

Western Oregon University
Digital Commons@WOU

Oral Histories of Western Oregon University

Department of History

1-30-2020

Hamid Behmard Interview 2020

Nicholas H. Sieber

Western Oregon University, nsieber17@mail.wou.edu


Ben Thompson

Western Oregon University, blthompson15@mail.wou.edu

Garak Garza

Western Oregon University, ggarza19@mail.wou.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/oralhistoriesofwou>

 Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Other Mathematics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hamid Behmard Interview 2020, Interviewed by James Owens, Cee Nicholas H. Sieber, Ben Thompson, Garak Garza, Western Oregon University Oral Histories, Hamersly Library, Western Oregon University, January 30, 2020

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of History at Digital Commons@WOU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories of Western Oregon University by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@WOU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@wou.edu, kundas@mail.wou.edu, bakersc@mail.wou.edu.



Hamid Behmard Interview

HB: Hamid Behmard

NS: Nick Sieber

BT: Ben Thompson

GG: Garak Garza

Audit/ Edit: Nick Sieber; 2020, Ben Thompson; 2020, Garak Garza; 2020

January 30th, 2020

Starting at 00:00:00

NS: [Beginning of interview introduction is cut off] Professor Hamard Bernard...

HB: It's actually Hamid Behmard.

NS: Hamid Behmard, sorry.

HB: That's fine.

NS: The Chair of Mathematics in the Division of Natural Science and Mathematics. The date is January 30th 2020. The interview is being conducted in the Natural Science Chair office, room 104. My name is Nick Sieber, and I'm here with Ben Thompson, and Garak Garza. We are conducting this interview as part of the Oral Histories of WOU[Western Oregon University] project in Dr. Jensen's 410 Introduction to Public History class, and the first question we have for you today is when did you start working at Western?

HB: So I started working at Western Oregon University in 1999 and... so I actually taught here for one summer I believe in 1996 I taught two of their Masters classes and then when I finished my Ph.D. in 1999 they had actually two positions open and I applied for it and I got one of them, and then the other one actually did not get filled up and then it disappeared that's how . . . when there are positions that are open and if it doesn't get filled there is a high possibility that it will go away, yeah.

NS: And what were the circumstances that led you to come to work at Western?

HB: So I think a lot of faculty have this situation that they have a two body problem so their—so I was—so my wife and I we both got our degrees from Oregon State [University] and she got her Masters from Oregon State in Statistics, and she was working actually for the Salem Hospital in the Quality Control Department, so finding a job in a different state meant that the whole family had to move. So, it was convenient to have a place that we were both working but it was also that since I knew about Western Oregon University's culture I strongly wanted to work here instead of going to somewhere that I didn't know the people there so that was part of the reason that I chose to stay here.

NS: Have you had a different position here since being at Western?

HB: So I started being a faculty then—six years ago 2014, I ran for the division chair, so Natural Science and Mathematics Division has four departments. It has Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Physical Sciences which includes Physics, and Mathematics so I got elected by the division, so when you are the division chair you are working half of the year half time as an Administrator and then the other half you are still teaching so that's kind of a little bit different than being a faculty only.

NS: Oh, thank you.

HB: Yeah

BT: So, what is the basis of your job here at Western?

HB: So, again since there are two parts. There is the teaching part and then there is the administrative part. For the teaching part of course you have your classes to teach that is about 18 credits for the division chair. So, it turns out to be about five classes. That's 20, so the next year you would teach a little less, maybe four classes. So, it kind of evens out for two years to be thirty six. The other 18 credits that half F.T.E. [Full-time equivalent] that you work as an administrative you do really a wide array of things. So, a big part of it is just answering emails. From faculty and students and then all the other colleagues that you have across the campus, when they need something. So, the division's chair position is a liaison between the division and the Dean. So, Dean wants things to be done. They don't directly go to faculty they relay these messages through the Division Chair. So, in our division we have about 50 faculty, we have, let's see, six staff. So, Math Department has one APA, that is administrative program assistant. And then, Natural Science has one. And then we have four Lab Preparators. So, we have two Lab Preparators that work for Biology, one for Earth Science and one for Chemistry. And, so, almost all the related jobs for faculty and staff comes to the Division Chair. That includes ~~the~~ making sure all the salary is all correct. Making sure they have no concerns about their working

conditions. Then there are issues- are between- that's actually the worst part of this job, is when the students come here with complaints about faculty. You have to deal with that. And, so you, so this part is the one I think is very important because after all we are here for students. So, when we get to these points that are complaints about faculty, it's taken very seriously. We have a process how to deal with that. Then there are parts which are related to taking care of the business, like for an example, as you know we have a new Gen Ed [General Education] came in. So, all the curriculum changes, all has to go through the Division Chair. So, these are kind of summary of the things that we do here as part of that administrative work.

BT: So, you personally what is a typical work day for you?

HB: So, a typical work day is, you start really with emails and everyday two to three hours you are reading emails and answering emails. I also do teach my classes and this takes me, so for two-hour class I spend a good two to three hours outside the class. Have to prep for the classes, I post my notes on Moodle, [Online Teaching Platform] so preparing the notes and posting them. And then having the homework or quizzes that I have assigned to my grader or doing it myself. All of this takes a good couple hours for two to three hours of the class. And then there are multiple meetings that we have. So, every Tuesday we have meetings with the Dean and then usually I have meetings with the faculty or the department heads. We have four departments so the department heads usually have meetings with me concerning different things, scheduling of the classes, if there are needs for new faculty. Talking about this, how should we approach this; Right now, for example we have two faculty positions open. Right now, in GIS [Geographic Information Systems], which is part of the Earth Science and then one in Chemistry. So, really a typical day is dealing with all of these, and then also dealing with budget. Budget is a very big part of what we do, so making sure that we are not going into red is a big part. And also, I help with running the Science Center, which I started it when I became the Division Chair. So, making sure that tutors have everything that they need. Also collecting all the data about the students that come to get help. Reporting these to the Dean and Provost because after all they are the ones that authorize the budget for the Science Center. So, typical day is really dealing with all of these different parts.

BT: So, what is the most interesting experience that you have had while working here at Western?

HB: So, for me actually was this position as the Division Chair was the most interesting because I had very little idea about what happened in the science classes. So, I had no idea about the labs in Chemistry or Biology. So, learning about what my colleagues do in the labs, and what is involved has been very interesting and a good learning experience. You actually learn how to find ways to deal with the challenging situations. A lot of times money is short, there are issues that happen that you have to find ways to resolve them. A lot of time faculty when there are challenging situations, they end up here being very unhappy. So, finding ways to help them to resolve those problems are challenging but also very interesting.

GG: [Clears throat] What are your plans and goals at Western, now and for the future?

HB: So, my position is changing because this is my sixth year as a Division Chair, so next year actually I am not going to be the Division Chair anymore, usually we have to limit for the Division Chair. I actually applied for a sabbatical and I did receive it so, so the last six years, I have not been able to do any research in my area. So, my research area is in Signal Processing. So, I would like to get back to that and started to do some research. There were some unfinished research that I had. I would like to get back to those and finish them up hopefully publish articles and also go to some of the conferences that we have in these areas.

GG: Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences working here?

HB: Yes, I would actually like to explain one thing that I did not expect that. So, as I explained half of the time I do administrative work and half of the time I do the teaching. So, a lot of time when you are doing administrative work it becomes very challenging and sometimes

you feel quite empty. So, you really get to a point that you feel like you are lacking in energy. It is very interesting that when I go to my classes and I teach, so usually my classes are two hour blocks. After that two-hour class, I am completely energized again. Spending time with students working with them and my classes are very interactive. I have work sheets, so I do a short lecture of ten minutes. And you know Mathematics can become very, very boring so you really have to make it in a way that keeps the students engaged. So, I teach a lot of the classes for our CS [Computer Science] students the Math for CS students. I have worksheets for them. I do a short lecture, then they start working on the worksheets individually then they compare their work as a group. So, it's very interactive and engaging so usually that is a very fun part. So, I think if I want just to be administrative, it would not go well. So, having that half time being able to teach has been very, very helpful.

NS: So, you prefer teaching over the administrative portion of your job...

HB: I like both but I think its just doing administrative work is hard on your psyche [All chuckle] so it is very helpful to be able to teach. Just interacting with students is very energizing I really enjoy that part. Yeah.

NS: Well thank you very much for your time today.

HB: Thank you very much, good luck with your classes.

NS: Thank you.

Ends 00:13:29