

Derringer Dick: 00:00

Well, thank you so much, Dr. Ainsworth, for agreeing to meet with me today. I am Derringer Dick, and it is 10:01 on February 25, 2020. I am with Dr. Diann Ainsworth in her office, ACAD 242, on the main campus of Weatherford College. Before we get started I want to clarify that I'm going to record this interview, and it will be uploaded to the University of Dallas Oral History Repository. Is that all right?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 00:30

Yes.

Derringer Dick: 00:30

All right. Um, so, my first question is, uh, what made you decide you wanted to teach English?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 00:38

Well, in high school, my sophomore year I had a teacher who had us read *Don Quixote*, which is 900 pages or more, and right about Menippean satire. And, what I found out later was that she was working on her dissertation on Menippean satire. It's a very obscure literary technique, and what's strange about it is, at sixteen, I was excited to write about that. I was probably the only one in the class. And then, my senior year in high school, my teacher introduced us – or me – to Jane Austen – *Pride and Prejudice* – fell in love with that, and created a life-long passion for reading, literature. But, strangely, I got my first degree, bachelor's degree, is a BBA in marketing. So, after three years in the financial industry, I decided it wasn't for me, so, I knew English was – that I loved reading and writing, and teaching – so I went back to school, I did sixty hours at UTA, got my teaching certification, then I did the Master of Education at North Texas, with a concentration (eighteen hours) in English, and with that Master's, I could teach at Weatherford College. But then I went back and got the PhD in English at TCU. So, I love English.

Derringer Dick: 02:03

Wow, uh, what a transition.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 02:05

Yeah, it really was!

Derringer Dick: 02:07

That's a great story.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 02:07

And I tell students all the time, you can change. You know, you may do a degree, and then decide you want to do something else. You can always go back.

Derringer Dick: 02:17

Wow, that's excellent. So, did you know when you started saying *Don Quixote* that you wanted to teach specifically, or was there –?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 02:23

No, no, I just knew I loved good literature, and I loved literary analysis. I mean, when you wanna talk up to your teacher in high school about Menippean satire, you know you love literature. [laughs]

Derringer Dick: 02:40

Yes, yes, no, that is absolutely true.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 02:42

So – But no, at that point I didn't know that I wanted to teach. But I come from a family of teachers.

Derringer Dick: 02:46

Oh, that makes sense.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 02:48

I played school, with my sister, all those years. We would grade papers, when we were little, you know, for each other. So, it's in the blood, or – it's a calling.

Derringer Dick: 02:58

Oh, that makes sense. Was it – so was it after you, ah, after you had spent time in business that you're like "yeah, I wanna go back and teach"?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 03:04

Yes, it wasn't for me.

Derringer Dick: 03:05

No, that makes sense, makes a lot of sense. So, as a teacher, how do you see your role?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 03:11

Um, you know, I – the thing that I think about first is sharing my enthusiasm for learning. And, so, I go into the classroom every day hoping to inspire them, you know, to love learning. Not necessarily English, I rarely get an English major in my classes, but I really want them to find their own voice in their writing, have some agency in the choice of what they write about – and that's how I develop my classes. Um, I encourage them in critical thinking, um, discover ideas, um, and I just want them to be able to transfer those skills and knowledge they learn in my class to other college classes, but – beyond. Um, you know, it's about communicating that writing matters, and reading matters.

Derringer Dick: 04:08

And so you say that a lot of people in your classes aren't English majors –

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 04:11

They're not. I rarely – I *may* get one a year.

Derringer Dick: 04:14

Wow.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 04:15

Rarely do I see an English major any more.

Derringer Dick: 04:17

Wow. Do you find that a lot of them end up using those skills in the other class that transfers over?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 04:22

They do. Um, I think that not enough of those skills are transferred, and that's something that we really hope to work on, continue to talk to them about the fact that everything they learn in my class will help them do better in other classes – because I ask them, “what do you write in your other classes? These skills that you learn here, that you're

being graded on, will make those classes, that work, so much better.” And, I just see myself as a coach, and a mentor, so.

Derringer Dick: 04:59

That’s great. That’s great. Yeah, that’s something they always told us at school, uh, whatever – when I went to undergrad, you know – whatever field it is that you do, your writing will be, uh, useful there.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 05:10

Exactly, exactly.

Derringer Dick: 05:12

So, I think we already got into this a little bit, but, um, what do you hope that your students will learn in your classroom, then, if you’re kind of the coach?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 05:21

Right. Well, in the comp classes, definitely critical thinking, reading, and writing. Um, I teach Comp 1 and Comp 2. Comp 1 has – they write in four different genres, and what I like about that class, and what I want them to take from that, is that it’s real-world writing. Um, the editorial – they can get those published, and I have had students publish their editorials in *The Weatherford Democrat*. Um, reviews – of movies, books, videogames: those can be published online, in a blog or on a website. Um, the short article: I have them choose an actual magazine that they want to write for, write the query letter, um, and then write their article for that audience, for that specific magazine. And then the last paper is a proposal, and they have to actually write to the person who can grant the proposal. A lot of times they’ll write proposals for Weatherford College, and I send those over – or I have them send them, you know, to the President, to the Dean, whoever can grant the proposal. So, I want them to see that writing is useful, you know. There’s a purpose.

Derringer Dick: 06:32

Right, right.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 06:33

There’s an audience for whom you’re writing. And, then in Comp 2, it’s all analytical writing, and I really like that idea, and I, um, we used to start only with argument. You know, take that one position, you know, and really persuade people. Well, what we do now, and what we have done for the last ten years – and I’m not sure if you used this

book when you were here – but it's called *Writing Analytically*. And so, what we want them to take from that are heuristics for critical thinking, for looking for patterns and contradictions in any source you use, okay: literary sources, visual sources, rhetorical sources, and just really process that information, and come to conclusions: not one right answer. Multiple interpretations, multiple implications of what those – your analysis means, their analyses mean. So that's what I want them to take from the comp classes. Find their voice, take ownership of their writing, and transfer those skills to the rest of life.

Derringer Dick: 07:41

Gotcha.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 07:42

Yeah, yeah. And then I teach Lit.

Derringer Dick: 07:44

So, Lit, do you take the sort of the same approach?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 07:47

Yes, I mean it's definitely analysis, literary analysis. Um. I only teach – well, I wouldn't say only – but for the fifteen years I've been here, I've mainly taught British Lit 1 and British Lit 2, but I have taught World Lit before. But what's funny is my dissertation at TCU is about six American women writers from the Nineteenth Century. So, I had my areas for my exams at TCU were American Lit, British Lit and rhetorical criticism. So I use it all, but I mainly teach British Lit 1 and 2.

Derringer Dick: 08:23:

Oh, and who's your favorite author, in those classes?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 8:24:

Ooh, good question. It's hard to pick one – uh – you know I love Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Jane Austen, um, but there's plenty of other writers that, you know, that I enjoy too.

Derringer Dick: 08:35

Gotcha. And –

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 08:36

Those are the biggies!

Derringer Dick: 08:38

Yes, yes – I'm, I'm a big Shakespeare fan myself after last semester.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 08:42

Yes, yes. Well, and I get – we can pick from the anthology or other um, texts, for the classes, and so I change it up, you know, for Shakespeare plays, I've done *Twelfth Night*, *Taming of the Shrew*, uh, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, um – so we, you know, we can play around with it, but I, I pick comedies.

Derringer Dick: 09:03

Oh, yes, yes. Good, good. Do you find that you – do you tend to tailor that before the class starts, in the syllabus, or do you do that kind of depending on the students' interest?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 09:12

You know, that's a really good question because I've actually had to change some of my choices based on the changes in students over the years.

Derringer Dick: 09:21

Oh interesting.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 09:22

What interests – what might interest them more, um, what might be a little more accessible texts for them, um, the anthology does dictate a few of those things because there are only three Shakespeare plays in the anthology, so when I go beyond that, um, they are required – they'll – I'll have them buy *No Fear Shakespeare* copies, which are only about \$5, but, if I make those choices it's an added book.

Derringer Dick: 09:53

Gotcha. So when you say changes among the classroom, is that like a generational or year-to-year thing, or is it is specific students?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 09:58

Again, that's a good question. Um, I will say my most recent change has been because my British Lit 1 and 2 classes this year have been a dual-credit cohort online. So, what I mean by that is it's not a single school, it's usually eight schools, two to five students per school in the area, who signed up for this online class. And, um, I do – although it's college-level of course, Shakespeare – um, I do change the text, because I feel some might not be as appropriate for high school students.

Derringer Dick: 10:39

That makes sense. Um, so changing the text, uhh, to be, um – I mean, it is Shakespeare – to be a little bit less, uh, suggestive, or?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 10:51

Mmhm, mhmm.

Derringer Dick: 10:52

Okay. Gotcha.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 10:54

Yeah. Just, for comfort level, you know.

Derringer Dick: 10:57

Mmhmm, no.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 10:58

They're still getting great literature, you know.

Derringer Dick: 11:00

Absolutely.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 11:01

There are – with Chaucer and Shakespeare, there's a level of comfort in different texts.

Derringer Dick: 11:08

Yes, yes. Uh. I've always been amazed at how seamlessly Shakespeare can shift from his different modes and different audiences. It's incredible.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 11:17

Exactly.

Derringer Dick: 11:19

Uh. Another, another, uh, question related to something you said earlier. You mentioned that your dissertation – it was eight American authors?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 11:25

Yes.

Derringer Dick: 11:26

Uh, which ones?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 11:27

Ooh, that's – well, I think it may be more like six, but let's see if I can remember them. This was – uh, I graduated in 2007. Ellen Glasgow.

Derringer Dick: 11:36

Okay.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 11:37

Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Wilson, uh, Pauline Hopkins, ohhh...there's at least two more, um. [Unintelligible] pull it out and actually look at Diann's dissertation. Um, Harriet Jacobs, uh, Rebecca Harding Davis, Helen Hunt Jackson, and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton – yay! So, there they are.

Derringer Dick: 12:01

What was the sort of unifying theme between them?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 12:04

Um, that's a really good question. Uh, my dissertation is about how they navigate naturalism in the 19th century in their novels.

Derringer Dick: 12:12

Oh, interesting.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 12:13

Yeah, it is interesting because these women are, um – they're, they have Christian themes running through their texts, and naturalism at the time was determinism or Darwinism, um, so, they were navigating those ideas through a Christian lens.

Derringer Dick: 12:34

Fascinating. Oh, that's very interesting.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 12:36

Yeah. Thanks! I mean, I liked it!

Derringer Dick: 12:39

Yeah, yeah, no, I'm sure you weren't the only one!

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 12:44

But yes, they're wonderful writers, and they're – it was – I loved working with them, but, as you can tell, it's been a while since I've picked up my dissertation.

Derringer Dick: 12:50

Oh, well, absolutely – I, I don't have to do a dissertation, but if I did, I might not wanna pick it up for a while after I'd finished it. Um, so, actually sort of – uh, you mentioned naturalism and how people working with that, so, I guess my next question kind of appropriate: what sort of educational, uh, theories have the most influence today.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 13:08

Well, that's a really good question, and I kind of went back and looked – when I saw your question – I went back and kind of looked through, uh, some of the texts that have had an influence on me, um, and, you know, I've done a lot of comp theory and rhetorical theory, um, so, um, people like, um – some of these are editors for collections, like Villanueva's *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*, just full of great theories on composition – I refer to it all the time. Um, you know, there's the biggies, like Kenneth Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, and things like that, but I really like a book called *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, with articles about women in rhetoric, women writers, women rhetoricians, etc. And that's edited by Andrea Lunsford. So I really like that one. Those're just a few. Um, recently,

I've been a part of the WC Learning Community, and what we've read this year is *Small Teaching* by James Lang, *Small Teaching Online* by Flower Darby and James Lang, and *Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone*, which is about universal design learning, UDL, which is very important these days – uh, making your class accessible to everyone.

Derringer Dick: 14:26

Okay.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 14:27

Um. Mainly UDL right now is, you know – of course it's course design, but mainly it's about making online resources accessible, uh, for screen-readers, and things like that. But it's also about variety in teaching techniques, so that you reach every learning style. Now, of course we've done that all along, I mean we learn learning styles, you know, forever ago. Um. But we all agree learning needs to be active – it's not lecture-based. So I guess my main theory is cognitivism. So – having students process their, uh, mental process – process their processes, um, of thinking!

Derringer Dick: 15:13

Gotcha.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 15:14

Through their writing assignments, um, reflections, self-explanation, things like that.

Derringer Dick: 15:20

So, uh, metacognition?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 15:22

Yes, definitely, uh huh, yeah. The pedagogy of cognitivism includes having them think about their thinking, yes.

Derringer Dick: 15:30

So is that why you would include assignments like the editorial to –

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 15:34

Yes. I mean – every single assignment I want to be active in some way, active learning, okay. Whether it's getting it published, or taking what they write – yes, they have to turn in an MLA-format essay – but taking what they write, and revising that, into some other

useful, rhetorical, have – to have a rhetorical meaning, for them, whether that be a video, um, changing that to a magazine format, where they're actually creating a class magazine, um, or speaking their writing to other students – so, presentations. I mean, this is not a speech class, but they need to be able to share their ideas beyond a paper essay that gets uploaded to Canvas.

Derringer Dick: 16:34

Right, right. You said that you want students to be able to find their voice. But obviously they're also taking in a lot of information. So is it – I'm trying to kind of synthesize what, what you said earlier – um, it's about both learning externally but also self-discovery?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 16:51

Yes, totally.

Derringer Dick: 16:52

How would you put that?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 16:53

Yeah. Well, we want them to internalize all the techniques and ideas that we're sharing with them, so in order to do that, um, I have them write reflections on each paper, and what I really like, in the most recent reflection, my 1301 students were reflecting on the review, their process of writing the review, what they will take from that, and I also had them reflect on my comments on the rough draft: so which comments were most helpful, or least helpful. And that really helped me, uh, process how I helped them. So if we're all constantly thinking about our thinking in order to make changes, uh, fix – remedy miscommunications, you know, um, and internalize how we think, how we write, and why that – why it should matter to other people.

Derringer Dick: 17:52

Now you may have already answered this question, but, uh, speaking sort of the pedagogical theories and practices, have those changed since you first started teaching?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 18:01

Um, well, I mentioned – or I did mention – the fact that we kind of moved from straight argument or only argument to more analytical writing and thinking, and that has been a change over the years. Um. Analytical writing is still making an argument, but it's not that, um, Rogerian or Toulmin model, it's more, um, a more open-ended model, and my

students have a hard time with it at first. I think we all analyze naturally, but when I tell them “I’m not asking you to debate, uh, two sides of an issue” – there’s never just two sides – um, but to tell me why you think an idea is interesting, significant, revealing or strange – our book calls it answering the ‘so what’ question – why does this matter? But to use those analytical signal words, and they have a hard time understanding that’s an argument, that’s an opinion, when you say something’s interesting or strange.

Derringer Dick: 19:02

Uh, why do you think that that is? Do you think that that’s –?

Dr. Dianna Ainsworth: 19:05

That’s a good question. I think that they have – I hate to say this about our system – but I think that they – because of, maybe, standardized testing, or whatever it is along the way, they, uh, lost their confidence in their own ideas. And so, I, I really love it when they find that voice, and they find that confidence and say “this idea is interesting because...” and I’m like “you’re right, that’s super interesting, let’s talk about it!” instead of saying they – I think they feel like there’s one right answer. And when you tell them there’s not, they’re like “really?” So, I think that it’s just, maybe, at points along the way they’ve been shut down.

Derringer Dick: 19:54

Interesting.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 19:56

And we’ve gotta open that back up.

Derringer Dick: 19:58

Mmhmm.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 19:59

But, there also students who don’t like it because they are very – I don’t know, I would say – not direct learners, but their, their learning style is...black and white.

Derringer Dick: 20:17

Mmhmm.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 20:18

Analytical writing's not black and white. It's open-ended, it's let's discuss this, let's look at possibilities, and the fact that there is no one right answer is a little – um, is uncertainty, uneasiness – but I try to help them embrace uncertainty.

Derringer Dick: 20:37

Do you find that there's any sort of correlation between people who tend to do well on, you know, like, true/false standardized tests and the people who are black and white thinkers, or is that – ?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 20:45

Oh yeah.

Derringer Dick: 20:46

Okay.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 20:46

Sure. For sure. They're the math majors.

Derringer Dick: 20:48

Mmhmm. And so people who are, maybe, maybe, analytical essay is less foreign to them, they maybe do harder on the tests – or have a more difficult time, or – ?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 20:59

Sure, sure. Yeah, I mean, if we want to go into brain theory, it's right-brain creative – open, you know, uh, open to uncertainty – and then left-brain direct, black and white, you know, math and science. I'm not saying math and science people can't be – they *are* analytical, but they're looking for very clear answers. And that's science, that's math, there *are* very clear answers.

Derringer Dick: 21:24

Yes, yes.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 21:26

In the humanities, and creative writing – hmm, that's a little too much open-endedness.

Derringer Dick: 21:31

Right, right. Yeah.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 21:32

But, I hope that they will embrace creativity, and curiosity, and inquiry, you know. I mean – there's a lot of enquiry in science and math! But it's looking for very specific answers.

Derringer Dick: 21:46

Yes. My – oh, uh, slightly related – my military history professor in undergrad, one of the things that she mentioned is that West Point and the Naval Academy are engineering schools, and so she said that she thought that had a tendency for the students to come out thinking there's one right answer.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 22:02

Exactly.

Derringer Dick: 22:03

Which there – you know, a lot of times there – it's called the art of war for a reason, right. So it's sort of interesting is that when you're talking about the educational system kind of – uh, at least for some students – pushing them towards one right answer, right. That's something you see in higher ed as well.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 22:13

Well, and those are life and death issues. Sciences are life – you know, doctors, and nurses, that's life and death, you have to get the answer right! [laughs]

Derringer Dick: 22:22

Yes. Yeah, no, absolutely true. I certainly want my doctor doing that.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 22:26

Yes, yes.

Derringer Dick: 22:28

Uh, so, you, uh, you mentioned before that you had gone into uh, business for a couple years, and then you're like "ah, I'm gonna go back and get my, get my PhD in English." What led you to teach at Weatherford College specifically?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 22:39

Okay. I'm – I live here, and my kids were little, and I stayed home with them, and when my son was, I guess four-ish, he went to the mother's day out twice a week. So, I applied to teach at Weatherford College while he was at school, I taught three classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, um, for three years, and then, uh, once he was older and in school, I thought "Hmm, I wanna teach full time, but I, I had a Master of Education, which is, uh, eighteen hours in your field at the graduate level, you can teach at the college level, but, I wasn't – they really weren't looking for someone with just the Master of Education, they wanted English degrees. So, I had to make a decision if I wanted to teach full time. So I went back to TCU and got the PhD in English literature and hired on full time, so. But I live here. Uh, it's my community, um, you know, I love it, and I wanna be a part of it, and that's why I teach here.

Derringer Dick: 23:40

So, that's actually a great transition to my next question: what role do you see community colleges like Weatherford College having in the American educational system?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 23:48

Yeah, that's a great question, and, um, this school has a big role, a, a, major role in the, uh, Parker – Parker, Wise, and Hood counties. So, um, interestingly, recently, we just had our hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and – so we had a lot of extra activities, and celebrations, and we had – brought back alums in all the disciplines, um – but it shows how special the connection WC has in the community. We have a lot of support, um, we have amazing fine arts programs, uh, everybody's at the alum – I mean the basketball, and, uh, baseball and softball games, we're getting, bringing back tennis – I mean, there's just a lot for the community, um, plays – we just became, um, and all Steinway school, which means we have, you know, the Steinway pianos here and we have wonderful concerts and things like that, which is a very major honor. Um, but, uh, we're just very committed to being a part of the community and so we get a lot of support from that.

Derringer Dick: 25:01

Do you find, um, that a lot of the students you're talking about having the reunion – do you find that a lot of them tend to stay here and work locally in the community, or – ?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 25:09

Mmm, that's a good question. I don't know what the percentage is, we do have, uh, alum once a month lunches, and things like that, but, I don't know. I would guess maybe 20% stay in the area, but it might be much higher, I don't know. That's a good question. And I can find out if you want.

Derringer Dick: 25:30

Okay. Well that actually might be interesting, if that's, if you happen to be able to find stats on that. Um.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 25:39

Um. But another thing about uh, not just in the community, but for community colleges in general, um, not only is it excellent freshman/sophomore level education, but because we are so much more affordable, uh, enrollment will always increase at community colleges because of the cost of education today.

Derringer Dick: 26:01

And so you find, you find a lot of people coming here for the two years of education and then transferring elsewhere?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 26:06

Mmhmm. Exactly. Because, um, why go into that kind of debt?

Derringer Dick: 26:11

Right.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 27:06

But, my point there was that some students get as many hours as they can and then transfer, like you said, and then some get the full associate's and then transfer. But no matter what, they're saving money.

Derringer Dick: 27:21

Do – so do you find a lot of – is it most students are coming here, then, to transfer up, there's not a lot of people coming for –?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 27:27

Um, I looked this up, and I would say that 25 – 30% are transferring, 25 – to four years, 25% – 30% are getting the associates degree, and then another 25 – 35% are doing either the certifications (vet tech, rad tech, um, uh, sonography – we have a lot of different certifications) um, or, um, just not sure about –

Derringer Dick: 27:59

Gotcha. Yeah, yeah. So –

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 28:02

I would say it's basically 30 – 30 – 30, you know.

Derringer Dick: 28:03

Yeah, yeah, good thirds. So, the role of community college, you talked really concisely about that – have you kind of seen that change over time, or has that been pretty much constant?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 28:13

It is changing. Um, the main change is dual-credit. Uh, if you look at the percentages, it's almost an insane increase. Um, students today, in Texas, can graduate from high school with an associate's degree.

Derringer Dick: 28:30

So –

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 28:31

I don't recommend it, but they can.

Derringer Dick: 28:32

Gotcha. So you're seeing a lot of people do that?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 28:35

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. It's just, it's, it's skyrocketing, the number, the increase in online – I mean, not online, but dual credit.

Derringer Dick: 28:42

And you don't recommend it because...?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 28:44

Well, uh, it's – I, I recommend dual credit classes. But I think getting the full sixty hours before you're eighteen years old, um...for me, because I loved undergrad degree, and that time, uh, from eighteen to twenty-one, uh, is lost, when they do that. They're, they're going into college at eighteen as a junior. So, yeah, I have hesitation about it. Yeah.

Derringer Dick: 29:16

That makes sense.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 29:17

I think getting twenty hours, eighteen hours – yeah, that's great, get a head start, save the money! But then come over here, and keep going, you know, with a more, real – real? – college experience, you know. Not why take all those classes in high school, you know?

Derringer Dick: 29:37

And so for you it would be, it would be more about the experience?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 29:40

Yeah.

Derringer Dick: 29:41

Or do you think students of that age are, are um...?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 29:44

I don't think they're all ready. Yeah. That's a good question. Because some are! I mean, there are people who're, uh, fourteen, who are ready for college! But then there are eighteen year olds who still need some, uh, not just maturity level but thinking skills, ya know? Everybody's different.

Derringer Dick: 30:03

And so do you think that the community college – sort of as an institution – is a good, you know, kind of a bridge to let people adjust to that?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 30:10

Yes, definitely, definitely. Um, community colleges have – most of ‘em – have very small classes. I say “very small” – our cap for comp is 24 students, um, our online classes are 20 students, you know, things like that. So, I consider them small classes. Um, uh, not only the small classes, but, uh, the community atmosphere – we have a lot commuter students but they – we still have a lot of activities on campus, um, for students during the day while they’re here, um, I just feel like they maybe get more one-on-one attention. I’m sure four-year colleges do that, universities do that as well, um, but I think there’s that very comfortable atmosphere here to ask for help. And we have a lot of great programs for student success. So.

Derringer Dick: 31:00

Gotcha. Um, let’s see – I covered the questions regarding the terminal degrees. That’s very interesting, um, what about the students? We talked about how, kind of – WC has changed a little bit, the pedagogical styles have changed a little bit, how have the students changed since you started teaching?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 31:18

Um. I think – I wrote down – or I thought about – a couple of changes over the years, um...the main change I’m seeing is a higher level of stress. And, it makes me sad, because when I think about my experience undergrad, I don’t, I really don’t remember feeling stressed. Um, but I feel like today’s world is a stressful world. There’s a busyness about it, there’s an urgency. And there is a book that was probably written twenty years ago called *Tyranny of the Urgent*, um, and so of course people throughout time have probably felt, uh, tyrannized by this urgency of life, the busyness of life. But I think we can all agree that technological advances have really overwhelmed us. And so students are feeling a lot of stress, and I, just, I – we have to have more services for that.

Derringer Dick: 32:20

So you, you mentioned specifically technological advances. Is there anything else you think contributes? And can you kind of elaborate on that a little bit?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 32:27

Hmm. Well, I don’t spend a lot of time on – on mental health, but I think we can see those changes in our world today. But, I’m wondering if students are lacking or less taught resilience.

Derringer Dick: 32:45

Mmhmm.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 32:46

Um, uh – that challenges are good, that we learn from failures, uh, failure's not a bad thing, let's we pick ourselves up and let's fight through it, um. I don't know if that's just not being taught as well, or if um, there's something about our world and the technology – the constant social media and things like that – that beat people down.

Derringer Dick: 33:12

Interesting. So, uh – it was interesting what you said about the, um – I've heard of some people describe children as being anti-fragile – that you, like, learn from mistakes, um –

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 33:28

Well, they, that's the goal, is that they learn from mistakes. Um, but I'm just seeing people who come into my classes almost fearful. And, I just – joy, I, you know, let's learn, you know! And I think it ought to be joyful, not fearful.

Derringer Dick: 33:

Do you think you've been able to kind of, uhh, you know, I realize you only teach a few classes, it's not like you've got the world on your shoulders here, um, but, do you think you've been able to kind of instill a different perspective in people?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 34:02

I hope so. Uh, it's my goal, uh, I come in with a smile on my face every day! And, you know, do that active learning. Um, but, you know, we have a certain drop rate, withdrawal rate, um, I, you know, I, there's not a number, but I'd say possibly ten percent, um. It's interesting, about five years ago I started trying to see if I ever had a class with 100% completion – never. There's always one or two people who, for many reasons – and we all know this, life can get in the way, there is real life out there, it's not my English class, you know – they have kids, uh, they have jobs, they have full-time jobs. I did look at some numbers that our students – only thirty percent, thirty-six percent are full-time. So that tells me that they have full-time jobs and families. And so that's part of the business, the stress of it. They want to go to school, but there's a lot of other stuff pulling on them.

Derringer Dick: 35:13

Now when you said that they have full time jobs and families, are these usually people who would be considered more, you know, quote - unquote traditional students coming out of high school, or – ?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 35:20

I looked this up too – um – our average age student is 21.

Derringer Dick: 35:24

Okay!

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 35:25

Okay. So that's young, and our traditional age group, 18 – 24, is 47 percent.

Derringer Dick: 35:31

Okay.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 35:32

But they're still working. And, I would say in the group 18 – 24, they've got kids. So, they are young parents, and have jobs, and then, our over-30 group, which would be considered non-traditional, is 23 percent. So we are mainly traditional, but they still have a lot of work. And, outside work and busy lives.

Derringer Dick: 35:59

And then I guess the third group, uh, to get it to 100 percent, those are mostly people who are younger than 18?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 36:03

Um, yes, the dual-credit, which is growing. Um, and over thirty! We have a lot of people in our classes that are over fifty.

Derringer Dick: 36:13

Oh wow!

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 36:14

You know. I mean, I say a lot, but you're looking at about sixteen, you know, percent or so.

Derringer Dick: 36:18

Are those people usually coming back to get a certification, or do they just want to learn?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 36:22

That's a good question, they're usually changing careers.

Derringer Dick: 36:24

Oh, interesting! Okay.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 36:26

A lot of them wanna be nurses.

Derringer Dick: 36:27

Mhmm.

Diann Ainsworth: 36:28

We have a wonderful nursing program here. Uh, the certification is, uh, I think the LVN, but we just got approval for a BSN, so it's our first bachelor's degree.

Derringer Dick: 36:38

Oh, okay. Uh, oh, a bachelor's in nursing! Wow! Oh, excellent.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 36:41

It is. It's exciting.

Derringer Dick: 36:43

Do you – so do you find – talking a little bit about, you know, students being more stressful earlier, do you find that um, that's true here sort of regardless of the major? I mean, are the geology students super-happy, or...?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 36:57

[laughs] That's a really good question. Um, hmm – well, not all students are stressed.

Derringer Dick: 37:04

Mmhmm.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 37:04

Some of them are very excited about their degrees. And I would say it's the ones who know what they wanna do. They have a vision, uh, they're very clear on – I have a student that knows she's doing her sonography certification, and she's very excited to be a sonographer, um, I have students that are very clear on being nurses, I have students who are very clear about moving on to a business degree, or something like that. So I would say the ones who have a clear vision of their future, are "knock-it-out, let's get it done." And then the ones who are unsure, maybe they're the ones who are more stressed by it.

Derringer Dick: 37:45

And so do you think people were more – is there kind of a correlation there, do you think fifteen years ago the students were more sure of what they wanted to do?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 37:52

Yes. I do. Um...I've seen this stress level increase, and I think that's part of the issue, is that I think they feel – maybe, it's not even the lack of knowing what your degree will be, but that, um, pressure to make a decision. Because that's why I tell them "hey, you can change! I did," you know. Get five degrees! But it shows that – do another one, you know, go into another field! There's nothing wrong with changing.

Derringer Dick: 39:35

And so it, uh – another follow-up question: do you see, then, that the stress levels are different for the different cohorts, the traditional and non-traditional students, or are they around the same?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 39:47

I'd say it's probably the same, it's the, it's those outside forces that are the same. It's – the groups are, are, um – the level of stress in each group is the same. Um, but it's because they all face these outside stresses. Um, and the stress – I will add to that stress, is the cost of education. Twenty years ago, or – for my undergrad, much longer than that – uh, college was affordable. It was. It just was. And it's not now. And they see

that. And – I – students have done research on the level of debt, and I can't remember what those numbers are. Educational debt is running, I'd say minimum of 20,000 when they graduate, to hundreds of thousands for doctors.

Derringer Dick: 40:41

Mmhmm.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 40:41

So, talk about stress, you know! My niece was getting a, uh, social work degree at Baylor, and when you think about her level of debt compared to her income – and thank goodness she cared enough to be a social worker – but, carrying that kind of debt is just very difficult, yeah.

Derringer Dick: 41:08

So what – uh, you're talking about WC being affordable – what do you think is the difference between WC and these other institutions?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 41:14

I argue to my students all the time, and I believe this – your freshman and sophomore level classes should be the same at any college. So why not get it for less here?

Derringer Dick: 41:28

Mmhmm.

Derringer Dick: 43:01

Do you think, uh, you know, sort of looking forward into the future, um – people have been pontificating about online education for some time, and you teach online courses, um...

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 43:12

Yes I do. Um. Online is growing. I prefer face-to-face. I...enjoy online teaching, but we can all agree that face-to-face allows that wonderful give-and-take, real-time discussion. We try to mimic that in online classes, but it's much harder. We work – our LMS, our learning management system is Canvas, we have real time chat in Canvas, but when I open a chat, I may have two students, not my twenty.

Derringer Dick: 43:51

Mmhmm. So do you think that, uh, the more traditional method will prevail, or do you think that online teaching will kind of begin to supplant a lot of face-to-face?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 44:00

It will continue to grow, mmhmm. Because students want the, um, easy access, you know, for their life? They are online at midnight, they want to take a test after work, at 8:00 at night. We, we understand those reasons, so.

Derringer Dick: 44:26

And I, I imagine it's also less expensive, generally.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 44:30

Um, online classes?

Derringer Dick: 44:31

Or not, not so much?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 44:33

Uh, I would say the online classes at TCU are based on their hourly rate, and the online classes at Weatherford are based on our hourly rate. It's exactly the same.

Derringer Dick: 44:59

Gotcha. And then, uh, uh, kind of I guess the curveball question. Um, you know, at one point you have – in America it was really the Bible, kind of served as a universal – if you're gonna make a reference you'd reference the Bible, because everyone had kind of read it. Do you see, is there any, uh works, books, or movies, you see as sort of serving as the reference point today?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 45:20

Mmhmm. Well I always ask my students what they read. I ask for recommendations. Um, sadly, I would say only 10% say they are readers, which, actually, hurts my heart, and scares me. Um, because they don't read for fun, and that makes me sad! So we do a lot of reading, we read poems, short stories, um, in the comp classes, and articles. Uh, in the lit classes of course they are reading novels, plays, poems, short stories etcetera, articles. Um, so critical reading's very important, um, they're not, they're not even reading for fun. The 10% who do say they read, I – the common books I see are *Harry*

Potter, Divergent, and Hunger Games. I'm happy they read, I think it's wonderful, but I'm not sure what that says about our culture.

Derringer Dick: 46:08

Yeah.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 46:09

They love dystopian novels, they love fantasy, which is great, um, as long as they're reading. But, um, they do, the students do read the Bible, you know, um, uh, I don't know that they would, um, even consider that, when I ask them "do they read books," I don't think that they think in their mind "Bible," I think that's more a daily, comfortable, uh, faith reading than, if I ask for "what books do you read," you know.

Derringer Dick: 46:39

That makes sense.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 46:40

So many students, we still have good conversations about faith, religion, culture in class, and I always ask them each semester what – or each year – what are your pop culture references, you know? And, uh, so, you know, that's a little off topic of, uh, Christian education, but uh they, uh, always mention pop artists, music, celebrities, things like that, movies, that's what their mind goes to.

Derringer Dick: 47:13

Yeah, I mean, that's actually exactly on topic, because I'm very interested in, you know, culturally, societally speaking, what's kind of, you know, what are people referencing that they have in common, and so it's...Harry Potter?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 47:25

Yeah, the most recent group said Post Malone, DaBaby, Lil Nas X, Lizzo, Tic-Tok, "Hit the Woah," *Endgame*, and Disney+.

Derringer Dick: 47:37

Okay.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 47:38

Those are their pop culture references.

Derringer Dick: 47:40

Interesting, all right.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 47:40

So we've got music, we've got apps, we've got phrases, we've got movies, we've got streaming services. That's where it's at.

Derringer Dick: 47:52

Sounds like a lot of, uh, visual or streaming media and less, less book references.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 47:47

Oh, definitely, definitely. Yeah.

Derringer Dick: 47:59

Do you think that's changed over time?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 48:01

I do. I do. I think...you know, um, I've taught here fifteen years full time and six years before that part-time. Um. You know, I didn't start asking this question until 2016.

Derringer Dick: 48:15

Okay.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 48:16

So it's hard to see much difference other than the fact that all through these years they've said "*Harry Potter*." So, they are reading books – the, the ten percent who say they read. Um, other students will say they read magazines, graphic novels – you know, you know, like, um, I don't know...uh, comics.

Derringer Dick: 48:38

Mmhmm.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 48:39

Um, um, but then that's also a small portion too, that's the people who like, uh, all the superhero movies, you know, which I love, although I don't read the comics. But some of them do. Uh, lot of videogaming. We know that. Yeah.

Derringer Dick: 48:53

So do you think that, uh...do you think that the, um, impact of, uh, movies, culturally, is more impactful than books, or do you think that there sort of taking the place of the traditional –

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 49:10

Taking the place. I totally believe that. Because even when there's a great book out there, they'll watch the movie instead. It's this, um, get it fast, get it in two hours, you know, "why should I have to read?" Yeah. But, I'm also noticing an increase in Audible reading, I will use quotation marks on that. I love Audible, but it, it, I have noticed when I listen to books more, I'm less likely to go back to my paper copies. I'm getting the full book, but I'm getting it while I drive to Norman, Oklahoma to see my kids, or, um, I, I just less likely to pick up my paper copy of the book. So, is that good? I don't know. [laughs] It's still reading, but it's listening, so – but it's the full book.

Derringer Dick: 50:04

Yeah!

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 50:05

You know.

Derringer Dick: 50:06

Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 50:06

Recently I listened to *A Gentleman in Moscow*, which I loved, you know, and, um, *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, and those I really don't know if I would ever read paper copies because the narrator is so – I loved the voice of the narrator.

Derringer Dick: 50:27

Oh interesting.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 50:28

Then there's other books that I'll start listening to, and the narrator will completely turn me off, so I go to the paper copy.

Derringer Dick: 50:33

Interesting. A friend of mine actually just got (if I recall correctly) Amy and I copies – or a copy of *The Night Circus*. So – small world!

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 50:40

Mmm! Let me know what you think!

Derringer Dick: 50:41

All right, I'll do that!

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 50:42

Loved it! Loved it!

Derringer Dick: 50:44

I've got a list that it's somewhere down here – but...

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 50:44

Beautiful language!

Derringer Dick: 50:46

Okay! Good deal, good deal. Uh, well, that about wraps up my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add, about any of the things we discussed, or anything else you think'd be – ?

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 50:55

Well, umm, since maybe this is a, it'll be put online, I just encourage people to go to community colleges, and, um, enjoy learning, um, embrace uncertainty, and don't let the challenges get you down! That's my hope for students. Less stress, more love of – for learning!

Derringer Dick: 51:18

All right. Thank you very much.

Dr. Diann Ainsworth: 51:19

You're welcome.