

Dr. Richard L. Sleight: A Brief College Employment History

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Dick Sleight began his college teaching career in 1978, at the age of 22, as a faculty member of the College of Engineering at the University of Washington. He is quick to add that he was a teacher, but not an Engineer. Although he had pursued an electrical engineering major well into his junior year at the UW, Dick graduated with a B.A. in Economics and added a secondary social studies teaching certificate. He had however, from 1974 to 1977, worked as an undergraduate teaching assistant for the ENGR 123 *Engineering Graphics* course. Yet, before he had a chance to seek a high school teaching position, the UW offered him a contract.

As a non-tenure track Lecturer, Dick was “Economist enough” to take advantage of up to six credits of free tuition each quarter at the UW. In 1980, he completed his M.Ed. degree in Educational Psychology with an emphasis in measurement and statistics, with a GPA of 3.89. His master’s thesis was written in the area of Computer-Aided Instruction. In 1987, he was a founding faculty member of the Industrial Engineering Program, and served as its Undergraduate Advisor and Undergraduate Committee Chair. While at the UW, he regularly taught Engineering Graphics, FORTRAN Programming, and later Engineering Economy, and Engineering Statistics.

In June 1989, Dick moved three miles west down the Seattle Ship Canal from the University of Washington to Seattle Pacific University. He was hired as Coordinator of the Adult Learner Program and worked in the Academic Advising Center. That autumn, Dick received his Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Washington College of Education. His dissertation titled, “Influence of Transfer Status on Admission to, and Success in, Undergraduate Engineering at the University of Washington,” earned the Gordon C. Lee Award for best College of Education dissertation for 1989-90. His position at SPU was closely aligned with his academic credentials. While at the UW, Dick had completed a doctoral internship in the university’s large central advising office. He had also served as Acting Director of the Engineering Advising Center for one summer.

At SPU, Dick also taught freshman level courses in Engineering and later Computer Science, as well as the statistics course in the MBA program. In the spring of 1991, Dr. Sleight moved offices from Demaray Hall to McKenna Hall as he became the coordinator of the MBA program in the School of Business and Economics (SBE). This role continued until 1996.

Coincident with the rise of the Word Wide Web, Dick was asked to take on the new position of technology manager for the SPU business school. They had begun the long process of seeking prestigious AACSB accreditation, and the area of instructional technology needed a champion in the school. Dick’s computer experience was to become a major part of his daily work. It was not an unusual decision when then Dean of the School of Business and Economics, Alec Hill, asked Dick to become the new Manager of Information Systems (as the title was later to be called.) While Bill Gates was at Lakeside High School learning BASIC, Dick was already teaching FORTRAN at West Seattle High School. As the computer age expanded, so did Dick’s interest in computer programming. Were it not for the fact that he came of age during the era of punch cards, he is likely to have pursued a career in computer science. While still managing the MBA program, Dick designed and coded the first business school web site in HTML in 1995-96.

As the SPU business school’s “Chief Information Officer,” as he was later called by Dean Jeff Van Duzer, Dr. Sleight setup the McKenna Hall computer classroom and the USWEST Computer Lab (now the McKenna Computer Lab). He redesigned the school’s website a number of times and managed all matters of instructional and administrative technology for the school. Much of his daily work went beyond technology to data management and analysis. He became responsible for data collection and reporting in areas such as faculty evaluations, learning assessments, and course scheduling. He also taught *Spreadsheets* and business statistics nearly every term from 1997 to 2007. In 1999, he also served as editor and publisher for the successful two volume accreditation report which earned SBE full AACSB accreditation in April 2000. In 2004, he received the Dean’s Award for his service to SBE.

Back in 1991, the Director of the Academic Advising Center, Dr. Doug Rich, was asked, “What did you do before Dick was hired?” His answer was, “We didn’t do it.”

In the business school it is not unusual for responsibilities that do not otherwise have a natural home, to fall to Dick. He enjoys using another of his skills as the event and portrait photographer for SBE. He serves as the building manager, keeping an eye on McKenna Hall, and he represents the needs of the SBE faculty and staff to other SPU departments, especially Facilities, Computer and Information Systems, and Student Academic Services. His leadership, on behalf of SBE, of the major remodel of McKenna Hall during the summer of 2010, was highly praised. He still loves to teach, and is regularly a guest instructor in the *Management Information Systems* class on the topic of web design. In line with his doctoral work, Dick also serves as the faculty advisor for all business administration, economics, and entrepreneurship minors, as well as advising the students of faculty who are on sabbatical or other leaves. His dean and faculty colleagues are anxious that he not retire any time soon.