

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley’s webtext, “Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck,” published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck

audio and webtext created by Amelia Chesley for *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*

Full Transcript

[00:00] [Resonant chimes fade in and out again: “Empty Rooms” by _ghost via CC Mixer.]

[00:02] [Amelia Chesley/AC] Two of my senior colleagues retired in 2022, concluding their decades of service to the university where I am now just finishing my third full year. That means I haven't had much time to get to know Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck. But I do know that they are pretty much legends in our small Humanities and Communication department.

[Rising piano arpeggios fade in and out again: “Empty Rooms” by _ghost via CC Mixer.]

[00:27] Dr. Landis-Groom has been involved with our growing campus and department for more than 30 years. She not only went above and beyond mentoring and advising students—she was the backbone of our creative writing course offerings, and, for decades, she led students from across campus in producing a literary magazine, *The Black Box*. On top of this, she created and maintained the first writing center tutoring program that our campus ever had.

[00:54] Dr. Angela Beck developed much of the curriculum for our technical writing courses, instituted an intensive integrated capstone course with the College of Engineering, and served as beloved chair of the department. Her influence and impact cannot be overstated.

[01:11] Both have taught thousands of undergraduates, served tirelessly in many corners of our campus community, and offered their wisdom and friendship to dozens of current and former faculty.

[Melodic piano fades in and plays under narration: “Nine Count” by Blue Dot Sessions.]

To me, they've been most graceful, powerful examples of women in academia. I'm going to miss them.

[01:34] I'm Amelia Chesley. currently teaching business communication, technical writing, and a little bit of humanities at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in the beautiful high desert of Prescott, Arizona.

In the months before Dr. Landis-Groom and Dr. Beck would leave their desks and go on to enjoy their hard-earned rest, I set out to capture some of their stories and advice. I asked about their scholarly and professional experience, their favorite memories, their greatest challenges and greatest successes. I asked them what they wanted to be remembered for.

I wanted to know how the institution and the program have changed over the years and their opinions on those changes. I wanted to make a record.

[02:20] [Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott](#) is not exactly a notable research institution. We are a small, teaching-focused service department with no writing or rhetoric majors. And these two scholars are not widely known in the disciplines of composition and technical writing. But they have each made monumental contributions here. Their memories as shared with me provide a unique lens on what the last few decades of teaching in these fields have been like. These interviews emphasize for

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley’s webtext, “Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck,” published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

me the priceless value of lore and institutional memory in higher education. The successes and the progress and the improvements that we make in our pedagogy and in our scholarship—they don't just happen. All of it takes effort. And even what looks like steady progress comes with ups and downs.

These interviews have shown me that I am part of something bigger, more communal, and beyond the limits of my own experience.

[03:18] My conversations with both Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck took place on May 3, 2022. Prior to each interview, I sent both colleagues a short list of questions as starting points. Dr. Landis-Groom preferred not to be recorded, so I've incorporated her stories into my narrative framing as meaningfully and accurately as possible based on my notes and follow-ups with her. In this full audio piece, you'll hear clips from my recording of one interview...

[Angela Beck/AB] So I’m Angela Beck-- is that a good sound check?

["Nine Count" fades in once more under the narration.]

[AC] ...and my own paraphrased renditions of Eileen Landis-Groom’s stories. In the accompanying webtext, I've also included a timeline of key moments from these scholars’ careers before and since they've become Embry-Riddle faculty.

[04:05] I haven't included everything from my interviews in this edited, reorganized and remediated record, (because that would be impractical). But this is a few of the threads of their stories gathered together with mine.

["Nine Count" fades up, then fades out.]

[04:34] Eileen Landis-Groom completed an undergraduate degree at [Bucknell University](#), as an English major in the early '70s. For her Master of Arts, she continued studying English at Western Washington University-- and there she found teaching so enjoyable, so rewarding, that she just had to find ways to keep doing it. She took substitute teaching jobs and later joined a teaching program that sent her to Venezuela for 2 years, where she worked with students and colleagues from all over the world. Eventually, she pursued a doctorate at Idaho State University—an interdisciplinary Doctorate of Arts degree that allowed her a chance to deeply explore literature, creative writing, novels by and about women, composition theory, and pedagogy. And of course, to do more teaching. She completed that doctorate in 1985.

["Nine Count" fades in; music continues under the narration.]

The next year she took a position at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

[05:29] Not long at all after that, I started kindergarten about 700 miles away to the north. And as I was learning to read and write and play the piano after school, Angela Beck was studying linguistics as an undergraduate and master's student in Southern California.

["Nine Count" fades out.]

[AB] I studied Applied Linguistics as an undergraduate at San Diego State University. And that included a minor in Japanese, which I have not used. [laughter] But I went from there straight into the Masters, still at San Diego State, under Ann Johns, Dr. Ann Johns, and this was in the mid to late '80s.

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

This was when genre was becoming the thing for teaching students how to read and write. And there was a growing awareness of the sociocultural nature of reading and writing.

When I finished with my Master's there, I wanted to go do a doctorate study, and I had my choice between a full ride at Berkeley or working my way through Northern Arizona University. And Ann Johns said, "You will go to Northern Arizona University," [laughter] "so you can work with my colleagues, Bill Grabe and Federicka Stoller and Mary McGroarty."

And I am so glad she put her foot down, because she was absolutely right. They were on the forefront of some of the sociocognitive, neurolinguistics, cognitive linguistics studies in composition theory. So I went to Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, got my doctorate there in '99.

While there and also while at San Diego State, I was able to teach as a graduate teaching assistant, and I loved it so much that I started teaching part-time as an adjunct for NAU, until I came to Embry-Riddle in fall 2002, where I have earned my tenure and promotion. And the day that I earned my tenure and promotion, the department said, "You are now our department chair!"

[07:36] **[AC]** Most folks I talk to also think that Eileen Landis-Groom served as department chair, but when I asked her to confirm the lineage of Humanities and Communication department chairs, she clarified that no she hadn't. For several years, she did chair the Aerospace Studies program; she also held plenty of other leadership and service positions, starting very early on in her career here. You'll hear a little bit more about all those endeavors later.

[08:04] **[AB]** So Eileen might have told you, Embry-Riddle purchased this campus 40 years ago, more than 40 years ago, from Prescott College, which is a small liberal arts college that still exists downtown. And all the buildings—every single building—was tiny, little slump block buildings. And I cannot believe the physical change in the campus in the last 20 years. The quality and size of the dormitories, the quality of the library building, oh my gosh—when they first opened the library, we had graduation on campus and we marched—after graduation, everyone just marched up to the library and they had the grand opening. It was fantastic. Fantastic! The building that we are in and some of the other STEM buildings did not exist.

Just try to imagine—gently sloping hills with slump-block buildings that look like a military base. It really did. There were none of the athletic fields, half the parking lots weren't here. The chapel where I got married was not here. Health Services was much smaller. It just, it's incredible the growth to try to keep up with the student population. And so I'm really proud of administration for dumping as much money as they have into new buildings.

[Solemn but slightly twangy music fades in: "Precarity" by airtone via CC Mixer.]

[09:19] **[AC]** New buildings often displace old buildings. Eileen Landis-Groom's very first office building has long since been torn down. And even when there are no old buildings to tear down, we tear up the land, cut down the trees. The new things often push out whatever things came before.

When I was hired at Embry-Riddle in 2020, Eileen Landis-Groom, knowing that she would be retiring soon, gave up her central office—room 314 in our main academic building—so that I could settle into the department properly.

[“Precarity” by airtone fades in once more, playing underneath the narration.]

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley’s webtext, “Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck,” published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

With her new office somewhere distant and what with all the COVID precautions that year, I barely saw Eileen around as I got to know my new institution. But she sent me a very sweet email that October: “I wanted to tell you,” she wrote, “that this is the time of year when you will be seeing ravens doing all sorts of aerobatics and often flying just a foot away from your window. It’s quite amazing.” Now that I’ve spent 3 years in that office, with its grand picture window facing west, I definitely agree.

[“Nine Count” fades in and continues under this narration.]

I can only assume Eileen welcomed the brand new assistant professor Angela Beck just as warmly in 2002—which, as it happens, was the same year that I graduated from high school and began my own academic journeys as an undergraduate at Utah State University. I had no idea then that I would major in Technical and Professional Writing, much less that I would be teaching it myself someday.

[“Nine Count” music fades out.]

[10:55] [AB] When I first stepped on this campus, the person who interviewed me was Dr. Patric McElwain. And Patric took me on a walking tour of the campus, which is very different than the current campus. And I remember standing outside the DLC Auditorium, on the hill above the DLC auditorium and looking out towards Flagstaff, that 99-mile view that you can see all the way to Flagstaff, and I told him, just blurted out, “I can feel myself teaching here; I feel at home here.” And the next day I had an offer. And so that’s a treasured memory of mine.

[11:29] [AC] I have my own treasured memory of the building Angela mentions there, the Davis Learning Center. Dr. Beck was the chair of the search committee that brought me out for a campus interview. And after my teaching demonstration in one of the DLC classrooms, Angela walked me from there to the campus Visitor Center where I’d be given my own official walking tour of campus. She praised the short lesson that I’d just given on document design and resumes and remarked that I had interacted with the students as if I’d known them for weeks. She was telling me that I already belonged there.

I didn’t get my offer the very next day, but when it did come, and when I ultimately decided to accept it and move back west, I did feel a little bit like I was coming home.

[Soft xylophone and plucked strings fades in: “True Shape” by Blue Dot Sessions; music fades out again.]

[12:16] [AB] A not so treasured memory of mine, or a shocking memory, is the day I came to sign my contract 3 months later. So in April, you sign your contract for the next academic year. And I came and the—my dean at the time, Dr. Richard Bloom—I literally had the pen in my hands to sign the paper contract and he said, “By the way, we need a General Education coordinator. You’ll take that task, won’t you?” And I’m a junior faculty, literally, physically signing my contract, and of course I said, “Um, Yes?” So I had to learn everything I could about general education programs in the next three months. That was not on my trajectory.

[12:56] [AC] There were unexpected trajectories for Eileen Landis-Groom, also. At one point early in her time here, as the result of what she calls “kind of a fluke,” she lived on the Prescott Campus, near the Chancellor’s house, just a short walk from the main campus buildings. Serendipitously enough, this housing option was available and cheaper than her apartment in Prescott Valley at the time.

[Upbeat xylophone and plucked strings play under the narration: “TwoPound” by Blue Dot Sessions.]

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley’s webtext, “Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck,” published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

Back then, everyone had to wear many hats in the department. Eileen emphasized that everyone taught first-year writing, and for several years everyone also advised students in the various aviation and engineering programs.

The whole campus was smaller then, and the local area far less developed around it. Eileen remembers seeing and hearing coyotes all over the trails and the scrub land to the north. Today there are two or three subdivisions and municipal buildings and highways sprawling out into that space. But some of the trails are still there. I wonder if, in my occasional hiking excursions, perhaps I’ve walked my two small pugs through the same desert patches where Eileen and her dog Beanie may have walked 30 years ago.

Eileen feels strongly about keeping at least some of the acreage around our campus open and undeveloped—not only because it’s better for the land and animals and ecosystems of that space, but also for the beauty of it.

[Plucked cello strings fade up and away again: “TwoPound” by Blue Dot Sessions.]

[14:24] Eileen loaned me a copy of a rare Embry-Riddle yearbook from 1990. On page 86, we have the profile of the Humanities department, not Humanities and Communication as we call it now, just Humanities.

[Energetic electronic music fades in under this quote: “Perpetuum Mobile” by Kraftamt via CC Mixer.]

[14:44] [AC reading from the yearbook] “In a university such as Embry-Riddle, it is very important that in the midst of all our technical classes, that we never lose contact with a part of ourselves which can only be brought out by the members of the Humanities department. This department, led by Berta Parrish, helps the students of ERAU to see more than just the technical aspects of their lives. The Humanities Department consists of the English department of the school, as well as the Social Sciences, including History and Psychology. It is through this department that the students learn about life in a more open-minded way. It is also through this program that the students are able to strip away some of the narrow-minded technical bonds controlling their lives and allowing them to experience Embry-Riddle in a way that is sometimes comforting, sometimes disturbing, but always educational. It is also through this program, the closest thing to a liberal arts program offered through the school, that the students discover what their lives can become, rather than what their lives will become.”

[“Perpetuum Mobile” fades out.]

Eileen shows up in two photographs on this page, with captions that emphasize her friendships with faculty, and students.

[15:52] [AC] The department hosted all kinds of events, in those days. Eileen remembers film screenings, poetry readings, and a creative arts night for students and faculty to show off their artistic talents.

[16:04] The other notable page in this yearbook is all about *The Black Box*, which at the time was a very new student organization. I’ll read what it says.

[Electronic music fades in again: “Perpetuum Mobile” by Kraftamt via CC Mixer.]

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

[AC reading from the yearbook] "*The Black Box* began in 1988 as a small group of students who liked to write creatively and noticed a wealth of creative talent hidden behind fronts of technical barricades erected in the minds of their fellow students. Knowing that these barricades were not only uncomfortable but unhealthy as well, they decided that something had to be done. As a result of this need to express oneself, this group organized a club to gather any creative works that could be squeezed from the masses on campus-- poems, stories, photographs, cartoons, sketches, anything. Somehow the name *The Black Box* was affixed to the group because they, like a flight data recorder black box, were to record events and unusual attitudes which transposed around them. An alarming response ensued, and one page, then two, then three started appearing in a section of the campus newspaper. In the spring of 1989, with the consensus of the Student Government Association and Humanities faculty, *The Black Box* was to be run for one semester as a student service organization.

"The response to *The Black Box* as a bi-semester publication was overwhelming, and at the end of the '89 spring semester, the student government unanimously voted in *The Black Box* as a permanent service organization, entitled to all of the privileges stipulated in the SGA bylaws. *The Black Box* is presently a well-staffed, student-run organization which produces a bi-semester magazine featuring works of art and writings of the students of ERAU–Prescott."

[“Perpetuum Mobile” by Kraftamt fades out gradually.]

[17:46] Until this semester, *The Black Box* magazine had been on hiatus for a few semesters, but we're not going to let it die. In fact, one of my colleagues and I have just put the finishing touches on the layout for a new double issue to come out in the next couple of weeks.

[Chiming music fades in: “True Shape” by Blue Dot Sessions.]

Our campus is still quite small, but in Eileen's stories it feels even smaller and tight-knit.

[“True Shape” fades out.]

[18:13] [AB] So when I first came here, the university was fairly small, just under 2000 students. So that was, again, in 2002. When I earned my tenure, we then hit the Great Recession-- so this was 2008. We have grown tremendously in the past 5 years now that we're out of the Great Recession, and our student population, which dipped to 1,400—we went from 2,000 when I joined to 1,400 at the Great Recession—now we're at 4,000 students, all of which have to take three COM classes and at least one Humanities class. And we support all that.

[Plucked strings and chimes plays under the narration, then fades out: “True Shape” by Blue Dot Sessions.]

[18:47] [AC] Working with colleagues in our department and across our campus, Eileen Landis-Groom supported her own students-- and other people's students-- in becoming strong and confident writers. She also supported other faculty in learning about Writing Across the Curriculum. She developed workshops and even a campus newsletter all about teaching writing in the disciplines.

In some of the papers Eileen shared with me, I found a 1993 edition of this newsletter. It was six pages long, printed on orange paper, and referenced the previous issue's grammar quiz, which apparently was quite popular with the other faculty.

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

The Writing Center tutoring that Eileen took charge of starting in 1988 took up a great deal of her time. She and other willing faculty volunteered some of their office hours to hold drop-in tutoring sessions for any student—not just their own. Eileen says she learned so much more about aviation accidents than she ever thought possible as part of this tutoring.

Sometimes the Writing Center hours were held in faculty offices, or in the student union, or in whatever other learning spaces on campus. Eileen not only recruited the volunteers, but also organized the schedule, and made it public through contacts at the library and academic support services. This volunteer system of decentralized Writing Center tutoring continued until about 2005, when Eileen says she decided she just couldn't do it anymore.

[20:18] [AC] How long were you the chair?

[AB] Six years. And then, when I was finished being a department chair, I was able to get back into composition studies for more than just reading about it, to actually doing research.

In retrospect, it seems so logical, but at the time, I felt a little bit battered around between my doctoral studies and then coming here, and they had different needs.

I taught values and ethics, I taught Japanese literature... I taught all sorts of things that I'm not so certain [laughter] my degree completely prepared me for.

[AC] Yeah, Japanese literature is not even a course that we offer any more.

[AB] No, no. That's correct.

[Melodic music fades in and continues under the narration: "Nine Count" by CC Mixer.]

[21:00] [AC] Eileen also described some of her favorite assignments that she designed to help students really learn to write for a purpose and not just for a grade. She set up a pen pal exchange with our sister campus in Daytona Beach, Florida. (The rivalry between our campuses was in full swing even back then.) Another assignment involved students writing a letter to a future child, recommending their favorite books. Eileen said these types of assignments helped students move past the "I'm not good at writing" or "I'll never be a good writer" phase.

["Nine Count" fades out again.]

She incorporated authentic writing and experiential learning contexts for many of her classes, sometimes in collaboration with the campus newspaper, and of course *The Black Box*.

She built in a lot of workshopping and peer feedback into her courses, making space for pointed critique, but lots of positive feedback too. It was important to her to create an environment where students felt comfortable and confident asking questions.

[22:04] [AB] We'd had two degree programs that became affiliated with our department when I was chair. One was Mandarin Chinese, because foreign languages were part of our department at that time. And one was Interdisciplinary Studies, which was basically a kind of a liberal arts major, a catch-all major—a "minor in three different subjects and you earn your major" major. And those both migrated out of our department after I stopped being chair. So we are back to a full service department.

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley’s webtext, “Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck,” published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

[AC] So they still exist? I guess Chinese is in Global...

[AB] Yes, Chinese exists in Global Security and Intelligence Studies. Interdisciplinary Studies... I think they finally phased it completely out. They tried moving it hither thither and yon, and there were insufficient numbers of students, so they decided to use other programs for retention, to catch students who are not doing well in their primary programs.

[23:00] [AC] Before the Interdisciplinary Studies degree was called that, it was “Aerospace Studies.” This was the program that Eileen chaired for many years from 1991 to 1998 and again from 2000 to 2001. This position required her to learn a great deal about all the other programs on campus, their course requirements and equivalencies between course offerings. She worked closely with many other faculty and other departments. Eventually, this retention initiative was renamed, and ultimately closed about 5 years ago.

Angela and Eileen both shared with me that the expansion and variety of other degree programs offered is what took the place of the Interdisciplinary Studies program. Embry-Riddle also began accepting more types of transfer credits from other institutions, which helped out students who needed to be a little more flexible or a little more economical with their education.

[23:56] [AB] We have probably twice as many degree programs now than we used to. We did not have Robotics. We did not have any of the Intelligence Studies. We did not have Forensics Biology, we did not have Industrial Psychology, we did not have Physics, we did not have Astronomy, we did not have Mandarin Chinese. We did not have Spanish; we did not have Arabic. So this university has really grown in diversity to serve our nation’s security and to serve science and tech, outside of aviation even.

[Harmonizing xylophone tones fade up and out again: “Empty Rooms” by _ghost via CC Mixer.]

[24:31] [AB] We tried to craft a degree that was interdisciplinary study related, it was a writing degree, and it got shot down. This was like 20 years ago; I was barely involved in that, I have almost no memory of it. It was some sort of a—kind of a general writing degree. And it was shot down because, and I agree now in hindsight, a student could go to any liberal arts university and get a writing degree—why come to Riddle for it? Then we tried to do a technical writing degree and that got shot down because we couldn’t guarantee that we would have the faculty to teach the upper division.

[25:04] [AC] In 2009, there were several discussions in the department about offering a new program—a degree, or at least a few new minors—without adding any new faculty or any new courses, and therefore not costing the university anything extra.

[“True Shape” fades in.]

Nothing came of those discussions at the time, but the discussions have continued, here and there. One of our newest ideas involves creating a User Experience Certificate—one that might serve students in engineering, and psychology, and simulation science, animation, and game design. We’ll see if that one gets off the ground.

[“True Shape” fades out.]

[25:45] [AB] Another one of my best memories was when the College of Engineering came to us my first year here and said, “[ahem] Our students can’t write—do something about it.” [laughter] And I said, “Well...” And actually, I was very pleased they came to us—they recognized the need, they let us go

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

and look at the need, they let me go and look at their papers and documents and sit in on some of their courses. And this was the beginning of the team teaching on campus.

We started with a linked course. So we had a COM 221 Technical Communication course, populated with engineering students who were all enrolled in a particular Engineering Capstone course. So they had their capstone instruction, and then they had me as their communication instruction, and we tried to link the two courses together. It was not successful. Not because the students were terrible, or I was terrible, or the teacher was terrible, but because I was not embedded in the capstone course and I had to get everything at secondhand. "What is it your teacher really wants? What are their expectations?"

So that lasted a semester, and the next semester I asked permission to volunteer extra time, to go sit in and volunteer my services for an engineering course. That was Dr. Ron Madler, who was an Assistant Professor at the time—he certainly was not Dean yet. That was more successful, to the point where when Dean Madler stopped teaching that course the very next semester, he said, "You know, this is a pretty good thing, why don't you try out Jim Helbling?" And so this is how I met my future husband.

[27:18] And that is one of my absolute best memories is the first successful teaming where we had a chance to negotiate duties, we shared very well and communicated very well. It helps that his mother was an English teacher, I think. And he was a good communicator about what his expectations were. He had documentation I could look at, he had sample papers, he had models. He wanted me to lecture; he didn't begrudge me time in the classroom. In fact, he wanted me there for every class, and not just 10 minutes at the beginning of class, or whatever. And so we started this team teaching. And so for 6, 7 years? Nine years—I volunteered without pay, to teach an overload to team teach, until we were finally able to get into the catalog. We were finally able to take a volunteer service project, and make it a required course and put it in the undergraduate catalog.

[AC] But that took 9 years...?

[AB] It took years, it took a lot of discussion between the College of Engineering and our department--fruitful discussion, but discussion. It took a lot of discussion with our Deans at the time, because in order to make this advanced technical communication, 400-level COM class work, they had to fit it into the engineering curriculum. And the only way to fit that in was to take something else out. So they gave up Speech, which in hindsight, was probably not the course to give up. Yeah, but it was that or Values and Ethics and I refused to give up values and ethics. Students need business ethics, period. Especially the engineers.

[AC] Yes.

[29:02] [AB] And one of the primary motives for teaching in the disciplines is to provide our students with the so-called "just in time" teaching. And when the engineers came to us and said, "Our students can't write," what they really meant was, "Our accreditation board, and our board of visitors, and our board of advisors, and our industrial advisory board all came and said your students can't write as well as they could in the discipline. So we want you to fix that... and give them just in time instruction, so that they're more buffed up before they go into their disciplines." That's really what they meant. And that's what we can do for physics. That's what we can do for astronomy; that's what we can do for forensics biology.

So that was one of my best memories, again, is when we finally turned it into a credit-bearing course. And I could get credit for teaching it!

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

Those years and years of work, were generative for me, because I was able to get multiple publications and chapters and conference proceedings, and a husband. [laughter]

[Bright, twinkling arpeggios fade in and under the narration: "reCreation" by airtone via CC Mixer.]

[30:05] [AC] Our current department chair is piloting and developing a linked cornerstone course with the intro to engineering course and our 200-level technical writing course. This is just one of the ways that Angela Beck's program development has rippled out from her initial volunteered linked course, into all kinds of new pedagogical initiatives on our campus.

[30:31] [AC] In speaking about the most difficult parts of her career, Eileen Landis-Groom cited conflict with the administration and the pressure to meet very high expectations. "This job takes so much patience," she said.

["reCreation" by airtone slows and fades out under this narration.]

What made the challenges of academia worthwhile for her were the strong learning relationships that she built with her students.

Many of Eileen's students have kept in touch over the years, sharing updates about their careers and especially how writing has taken them in new and unexpected directions. One student pursued a pilot career but also writes fiction on the side. One student became a travel writer.

["Nine Count fades in.]

Travel writing was one of the courses Eileen developed and taught while she was here. She even edited [an excellent collection on the topic](#), which one of my colleagues is currently referencing as she prepares to study abroad in Japan with students this summer.

["Nine Count" fades out.]

[31:29] [AB] I think some of my key success, just in being a colleague of this department, has been searching—being on search committees, leading search committees, and bringing into the department people who've been collegial, productive, a good fit for the department, yourself included. [small laugh]

I feel so blessed that we've managed to, with some exception, acquire colleagues that have added to the department. I will take a small bow for serving on the search committee for every single person we have now, other than Ashley and Jonathan.

[AC] The brand new people. It's great to hear that you take pride in choosing—choosing these people.

[AB] I take pride! in helping bring fabulous people here, people who are better than me—more fabulous than me. [laughter] No, I'm serious, more productive than me, who have more vision than me, have more everything. I want to surround myself with people who are better than me to make the department better.

[AC] Yeah, 'cuz as we've been touching on this whole time, nobody can do any of this all by themselves.

[AB] No, no,

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

[AC] We need other disciplines. We need our colleagues, we need support. We need—we need all of this.

[AB] And we do. And we need to be interdisciplinary.

[32:42] [AC] It's easy to talk about the value of all these Humanities disciplines and the value of an interdisciplinary department, an interdisciplinary campus. But all this growth, all this making way for the new can come at a cost.

[33:01] [AB] So there's been a change in the trajectory, there's been a change in the service, and there's been—thank god—growth in the number of faculty we are able to maintain at full-time status.

[AC] Yes.

[AB] However, there's not been a change in the number of part-time faculty, we have always had a large adjunct contingent, in part because the university felt that it was more cost effective.

[AC] And that's a trend throughout higher education. I feel especially here, all those literature courses that used to be more of a focus have gone, and the ones that are still offered are taught by the adjuncts.

[AB] This is true.

[AC] And once Eileen, especially when she leaves, there's no other—

[AB] Such a loss! Who's going to do creative writing?

[AC] —there's no other literature or creative writing people that are full time.

[AB] And Eileen has been wonderful because she's developed not just a creative writing class, but a little mini-program. Her students have live readings at the local bookstore, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

[AC] Yeah!

[AB] I mean, it's, she's in charge of *The Black Box*, which is our literary magazine, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And when she goes, we currently have no one with a skill set that even approximates hers. Again, because we're kind of turning into a technical writing department—says the technical writing teacher—

[AC] Yes.

[AB] But our students need literature, they need humanities. We used to have a faculty member who taught Southwest Indian Culture as a humanities course—David Brandstein—it was fantastic.

[AC] I definitely can see that we're losing something in this focus on technical writing.

[AB] We are losing something.

[34:34] [AB] I see a shift, now that our chair is a technical writing instructor like I was—am, I see a shift towards a real concentration of effort for technical communication in our department. But our

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

department does more—we do business communication, freshman composition, humanities, values and ethics, religious studies, and those are getting much less attention than they should.

If I had to guess, the trajectory of the department in the future may be the separation of humanities from communications into a separate department, where they could have a chair and faculty that are concentrated on their own needs.

[35:16] Maybe there used to be a split. Eileen Landis-Groom and others with a longer institutional memory than mine might answer that.

[Slow piano music fades up: "Precarity" by airtone via CC Mixer.]

[35:24] **[AC]** From everything I've learned, there's no sign that Humanities and Communication were ever housed in separate departments. On the contrary, we were even more inclusive, with history and psychology courses offered under our department. Those subjects have since been split off into a separate department of Behavioral and Social Sciences.

Changes have happened before. And change will keep happening whether anyone wants it to or not.

One of my biggest takeaways from these interviews with Eileen and Angela is that my colleagues and I have the power to change things on purpose when we really want to.

[Plucked bass notes and chimes come in and fade out again: "Why Journey?" by _ghost via CC Mixer.]

[36:06] **[AB]** We are the beating heart of this university. If for some reason we all decided to go on strike, this campus would fall apart. We are the beating heart! Us and math—We are the gen ed. The primary gen ed. And without us, there is no campus.

[36:21] Being a service department does not mean being servile. It doesn't.

[AC] No.

[AB] It means being collegial, being interdisciplinary, helping students get what they need, so that they can succeed in the military in their careers, in life.

[AC] Yeah.

[36:32] **[AB]** I have two pieces of advice. Get yourself a mentor, or three-- in the department and outside the department. Not just someone that will help you learn the administrivia, but someone who will push you to be a better teacher, push you to be a better researcher, publish with you, guide you, have tea and cake with you, let you go to their office and cry when things are going lousy.

And you want colleagues that you can have tea and coffee with and be friends with outside of the department from time to time, colleagues that you're happy to disagree with, respectfully. Colleagues that spark creativity, colleagues that have this gem of an idea that would have never occurred to you. Colleagues that have got your back when you've got some issues with administration or with students or whatever. And I feel that this department that we've crafted in last 20 years generally has that.

[Low chimes and melody fade in and out again: "Why Journey?" by _ghost via CC Mixer.]

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

[37:33] 2: Don't be afraid to push back-- against your chair, who's supposed to be just appear among peers, or against your dean, or against HR. If there is something that is wrong, push back. For example, if your yearly evaluation isn't what it should be, push back. If you did not get a peer evaluation, if no one came to observe your class this semester, push back—request it. If you want to start a certificate program, and people are giving you the runaround for the administrivia—you just keep pushing and pushing and pushing. Gently, respectfully, collegially. But push.

Because sometimes people are wrong, and if you can speak to them calmly and respectfully, and then listen to what they have to say, often decisions can be changed. People can change their minds, people can better understand you and make course corrections. Not always—but if you don't push back, you won't know. You should be a colleague and that's part of being a colleague—it's not always doing what you're told. Even as a junior colleague! You're still—the word there is colleague—that should be the focus, not the junior.

[Plucked string instruments fade in and continue under the narration: "Eggs and Powder" by Blue Dot Sessions.]

[38:45] **[AC]** Eileen also shared two pieces of advice for junior faculty like myself. Remember that this work is time consuming, she said. All the deep thinking and deciphering meaning, writing and connecting ideas and theories to practical action, it all takes time.

Her second piece of advice came with an anecdote. She related, "Early on in my career, a colleague from aviation science remarked to me, I hope you're having fun. And I thought to myself, 'What a novel idea.' But yes, we need to have fun," she said.

[Gentle staccato music transitions to "Two Pound" by Blue Dot Sessions.]

And Eileen did have fun in her work. I can't think of a time when I've seen her without a smile on her face. Her career was student-focused, full of lightheartedness and joy. She has an enthusiasm for her subjects and for the creative activity that she was able to nurture.

["Two Pound" by Blue Dot Sessions continues.]

[39:43] In the final spring weeks of Dr. Landis-Groom's final semester, I made my way to the upper floor of the campus library for an event she'd arranged and publicized for her creative writing class: A formal reading with a podium and refreshments and all.

Eileen sat back in the corner of a relatively packed room, smiling and greeting us as we came in. As we all grabbed our slices of strawberry cake, she sat back and let her students shine, humble and content to enjoy their performances.

["Two Pound" by Blue Dot Sessions fades out.]

[40:19] Eileen insisted that we not make a fuss over her retirement. So we all chipped in, quietly, for a gift certificate to the local bookstore where most of the staff know her by name, and left it at that.

I will remember Eileen for her earnest and enthusiastic enjoyment of her work, and for her encouragement of me and my other colleagues who are new to the department. It has been a privilege to learn from Eileen. And I hope that we can keep in touch at least a little bit.

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley's webtext, "Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck," published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

["Two Pound" by Blue Dot Sessions fades in and out again.]

[40:51] [AB] I hope that when people remember me when I'm gone, that they remember that I was kind.

[AC] When Angela said this, I assured her that every single one of our mutual acquaintances says she is the sweetest human being they've ever met. Eileen backs this up: When she broke her leg in March of 2013, Angela was the one to step up and handle all of her classes while she recovered from her surgery.

I know I will remember Angela for her genuine compassion. She is generous with her time and attention, and brilliantly enthusiastic about books and learning and culture and tea.

[41:29] In terms of her career...

[AB] If I want to be remembered for anything I want to be remembered for team teaching and I want to be remembered for not letting this department fall apart!

Other people would have found different ways to handle the challenges that I handled, but I did handle them and I kept our department intact.

[AC] Yeah. And we're growing and growing and off to new... all sorts of new things, hopefully.

[AB] Yes. And I'm really excited to see what happens in the department in the next 5 years.

[41:58] [AC] Yeah, you'll be around, right?

[AB] I'm not moving. I'm not leaving. I'm going to apply for Professor Emeritus in the fall and hopefully get it, and Jim gets to use the racquetball court, so we're not going anywhere.

["Nine Count" fades up and continues under the narration.]

[42:14] [AC] Angela was awarded emeritus status, and for the December 2022 commencement she was honored as the Faculty Marshal.

Learning from these women as part of this interview piece has somewhat made up for the fact that I barely got to work with them as colleagues.

Right now, halfway between my first day teaching here and my tenure review in 3 more years, I'm figuring out as best I can how to balance the demands of service and teaching and research in my own way. And I'm already taking a small place in these women's shoes—I've been on at least one search committee every semester here so far. And now that *The Black Box's* 2023 re-launch is underway, my colleagues and are I brainstorming other ways of showcasing students' writing and creative work. (Maybe we'll start a podcast.)

["Nine Count" slowly fades out.]

[43:09] Someday, in 30 or so years, maybe someone will sit me down and ask what were things like way back in the early 21st century? What's changed since the 2020s?

This is transcript for the Amelia Chesley’s webtext, “Interdisciplinary Legacies: Interviews with Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom and Dr. Angela Beck,” published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.2/interviews/chesley>.

I don’t know what new things will be pushing us around by then and which old things will be fading away—nobody can exactly predict the future.

[“Nine Count” comes in again and fades slowly under the narration.]

But looking back with these two accomplished women has helped me to more tangibly realize the kinds of change that I should try to be prepared for in my career, whether at this institution or any other. Their stories have also pushed me to think about the kinds of changes and evolutions that I can bring about—the ways that I can shape and mold and influence this department into the kind of workplace and community my colleagues and I want it to be. Together we’re going to have an impact on what students learn as they come through the courses we offer in our department, so we may as well try to make that impact as positive and meaningful as we can.

[Resonant chimes of “Empty Rooms” by _ghost come in and fade slowly under the closing narration.]

[44:08] This audio piece was produced for *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. And if you’re listening to this, you’ve probably already found the accompanying webtext, where I’ll share links and references and other media related to the interview.

Thank you for listening.

[pause]

[44:26] **[AC]** Sidenote, the student editor who put together the whole yearbook, [Bob Brantner, was that pilot turned novelist](#) that I mentioned earlier.