

**Charles O. Burgess's recollections
about the first master's degree programs**

Vaughan: Right. So then by 1965 you became Graduate Program Director, so do you want to talk about how the graduate degrees evolved?

Burgess: Yeah. Actually, actually my involvement with it started earlier than that – probably around late... mid '64 – when Steve appointed me as a person who would be drafting the degree proposal. So working with the new faculty in the department, and again there was a hierarchy and actually, potentially a pretty divisive split. Working with the new faculty in the department and with Steve, we developed what we thought was an extremely strong, credible master's program – emphasis on literature, of course, almost entirely, very restrictive. In fact, we included something that lasted until the early '70s when finally it became too difficult to do anymore. We included an extensive written exam as a requirement for the master's, in addition to a thesis, and course work, so it was a very rigorous program when it first went in. Then in... then it was in '64... it was in '64 that the first graduate programs at ODU were approved. There were two in humanities – English and History – and then elementary education, and business administration. [Vaughan: And this was all in '64? Those were the first graduate degrees?] It was a package, yeah. And those were the first graduate degrees and they were approved by the--somewhat to the disgust of a number of other institutions in the state, they were approved by State Council and we began to become a graduate offering institution. In fact, at that point there were some people who at that point thought we should change our name to university, but Lewis resisted that and a lot of the faculty resisted it too as a matter of fact. So it, from that point the excitement became the graduate program... attracted to the program some people in the community who had wanted to have graduate work in English and who were highly qualified. Of course, the main example I would give is Crow Tunstall – Caroline Tunstall – who was probably one of the most brilliant people I've ever known, and she could--she had read everything. She was capable of analyzing everything. I mean she was a--she was a brilliant person. (pg. 16-17)

Full interview at:

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