

La Salle University

La Salle University Digital Commons

All Oral Histories

Oral Histories

Summer 7-15-2021

Interview of Kate Ward-Gaus AVP of Student Wellness

Wendy Stanley
stanleyw1@lasalle.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/histdeptohall>



Part of the [Health and Physical Education Commons](#), [Public Health Education and Promotion Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Stanley, Wendy, "Interview of Kate Ward-Gaus AVP of Student Wellness" (2021). *All Oral Histories*. 129.
<https://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/histdeptohall/129>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral Histories at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact brigham85@lasalle.edu.

Wendy Stanley
HIS 650

Field Notes: Kate Ward-Gaus

Interviewee: Kate Ward-Gaus

Interviewer: Wendy Stanley

Interview date: July 15, 2021 at 1 p.m.

Interview location: Counselling offices at La Salle University

Field notes written July 21, 2021.

Interviewee:

Kate Ward-Gaus was born October 30, 1954 in Philadelphia to Irish-Catholic first generation parents. She was the second-oldest of six children. Kate grew up in Philadelphia in three Catholic parishes during her youth, and attended the local Catholic schools. She was surrounded by extended family including aunts and uncles, as well as her grandparents. She lived with her family in her grandparents' home on Pine Street in west Philadelphia for a time in early childhood before her immediate family purchased and moved into their own home at 65th and Chester in southwest Philadelphia when she was about six years old.

Kate describes her childhood as happy and fulfilled. There was always family around. Her older sister was only thirteen months older than she, and her younger brother only eighteen months younger, creating sibling playmates.

Kate's father was a chemical assistant at the DuPont Chemicals Company. He also worked part-time selling tickets for the Phillies baseball team. Kate's mother was a stay-at-home mother for many years until the last child went to school. At that point in time, she went to work as a waitress in the executive dining room of a bank.

In regards to school, Kate describes herself as a good student, but an average student. She often compared herself to her older sister, who excelled academically. Kate says she was a shy child who eventually found her confidence in high school. She attributes this growth in confidence to doing volunteer work with the Catholic Service Corps, as well as learning leadership skills during her adolescence.

After graduating from West Philadelphia Catholic Girls' High School, Kate chose to attend Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., pursuing classes in psychology and education. She transferred to Temple University in Philadelphia for her junior and senior years.

Upon graduating with a degree in elementary education, Kate worked as an elementary school teacher for two years. After that, Kate began working in substance abuse prevention, addiction counselling, and student wellness for many years, including a role at the University of Pennsylvania that she held for eleven years. She transferred to La Salle University in 2006 and became Director of the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center. In 2017, Kate was promoted to Assistant Vice President of Student Wellness at La Salle. She held the position for almost four years, including taking a leadership position during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak that began in February 2020. Kate retired from La Salle in January 2021. During retirement she plans to travel, kayak, explore, and perhaps write books or essays on her experiences with wellness in order to continue to help others heal.

Interviewer:

I, Wendy Stanley, am a graduate student in public history at La Salle University in Philadelphia. I was born in England on May 27, 1969 and emigrated to Canada with my parents and older brother, Ian, in March 1971. I lived in Canada until September 2008, when I emigrated to the United States from Toronto with my husband and our two daughters. I became a U.S. citizen in August 2017 and retain my British and Canadian citizenship as well. I have an undergraduate degree in English Literature and a college certification in Print Journalism. I enjoyed a successful twenty-year career in senior corporate communications positions prior to becoming a novelist in 2016, and beginning my master's degree in public history at La Salle University in 2019. I am currently at work on my second novel.

Background

I am interested in documenting the lives of women and wanted to interview a woman for my oral history project at La Salle. Dr. Allen suggested I interview Kate Ward-Gaus, who recently retired from her position at La Salle as Assistant VP of Student Wellness.

Dr. Allen initially reached out by email to Kate, who agreed to be interviewed. Dr. Allen then turned the communication process over to me.

In order to accommodate family visits and travel on both sides, Kate and I decided to wait until the second week of July to hold the interview. We both had been fully vaccinated for COVID by that time for several months.

We were scheduled to have an introductory meeting over Zoom on July 8th at 10:30 a.m., but due to technical difficulties on Kate's end, the Zoom meeting could not take place. Wendy followed up by phone and asked permission to speak on the phone with her instead and not use Zoom on their laptops. The phone meeting took place that same day at 11 a.m. I spoke to Kate for half an hour about the process for the interview, what was required, and asked if she had any questions. Throughout, Kate was a kind and generous participant. By the end of the phone call, we had agreed on July 15th as the date of the interview. Due to the need to have silence for recording, which would lead to excellent sound quality, we agreed to meet in one of the counselling rooms at La Salle University. We agreed to meet there at 1 p.m. on July 15th.

Prior to the interview, I did a sound check and checked the Voice Memo app on my iPhone 11 for sound quality. The quality was excellent. I also purchased a voice app for my iPad in order not to have any technical difficulties during the interview. I then also purchased a handheld digital recorder from Amazon, just in case, hoping that *three* devices would mean security.

I made sure that I could easily transfer the files from all three devices to my laptop afterwards and that all of them could be uploaded to the Cloud for storage and safekeeping.

I wrote an outline of questions I wanted to ask so I would be better prepared to interview Kate. I also, again, read the chapter on conducting an oral history interview in Donald Ritchie's *Doing Oral History*, and went over Yow's checklist for effective interview qualities.

I drove to La Salle on July 15th, a drive of an hour and a half, and Kate met me outside the counselling offices on a 90F day with high humidity. It was a very hot walk across campus from the parking lot that I had chosen. The campus was quiet, as it usually is in the middle of summer.

Kate was warm and welcoming. She was dressed professionally in a sleeveless dress and sandals. She has a very youthful energy. We made our way into the counselling offices to do the interview. Before we began recording, I repeated to her that the goal of meeting was to create an oral history of historic value. I reminded her that I would not be doing any editing of the audio file. I explained that if she wanted a break during the interview, we could pause and then resume.

We did a sound check. I positioned the digital recorder, the iPhone, and the iPad on the small table between us. Throughout the interview, I repeatedly checked that the three devices were still recording. I tried very hard not to talk too much or react unnecessarily. The interview was almost two hours, so there were times when I achieved that, and times when I said more than I wanted to, in hindsight. I enjoyed the

interview. I felt that I was very focused with my questions and tried to provide Kate with a firm structure so she received a positive outcome.

Kate was a wonderful narrator. Throughout the interview, she was relaxed and appropriately talkative. If she was nervous, she did not show it. She spoke easily and from her heart. She was often candid, yet professional. Kate did not fidget or play with hands and fingers. For two hours, she spoke effortlessly. We sat across from each other in two chairs in the counselling office, facing each other. The two hours, in my opinion, flowed smoothly and went very quickly. Kate was a pleasure to interview. The only external sounds were from the floor above when someone occasionally made a noise or dropped (moved?) something.

Note on Recording:

I used the Voice Memo app on an iPhone 11, and purchased an app called Voice Record & Audio Editor from TapMedia PRO Group for my iPad. I also purchased a small handheld recorder, an EVISTR 16GB digital voice recorder.

I transferred the files to my laptop, a MacBook Air, and then transferred them to the iCloud to back them up before submission to La Salle. As stated, the recorded interview itself took place in one of the counselling offices at La Salle University on July 15th, 2021.

Transcript:

- I purchased transcription software to do the initial text dump in hard format. I then went over the transcript many times.
- Kate had a tendency to say “like,” “so,” “um,” and “but” very frequently as she was gathering her thoughts and speaking through her memories. I removed a great number of these without affecting the quality and meaning of the conversation. If I had kept them in, the transcript would have appeared halting and piecemeal.
- I deleted a few false starts.
- I used square brackets [x] to indicate missing words.
- I used *italics* to denote emphasis in speech.
- I used spaces and names to indicate who was speaking.
- I placed a time indicator at the top of each page.