

## DU ORAL HISTORY 1984-2014

**Interviewee:** Barry Hughes

**Interviewer:** James R. (Jim) Griesemer

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Transcriber: Terry L. Zdrale

### Transcript

- Introduction: [00:00](#) Series introduction.
- Jim Griesemer: [00:19](#) Welcome to the University of Denver's oral history. Our series begins in the mid 1980's when DU was on the brink of bankruptcy and continues to 2014 with the university, a regional academic leader poised for national prominence. The interviews in this series present a panorama of progress against steep odds. They're stories told by men and women who were personally involved in saving the university and undertaking an extraordinary process of renewal. We've divided our story into three parts. The first being, DU's severe financial crisis of the 1980's then the dramatic financial turnaround in the early 1990's followed by a decade of remarkable growth and renewal. Our guest is Professor Barry Hughes, who's been at the University of Denver throughout this period and who has made major contributions to DU in several capacities. Barry welcome to DU's oral history.
- Barry Hughes: [01:23](#) Thanks very much, Jim. Glad to be here. Honored to be here.
- Jim Griesemer: [01:27](#) so well, let's begin at the beginning. How did you come to join University of Denver in the first place?
- Barry Hughes: [01:33](#) I came in 1980. I had a mathematics and international studies kind of background. I was at Case Western Reserve University in the 1970's for a decade. And the School of International Studies, the Graduate School of International Studies then was called at that time, was a good fit for me because it's an interdisciplinary program and it deals with the kinds of things that I was already getting involved in, in terms of looking at global change.
- Jim Griesemer: [02:00](#) and then when, what year did you come to DU?

- Barry Hughes: [02:02](#) I came in 1980,
- Jim Griesemer: [02:04](#) 1980. So, when you came to the university was a period of gathering clouds and early in your career at DU the financial crisis really began to unfold. As, as a young professor were you aware of it and if so, what was your reaction?
- Barry Hughes: [02:29](#) Actually, I, I, I'm naive on lots of fronts, Jim. And, even though I had been told by some of my colleagues that DU was a somewhat risky place when I was at Case Western because of the low level of the endowment. I, I came, I was happy here. And, when the clouds became obvious to me it was a bit of a surprise and a shock. Obviously. It, it, threw into some question whether I should stay.
- Jim Griesemer: [02:57](#) Did you think about going somewhere else?
- Barry Hughes: [02:59](#) Well, I was actually recruited to some considerable degree by the University of Maryland at College Park and about 1985, just at the beginning of this. And, and I remember at that time asking myself about this hard decision. It was a good program out there and I, I made a contact with Roger Campbell, admissions, undergraduate admissions officer at that time and went over to his office at the bottom of Mary Reed at that time in an incredibly smoke filled room with, with Roger and, and asked him, what he thought our prospects were. We talked for some considerable time about a demographic change in the university and, and he convinced me that there was a, a reasonably good chance he didn't sugar-coat it, but a reasonably good chance that we were going to make it through this quite comfortably, after some time. A hard decision, but I decided to stay.
- Jim Griesemer: [03:57](#) Well that was to DU's benefit. In spite of DU's financial issues at the time, you were moving forward with academic programs. Could you talk a little bit?
- Barry Hughes: [04:08](#) Yeah. Actually, the school, graduate school of international studies, at that time was almost entirely a PhD program with a few terminal Masters along the line, but it was really oriented towards a small number of students. And it also became fairly obvious to me at that time that the economic viability of such a program was, was somewhat questionable in this, in this environment. We needed to

expand the Master's program, which many of my colleagues understood and we also needed, in my mind, an undergraduate program in international studies. So at that time, I actually, with the support of the dean, obviously, sought out funding from the Department of Education to begin an undergraduate international studies program in the university.

Jim Griesemer: [04:55](#)

When would that have been? Barry?

Barry Hughes: [04:56](#)

It was, I mean, it's around 84, 85 just at the beginning again, of, of, our understanding of the, of the situation more generally around the university.

Barry Hughes: [05:10](#)

But I already was seeing some of the issues inside GSIS. So I was able to get the grant. I worked for a year or two actually in formulating the program, had the dean's approval and only at that time did it come to my attention that required university approval, also. I was a bit of a surprise to me because I had no idea what the administrative processes were, but I was brought in front of the Undergraduate Council of the university and given quite a grilling on this program. The expectation of, of, academic programs at that time was very disciplinary. And I remember being asked more than once. What kind of a discipline international studies really was? And I've always been focused as you know, as you well know, on interdisciplinary programs, on integration of academic areas. So, with some difficulties but not probably dramatic ones, it was approved. Within a fairly short time. A few years became actually the second largest major in the in the undergraduate programs of the university. It's still very large. I don't know where exactly where it ranks. One of my first students was Marjorie Smith, who is now a vice chancellor. Is that her official title, of international programs, a wonderful woman, and we've had all kinds of good graduates from that program.

Jim Griesemer: [06:34](#)

So, that new program was really instrumental at the time in helping DU build it's, it's overall enrollment.

Barry Hughes: [06:43](#)

Yeah. I actually, I think we contributed. I don't think so. Any questions?

- Jim Griesemer: [06:45](#) Yeah. And, and in addition to starting this program, which, which grew pretty rapidly, you took on some university wide administrative responsibilities, how did, how did that happen?
- Barry Hughes: [06:58](#) Well in 1990, I was, I received a phone call from Bill Zaranka, provost, who invited me to come in and talk about the position of vice provost for graduate studies. And I have to admit again to my naiveté because I'm not even quite sure why he called me. I assume it had something to do with that undergraduate program, but then to be invited to look at the, the graduate, a vice provost position. I, I don't, I still to this day don't know exactly how I came to his attention, but, yes, it was 1990. I was invited to, to take that position and again, after some considerable reflection, decided to do it.
- Jim Griesemer: [07:40](#) Well. How did you, how did you enjoy the position?
- Barry Hughes: [07:44](#) The first two years, uh, given the fact that I didn't really know what the position was really about were, were especially challenging because one of the first things that happened to me was when Jackie Kamer, who was then the executive support person for that program, and I sat down, she explained to me that one of my jobs was, allocating graduate assistant-ships across the university. So building spreadsheets, figuring out where the enrollments were, where the money was going. And then finding out that after I tried to move two from one place to another place, I got all kinds of push back from the deans involved. It didn't make any sense to me. And it wasn't, it wasn't exactly a happy time in my life. So, at that point, given what was going on in the university with the decentralization of budgets, it made all the sense in a world to turn those graduate assistants into budgetary line items within the respective units, and to let them decide exactly how many of those positions and how, how to fund them. So that's, that was a major of relieving a burden on my shoulders.
- Jim Griesemer: [08:58](#) and then that allowed you to focus on other things and in other areas. And this is I think really quite important because we're now moving into the period that we've called a tide of renewal in the university. Lots of things started happening and you were a major part of that. Can you talk about some of those?

- Barry Hughes: [09:15](#) It was obvious to me that first of all, our graduate programs could be built up around the university with higher enrollments and graduate programs often are counter cyclical economically with respect to economic cycles in the broader economy and even with respect to undergraduate programs. So we needed more graduate enrollments and I thought one of the best ways of achieving that besides supporting existing programs was to build new ones. And there was a lot of prospect, I thought for, again, interdisciplinary programs, cutting across units. We instituted a flexible dual degree program, to let people take more than one master's program simultaneously. We introduced a wide variety of new graduate programs from logistics to digital media studies to a master's degree in professional psychology. I mean, there were a large number that we, we brought through again this time, the graduate council and instituted and built enrollment for around the university. I, I don't, I can't even count that because there were a large number in Daniels. In a business school, there were a significant number in a Korbel school. Then GSIS, they, they were being built around the university.
- Jim Griesemer: [10:43](#) How did you interact with the deans and how did you encourage, and I know for a fact you did, people to think in innovative, innovative program?
- Barry Hughes: [10:53](#) Well, the environment was right because the environment had begun to empower local administrative units, academic units. Decentralization of budgets, transparency with respect to budgets, gain share opportunities. The potential that you and Dan and so many others at the university had put in place to support local academic units also empowered them and incentivized them to do this. So sitting down with them, giving them some examples of programs that were coming online and in place made it possible to really get their involvement and their support and doing this. I mean, it wasn't something that came just from the top, obviously. They had to want these programs. They had to think through what would work in the market and for their existing students and put the proposals on the table.
- Jim Griesemer: [11:54](#) It was a very exciting time. We both recall. Yeah. Well, in spite of your success and it was considerable in a senior administrative role, you chose to move back to the

academic realm. When would that have been and what led you back to the, to the academic side?

Barry Hughes: [12:16](#)

Well, I had continued even as a university administrator to work on a computer software system called International Futures, which looks at long-term global change and helps people think about long-term global change. I'd continued that and I'd written a couple of books about it. Uh, even in the 1990's in the evenings and weekends.

Jim Griesemer: [12:39](#)

Even early on.

Barry Hughes: [12:39](#)

Yeah. Yeah. And between 1998 and 2003 roughly, a number of opportunities started coming my way. First opportunity was actually an invitation to go to Brussels and to meet with people at the European Union there. The European Union has a series of what they call framework programs. They sponsor academic, innovative academic activities across institutions within Europe. And I was brought into a program that had 12 European institutions and us. And, it was, it was exciting because we were working with what was then called the new economy, the information and communications technology supported economic transformations that we were seeing around the world. And, and to think about how those were affecting Europe and the world more generally. So it was a good program and it lasted about three years, took me to various institutions around Europe.

Jim Griesemer: [13:40](#)

Okay. And then did that lead to other opportunities, things, these things tend to build on, on each other? Can you talk about that a little bit?

Barry Hughes: [13:47](#)

Well, at about the same time, actually, I was invited to Washington and brought into a group on the analytical side of I want to emphasize of the CIA and, and asked again about how that tool, the International Futures system could support some of, their looking at, at strategic environmental change for the United States. And that led to a connection which at in the year 2000 or 2001, when I was coming back from the European Union, I was asked to stop in Washington and meet with somebody named Ambassador Robert Hutchings, who was the head at that time of, of the National Intelligence Council. National Intelligence Council is a peak intelligence organization reporting to the

director of intelligence. And every four years they do a report to the President, either returning or, or our new President. But that's been called global trends. And looking at the international security environment, again, for the US under different scenarios. And they asked me at that time to participate in the one that they were, that they had started and I actually supported, participated in with this system, this International Futures forecasting system, the next three of those. So that was beginning also to come online. So by 2000, and that was shortly after my stopping in Washington at the National Intelligence Council, I realized that too many things were pressing on me and I really needed to ask to be relieved from the, from the administrative post.

Jim Griesemer: [15:30](#)

Okay. And then I know you were traveling around using the, the, what was then the new International Futures tool. Today we, you had a center. I think the story is an interesting one about how those connections led to the creation of the center that, you now had.

Barry Hughes: [15:56](#)

Well, some of those things that I was doing, the books that were out. the European project, the Washington, actually I think especially the Washington project, brought me to the attention of an organization called Rand, which is a think tank with major headquarters out in Santa Monica. And I was invited by a group there to come out in 2003 to make a presentation of what we were doing in front of a group called the Pardee Center out there. Frederick Pardee was the founder of that.

Barry Hughes: [16:29](#)

And I had enough truthba I guess, to suggest that maybe Pardee would enjoy coming in to the, to the meeting where we were talking about things. And he and I hit it off very well. It turns out that after a couple of years, our relationship continued to develop and he began to support some of our activities here at the University of Denver. And I think it was about 2006 or eight. I, I lose track of the years a little bit. But in that period, we began to talk about and then institute the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures here at the University.

Jim Griesemer: [17:10](#)

Well, the Pardee Center is something for which DU is today, known globally. For our viewers who may not be familiar with it though, in terms of details, could you talk about how the center, what you do, how it's evolved and the



areas that you focus on and the, and the folks that you do work.

Jim Griesemer: [17:35](#)

Okay. The Pardee Center is built heavily around this International Futures system, which is a, an integrated set of models across multiple issue areas, economics, demographics, energy, agriculture, governance, some environmental impacts obviously including climate change. And that integrated system can be used by all kinds of, of organizations and governments. And it has been of interest to a variety of international organizations, including the World Bank, the United Nations. Obviously, again the European Union, but a new project we've just begun with the African Union actually in support of, of some of their activities. And it's also been of interest to national governments, including again, within the U S government. But also governments like Peru, South Africa, Egypt, uh, Uzbekistan. We're working pretty actively right now with something called the United Nations Development Program, which, there's a branch of the UN has a particular interest in something called the sustainable development goals. That's a set of, of global goals that have been widely accepted by countries around the world, as things that we should try to achieve as early as 2030 if possible, but certainly thereafter, reduction of poverty, elimination of hunger, provision of water and sanitation, better governance, controlling climate change. And the UNDP has connected us with a number of national governments, also.

Jim Griesemer: [19:16](#)

I think it's interesting that your, your history, your professional history and the center really blends academic research, but in, in the service of dealing with world problems. It's, it's not only a great contribution, but I imagine it has to be satisfying for you to work on that.

Barry Hughes: [19:40](#)

It is because I'm going all the way back to your earlier question about coming to the University of Denver. I realized fairly early on after my PhD that working in a kind of traditional disciplinary environment focused on theory and, relatively narrowly constrained focus of attention just was not my thing. I and I needed to, to broaden the scope needed to be more interdisciplinary and to tie it to the applied world to try to do something of service.



- Jim Griesemer: [20:22](#) We, you, you mentioned earlier areas that you look at in attempting to assess the impact of policy and future conditions. Could you talk a little bit about what are, what are some of those major areas and what their importance is to various countries?
- Barry Hughes: [20:41](#) Yeah. I often think about them in terms of three, what I, sometimes domains of issues and these correspond again, back to the sustainable development goals to a large degree. The first one is human development and that involves education and health and a basic level of income escaping poverty for people. If you do that, you empower people to move on and accomplish things on their own. And, we've got a lot of work to do around the world, billion people who are still in poverty and hunger around the world.
- Barry Hughes: [21:17](#) A second domain is governance and sociopolitical elements. And again, it's to some degree in an empowerment issue because you need, you need, governance, which is the relationship between people and government to be not corrupt, to be transparent and to be effective. And so though that is another set of issue areas in the second domain of really a government improvement or governance improvement.
- Barry Hughes: [21:44](#) And the third one is sustainability. You, we need to be thinking about the next generations in terms of avoiding, runaway climate change, of dealing with water problems, localized air and other pollution. So, the sustainability is the third domain and these three together are highly interactive. The study of the sustainable development goals and our work with international organizations and national governments is pretty focused to a large degree, not just on each one individually, but on their interaction.
- Jim Griesemer: [22:20](#) As you think about the world, recognizing that different countries are at various stages in these domains that you described, what is, what is sort of your personal take on, on how, how the world is going in the terms that you all think about this.
- Barry Hughes: [22:39](#) Some things are going very well. And we really are making a lot of progress on universal, not just primary education, which is through a significant degree achieved around the world. But now moving into universal secondary education.

Healthcare has improved quite dramatically. Life expectancy has been going up just about everywhere after some downturn in Africa with HIV AIDS epidemic for a few years. But there are a lot of advances in human development. The advent, the problems are, as we well know, heavily on the sustainability side. And those are our areas where I, I find myself challenged to be as optimistic as I would like to be as I am on the human development side. So it's a tension between those two that generates an awful lot of the analysis that we, we actually tried to do and help countries with.

Jim Griesemer: [23:39](#)

Well it's been remarkable how, how your center has grown, under, under your leadership and, and now you've passed the baton to others and are, are playing a greater role in the strategic direction. Throughout your career DU, both as an administrator, as an academician and really as a creator of one of the university's major programs, what, as you face the opportunities and challenges, what, what values have guided you, what, what principles, do your sort of rely on as you have to make decisions? Is there, is there sort of a ground, an ethical and intellectual grounding that you sort of heavily relied on?

Barry Hughes: [24:35](#)

I was really glad, Jim, that you, you told me you were going to ask me this question because it gave me a little chance over the last couple of weeks to be thinking about it. And the more I've thought about, I've gone through several iterations of answer to that. And the word empowerment is the one that has kind of come to the top of my mind because education is about empowerment. We try to offer our students support without going overboard and into, into coddling and we try to offer them challenge and that's balanced between support and challenges in my mind, on off a lot of what empowerment is. And it goes over to what does university has gone through in my mind, because the, the combination of those things, the empowerment of people around the university and of the academic units I think was fundamental to the thinking again of Dan and you and others in shaping the environment of the, of the Gainshare of the responsibility that was given to people for their own budget, but also the opportunity to develop new programs and, to make the changes.

- Barry Hughes: [25:50](#) It's that combination of support and incentivization that, and challenge that, that really, I think the empowerment was critical to the turnaround of this institution. And I think it's been important in my, my own academic work and in the center work I try, I've defined myself now as senior scientist and mentor and mentoring is about empowering. It's about providing support and also, and also challenge. I think that that combination is, is critical. Now that leads to lots of other values. Transparency was in my mind, a really important one in this transformation of the institution and in what we do academically. You have to let people know what their situation is. You have to give them some information about their, their expenditures, their revenues, their balance. Institutionally, in terms of what we do in the Pardee Center, uh, it's been critically important to me that we are transparent with respect to the tool.
- Barry Hughes: [26:47](#) We make a publicly available, public source. We're trying to empower people to understand the, again, what's, what's going right and what's not going right and to try to make some decisions. So the, the transparency is a significant part of that. And with that obviously goes the integrity you mentioned. Because you have to trust people, you have to give them support but, and you have to hold them responsible. All of those things together are part of the, of the integrity side of that empowerment. So I, I think though, that cluster of values which your question led me to think about, empowerment is kind of at the top of the list.
- Jim Griesemer: [27:31](#) Well Professor Barry Hughes, thank you so much for joining us. Your contributions to the University have been very significant and continue to be. I hope you'll join us as we continue to look at the remarkable renaissance of the University of Denver. I'm Jim Griesemer. Thank you for watching.