

OREGON HEALTH & SCIENCE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

a project of OHSU's Historical Collections & Archives

an interview with:

Mary Stenzel-Poore, Ph.D.

interview conducted on: May 22, 2018

by: Susan Smith, Ph.D.



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Interviewee: Mary Stenzel-Poore, Ph.D.

Interviewer: Susan Smith, Ph.D.

Date: May 22, 2018

Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

Susan Smith: My name is Dr. Susan Smith. I am interviewing Dr. Mary Stenzel-Poore for the OHSU Oral History Program. It is May 22, 2018, and we are in the BICC Building at OHSU. So, Mary, it's so nice to see you again. It's been a long time.

Mary Stenzel-Poore: It has been.

Smith: It's been too long. I guess I want to get into your career a little bit. But I really want to start out by more of a broad-ranged question about OHSU, because you have a unique perspective. You have seen it from the perspective of a graduate student, a postdoc, a faculty member, a department chair, an associate dean, and now you're director of research opportunity at the Knight Cancer Institute. What is your sense of what has made OHSU grow into what it did, in a way? Was it just growth? I mean, were there seminal events? People? Occurrences that sort of gave it a boost in a different direction? I mean, in sort of an overall- because you've just got an incredible perspective from someone who has seen it at every level. And you've grown with it. But I'm curious, what do you think?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah, that's a really great question. And I have to think about it. Because I think if you look at the beginnings of OHSU, the beginnings of OHSU was comprised of pioneering, non-egotistical faculty who came here because they wanted to make a difference in their research. They didn't come here because this was a prestigious institution. So, they came here for a specific reason. And it's different than the way other institutions attract individuals. And we were small, relatively, which required then, in order to make significant contributions, you had to collaborate. So, the motivation to come created a faculty group that were interested, really interested, in doing research, very interested in collaborating. And we had moderately good students, not great, but good. And as a result, it created, I think, an ecosystem, if you will, of faculty who depended on students in order to really do the research they wanted to do, living in a city that had only one academic institution in which they could do their research, and required to collaborate in order to have big success. That foundation, I think will define us probably forever.

And then, layer on to that, that Portland's a lovely place to come. And that secret got out, so we began to be able to really recruit great people. And I think that some of the individuals we brought here felt like this is a place I could build something that will stand out in the nation. And there wasn't competition that would block that. It was allowed to happen, if you will. It was permissive.

And we built the Vollum Institute. We built the primate center. We built the Vaccine and Gene [Therapy Institute], VGTI. We built a number of really prestigious research institutes that came together because of the kind of faculty we have. And I think that those were iterative events that created an institution that looks like OHSU.

Then a couple of defining things. I do think that the Phil and Penny Knight contributions to research will change us forever. And they allowed us to recruit in a way that we hadn't been able to before, because resources and investments in technology made OHSU become a place that we could steal, rather shamelessly, from great institutions across the country where people

said, “I want to go there. I want to go to Portland. I like that kind of culture.” And look what these gifts have done.

So, I think that those are the main things. And within that, we built a clinical faculty that is really second to none. And that combination is defining.

Smith: You’ve been here through all of this. And as OHSU was growing, you were growing, too, right? You were developing yourself. So, I’m curious, when you started here as a graduate student, what did you see yourself to become? I mean, I know you got a bachelor’s degree in biology and then you decided you were going to go to graduate school. But did you see yourself being where you are now? Was this a goal? Was it a plan?

Stenzel-Poore: No.

Smith: Was it serendipity? Or was this a consequence of the opportunity of OHSU that allowed you to do that?

Stenzel-Poore: I think that’s an interesting perspective. Because I actually started here as a technician when I was twenty-one years old. And I had no idea, really, what research was all about, although I had always been interested in science, since I was a little girl. You know, I think probably eight or nine years old, I’d been interested in science, and had done that. But I didn’t really know what research was until I started working at OHSU. I still didn’t have any perspective of where that takes you. I think most, actually at that time, and maybe even students today, you can really only see a few years ahead of you. You don’t see twenty years ahead of you. And you see that you really like something. And I think that’s what I saw is that the moment I landed on doing research, and I had some great people that kind of showed me the way, landed on research, I knew that this was me. I knew this is exactly what I was wired to do. And I loved it then. And it kind of got at my, a number of different sides. Creativity; I had no idea how much creativity science really took. And I think it’s one of the strongest features for biologists. Not necessarily all life sciences, but certainly for biology, that creativity—you’re usually filling in, you know, at least 50 percent of the story was what you imagined to be true. And that’s where the creative part comes. So, I loved that. And I loved the query. The whole piece of trying to figure out one more piece of the puzzle. It’s what gets you up at two in the morning to go stop an experiment at the right time, and it’s what gets you in at four a.m. in the morning to start the right things. It’s so compelling that you just can’t not. It’s almost like an addiction. You just have to keep going because it’s so exciting.

So those pieces were what drove me. I didn’t know what it would be like. And I didn’t even think about it, to be a junior faculty member. You kind of think a few years in advance. Oh, go to graduate school. That will be four years. And then what? And you think about it that way. And I think the thing that is both strange and defining is that you don’t see a clear path. You see in front of you a little bit. But you don’t look at that and say, in the same way you might were yeah, I’d like to be the CEO of a company. I didn’t think about anything more than running my lab. Not at all.

But I had, from the beginning, some fantastic mentors. I started when, again, when I was quite young. Lesley Hallick was, I worked for her, and Fran Storrs. Two extraordinarily talented women, very strong leaders. And I didn’t even think about it actively. I just saw them, saw what they did. I saw these very smart women who were outspoken and cared about me and my

development and said, “You should go to graduate school. You would be good. You should do this.” And it just spurred me on to do it. So, it wasn’t a conscious, but these wonderful women were there to guide me. I think that was a big piece of it.

Smith: Yeah, I think it’s a good message to get out to people that, and we’re very much the same in how we got to where we are. It wasn’t planned. We didn’t grow up wanting to be a professor at a medical school. It’s more than serendipity. But there’s a lot of aspect of that. Of taking advantage of the opportunity of where you are at the time. I mean, you sort of, I really like this. So, you came here. You did some research. You really liked it. Someone said you could go to graduate school. It was kind of like with me. Someone said, “You should go to graduate school.” So, you do that, and you know you really like it. And then the next step after that, which is, for you, you did postdoc. So, you did one here. I’m curious. What made you decide to go down to Salk Institute?

Stenzel-Poore: Right. So, I did, I was doing a postdoc here. Because I wasn’t 100 percent sure what area I wanted to do a postdoc in. And I had been trained as an immunologist by a great immunologist. But I knew I wanted to train in another area. I wasn’t 100 percent certain what that was. And so, I took some time to look around and think about what was the area that was appealing to me. And what got my attention, actually, was how the immune system and the nervous system worked together. And I felt as though what I needed to do was learn more about the nervous system and the neuroendocrine system in order to be able to ask questions about both immunity and how the nervous system functions.

So, I in fact found a paper that came out that represented everything that I thought was interesting in that field. And it was from the laboratory of Wylie Vale and Catherine Rivier. And I saw that and said, “Well, that’s where I want to go.” And I had no idea. Never heard of the man before in my life. I just wrote him a letter and said, “I’d like to come and be a postdoc in your lab.”

And when I told my friends that were colleagues in the Vollum Institute what I was doing, they just said, “Well, do you know who that is?” No, but I know that that’s the kind of science that I want to do.

And so, I went down there and interviewed. Those were three glorious years.

Smith: I’ll bet they were.

Stenzel-Poore: Yes.

Smith: They’re wonderful people there. And Wylie is—

Stenzel-Poore: He was terrific.

Smith: He was special. He was really, really a special person.

Stenzel-Poore: He taught me much, I’d say. And he taught me a lot about being courageous and how it takes as much time to work on a small problem as it does to work on a big problem. So, pick a big problem, one that’s going to make a difference. And that guided me the rest of my life. So that was really a great opportunity.

Smith: He seems to have been a special role model to you. Because not only did he teach you that, I mean, you had to have gotten interested in the thought of forming your own company. That whole aspect that you've done that I didn't do, which was to go down that pathway, which is not something we were taught to do in graduate school or as postdocs at all. And somewhere you had to see that as a possibility of what you wanted to do.

When did you start thinking about that possibility of forming your company? I mean, it had to have something to do with the research you were doing and the findings that you had?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. That's interesting because while I was still a postdoc, he just started a company, a company that still exists today, called Neurocrine.

Smith: Neurocrine, right.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. And it was working on the very things that I like to work on. And I was quite interested in that, and being part of his company. And he, this is how good he was. Here he was, starting a company. Obviously he thought it was quite important. And I came to him and said that I'd be interested in working in his company. And he tells me, "You want to really think hard about that, because you will spend five years, you won't publish anything. It won't help your career one bit. And then if you don't like it, and you want to try and get a job back in academia—"

Smith: It's going to be hard.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. It will be very difficult. So, he said, "I urge you to take a job in academia and build your career further before you take that risk." And that paid off. But it made me really think about companies and what they do. So, I have started actually a couple of different companies. And I always worked on the side with developing new drugs or interventions that could be used to treat patients. And that mechanism of starting companies, I must like it, because I've done it a couple of times. And it is a different way to both get funded and pursue science in a different way.

Smith: As you've moved up your career ladder, what kind of got you interested in running a department? I mean, that is a difficult job. And sometimes a thankless job. Sometimes it can be a wonderful job, depending on who the cast of characters are and who you're working with. I mean, how did you get into that? And do you think of it fondly?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. So interesting, because I think how you end up in a place just is never what you think. What had happened is that a couple of years before that, maybe three or four, I had realized that I wanted to do more with my life than continue to train graduate students and do academic science. But I didn't know what it was. And I didn't know where that came from, either. It came from a very internal spot. And what it was, and what it has to do with, is I became very interested in figuring out a way that I could make a contribution to the community that had raised me, essentially, that had allowed me to be successful. Because I felt like when I was running my lab, it was all about me. Even though, yes, you train students and postdocs. But it always is focusing back on the Mary Stenzel-Poore this or that, and—

Smith: And plus, you've got to get grants.

Stenzel-Poore: Yes.

Smith: I mean, it's a very self-focusing activity.

Stenzel-Poore: It has to be.

Smith: It has to be, or you're not going to be successful.

Stenzel-Poore: Yes, it does. But I grew up in a family in Saint Paul, Minnesota. And it was part of what our parents all did is they played a big role in the community. My father raised millions of dollars back in the '60s as part of what he did. Not, he had his job, but he did that for the community. And he chose science and technology and hospitals as where he focused his fundraising, to provide for them. So, I saw that, without ever paying attention in a conscious way, I saw that happening. And it just became part of me. What could I do? So, I didn't know what it would be. But I opened my mind to it. And I stopped training graduate students. I didn't take more. Because I thought, I might do something that's different. I may go to NIH and be a program director. I may work for a foundation and help raise money. Or I might run programs. But something that's not about my own program.

And I think it was just opening that door. And it turned out that the chair of the department that I was in took a job elsewhere. And she came to me and one other faculty member and said, "I'm going to need to make a recommendation of who should be the interim chair." And my colleague who would have been probably, certainly the candidate who was older and wiser said, "Don't recommend me." And so, it leapt out of me. I said, "You can recommend me." But I had never pictured myself being a chair. That wasn't the way I was thinking about it, oddly enough. It always seemed like a very politically charged role, one that had many features about it that I didn't necessarily think that I would be good at. But it just came out of nowhere. So that's how that ended up. It was by chance.

Smith: So, I think I know the kind of chair you are. I mean, my experience with chairs is some of them are selfless, meaning they sort of view the department as their creation and so they care about everybody. And everybody's success is important. And then there are other people who aren't like that so much. They tend to see the department as a way of getting resources for themselves and building up their own program. It's more of an ego-driven thing as opposed to I'm interested in the community and the other. And you clearly fall into the community role and caring about people. And you know, I mean, there have been a lot of people in your department. Is there anybody, you don't have to name them, but people where you feel that you really made a difference because that's the part of it, isn't it that you really made a difference in their career?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah.

Smith: I mean, they were floundering or they were whatever, and you did something that they will never forget.

Stenzel-Poore: I think it's the young people. Because more senior individuals, they were actually my contemporaries, and it's sort of like your siblings. You're all the same age and you know, it's sort of a rough and tumble. The thing that struck me is that we needed to grow. And it was because we were all full professors. There were no junior faculty. And the only thing that I could see going forward was I could either sit there with my hand on the tiller and not go anywhere, really, just guide it, or we could actually start to build something. And I think that it was hiring the young people. And during that time while I was the chair, I think that we hired five faculty. By hook or by crook. I mean, we figured out ways to look for quarters in the creases in the couch. And we as a group could advocate for resources to the dean where we really must build. That's the next generation of scientists. So, we had, I think the department had a good time in hiring some new faculty over a course of five years, I think these junior faculty. And they would say, if you were to ask them, in part they credit me because I hired them. But that was just a technicality. It's really been that the faculty were very excited to have new junior faculty come. And I watched those senior faculty really change. Because that's what they like to do. They like to help others grow their programs. And that piece had been missing for years. So, it was terrific to watch that.

Smith: So, I mean, as a department chair, and then you moved into the dean's office, I mean, I thought about you frequently, because I would hear my colleagues talking about the dean's office. And you know how that is. And I mean, I'm sure you got caught up in a little bit of the politics of it, you know, the politics that always exist between the administration and the faculty. And I think you did a really good job of trying to bridge that gap. But there must have been challenges where you felt you were caught in the middle, you weren't getting treated fairly, or you had to maybe defend something from the dean's office that as a basic science chair is not exactly what you would have been rallying for if that's the only hat you wore. So, can you talk about that a little bit?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. Those were quite interesting times. And as you just said, you get caught in this interface. The way I looked at it is that my job was to help build the strongest research enterprise we possibly could. And that my job was to be able to articulate the needs and help get the resources. I think that there were times when especially it was a perfect storm of, funding crashed in 2008. Everything did, including funding. And that faculty by and large who had been highly successful watched themselves go from well-funded to unfunded, from luxurious states of being funded to unfunded. And that the target becomes the administration, because there is no other, what else can you do?

Smith: Who else can you lash out at? Exactly.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. So, if I took that personally, I probably would have quit. And were there times when I wanted to? Many. But I was so convinced, I was so convinced that it was the right thing to do to keep trying to build. And I worked with a great partner. The dean, Mark Richardson, believed in me, and he believed in science. And he saw what the problem was. And he didn't have infinite resources. But someone once asked me, "What kind of budget did you have during that time?" And I said, "Zero budget. I never had a budget." But actually, that made it limitless. Because if I could write a convincing proposal, essentially, or get enough faculty to

really stand up and say this is what they wanted, then the dean would go for it. And that was a great partnership to have, because I could work with faculty.

So, during the time when there was this great angst going on, and there was faculty unrest. There was this simultaneous recognition of it on the dean's side. And we slowly, slowly just infused, especially the basic science department, with very strong support for the faculty.

And that's when the faculty compact came about, where the dean said, you know, "I believe in faculty. They're our greatest asset. And we are going to invest in them in such a way that's very visible to them. It's not hidden. This is going to be how we live."

And so, I think you're right. It was a difficult time. And yet it was an extraordinary time. Because look at what we built. So, we built technologies that we didn't have. And we've talked about this, Susan, about how fundamental technology changes are to the direction science actually ends up going. And there's been an investment of, I don't know, upwards of fifty million dollars in imaging capacity at this institution. And that meant we had to bring directors of institutes, the dean, vice president, all together to say, "Yeah, this is really important. This is what will change us forever." And to be able to stand up and say, "This is what we're going to invest in." And it has changed us forever as a result of that.

Smith: Yeah, I guess you know, at that point, I'm not sure. I don't know, I'm not sure the faculty ever really understands how things happen. Or they never really appreciate when something like this happens. Particularly because it's happening over the course of several years. So, they never I think really get the big picture. I mean, from my perspective then, I wasn't director of the primate center anymore, just a faculty member. I mean, I always thought that, I don't know, there was just, there was so much angst in the faculty that you could almost hit them on the head and they still wouldn't see what was going. And I also thought that maybe Mark, you, I don't think enough credit came together. I mean, maybe it has now. But I thought at the time, in the 2008, '09, '10, '11, that era, I don't know if I felt there was an appreciation for what the whole story really was. So, I kept thinking about, is that because the story wasn't told well? Or is it just the nature of faculty and this sort of divide that's always there between the administration and the faculty? I don't know. What do you think?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. I think the story was told. Because I know, at least the School of Medicine spent considerable time doing that. Maybe they didn't do a good enough job. But I would argue that there was a sense of resistance to accepting that these investments were really being made. And that it felt as though, and this happens, that they were investments made to individuals. But they weren't. They were actually made to build capacity. And now we have that capacity. So that's the piece in science. And you've seen it probably, too, is that from start to finish is often a ten or fifteen-year period. And we, in 2010 we began to build the Center for Spatial Systems Biomedicine, down in the waterfront. And today, we've garnered one of the greatest grants ever from the NCI. We're a center of excellence in electron microscopy, the very thing we built. And that's a short time span. It took a big investment on this institution's part, largely from the Knight Cancer Institute, but with a belief from Mark Richardson that this was the right thing to do.

I worked with Brian to recruit Joe Gray here. And that was not without its criticism. "Why are you hiring this person?" It turns out this person is an extraordinary individual. And when I would go outside of this campus, I would hear from others, "How did you get Joe Gray to come to OHSU?" And I would say, "He saw an opportunity here that he didn't see other places."

And we've done this again. We just hired someone else, Gordon Mills from MD Anderson. And people have stopped me on the street, essentially, and say, "How did you do that?" I said, again, "People see an opportunity here that they don't see other places."

So, I think while those were difficult times, it was paving the way to where we are now. And as you go through that kind of narrow, difficult part of the trajectory, you got to put Kevlar vests on and be a strong leader. There were times when it was very hard!

Smith: Oh, yeah. I'm sure it's true. In your career, I mean, you've moved on to a new role that I don't know very much about at the Knight Cancer Institute. Tell me a little bit about it and what do you, what makes you so excited about it?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. So, this role is a role to work with the director, Brian Druker, to help with developing a strategic plan for the Knight Cancer Institute. One that is consistent with the one-billion-dollar investment that the Knight is making. And the role is interesting because it's a role of, I get to define significant parts of it, because there hasn't been someone in this role. And I am careful in picking what I would want to work with and what matches up with what I need. So, there's two pieces in this. One is recruiting. We are on a very ambitious recruitment plan to help build out early detection in cancer, and to build out something called precision oncology. And that is a combination of what we will be able to do in terms of early detection for cancer and all the technologies that are required. So, we're hiring a large number of technologists that are going to be innovative in new ways to see cancer early. And then physician scientists who will be able to take precision therapies, precision interventions, and apply them to patients. So, recruiting, planning, and working with faculty who are all members of the Knight. It's different than what I did in the School of Medicine as the dean of research. But it has some aspects that are similar.

Smith: Yeah, I can see that. I mean, there's such an incredible opportunity, isn't there? And so, one of the things that I'm thinking about the Knight Cancer Institute, and your experience with training, it seems to me that there's a really unique opportunity at the Knight Cancer Institute in terms of training. Whether it's basic scientists working with clinicians or physician scientists, or training clinicians to think a different way about how they practice medicine. How does that fit into that? Have they had time to put that hat on yet, to really think about what unique training opportunities could come out of that institute?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. That's a good question. And it really has been percolating in the background. And an aspect in particular is around a discipline. It's made up, almost, but it would be a new discipline. And for lack of a better word or term it would be quantitative oncology. It comes from that concept—so we have this new Center in Spatial Systems Biomedicine. What is that? It's using electron microscopy and in general genomics and proteomics to start to define the state of a person who has a malignancy. And if you think about that, it is about detection at minute levels and quantification; looking at changes over time and being able to both visualize it and measure it. People aren't trained in that science. And that science requires deep computation, much in the way of technology. And we need to define that area in such a way that we could entice students into that. And I think we need to, because it will be with us for the next thirty or forty years.

Smith: Oh, yeah.

Stenzel-Poore: It will be the new—we will be living with cancer lifelong, because we'll be able to treat it. But we will need to be able to follow it as it changes. And we need the next generation of, and you said it. Whether it be students, classical students, or whether it's clinician scientists, who are doing research with patients. We will need to be training in that area.

Smith: So, I was thinking about your area of research that I'm pretty familiar with, the Knight Cancer Institute, where there's just all this new stuff in technology. How do you look at that in terms of your own research interests and program? And how do you see, I want that, I want to do that. Could you answer this question, how does that turn you on?

Stenzel-Poore: I've had it kind of compartmentalized. I've been working on the Knight Cancer Institute for I don't know, only seven or eight months, only. My own research has been in this different compartment, the way I think about it. But we've hired a couple of individuals who are, they're not really cancer biologists, they're more technologists. And when we talk, we talk about what I work on, neuroprotection. And it's interesting, because it's in those conversations that I don't tell myself anymore well, I'm not a cancer researcher. And I open my own mind to how the new technologies that are being developed could tell me something about my own work. And as you know, I work on how the brain experiences loss of oxygen, either due to a clot or due to a constriction of a vessel, and what the brain does in that setting. And one of the things we want to be able to learn are what are the signals to the rest of the body that happen in that setting, because there may be ways that we can commandeer those signals to protect the brain.

My work is, as an immunologist, thinking about how can we tell the immune system to help the brain in the setting of injury. And in cancer, the immune system both helps and blocks cancer. There's a lot of evidence right now that it helps the cancer grow. So, the immune system can play both roles. And I think about that in protecting the brain as well. So, I've learned a lot. And I think the technologies that are available in the Knight Cancer Institute are technologies available to everyone at OHSU. We just have to figure out how we want to use them.

Smith: Figure out how to do that, yeah. So, I guess I want to get back to a fundamental that we've talked about, the whole role of mentoring. We talked before about that for women, women mentoring are really important, because it's just the nature of our culture. It's not the same as it is for the guys out there. So, who really had an influence on you? Did you recognize a mentor before you got to college? Was there somebody in your life that you looked at in that kind of way you look at a mentor now? Were you fortunate enough to have somebody like that? Or did it take getting into this whole program of doing research before you finally realized, that's a mentor? You know what I mean?

Stenzel-Poore: I do. I know what you mean. And I'm not sure that I recognized what a mentor was when I was younger. But I went to an all girls' school. And I think that actually had □

Smith: That probably helped.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. Because it was a religious order of nuns. And it's like gender-neutral, actually. It's the most interesting thing that I thought about later is that this is a group of women who teach other women. And there are no gender barriers. You're taught to just do the best you

possibly can. And the sky's the limit. It's fascinating. So, I didn't actually ever appreciate that there were gender differences in education until I learned about them much later. I didn't know about that, and I didn't sense it, so I don't think I really knew it. But I did have the great opportunity once I graduated from college where I worked with these inspirational women. And I mentioned worked with Lesley Hallick and Fran Storrs. And then my PhD advisor was a huge supporter of women. But from the kind of tough way of actually he had a lot of graduate students that were women, and he was far harder on us than he was on the men. And I saw that. I was actually shocked by it. But I think his view was that it was going to be tough for women to be successful.

Smith: And you need to toughen up.

Stenzel-Poore: So that was a good lesson. And then I had a woman who was a chair of the department where I came back to OHSU to be a faculty member. And I watched. I just watched. That's what I saw. And again, I think she actually was extremely supportive of my career, without a big to do about it. So, I saw these things.

And yet it wasn't until I was in the dean's office that I really began to look around and see that we were quietly building a pretty strong leadership group that were comprised of women. And it was during this difficult time that we were talking about. Turns out that Mark Richardson, again, as dean, was quietly very supportive of women leaders, and hired two clinical chairs that were women, three, actually: Sharon Anderson, Jen DeVoe, Sancy Leachman. And then in the basic sciences, Bitu Moghaddam for behavioral neuroscience, at the time when I was there for MMI, and then Susan Hayflick and Lisa Coussens. So, it was really a remarkable time, but difficult.

And it was in that difficult period that there was a sense that actually being a woman leader at OHSU was pretty tough. And because there were enough of us, we talked about it. Like what we were experiencing. Experiencing a level of resistance to our leadership that we were not very happy with.

So, I started a group, brought a group together, of women. And it was the Senior Women's Leadership Group. It started small. It was maybe eight or nine. And we met at each other's homes for a while, maybe a year. And then we expanded it. It became thirty or forty women on campus who were in leadership positions who were all sort of mid to senior career. And we began to talk about what was so difficult. Was it relevant? It was relevant because it made us each aware of why it was challenging. And I think it was challenging because of something kind of interesting. That OHSU and Portland in general sees itself as a very tolerant place. It views itself as tolerant. And when you have what I would say, strong implicit bias, which we all have.

Smith: We all have, absolutely.

Stenzel-Poore: But very low explicit. So, we would never say that, we would say we're tolerant, which put us in this low explicit, high implicit. That's a storm. Because you're not talking about why is this hard? You're not talking about how you can make it better for women or underrepresented minorities. And you don't view the problem as a problem you have institutionally. And I mean men and women.

So as a result of that, I think it was particularly difficult. And this group worked hard to think about ways to make it easier for one another to be leaders. And I think that's slowly making a difference. I think Brian Gibbs being here as—do you know Brian?

Smith: No.

Stenzel-Poore: Oh, he's the, I don't know, chief diversity officer? Wonderful man. And he is leading an unconscious bias movement across healthcare and the rest of the institution.

Smith: That's very interesting.

Stenzel-Poore: It will change us forever. He really understands what the problem is.

Smith: There's so much interesting research going on on that.

Stenzel-Poore: I agree.

Smith: And we all, we take these tests and we go—

Stenzel-Poore: Yes.

Smith: But I mean, the encouraging thing seems to be that you can train people to be better. To recognize it, and to make different choices, and to react differently.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah, it's shocking when you, I mean, I've taken the Harvard implicit bias test in a number of areas a couple of times.

Smith: And it's shocking.

Stenzel-Poore: Oh, I know, and I guess it just tells you, okay, this is part of who we all are.

Smith: Who we are.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah.

Smith: Where we came from, how we learned.

Stenzel-Poore: So, when we were talking earlier, Susan, we were talking about the path that's open to women leaders. And some are saying, "I want to work half time." Well, I actually think if you make the case, the business case, for why we need to have a diverse workforce and diverse leadership, then we have to make it a path that looks appealing, that allows us to have the diversity we have to have. If you make the case, then I think you're willing to actually let people be a half time homemaker because that's important, and they need to take care of their children, and they want to be present, and still give them the opportunity. So, we've got to figure that one out, rather than saying, "It's just one path. There's only one way to get there."

Smith: Yeah. It's hard.

Stenzel-Poore: It is hard.

Smith: It is hard. I think particularly when you get research grants involved, and how hard it is to keep them when you're even working at it 24/7, much less part time. I mean, how you get around it, I think it really, really is hard. What opportunities are there for female graduate students, or female medical students, to sort of be exposed to what opportunities, or to give them an opportunity to really think about the career choices they're going to make? Maybe I don't need to go into that profession because I can get a clinic job and only work half time, and that's what I'm going to do, because I've made that choice. I'm going to get married, I'm going to have kids, I'm going to do all of these things. How do we get over that hump?

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. Well, again, I think we have to actually believe that we will fail if we do not have the right leaders to help lead, or the right people to help build scientific community or healthcare community that we must have. We have to believe it. And I think, I'm not sure we do yet. And yet I do think it will make or break us.

So, once you decide that's the case, then you begin to think about how you're going to train for that. And I think that actually our graduate program against the faculty are not happy with this, but are saying, let's create a graduate program that appeals to the next generation. Where they can learn about science policy. Where they can learn about law. Where they can learn about the different areas that science needs to have an impact on.

And I actually think that this is something that we neglected as a community. We did not build out our science policy side. And as a result, we're suffering. We haven't built out the right legal aspects who've recognized science for all its merit, and we suffer. Same with science writing. Our general public doesn't understand the science we do. And we're not very good at communicating it. So, we need people □

Smith: We're not very good at explaining it. And we're not very good at talking about it. Yeah, I would agree. I think it's, you know, the lab director's view is, I need these people in my lab to do the work so I can get this work done so I can get papers published so I can get my grant renewed. And there is truth to this.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah.

Smith: And you know, there's also the conflict of I've got to get all my salary off my grant. And so that is where my work has to be. I can't be doing all of this good stuff for the university, because it's paying me very little of my salary. So, I think there's a lot of, there are a lot of issues there that, where there has to come to an understanding of how to make this work. Because if I were someone who got most of her salary off a grant, where would all my effort go? I mean, I have to survive, right?

Stenzel-Poore: Yes.

Smith: Because if I lose my grants, I'm not going to have a salary and I can't do that. So, I think it's really, I think it's hard. I don't know, maybe it's easier on the clinical side. I mean, you can

clearly be a half time clinical person. And how important the scholarship angle of that is, I'd have to really think about that. But for a basic scientist, you're primarily there because you're doing research, not because of your teaching. So, I just, it just makes me so sad to see my own former graduate students, and other people's former graduate students that are women, I mean, how many of them fall by the wayside? And—

Stenzel-Poore: Because of the choices that they have to make.

Smith: Because of the choices they have to make. And it's just really sad. And it's very frustrating. And I think that, I mean, I agree with you. We need more women in the systems, and in leadership roles, and making decisions, not fewer.

Stenzel-Poore: I don't have a solution. I wish, I actually think about it a lot, as I'm sure you do, because the future of science is absolutely going to depend on having women and minority leaders. I'm certain of that.

Smith: Yeah.

Stenzel-Poore: And you are right. We have made it a choice where you choose to have a family or not. And you choose to take on these other roles at great peril, because your scientific career might suffer. And those, to me, seem like choices we actually can't live with. And I don't know the answer. I don't think that any other country has figured it out, either.

Smith: Yeah. I think it's really hard. And I—I don't know. It's still intractable, even though a lot of people have spent a lot of time thinking about it. I don't know. I just think in this day and age, the funding is hard. It's very hard, particularly, I think, to be a basic scientist, where you're dependent on getting a lot of your salary. There's huge pressure on you, male or female. You've got a family to support. You're doing all of these kinds of things. I think it's just really very difficult. And I don't know the answer to it.

Stenzel-Poore: It's possible that one piece to this is thinking about how we can solve problems in a more team-focused way. You described something where you had a wonderful relationship with a junior faculty member. And you could work together. And you built a program that was just unparalleled. And I think that one way to begin to get to another place scientifically and kind of the social science of the science we do, is to think about those relationships as equal. And that we begin to think about team science as a celebrated way to approach a hard problem. And that there are many contributors. They're compensated well. They depend on one another. And it's a kind of science that's being done, instead of it's a lesser science that's being done, and that there's only one great leader among them. But in fact, it's not like that.

And maybe that's part of the solution, because it gives people ample room. The don't have to just be an independent investigator that relies on this □

Smith: Right. They can play various roles.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. Yeah.

Smith: And universities have to figure out a way to recognize that and to make it count so that—

Stenzel-Poore: Yes.

Smith: I don't know. I mean, it gets caught up in all of these promotion and tenure—

Stenzel-Poore: That has to change.

Smith: All of those issues that are really, really hard, that need to be looked at in a new model. And I don't really know if places are trying to do that in this country. Are universities really trying to figure out what works, or doing some experiments? Or, you know, maybe academic health centers are not the place to start doing these kind of experiments. Because it's just different. It's—

Stenzel-Poore: I wish they could be.

Smith: Yes.

Stenzel-Poore: But they tend to be more conservative in their, they're on the lagging edge, instead of the leading edge.

Smith: The leading edge. I would agree with you. Because they have more business than just being academic. I mean, they have a whole clinical enterprise that is very time-consuming. It's very costly. And it is an academic enterprise. But it isn't exclusively an academic enterprise. So, it makes it more difficult and more complicated to actually deal with. So.

Stenzel-Poore: Well, OHSU was one of the early adopters of crediting individuals who play a key role, but a role in the middle of the authorship list. And calling it out in the promotion and tenure guidelines. And it is one of the things that helped us recruit Joe Gray. He was sixty-something when we recruited him from a national lab. And he saw that and said, "This is important to me. I actually want to credit people who are in the middle with a higher impact to the overall contribution than the first or last author." And he said, "And if I never have another first or last author paper, that will be fine."

Smith: I've had enough, yeah.

Stenzel-Poore: Yeah. So, I do think it's trending in that direction. And that we have to be able to walk that walk. And we have to be able to have our promotion and tenure committee say on a regular basis to themselves and everybody else that approaches them, we do not just look at your independent contributions. We measure your ability to work on a team and provide it with as much of an impact or weight as anything else you do.

Smith: That needs to be proven. I mean, there needs to be examples of that to the faculty before they will buy into that scheme.

Stenzel-Poore: Yes.

Smith: And you can't blame them, in a way at all.

Stenzel-Poore: No.

Smith: I think that part is all pretty interesting. I'm going to ask you the same question I think you asked me, which was, what else, is there anything else you want to say or get across, or want people to know about you and your illustrious career and all the things you've accomplished? And I will say, you've had a huge impact at OHSU.

Stenzel-Poore: Thank you.

Smith: And a really nice impact. I'm so glad that you have found a new home, still at OHSU, but that I think is really going to challenge you. But it's making use of all the talent you have, and all the experience you have, in the very, very best way. And more than being a department chair will do. I mean, I think this is a big challenge. And it relates to things you're dedicated to, which is the public, in all of those aspects that are good. So, I'm really happy that you have that position.

Stenzel-Poore: Thank you, Susan. It's nice to hear you put it that way, because we don't stop and reflect on our contributions or what we bring, necessarily. But you're right. A billion-dollar gift comes with a huge responsibility, I think. The stewardship of that, you really want to get it right.

Smith: You've got to get it right.

Stenzel-Poore: Yes. And I think it's actually a privilege. And there are pieces of this job that are different, and do challenge me, as you just said. I think that I do have to express gratitude for the people who have been here who, whether they know it or not, had such a big impact on me. And they are either fellow faculty or they are leaders that I watched. OHSU has some of the most extraordinary people here. And if you just look around, you learn so much without paying any tuition, right?

Smith: Right. Yeah.

Stenzel-Poore: You do. I am a very keen observer of people. I pay attention to what people do and how they see the future. And I adopt it. I mean, I just do.

Smith: Well I think you said one thing that really struck me about the way OHSU developed and this kind of not being an old, established, prestige place where everything is cut in stone. You can't do this until you've done this, this, and this. So, there's infinite opportunity here. And that attracts some people. And those are the people you want to attract, right? And I mean, you're an example of that, that you were allowed to develop your career and move into places as people saw you. "Mary would be just perfect for that role." But it's a great place to be, isn't it? Because you're not stuck in a position and thinking well I'm never going to do anything different, because there's this hierarchy up here that I can't break through.

Stenzel-Poore: That is so true. If you want to do something, you can. You either just run fast, no one can catch you.

Smith: Yeah. Right.

Stenzel-Poore: Or you get other people to buy into that idea, and there you go. I think that's true. People don't say no here. They either sit quietly by the side and say, "Let's see what happens." But they don't say no. And I think other institutions do suffer from a culture of no. We don't here. We really are pioneers.

Smith: Yeah. I would agree. And it's fitting with the status of OHSU in the state. It is the only one. Oregon's not a rich state, doesn't have a lot of rich donors. I mean, it's had to struggle. The state doesn't put a lot of money into higher ed, as we all know. So, it's had to really work to develop its way. I remember, I was around when Peter Kohler made the decision to make this a public corporation. And that was a very controversial move. But looking back, it was the right move. There were some hard times in there, but it was the right thing to do.

Stenzel-Poore: Absolutely. We're lucky to have been here during that time, actually.

Smith: Yeah. I would agree. Okay.

Stenzel-Poore: Well, thank you.