



Carolina Population Center

In 1966, the Carolina Population Center was founded at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. To celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2006, a project was conducted to document the history of the Center. This transcript is an excerpt from an oral history interview.

Interviewee: Estelle Mabry

Interview conducted by: Grace Camblos

Interview date: December 6, 2005

Estelle Mabry was secretary for Thomas L. Hall, former CPC Director, from 1974 – 1977, and worked with Dick Udry, CPC Director, in 1977 and 1978.

EM: The Center's Award began to change. And what the new Center's Award said was, "Okay, we're going to support you, but we're really going to provide extra money to all these - for support services for the faculty who are doing research. We're not going to support the Center as a structure, necessarily." So, Dr. Udry came and said, "Could you read this, and tell me what's different from the other one?" And so, I took it, and I started reading it, and I'm going, "Uhhh, this is totally different." Because you had to say what grants you have, you have to prove what you're doing. This is not just institutional support. This is... "We want proof." You know, and "We're not going to just support you to begin this stuff, we want to support you as a center." So we had to get every grant that the University had that had *anything* to do with population. It didn't matter where it was, it didn't matter whether it came through the Center, nothing. So I spent a lot of time over in research development, going through grants, looking for people who'd never heard of the Population Center, but guess what, they were doing something that had a population twinge. Whether it was in the Med School, and then going and saying, you know, "We need to put your grant in here, we'll provide you some services."

GC: Huh!

EM: And so that's -

GC: Now these were just random people on campus?

EM: Yeah. We had no - because that's not what the Pop Center was doing. I mean, they weren't all - the grants weren't coming through us, they were all over the place.

GC: Right.

EM: And some people we knew. You know. Some people we didn't know. And so we got the lists, and that's when Dr. Udry started looking at a Fellows Program.

GC: Okay.

EM: Okay. Of how, you know, how are you going to entice these people into the Population Center? What kind of services are you going to provide? How are we going to get NIH to fund all of this stuff? And what can we do? So that was sort of the beginning of the Fellows Program, because NIH changed how it was going to fund.