

11-11-2022

Will Fawcett, Oral History Interview, 2022

Colae Eason

Eastern Michigan University Archives, Oral Histories

Interview with Will Fawcett (WF) conducted on November 11, 2022 via Zoom by EMU undergraduate Colae Eason (CE) for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Colae Eason

I am Colae Eason, a sophomore student in JRNL313. This interview with Will Fawcett was conducted over Zoom on November 11th, 2022. In this interview, I chose to focus on Fawcett's journey transferring from Central Michigan University to Eastern Michigan University during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CE: Okay. So. What's your name?

WF: My name is Will Fawcett. I was going to spell it, but you have it in the recording. I think we're good there.

CE: What's your major?

WF: I am a digital media production major with a minor in journalism.

CE: What year are you here(at Eastern)?

WF: Well, this is my fourth year, but I'm technically a junior.

CE: I'll be asking you some questions about you transferring.

WF: Yeah.

CE: My first question would be, why did you initially choose to attend Central Michigan?

WF: I had some friends up there and uh, I don't know. I thought it was a good idea. I grew up in a really small town, so I thought leaving and going somewhere else would be good for me, and then I had a friend up there that kind of convinced me to go.

CE: Where are you from?

WF: I am from Dexter, Michigan. It's like, right out of Ann Arbor.

CE: Did you know your major when you went to Central?

WF: Yeah. I did a lot of production stuff in high school and some theater, so I knew I was going for production. That was another reason (I chose to go to Central), Central has a good production class, a broadcasting class or program. So, I already had an idea of what I wanted to do.

CE: And how was your experience there?

WF: Well, it wasn't great. I'm not a huge party guy, so there isn't a ton to do at

Central other than party and, I don't know. I thought I'd make more friends. I didn't really make any, if all. And I was spending a ton of money for something I wasn't super enjoying.

CE: You kind of already answered it, but was there anything else that contributed to your need to transfer?

WF: One thing that I didn't expect. So, I basically live in the middle of nowhere and living in the dorm, I felt really claustrophobic. I had a hard time not being able to just go outside. I don't know. I felt trapped in a box. That was probably the only thing that I didn't like about the experience). It wasn't money or like, I had no friends. That was a psychological thing that I didn't like about it, if that makes sense.

CE: Yeah, I get it. Did things start shutting down before you made the decision to transfer or was it after you made the decision to transfer? When did that all kind of start?

WF: I'll just run through the timeline because it's kind of complicated. So, we go into spring break, everything's fine. I come down to Dexter and I talk to my parents, and I started talking to them about transferring then. And then I went on a trip to Niagara Falls with my friends for spring break, and then I got back, and everything shut down. So, I made the decision days before or- not even I made the decision, but I didn't apply or anything yet.

CE: Wow. What are the odds?

WF: Yeah. And then because I was on spring break, I didn't have anything and I was 2 hours away from Central. So, I didn't have, like, half my clothes and half my stuff, but luckily I did pack a lot.

CE: That's good. So, what made you want to transfer to Eastern?

WF: It was close, and I had friends there in high school. I did like, it was basically a college level media class that was the same level of the community college at Washtenaw around Eastern, and I did all of that. So, I didn't think there'd be anything that Washtenaw could provide for me. That was the closest one that I knew I could get into, and it's a good school. I like it here a lot more.

CE: Yeah. Were you considering any other colleges or was it just Eastern?

WF: I considered, but I was pretty (sure that I wanted to attend Eastern). That was my second-choice school when I first applied. So, it was a pretty "I'm just going to go there" kind of deal.

CE: Can you describe your experience transferring over the credits and everything, how did all of that kind of go?

WF: So, I applied, and they got back to me pretty quick. It was all done over Zoom.

I sent them my transcript and then they pretty much figured out what could transfer and what could not. Almost all of the schools in Michigan have like an agreement where they can transfer most credits. I did lose two classes, I'm pretty sure. But overall, I didn't have a huge loss in terms of credits. But it was all done over Zoom. I didn't go on to go into campus until- Wow, I think probably that fall for anything.

CE: Okay. And then were you able to access the resources that you felt you needed for a smooth transfer process here (at Eastern)?

WF: Yeah. For the most part, I was able to talk to counselors. I wouldn't say it was smooth because trying to transfer when the world's falling apart is always going to be difficult. School and everything was still kind of transitioning to online and everything. So, it wasn't like I was getting crushed by a bunch of schoolwork and trying to also figure this out. It was like, I'd send two emails a day and then I'd go play video games for the rest of the day. So, it wasn't difficult, but it wasn't, like, smooth. It was just weird.

CE: Were there any like extreme complication moments though, or anything?

WF: There was some trouble for a while. Since I never actually went back to Central's campus other than to get my stuff, there was a little bit of problem with them knowing I wasn't going to be there anymore, but it wasn't too bad. I think the biggest thing was that it just took a lot more time than I think it normally would. Which was fine, I wasn't doing anything. I'd say April is

when I started the process, and I wasn't like, 100% that I was going next semester until June. So, it took a while, but I don't know. I don't remember it being too difficult. I thought it was pretty easy.

CE: That's good. What resources did you have? You said counselors, was it just meeting with advisors and everything mostly?

WF: Yeah. At that point I kind of knew that I had an idea of what was going on and I had one meeting with an advisor who basically walked me through how to schedule classes and everything like that. So yeah, it wasn't like there wasn't much going on in-campus anyway. I wasn't going to go to campus, and even if I could, it was all shut down. So, I basically just kind of had to jump around websites trying to figure out information. And it was a while ago, so I don't remember the exact, but I thought it went pretty well and pretty easily, all things considered.

CE: That's good. Sorry. I don't remember, when did you transfer? How long were you at Central?

WF: Only a year, and then the following fall, I started at Eastern.

CE: Okay. So, you did a year at Central?

WF: Yeah. And the majority of that second semester was online. So, I did all that at home and then I started at Eastern.

CE: Okay. Did any second thoughts or regrets occur during your transition process? Just in general, with school?

WF: Yeah. Personally, if I were to do it again, I'd probably just bite the bullet and went to community college and saved, because that was my plan originally. Just tried to save a little bit more money, and I don't know. I think it was a really good experience for me to be pushed out and had to deal with that. Would I want to do it again? No, absolutely not. But overall, I probably think it was for the best and I'm cool with it. I don't really have any regrets or anything, but definitely wouldn't do it that way if I had to do it over again.

CE: Yeah. And then what do you think led you to continue to want to go to Eastern instead of going to community college, you think?

WF: Well, I think Eastern is the best, they just let me do my thing and they don't bother me a bunch like- and it might just be because I transferred at a really weird time- The most they ever email me to do something is when I have to do (Title 9) training once a year. It's a lot more chill here. I have majority of my classes online and I work 18 hours. So, I'm able to do that and still get all my work done. And I don't know, it's just a lot more relaxed and a lot more flexible than Central was in terms of curriculum, and I'm living rent free at my parents' house now. I have a dog, which is something I couldn't have at Central. I'm much happier than I was at Central, and I think all things considered with the state of the world, I'd rather be living in my parents' house

right now than trying to make buying an apartment or a dorm or somewhere.

No, I'm A-Okay with everything and I think overall, I think it was the right choice and I think it's worked out pretty well.

CE: That's good to hear. When did you start working? Did you work after you went to Central?

WF: It was right around the same time I started at Eastern, so I think I started classes and then a month later I started working.

CE: You think wanting to work or finding a job factored into you coming to Eastern too? Or your decision to transfer?

WF: Yeah, I think I did try to get a job at Central and it was just a pain. I couldn't because there's nothing there other than the university. So, I tried to apply and never heard back. I tried all these different things and the parking situation at Central was also a pain, so I couldn't really drive to work anywhere. But now, I don't know, it was just an easy way to make money and it's something I can handle while also doing school.

CE: Why did you decide to transfer instead of dropping out? Is that ever an option you considered?

WF: Well, yeah. It's always an option. But I don't know. In my field, I feel like I

need some kind of education to do what I want. There was no way I was going to drop out. I didn't have a plan for that. Before I decided to transfer, my plan was just go to Central for four years and then figure it out from there. So, then I just made it: I'll just go to Eastern for four more years and figure it out from there.

CE: Right.

WF: So, I really just kind of shifted my focus from Central to Eastern and it's the same general plan.

CE: Yeah, just a new school. How did your decision to transfer affect your academic performance, think you got better at Eastern?

WF: I think a little bit of both. I think it's hard to tell if it was the school or the world, but I think I definitely have been (better). I don't know. It's hard to tell because I only went for one year at Central. And I've definitely done really well here, but I definitely have done worse in moments academically than at Central. But overall, I think I'm still getting everything that I was learning at Central. They're telling me the same stuff here, so I don't think it's too crazy. And for my minor, I think it's more impactful because I don't even think they had a journalism program at Central. They might have. But I think it's better or the same at Eastern, education wise.

CE: And then as far as credits, you're still on the same track and everything, you

would have been there (Central)?

WF: I am probably going to have to take an extra semester here, but if I stayed at Central, I probably would have had to do that anyway. So yeah, I would say so. I think I'm pretty much on the same trajectory. I don't think there's a world where I stayed at Central, even if there wasn't a pandemic.

CE: Yeah. I mean, you kind of already got into it, but how did you adapt to Eastern or being in the situation you're in now, once you transferred?

WF: Yeah, I just basically adopted online learning because that's pretty much how I've done everything at Eastern. And I've gone to campus and whatever, but at Central, I would go to like, 500 people lectures, and I haven't done that since. So, I don't know, I think I've just kind of changed with the times more or less than changing with like, the schools, I think I would probably be getting a similar education if I stayed at Central.

CE: Yeah. It sounds like it probably might have been harder to transfer to Central from high school than it was from Central to Eastern, if that makes sense?

WF: Yeah. No, I definitely think so. I think that having the experience of living on campus and everything, I kind of knew what I was getting into a lot more with Eastern than I did with Central, so that was good.

CE: Yeah, that's good. If you could go back and change one thing about your

overall experience transferring, what would it be?

WF: I think I would have taken less classes my first semester. I think that would have been the biggest thing. It wasn't like I did anything too hard or I failed a class or anything. It was just that everything was going on. It was like, I'd come home from work, do homework for a bunch of time, then wake up, go to class, go to work. And it was just over and over again. I could do less and live more, and that's more important to me than sitting, working, stocking shelves. And I think I learned that, that semester.

CE: How many classes were you taking?

WF: I think like five or six. I think one was also writing intensive.

CE: Oh, wow. Yeah.

WF: And like, I was learning how to learn online first. So, I should have just went easier on myself there. But yeah, that's probably the only thing I'd change about transferring.

CE: What positive experiences do you think you've had with Eastern? Even though the whole time you've been saying how good it is and everything, but any specific positive experiences from Eastern you want to talk about?

WF: One thing I talked about at Central, I talked to an advisor, and I walked out of

the meeting feeling confused and anxious. And when I walked out of the meeting with the EMU Advisors, they were already just way more chill and they didn't like, say in a way where I had to figure it out. They just told me straight up what I needed to do and where I needed to go. And that is so, so much nicer than playing charades with an advisor. I mean, just the level of chillness. Central had so many like, I had to be part of clubs and all this stuff just for my major, and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to do my own thing. And EMU really lets me do my own thing, and that's the biggest thing that I like about EMU.

CE: That's good. And then obviously you feel good about your decision. Is there anything else you want to add?

WF: I think transferring schools is a good thing. I think more people should be open to the idea of doing it. I think they're big enough differences that if somebody was like, I'm thinking about dropping out because this sucks or whatever. I think I would say, well, I would look at other schools because a lot of the time, you can find a place or some kind of education that is a lot more fitting to you, even if it's just attitude towards it. Yeah, EMU just lets me do my thing. I go to my classes. That's it. That's all I have to do. A-Okay with that. I love that. I think it's really important to find the right school, a lot more than I thought it was when I was applying and stuff.

CE: Yeah, it sounds like you had a really positive experience. When I did the

research, it was so many articles about like, people transferring during the pandemic and like that, making it worse, them not having resources and everything, but it sounds like you had the opposite.

WF: No, it wasn't great because it was like, okay, I'm going to figure all this out. I got to make this life decision while the world is falling apart. Yeah, but in terms of how they helped me, they were straightforward and easy. They just want people in their school. They make sense, you know what I mean? Like it was difficult to figure some of the stuff out, but in terms of experience, I would much prefer that. Me having to Google stuff and figure some stuff out than like, I don't know. Being kind of halfway told what I need to do.