monday." So, okay. But you have to take precautions. So, we, of course, called in all of our partners, outside agencies, facility services because they have so many people that could, at a moment's notice, someone could get barricades, someone could get cones, and all of that, and kind of blocked off Natural Sciences and set up a perimeter. And had Public Safety, which was important when you're teaming up with outside agencies that you pair a Public Safety officer with them because Public Safety officer, number one has a set of keys, and they know the buildings. So an outside agency coming in--they don't have that information, I know that. So we paired them up together, and everybody's going through doing a search, doing a sweep of it.

We got that done, and the only thing--well and we were lucky because it was a shift change for us and for Monmouth Police, so we had double the amount of people we would normally have because it's 3:00 in the afternoon. Normally, it would be just a bare-bones couple of people. It's a Friday afternoon; a lot of people are gone. That was kind of a good thing because you didn't have as many to evacuate. Did the thing. The only thing they found suspicious was a bag, a backpack sitting in a room. And when we have, if there's a bomb threat and we tell people to evacuate, we tell them to take all their stuff with them. Because if you've--all this stuff over here is yours, right?

BC and MC: Mm hmm.

RC: So if you left out of here, now we've got to search all of that, now that might be the bomb. Right? Because we don't know that. So we want everybody to take their belongings with them, so whatever's left, then that's fewer things to go through.

Well it turned out, once they got a little deeper into it, and I guess somebody got brave enough to approach it, but it was a bowling ball. [All Laugh]

A professor had brought in a backpack, and it was in a classroom; it wasn't even in his office, but it was a bowling ball.

And so that was Friday; we cleared out. We said, "Well, since they said that they're going to do it again on Monday, we'll come back in here first thing Monday morning and we'll sweep the building again." Just us, just Public Safety. So I came in, and this was about 5:30 that morning, I think four of us came in, and we took different floors and different areas. And we said we're just going to check everything again before we allow classes to start back at 8:00. And at that point we were--myself and another officer, Allen Risen--we were down in the basement level, and there's a mechanical room, and he walked into that room. Now remember, I'm new, I've been here three weeks. I mean, I don't even think I'd been in Natural Sciences at that point.

He opens the door and goes in, and I'm kinda a little bit behind him so I grab--just stick my hand in the door to grab the door as its closing in, and I didn't know it had suction on it. So it sucked the door closed right when I stuck my hand in it, and it caught the ends of my fingers. So then I pulled my hand out because it hit so hard that it bounced open, and the middle finger was just busted, it was just ripped open. [Ew.] It just popped open. _ So I'm, "That's great." So I'm just standing out in the hallway holding my hand over a trash can because it's very messy. And Allen comes back out and he says "What are you doing?" and I'm just like this, right? [Holds up middle finger] This is what I'm doing. [All Laugh] And he--the funniest part about the whole thing is--he said, "That's going to need stitches." And I said "Yeah, I think so" and he goes, "Well can you walk?" And I said "Well, you damn sure can't carry me. So yes. It's my finger; my legs are fine."

[All Laugh]

So anyway, that was an exciting day. And then, got that, drove to the hospital, got bandaged up, and came back to work, and finished searching the building. Luckily, there was nobody in the E.R. [Emergency Room], and we were through in there in about twenty minutes.

So yeah, that was my, I guess "Welcome to Western," and I was the butt of many jokes. And the Safety Committee Meetings with--because we did injury reports for employees at our Safety Committee Meetings--and there's one that "Got their finger smashed." And here's my finger still--because it broke it (stitches), so it was pretty nasty for a while. So I'm here--because we don't tell names in there--so I'm just urgh, "It's me, it's me." Anyway, so that was great.

MC: All right, so a couple more questions. What are your plans currently and in the future at Western [Western Oregon University]?

RC: Oh, goodness. Now and for the future, so--. What we're, I think we--this department does and--I inherited a great department, right? So when I came here three and a half years ago and the people, most of the people were already in place that are just, they're here for the right

reasons. And we don't have the mentality of people on a power trip and that type of thing. They're here because they want to be here, and they want to serve students. That's our thing: we're going to be student centered, and we're going to be student focused. And we've been able to do a lot of things, and we've started ALICE [Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate] training for one-- y'all familiar with that--the unarmed response to an active shooter. We didn't have anything like that on campus; we started that. We started emergency preparedness on campus like it's never been done before. And without this team in place and the people in place, I couldn't done any of that by myself. And so we're doing all those things and training people and helping get people ready for any type of event, even training people in CPR [Cardiopulmonary resuscitation] and first aid-- we have those instructors, and self-defense, providing that stuff campus-wide.

And then the other thing is the emergency preparedness. For the future, our goal is, our three-year goal, is to be, I can't remember exactly how I've had it worded, but I mean it's actually a goal that's been, it's gone to the Board and everything. And it's--we want to be the example or the mentor if you will, or the, or the, what it should look like, the example of what emergency preparedness should look like in our sister universities in the state. So that's the true--the Southern, OIT [Oregon Institute of Technology], Eastern, us-- that's not a huge crowd, not a huge crowd. But we want to get there, and I think we are well on our way to that 'cause we've got a pretty good path lined out, and we've got some good support and things we've done already around that. So I think we can do that and be in a position not just to help us and get us prepared, but get those other people prepared. Then we, when you have your teammates prepared, then you can help each other, right? 'Cause if they're in a bind, and we've got a major state-wide emergency--or even just the western side of the Cascades [Cascade Mountain range]--if we have the huge earthquake, everybody's going to be in a bind, right? If they're not ready, then they can't help anybody; they're the ones sucking resources instead of being able to give resources. So, we want to be part of that, part of that thing that wheree we can kind of bring everybody up to speed on that and get everybody into a good place.

MC: Well, that's an awesome plan, I'll just say.

RC: Oh, well thank you! Thank you!

MC: And, just to wrap anything, wrap it up. Do you have anything else you like to talk about? Either, on this or about, any of your previous experiences?

RC: No, I'm just, I'm really happy to be at Western [Western Oregon University]. I think it's been a good decision and a good fit. And just continue to learn, and, and I've said this since I moved here, well after I got here couple months in and, that this: Western is open and it's inclusive. And--I know you've all heard this--the South thinks they have the cornered market on hospitality, and it's just not true! I mean, people here are very nice and very hospitable, and it's just some great, great place to be. I'm sure y'all probably think the same thing, or you wouldn't still be here. [Chuckles]

RC: Yeah, yeah. I mean everything's got its little negative stuff that comes up, but overall it's really great place, and great people who care about, who care about y'all: the students.

MC: All right, well, that wraps everything up.

RC: All done.

MC: So, thank you very much.

BC: Thank you.

RC: You're welcome. You're welcome.

[End transcription]