

Hello, and welcome. I am your host, Neil Ward, and I'm grateful that you are taking time out of your day to learn more about design educators' paths to Tenure. I truly appreciate it.

On this episode of Tell It To Neil, we're chatting with Associate Professor and Chair of Fine and Performing Arts, Hilary Walrod from Colby-Sawyer College in New London, New Hampshire. Let's listen in.

Neil: Hi Hilary, how are you?

Hilary: Good thanks Neil. Hi, how are you?

Neil: Doing well. Thank you for taking time out of your day to be on Tell It To Neil.

Hilary: Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

Neil: Of course. So, let's get started. How did you get into the world of Graphic Design?

Hilary: Yeah, it has been a circuitous route for me. Despite declaring in Fifth Grade that I wanted to be a Graphic Designer, when in hindsight I don't even know how I knew what a Graphic Designer was in Fifth Grade, I ended up pursuing other areas of study for Undergrad and didn't come into Graphic Design until Grad School.

Neil: Interesting. So that was quite a way. So, how did you get to Design, because I love hearing about these back-stories of people who have these different bodies of knowledge and then come into Design. So, can you talk a little bit about that?

Hilary: Yeah, absolutely. I've always loved making things, especially visual things; my mom was an Art Teacher so it's probably in my blood to some extent. In hindsight, I look back and I was that kid who organized my seventy-two set of Prismacolor pencils in color order and I drew borders around drawings and sometimes never even got to what was in the center; I think grids come naturally to me! I liked a lot of areas of study so I think I had a really hard time deciding. I knew that I wanted to do something environmental so I looked for schools with Environmental Studies and I actually looked for

Biology programs for Undergrad and really felt like I wanted a Liberal Arts context. I ended up not even taking Bio 101 and jumped right into Studio Art classes and ended up Majoring in Studio Art and concentrating on Environmental Studies at a school that did not have Graphic Design at all. I don't regret any of it. I think it was really worthwhile. I thought very seriously about going into Environmental Law; I took an LSAT prep course; I took my LSATs, I narrowed down to a list of five Law Schools and then I sort of about-faced and shifted gears and realized that I really wanted to make things. Yeah!

Neil: Wow!

Hilary: I think I had some hesitation about Graphic Design because I falsely believed I might need to submit to pop culture if I started doing work for other people instead of my own studio artwork and it has been nothing like that; it's been wonderful and at times independent and at times meaningful ways of interacting with other people and culture.

Neil: In your Fine Art work, what was that? Was that drawing or painting or illustration or sculpture?

Hilary: It was a little bit of everything, yeah, so I went to a Liberal Arts School that only had the BA, not the BFA; I would say that I mostly did painting and sculpture but also did a little bit of print-making and drawing.

Neil: Working with your hands.

Hilary: Working with my hands, yes.

Neil: So, after graduating, you mentioned that you didn't get to Graphic Design until Graduate School. Now, before you get to Graduate School, there's some sort of...there's usually something that happens to make you want to go to Grad School or to attain that level of degree, so for you, was there a turning-point or an a-ha moment that you thought, you know what? Design education might be for me, or was there a period of your life that you were just kind of out there, working and thought, you know what, I need to work on my craft a little more, and that's what did it? So, what was your...what was the decision behind going to seek out an MFA degree?

Hilary: Yeah, it was an interesting four years. I think I always assumed that I would go to Grad School but I didn't know for what, since I had so many interests, so when I was in my Senior year of College, I was thinking about what to do next and decided that maybe I wanted to work in independent schools, in private schools, since I didn't have certification for public schools and it took me a while to arrive at that. Friends and room-mates then said, of course you're going to teach; we could have told you that months or years ago. And I said, why didn't you? It would have been helpful! I think teaching is in my blood, just like making things is. So I worked for two years at an Arts boarding school in Southern California; I worked in Student Services and I taught Painting. It was an amazing little community to be part of. After two years though, I learned that I did not want to live with High School students for life so I moved back East and did a range of things in the Boston area; I worked at an environmental non-profit for a little bit, I did some retail, I taught at a charter school, I taught an elective course at a private school; I took an evening course in Sustainable Landscape Architecture, another one in Sustainable Interior Design, a Children's Book Illustration class; I think I was really exploring and dabbling and figuring out what sort of making or design I wanted to do and when it came down to it, I think it was two-fold; I realized that one, those other areas of Design weren't exactly it, that it was really Graphic Design that I wanted to do and the other part was teaching High School and Middle School students, I really realized I wanted to teach College students; I wanted intrinsic motivation, I wanted to be in an area of study that they were choosing and I figured if I was going to get my MFA, I might as well do it in a new area, so that was....

(05:39)

Neil: Absolutely!

Hilary: That was the decision!

Neil: So, you have this very diverse body of knowledge. So, how did you choose a Graduate School with all of that?

Hilary: Yeah, I did need to find a place that would accept me coming with a degree from Undergrad that was not in Design, so that was one filter. I wanted to be near mountains and I was really taken when I applied to the University of Tennessee, I had a phone interview with all four Design Faculty and that absolutely sold me; one, that all four of them would take the time to get on the phone call and two,

the things that they said about the program and their approach and the mentoring they would do about teaching, it really seemed like a good fit for me.

Neil: You accepted, of course, and then you went there and how was your Graduate experience there?

Hilary: It was great. It was totally intense, because I didn't have an Undergrad background in Design, I spent the better part of the first year crash-coursing the Undergrad curriculum. I started Graduate work in my second semester; it's a really small program in terms of numbers of Grad students, but large number of Undergrads and so that gave me the opportunity to have lots of one-on-one contact with Faculty, or two-on-one or three-on-one seminar courses and it also gave me a lot of teaching experience, so it was all great and I think my thesis year was probably the most intense year of making I've ever had, as it probably is for most people!

Neil: Well yeah! Well, let's talk about your thesis project. So, what was the topic? You've mentioned sustainability, but what kind of culminated over those years?

Hilary: Yeah, so I did have in the back of my mind that I wanted to do something environmental, based on that background in Environmental Studies and that commitment. I traveled to Denmark the end of my second...I guess third year; I did four years of Grad School total since I had an extra, so I had one year of Undergrad during Grad School and then the three year MFA, so the end of my third year, I traveled to Denmark to present at an interactive design conference and it was totally inspiring, I mean the conference was fascinating but just being in that Scandinavian culture and seeing their seemingly effortless but in fact very designed commitment to environmental things. Like, the fact that the bike lanes have curbs and they get priority at traffic lights and it just seemed like a place that really had a different relationship with the environment than we do, and I found that totally inspiring. Perhaps I dream big because I came back and I walked into my Faculty Chair's office and I said, I think I want to tackle Climate Change through Design. And she smiled.

Neil: Oooh, that is a can of worms!

Hilary: So, she smiled and said, I think we're going to need to narrow your topic a bit and I spent three months reading about Climate Change and figuring out how I could possibly narrow it down to a scope

that would be feasible and meaningful and relevant and what I came down to was looking at our food systems.

Neil: OK, so walk us through your thesis project. What was the...what was the final, I guess the final product for your thesis?

Hilary: Yes. The final product was an exhibition with a lot of parts. I credit my mentor and committee Chair for pushing me to say, I think it just needs one more component and it kept getting bigger, so the exhibition was called A Fork in the Road: The Time and the Place for Local Foods, and it was two-fold. One, it was...graphic and spatial and three-dimensional representations of statistics and information about our industrial food system and its ramifications and externalities, so as you walk into the gallery, you're confronted with that information and then as you turned around to walk back, it offered a more hopeful perspective looking at ways that we can grow and eat food that are different from the industrial food system. So, for example, one of the key parts was a seasonable calendar of local foods for East Tennessee, looking at ways of sourcing food differently and more sustainable.

Neil: That sounds amazing. I wish I would have been there to look at it and to experience it!

(10:02)

Hilary: Thanks! It was quite the undertaking!

Neil: I bet. And now, it is very, very timely, as Designers I feel like we're a little ahead of the time or a little bit ahead of the curve but I think now it's really timely and people are really wanting to grow their own gardens or really wanting to have chickens in their back yards and...

Hilary: Yeah, absolutely, yeah, I think it's really encouraging to see those trends taking shape.

Neil: Do you feel like you've had a little part in doing that?

Hilary: Who knows? I certainly got some wonderful feedback from people who were inspired. I had one small analogue, interactive part of the show where I asked people to just say, we are at a fork in the road, I can ... and fill out a little card and just even seeing singular food habits that people thought they

might shift, I think I really believe in incremental change, so I don't know that I've had a big impact but hopefully some incremental change that can lead toward big impact.

Neil: Small steps are always easier!

Hilary: Yes!

Neil: Do you remember any of those responses or has it been too long?

Hilary: I do, one jumps out. One person said, I can put local honey in my coffee or tea instead of sugar and they looked up the conversion rate of how many teaspoons of sugar equals how much honey; it's actually much sweeter, honey is, so that was one.

Neil: It definitely is, especially in the icing! No, that's amazing and that's a reward for Designers; that's why we do what we do so we can help influence change, right?

Hilary: Yes, yeah, to move people.

Neil: So, you graduated from UT and then you were out on the job market. So, how did you...how did you get to Colby-Sawyer from UT?

Hilary: Yes, so it was a two-step process. I was at Drake first. In my final year of Grad School I figured that maybe I should go practice Design first and teach later. I knew that I wanted to teach ultimately, that was the dream job, but I felt like since I was in the unusual position of actually coming into the MFA program with more teaching experience and no Design experience that I should go get some. I certainly had some summer internship experiences during Grad School, but I thought, well, I might as well learn everything I can about both avenues and our Grad School offered a workshop for third year Grad students to prepare their materials for the academic job market, so I figured I would just walk through that process and learn as much as I could and be ready for when I wanted to transition from practice to teaching. This was in 2009 in the heart of the recession and I went through the process and I actually did really well and figured I would be a fool to turn down a great teaching offer just for the premise of going to practice first, so I went straight into teaching at Drake University.

Neil: Woo-hoo, go Bulldogs!

Hilary: Great place!

Neil: So, we'll continue on this path of getting to Colby-Sawyer, but do you feel that because you entered Graphic Design a little later in your education, do you feel like that helped you as a Designer? Do you feel like that has helped you in the classroom with students, at all?

Hilary: That's a great question. I do think it's helped, actually. I think Design...is about so much and encompasses so much and connects to so much that the breadth of my Liberal Arts education feels really valuable. Like learning how to write and learning how to read and analyze, and learning how to think deeply about a variety of topics that has really stood me in good stead in design, so even though I may not have had the rigors of an Undergrad design program or that earlier knowledge of the history of Design, I didn't get that until later in life; I do think there was a certain larger awareness that I've been able to bring into Design and I'm grateful for that.

Neil: I think that in the age range, so going to School when you're eighteen, nineteen, twenty, things don't seem as concrete or like you said, you're not maybe as aware as you could be and then a little later in life, then you start really absorbing the world around you and the ramifications of what you do and whatnot, so that's...that's a really good answer to that question.

Hilary: Thanks! Thanks for asking me to think about it! It's the first time I've been asked that.

Neil: Of course. OK, so we are now at Drake University and how long were you there for?

Hilary: I was at Drake for three years.

Neil: OK. Was that a Tenure Track position when you started?

Hilary: When I first started it was a two year Visiting position and then I was really fortunate to have it convert into the third year of Tenure Track.

Neil: Right yeah, that doesn't always happen!

Hilary: I felt very fortunate for that.

(15:00)

Neil: So, with your thesis project, did you incorporate those elements into your courses here at Drake?
Or there at Drake?

Hilary: Yes and no...right yeah. Here for you; there for me. I did not incorporate food, although I'm actually teaching a first year symposium course this Fall on food.

Neil: Oooh, I want to hear more about that too!

Hilary: So that is coming full circle from my thesis but I think what I did incorporate, I believe the summer after my first year at Drake, we underwent a curriculum conversion of our own choosing in the Graphic Design program. I worked collaboratively and one of the big parts that I was excited about was taking the existing Graphic Design for Senior class and making it more independent, so it became a class called Context in Process in which we asked students to undertake independent projects with their own research and processes and that really harkened to the MFA process for me.

Neil: Yes, and at that level of their education, I think that falls at a good time too for them to understand how they're going to be expected to work!

Hilary: Yes, I think so, yep, I told them it's either a good preview of Grad School or a last chance before working primarily for clients to work for themselves and operate as Designers of others.

Neil: Definitely. So, during the curriculum revision, was there anything from Grad School that helped you prepare for that or had you always had an interest in curriculum?

Hilary: Good question. I do think I've always been fairly interested in curriculum. I think one of the unexpected things about going to Grad School after some experience teaching was that I sat in each classroom, in each studio, and found myself learning by how people taught and not just by what they were teaching me, so I would be there thinking, oh, look how they're structuring that critique; or,

they're having us read this before we do that and so I think my eyes were sort of turned onto that lens of looking at curriculum, so I probably brought that into the revision classes; it was exciting and sort of amazing to get to be part of that after only one year and as Visiting at the time.

Neil: Absolutely. That doesn't typically happen with Visiting positions.

Hilary: Yeah, when I started at Drake I believe they told me they would treat it as if it were Tenure Track in case it ever could become that, so that was great in terms of observations and reviews and getting to really be part of things in the Department.

Neil: And luckily it did turn into a Tenure Track position.

Hilary: It did, yes!

Neil: So, during those years, a couple of things. So, I want to ask about the students, how they differed from UT and then what was the...what was the review or the Tenure and Promotion process at Drake? So, were there check-points that you had to hit and what was...what were in those check-points, so that's question one. So yeah, we'll cover that first.

Hilary: OK, so I did an annual review each year at Drake, even when I was Visiting and it was comprehensive; I remember being advised to buy a box or lay-on(?) and save everything. Gosh, it's been a while but I believe it involved course evaluations and syllabi and my reflection on my Teaching and Scholarship and Service, much like it's been here at Colby-Sawyer.

Neil: And luckily you've had a background in writing, so you're able to write that concisely.

Hilary: Yes, I suppose that's true! I'm not a fast writer though; I get a little bogged down in the editing process.

Neil: I think we all do actually! So that sounds like a fairly typical Tenure and Promotion process there, or check-points anyway. So now, the students, because you mentioned that you taught at UT and I'm guessing that was a Graduate Teaching Assistantship?

Hilary: Yes, yep, I did several years with the Beginning Graphic Design seminars, the Sophomore Fall and Spring courses, their pre-portfolio review. And one semester of Foundation.

Neil: Oooh, that's a tense time!

Hilary: It is a tense time, yes! So I got to be first a TA and for one year and then got to be an Associate and have my own sections although it was still largely team-taught.

Neil: Which is great experience.

Hilary: It was really great.

Neil: So how did the students compare? So, the students at UT that are, it's a public university and there's thirty...thirty-five thousand students; it's enormous!

Hilary: It is enormous!

Neil: And then you make a transition to Drake University where there's only about three thousand Undergraduate students here, so what was the...what was the difference between those two bodies of students that you noticed?

Hilary: Yeah, I think that they were both largely but not exclusively geographically regional, so I would say it was primarily students from the South at UT and primarily students from the Mid-West at Drake, although I had a student from California at Drake and we had international students at UT so that's by no means exhaustive, but that was one difference. I think the fact that UT had a portfolio review and Drake did not was the big difference; I think it's a different tenor to have that competition there.

(20:19)

Neil: Definitely.

Hilary: Yup, so the competition and that threshold to cross or not cross was really prevalent at UT. It did mean that once you got to Junior and Senior years and there is that smaller cohort of really

committed, talented Designers that was really exciting to see where they would get to by their Senior year, even though it was only teaching the Sophomores, it was amazing to watch them by the end. At Drake, I believe we had the BFA and the BA programs, so we actually had a lot of Double Majors; many in Magazines in the School of Journalism, some in Advertising I believe and so that was an interesting mix to see which route students chose for the program and how it might synch with their other studies.

Neil: The difference there is quite vast, right?

Hilary: Yes.

Neil: So, at UT there are students that studied that created a portfolio that got into the program and now they're in a very tight-knit cohort and that's what they're doing; they're doing Design all the time. And then at Drake, there are students that are here but they're not necessarily here for Design; they're here for other things, so like you were saying, that difference, there's a big difference in motivation there!

Hilary: There is, although I did find that my Drake students, they would rise to the occasion, you know, whatever I think I probably tend to assign a fair amount of work; I actually am embarrassed to admit that my first semester at Drake, I didn't learn until Fall break or Thanksgiving, some pause in the semester when a student thanked me for everything so far, and in our conversation I discovered that students there took five courses at a time and I thought they were taking four and I had assigned what I thought was a quarter of a semester workload and realized oh, they're balancing this against four other classes. But that said, I think they really rose to the occasion in a lot of things.

Neil: That is really good to hear! You're here at Drake and you're teaching, you're going through curriculum revisions; you're working your way through a Tenure and Promotion process and then your third year comes along and you make a transition out of here, so what prompted that transition?

Hilary: Yes. Perhaps not the most timely from career advice perspectives but I had just committed to Tenure Track there, they'd converted my role, I was really excited; I liked teaching there, I liked living there, I was really enjoying it and then I went back to my Tenure College Reunion and met my future husband. So...that prompted the move!

Neil: Aw, what a fairy-tale! So how was that transition because I imagine it must have been hard to make that decision to leave a job that you really enjoy and an area that you enjoy to fulfill this life decision, you know?

Hilary: Yeah, I would say it was and it wasn't hard. It seems like a clear decision. That said, I think it was certainly made easier by the fact that I wasn't giving up Design Education. I think the fact that I was able to land a job and move directly from one Design teaching job into another Design teaching job it felt like I could have both worlds.

Neil: And that's the goal!

Hilary: Yes! That is the ultimate goal.

Neil: So, was there an open position at Colby-Sawyer when you were looking or were there just open positions in the area or did someone call you and say, "Hey Hilary; there's a job open here, we'd love for you to apply for it."

Hilary: There was an open list of positions for a five year Visiting position and I thought, wow, five year Visiting. But given the geographic location, I went for it.

Neil: That's quite a commitment, a five year contract right off the bat.

Hilary: Yes.

Neil: So, how long have you been at Colby-Sawyer?

Hilary: I am going into my sixth...no, I have been here six years; I'm going into my seventh year.

Neil: Whoo!

Hilary: Yes! Since 2012.

Neil: So, oh my gosh, I've got a lot of questions now! So, one, the student body going from Drake to Colby, so...you've gone from a really large body at UT to a much smaller body at Drake, to a smaller body at Colby-Sawyer?

Hilary: Yes, only about a thousand students.

Neil: Much smaller. So, how have the students...how have you noticed that the students have changed through those different...or how have you noticed that the students have changed going from Drake to Colby-Sawyer?

(24:46)

Hilary: Yeah, I think...maybe initially coming in, they're not driven the way that the Design, prospective Design Majors say at UT might have been. Those ones coming in pre-portfolio review, they know what they want and they're going for it. And we don't have portfolio review here and so students do declare Majors as incoming students, so many of them declare Graphic Design and we have a BA and a BFA but I don't know that they are shooting for it in the same way until they learn more about it. I have found them to be really open, really...this word is going to sound trite, but nice, like we have a really pleasant community here. When I came and interviewed, I was amazed they actually had me have lunch in the dining hall with the students during my interview and I thought, oh I wonder if that will be funny; and it was great. I was sold on the people at this place in my interview, both the students and the Faculty and I think because we're so small, we get to know each other really well. I sort of laughed, the first day of the semester of Upper Classes when I say, well: we don't need to go over my syllabus policies because you know them all, so we're just going to dive in and let's look at what we're covering in this class, so the rapport that you get from having one student four, five or six times and having them as an academic advisee and advising their internship and seeing them in class and out really does a lot. It feels very personal here, I guess. I don't know if that speaks so much to the students as much as it does to how I get to know them.

Neil: Well, and it's wonderful to have that ability to really get to know them, so when they do get to Seniors, you can kinda help them navigate the job market a little bit.

Hilary: Yes, absolutely! I always feel like I'm in a continual learning process with what to advise them as the years go on; not that it's been that many years and I still feel young and yet I'm removed from it, so that's been a learning process.

Neil: Well, do you get any feedback from students when they ask you about your professional experience at all?

Hilary: Yes. Tell me what you mean by feedback.

Neil: So, I've been asked a number of times from prospective students and parents and whatnot, you know, "So, what have you done professionally? Where have you worked?" and I'm like, well, I've worked at marketing agencies and I've been a freelancer for over ten years, that type of thing, and to some people actual agency work, they're like, oh, I get it and for some people when you say, oh I do freelance work, they're like, oh, whatever...you know, so I'm wondering what the response has been for yourself because you mentioned that you had thought about going into the field at one time but then you went into academia.

Hilary: Yes...yeah, I think sometimes I highlight the differences for them and sometimes I highlight the commonalities. I think I make a point of sharing my freelance projects and talking through that process and showing them look: I'm going through the same sort of process that you're going through, so when I teach Identity System Design, I show them every single thumbnail sketch for a logo and every version that I send to the clients and walk through that and I think there probably is a certain credibility that comes from that: they're saying, OK, you do know how to do this, even if you weren't out working in it full time. Sometimes I feel like I need to make a point about things, like they ask if they can see my résumé so they learn how to do a résumé and I have to say well, I have what's called a CV and you don't want yours to be seven pages, so let's talk about what's needed outside of academia, so just being transparent about the commonalities and the differences.

Neil: How do you keep up on the Design industry? Because I know as an academic myself, that it's really difficult to keep up with what's going on in the industry because we're kind of buffered a little bit, right, and we're supposed to be preparing these students for the industry, so how do you keep up with the industry in your area up there?

Hilary: Yeah, it's a challenge; I think we have to be really pro-active. I certainly make a point of going to a lot of Design Education conferences and some Design conferences and talks. I listen to Design podcasts; I read what I can. Every time I send students off to internships I think, one of these summers I need an...I don't know if you'd call it an externship or internship or what, but we need a way that Faculty could go into studios and agencies and really see what it's like these days in different areas of the field, I think that would be great to do. Not something I'm doing yet, but may be we could pilot it!

Neil: I definitely agree. That would be a fun externship for Professors! And you mention podcasts. Is there any one specific podcast that kind of stands out?

Hilary: You're going to narrow me to one?

Neil: Well, I mean, you can say more than one!

Hilary: For years, Design Matters with Debbie Millman. Recently I've really been enjoying The Observatory.

Neil: OK. So, you're at Colby-Sawyer and you're on a five year contract. Now, during that contract did they...did they treat you as a Tenure Track Professor, so meaning did you have yearly reviews or where there any check-points or was there any projected Tenure and Promotion year or anything like that?

(30:15)

Hilary: I have done annual reviews from the start, so when I was Visiting I did convert, they converted me to Tenure Track...maybe the end of my second year, I think. I'm losing track of time a little, but they converted...

Neil: That's OK. Congratulations!

Hilary: Thank you! I got converted out of the five year Visiting into Tenure Track. From the get-go, first year Faculty here are protected from Service a little bit but after my first year, they had me jump right in on Service and that's common for all Visiting Faculty here; it's not a differentiation that's made like at

some other schools. So yeah, I felt like I did get the same number of classroom observations that Tenure Track Faculty got and had everything set so that when I converted, I was already in that process.

Neil: Did you negotiate any Tenure years when you started at Colby from Drake, or did you start off fresh?

Hilary: I did not negotiate any Tenure years when they converted me to Tenure Track. They set a clock that seemed reasonable to me so I didn't negotiate it otherwise. They did, however, count my years at Drake toward Promotion, so after three years here at Colby-Sawyer, once I'd had six full-time years of teaching total, I was eligible for Promotion, so I'm on staggered Tenure and Promotion clocks.

Neil: OK, so what did that Promotion packet look like?

Hilary: Just about everything...

Neil: What did you have to include in that...

Hilary: ...you would include for Tenure! I think I'm doing it twice! Yeah, it is largely the same; a narrative commenting on my Teaching, Advising, Scholarship and Service; all my syllabi, all my course evaluations, all my grade distributions, letters of support, evidence for scholarly work...

Neil: Phfffoof....are you the only Design Professor in your Department there?

Hilary: I am!

Neil: So, that brings me to my next question. There's a lot of Departments out there where you're fortunate enough to have two or three or four or five or more colleagues in Design that you can hear...here, can you review this, can you take a look at this, does this sound about right? If you're only one person in a Department, who did you go to, to kind of, for a soundboard through that process and the who reviewed that packet?

Hilary: Yes, so let's see, I guess I'll start with the formal process and then back up from there, so in terms of reviewing the packet, it went to my Department and my Department had to write a letter of

support, or not, and my Department Chair had to write a letter of support, or not. It then goes to our Faculty Personnel Committee and there is reviewed by a team of five people. It goes from there to our Academic Vice-President/Dean of Faculty and then onto the President and then onto the Board of Trustees, so it's the same process in terms of sequence of approvals as it would be for Tenure. I was assigned a mentor as a new Faculty. All new Faculty here at Colby-Sawyer are assigned mentors. Obviously wasn't a Design mentor, since I'm the only full-time Designer and they actually make a point of assigning mentors outside of Departments, so I had a great mentor who's in Natural Sciences; they chose him because he loves food as well. He runs our maple sugaring operation here and has animals...

Neil: Oooh, yum!

Hilary: Yeah. It's been a great fit socially as well. So I had him as a mentor. I don't believe we did extensive work on my Promotion stuff but he's been a mentor for Teaching and other things. We do have a Teaching Enrichment Center here that offers workshops and reading circles and discussion groups and things and part of the role for the Director of the Teaching Enrichment Center is to be available for review, so I didn't have her review before my Promotion materials but I actually had her look over my Promotion materials as I started planning for Tenure to ask how I could improve them this time around. She also will do things like an anonymous advising survey or informal focus groups with your students, if you want other ways of garnering feedback that are less official.

Neil: Wow, those are all really great resources.

Hilary: They are, yes! It's great, yeah.

Neil: I'm assuming by your title that you achieved Promotion?

Hilary: I did, yes!

Neil: Congratulations!

Hilary: Thank you.

Neil: And then when do you go up for Tenure?

Hilary: I go up this year. February first of this coming school year.

Neil: Oooh, so you're starting to put your packet together?

Hilary: I am, yes!

Neil: And is that a lot like your Promotion packet?

Hilary: It is, yeah. It is in many ways similar. I think one big difference is to think more explicitly about defining what Graphic Design is or what Scholarship is in Design and perhaps getting external letters to support that. We actually don't have a requirement here for external things but it is highly encouraged, so to get someone else who can vouch for my work or my approach to my work, since we don't have other designers here.

(35:12)

Neil: With Scholarship, how does Colby-Sawyer determine Scholarly Work or peer reviewed work? Actually, that's a two-part question!

Hilary: OK, yeah, so here, I will say we are primarily a teaching institution; we're a Liberal Arts School that also has Pre-professional programs: Nursing is a big program here, Business; it's actually one of the things that's fascinating to me about teaching Design in this context where it's both Liberal Arts and Pre-professional. And I think that carries out in terms of how we look at Scholarship so here, they reference a model from Ernest Boyer, I think from 1990 and it gives four categories of Scholarship: Discovery, Integration, Application or Teaching and Learning and it recognizes that you might work in one or you might work in more of them. We call it Scholarship and Creative Work here, instead of Research which I think is emblematic, so my creative work can fall into Discovery or Application, if it's being applied to social issues, societal issues, and then I've really taken the Teaching and Learning approach as well, since I find it worthwhile to go to Design Education conferences for my own learning; it's nice to have that exchange and be presenting there too.

Neil: Absolutely. That's where I have a lot of really engaging conversations with other educators.

Hilary: Yes, people will say, oh, you had to do a conference. I say, no, I'm here to do a conference; I'm going to see my people; it's great, usually!

Neil: Yes! You are also the Department Chair.

Hilary: I am. One semester in, yes.

Neil: So, how did that...how did you develop into that position?

Hilary: Yeah. I am the newest and youngest full-time Faculty in my program, or in my Department I should say, since I'm the only one in the Graphic Design program. My other colleagues who are more senior have either been Department Chair or Interim Chair and they have served and so they have been grooming me. I think, I don't know, a past colleague joked I probably should have a Born to Administrate T-shirt so I guess it's been a long time coming but yes, it is my turn and I got elected and I've been enjoying it so far.

Neil: Great, and what are your duties as Department Chair, because some of us might not know what that is.

Hilary: Yes, they run the gamut. I did a lot of learning about all the bits and pieces of my duties by having an office next door to my prior Department Chair and I actually...we just moved into a new building this year and so I still have an office next to him and that's why I started in January actually; he ushered us into our new building, grand opening and everything, and I picked up after that but...

Neil: Congratulations on the new building!

Hilary: Thank you! Yes it is really exciting. We...officially my role of Chair has four categories, if that helps to frame it. So, general Administrative responsibilities, Business and Financial responsibilities, so the Department budget, supplies, events, all of that.

Neil: Very important!

Hilary: Yes, very important! Personnel, so everything from observing classes to reviewing student course evaluations for all of my colleagues; mentoring new Faculty, helping people through the Tenure and Promotion process; hiring Adjuncts, supervising them and then the final category is Curriculum Instruction an Assessment, so, getting the bigger picture view on our degree programs and minor requirements and course proposal sand how all of that fits into the College.

Neil: So that's a really great position to guide the Department.

Hilary: Yes, you know, when I was thinking about whether or not to do it, one of my former...I reached out to one of my former Faculty and asked, should I think about being Chair and he said only if you have a vision for it! Which was good advice at the time I thought, oh I don't know that I have a vision for it, but it got me thinking and I spent five years here on Academic Policies Committee which reviews curriculum and course proposals and that gave me some insights into thinking at that bigger level about a program and what to do with it. So, I think I'm ready. I don't know if I have an articulated vision yet but it's coming together!

Neil: Well, still, I mean, you could find your way through that. But that's a lot of extra time and effort. So, do you get a course release with that or...

Hilary: I do. I get one course release each semester and extra stipend for compensation.

Neil: Oh, that's nice.

Hilary: Yes!

Neil: And you mentioned that you're the only one in the Design Program.

Hilary: Yes.

Neil: So, I'm imagining you may have had to hire Adjuncts?

Hilary: Yes, we...I have not had to hire any new, but we have several Adjuncts and so given those course releases, we're using them a little bit more often.

(40:04)

Neil: I would imagine so! So, are there...do you have any tips for those that might be looking for an Adjunct position somewhere?

Hilary: Hmm. Reach out and enquire earlier ahead of time than you might think. I often get enquiries, I'm learning, over the Summer say for the Fall and schedules are set well in advance so I think applying further ahead of time is great; that said, I think it is worth enquiring, even if you don't see something listed, it doesn't hurt, just send a CV and a nice note and really clearly outlining what sorts of things you feel qualified to teach and also what flexibility you have.

Neil: All good points!

Hilary: Yes!

Neil: So, what kind of work are you engaging in right now?

Hilary: Yes, for creative work?

Neil: Yeah!

Hilary: Yeah, so I'm still doing design things related to food. After localizing that seasonal calendar of foods for East Tennessee; I made one for Iowa while I was at Drake; I made one for New Hampshire when I came to Colby-Sawyer. I am revising that right now, making some changes. I became interested in what foods babies and kids can eat after I had my son so I recently completed a project called First Foods that's a cross between a timeline on a periodic chart showing the diversity of foods that kids can have in their first year of life and what the recommendations are for when to try different ones, so that's been fun. I don't know if it's working...

Neil: Absolutely!

Hilary: My son has a small repertoire of vegetables that he likes right now but nonetheless I have all of the possibilities color-coded up on the freezer door to take a look at.

Neil: Well, and that sounds like something a lot of our listeners might be interested in. Can they find that anywhere? Can they find that project anywhere?

Hilary: Sure, yes, I can sent you a link on my website and I've been putting it up for sale there on TE so...maybe they'll push me to do a little marketing.

Neil: Yes; please do, let us know about that.

Hilary: The other related project that I have had in the first for a while that's not finished, after I've made the seasonal calendar of local foods, it was actually one of the Drake students, one of my Drake students said, OK, so now I know when kohlrabi's available, but what is it and what the heck to do I do with it? And I said. Good question. That's the next phase of the project, isn't it? So I have been working on a little booklet called Vegetable Know-How that has an icon for each of fifty vegetables and then charts them in a matrix showing which ways they can be cooked and can they be eaten raw or not, can they be frozen? should they be refrigerated? Can they be grilled, steamed, you name it. So that's been a slow and steady incremental build-8up of icons but that will be the next one to finish.

Neil: And I would love to have a copy of that when you're done.

Hilary: OK, yes, that one's geared toward adults!

Neil: Perfect!

Hilary: A non-recipe guide to cooking and eating more veggies.

Neil: So, we're kinda nearing the end of our interview here. The end of our hour, so are there any parting thoughts, or up-coming projects that you would like to talk about? I know we just talked about a little bit of it.

Hilary: Good question. Let me think a moment!

Neil: Sorry to put you on the spot!

Hilary: No, it's fine; I should have seen that one coming. A possible up-coming project: I have been invited to collaborate on an initiative to change College eating habits in New England, so I'm part of a...I've been invited to be part of a group that's applying for a grant prize so if we win it, that will be really exciting to look at how to influence food habits on a larger scale, on an institutional scale.

Neil: Wow, how did that project come about?

Hilary: I befriended our Director of Sustainability and Innovation when I arrived here, given my background in Environmental Studies and we've really hit it off. We collaborated on another grant-funded project with other people as well called The Sustainable Learning Initiative at Franklin Falls which is a community-based learning environment for our students to collaborate in the city of Franklin, so I think after that collaboration she had me in mind and knew about my food work.

Neil: Great. It is all about networking.

Hilary: I guess it is! Yeah. I think I tried to disbelieve that early on, but I think it does make a huge difference.

Neil: And some things shake out and some things don't shake out.

Hilary: Yes, true.

Neil: All right, well, do you have any...do you have any parting thoughts on any advice for the Tenure process for other people or any advice for that?

(44:53)

Hilary: Ah, advice for the Tenure process? The first advice I was given was to buy a box and save everything in it. Which I have done to some extent; I've gone more digital these days. I think, don't

hesitate to ask other people to be involved; it's your own work and it's your own process but I think colleagues are really happy to be sounding-boards to bounce ideas off of or are open to you going and saying, hey, I'm really wrestling with this with my class: do you have ideas or can you come observe? I think seeking out that extra support is really worthwhile and I think we all could follow our own advice not to procrastinate better but I think that the reflection involved in writing a narrative for Tenure and Promotion; it takes time to percolate and so I do think wrapping your head around it in bits and pieces and seeing where I can get to, I actually, I feel like I've had some good insights when I've written my reflection narratives for annual reviews and Promotion but I think sometimes it takes a little distance from things to see that.

Neil: Which is why the summer's a perfect time for that.

Hilary: Absolutely! I should go follow my own advice some more!

Neil: All right well, thank you again for being on the podcast.

Hilary: Thank you so much for having me. It's been fun.