

LEWIS W. WEBB, Jr.

Lewis Webb has spent his career at what is now Old Dominion University. When he joined the faculty there in the early 1930s as a physics professor it was a small, struggling branch of William and Mary and was known as the Norfolk Division. Situated in an urban area and with strong community interest the school grew over the years, and the events of these years and the relationship with the college at Williamsburg is described by Dr. Webb from the firsthand view as a faculty member (which he still is) and as head of the institution from 1947 to 1969. These sessions are particularly valuable for the story of the separation of the Colleges of William and Mary.

Dr. Webb added a few phrases to his transcript but left his candid assessments intact.

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Interviewee Lewis W. Webb, Jr.
 Date of interview Sept. 3, 1975
 Place 235 Chandler Hall, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA
 Interviewer Emily Williams
 Session number 1
 Length of tape app. 80 mins.

Contents:	Approximate time:
purpose of Norfolk Division of W&M	4 mins.
control, relations with W&M in 1940s	3 mins.
establishment of Norfolk division	7 mins.
cooperation with U.P.I.	2 mins.
grade-fixing scandal, 1941	2 mins.
advantage with connection with W&M	4 mins.
grade-fixing scandal (cont'd.)	5 mins.
Duke as director	1 min.
postwar period in Norfolk	5 mins.
separation proposals in 1940s, 1950s	4 mins.
W&M relations with divisions in 1950s, separation, expansion to 4-yr. college, advisory board,	12 mins.
Oliver as coordinator of branches	
Colleges of William and Mary	
purpose, establishment of	2 mins.
separation	18 mins.
advantages + disadvantages of system for Norfolk	7 mins.
Norfolk desire for autonomy, needs	3 mins.

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Interviewee Lewis W. Webb, Jr.

Date of interview Oct. 8, 1975

Place Tucker-Coleman Room, Swem Library

Interviewer Emily Williams

Session number 2

Length of tape 35 mins.

Contents:

- coordination of branches
- separation of Colleges
- funding, operation of VARC
- separation (cont'd.)
- Old Dominion as part of VARC
- summary

Approximate time:

- 3 mins.
- 2 mins.
- 16 mins.
- 3 mins.
- 6 mins.
- 5 mins.

Lewis W. Webb, Jr.

September 3, 1975

Norfolk, Virginia

Williams: Dr. Webb, in 1946 you became director of what was then called the Norfolk Division of the College of William and Mary. There had been talk that antedated your directorship (and also included it) that the purpose of the Norfolk Division was unrelated to the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg.

How was the purpose - - or was it related?

Webb: I feel that it was definitely related to the College of William and Mary in a number of ways, yet the purpose of the division was also to serve an urban population here, which was entirely foreign to the William and Mary purpose. Back in those days, of course, William and Mary was a very restrictive liberal arts-type of institution, and here we couldn't be; we had to be a part of the community. So many of our courses would not in any way transfer to the College of William and Mary because we'd have such things as Aircraft Instruments. We developed during the war a large number of vocational-type courses to train people for the war. And after the war in the postwar period, we were training a large number of people to rehabilitate them, to get them into civilian work. Again, they were not strictly Latin, Greek, academic-type courses; many were in the field of engineering. The reason ~~we~~ could get into the field is because we also were part of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and this gave us a status and legal way to get into some of the work in engineering and drafting (we had numerous courses in drafting). ~~I~~ say basically, however, of our day students (the majority) were

~~was~~ preparing for strictly two-year liberal arts-type programs in which they would transfer to another institution, and many of them did transfer to the College of William and Mary. So we had a core program of liberal arts that would transfer to other institutions, but at the same time we also had a very large number of urban-related programs.

This difference really probably in the long run caused the break between the ~~division~~ and the parent institution. In no case was there ever any great amount of supervision for the faculty here by faculty there, although when I was appointed, I made a very definite effort to tie the two closely together; in other words, to have the head of the English department (in Williamsburg) know our English faculty here and the curriculum that we were using. But it was always a one-way street; we had to go there. No one came here to say, "Let me help you select your text. Let me help you relate it to the curriculum." It was always, "If you want any help you can come up and get it, but we're really not a great deal interested." The faculty developed a program on their own, yet our faculty was constantly aware of what was being taught at William and Mary. Really, our pride was that we'd never send a student to William and Mary that couldn't stand up academically. For several years we had more members of Phi Beta Kappa than the William and Mary group had that was going there all four years. I think in the long run those that were trained in the liberal arts program had a good background when they went to William and Mary, yet these were entirely different institutions.

I see you are asking questions on the control of the division in the '40's and late '50's. Of course, the initial start of this institution was that it be financially completely self-supporting. In other words in the '30's the only money that this school had to operate on was money that came from student fees or donations, sources of that type. In fact, there was no state aid. William and Mary wouldn't put us in the state budget until around '44, when we got the first nickel of state money (approximately \$5,000.) It was all student fees; even the buildings which were built (the stadium and that which is now the old administration building) were built with P.W.A. and F.H.A. and students' money (they assessed \$10 per student for capital improvements). So there was no real tie, yet the only close supervision of this institution by William and Mary was over its finances. The budget director saw to it that this school operated within its finances; that there was no drain on the College of William and Mary. They felt that William and Mary didn't have enough money of its own and certainly couldn't share any here. So in the beginning the two Divisions (Norfolk and Richmond) were supervised only through the control of the president and his financial director. There was no academic control.

Williams: Did you have the feeling that William and Mary looked on the Norfolk Division as its "poor relation" because of this?

Webb: Very definitely. This feeling was a feeling which came from faculty there, not from the administration. The initial organization of the school, of course, came from President Chandler -- the old President J.A.C. Chandler ^{for whom} this building we are in today is

named. Mr. Alvin Duke Chandler's father was the one who in 1930 started this division because he felt there was a need, and William and Mary could supply it. Of course, in those days this need that he was shown and responded to was a need to help the teachers improve their education, give an opportunity for some evening courses and teacher-type courses. Of course, in the '30's the depression was a very positive factor. People couldn't afford to send their children away to college. Here tuition was \$90 a year; you could afford to send them if they lived at home, which made the difference, so that was the beginning. I think the administration - - the president and his staff at William and Mary - - felt very definitely it was worthwhile to organize and keep this division in the beginning. It was worthwhile, too, for another reason. I'll tell you this because I don't think you'll find it recorded in any record. In the 1928-'29 era, a group of people were starting a university at Virginia Beach called Atlantic University. At that time William and Mary's enrollment was very low, and the thought of siphoning off the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Portsmouth student body from William and Mary was quite a factor that had to be considered. I feel a great deal of the weight Dr. Chandler put on the decision to start this division was the fact that William and Mary could prevent that institution from getting underway. And it did because as soon as this division started Atlantic University lost enough of its student body so it was not a financially sound operation. Then the depression hit the supporters even

further, and they withdrew their support. With the lack of students and lack of subsidy from the backers Atlantic University collapsed. The whole blame can be put right on the College of William and Mary for the collapse of Atlantic University, in my opinion. You may get other viewpoints, but the fact is that the timing was quite good for killing off Atlantic University and serving this area as well. I think the decision that was made was the right one because Atlantic University would never have been a great university in light of today's universities (and Old Dominion will be). So that goes back further probably than you wanted but - -

Williams: No, that gives a good background to the William and Mary interest in the Norfolk area.

Webb: The citizens of Norfolk went to see Dr. Chandler (J.A.C. Chandler) in '29 and asked him to consider some form of collegiate program here. The Chamber of Commerce and the ladies' society, which was the Women's Club of Norfolk, both called on him and asked him to do this. (I have a picture showing Dr. Chandler with the mayor of Norfolk and the president of the women's club celebrating the first anniversary of this institution in 1931). They felt quite proud (the women's club) that they had been instrumental in bringing Dr. Chandler to Norfolk and interesting him in this proposition. Mr. Foreman, who was a lawyer and also a member of William and Mary's board, met with J.A.C. Chandler and one or two of the Norfolk citizens in ^{the} building now being torn down, the old

Larchmont School Building, just about two blocks from this site. (The building is in the process of being demolished today.) That building was an elementary school building, built in 1912 and abandoned by the city in 1928, a new building having been built across the street (across Hampton Boulevard). Now this building was available. They showed it to Dr. Chandler and said, "You may have this building if you will start a branch division here." And he said, "I'll do it with one understanding." They said, "What's that?" He said, "That you provide enough land for expansion of the college. This building is not enough." At that time, looking from that building south, there was a farm -- quite a large -- sized farm -- and they said, "Dr. Chandler, how much land do you want?" He said, "Two and a half acres." If he had said twenty-five acres we'd be in much better shape, or two hundred we'd be in excellent shape, but at that time his vision was that this is a small institution, a satellite which will feed into William and Mary and serve some of the teacher education needs in Norfolk. So he said, "two and a half acres." And that's when it started. They moved very quickly. They hired one of the junior high school teachers to draw up the curriculum; they took the William and Mary catalog and extracted the course contents. William and Mary organized and hired the faculty and got underway in September of 1930. In 1931, V.P.I. was invited to join and offer courses in engineering.

Williams: Because William and Mary couldn't offer this type of training.

Webb: That's right. And it was needed in this area. For many years

the faculty of the engineering division was selected by V.P.I. and paid by V.P.I.; their finances were kept separate. I was hired in 1932 and my pay came from V.P.I.; so did Professor Harrington's and Professor White's. The other faculty members were paid by William and Mary through the student fees. Finally they realized the finances would probably cause difficulty, and they turned all the financing over to William and Mary. Then all the faculty members were paid through a local budget, through William and Mary, but in the beginning they tried to keep the finances separate.

Williams: Now Dr. Chandler's successor, John Stewart Bryan, does not show up in the records as being particularly interested in the Norfolk Division until the grade-fixing scandal. Did William and Mary suddenly have to sit up and take notice of what was going on in Norfolk?

Webb: Yes, very definitely. You see, the accrediting agencies also were going to start their own investigation. There were threats of William and Mary losing its accreditation because of the handling of the situation here, and so there was quite an investigation, which is another part of history we can probably go into later if you want, but that focused the attention of Mr. Bryan on the Norfolk Division. I attended several meetings here and there both on the scandal, as it was called, and since I was representing V.P.I. at the time I had the V.P.I. dean, who was the academic head of V.P.I. at that time, Dr. Williams, come

down to Norfolk and then we went to Williamsburg to be present in case the Board decided to separate or close the Division. This was the first threat of separating the Norfolk Division, and if the Board had decided to separate, Dean Williams was going to announce that he was continuing the operation under V.P.I. Word got to the Board very quickly that V.P.I. was going to pick it up if they let it go, and they didn't want that to happen. They wanted to keep their place in Norfolk, so they decided to hold on to the Norfolk Division.

Williams: Would the Norfolk Division have been picked up by V.P.I. or I think at one time there was talk of U.V.A. coming in - - do you think it would have profitted?

Webb: No, I don't think so. I think the way it has worked out is by far the better way for it to work out. Of course, there's no way I believe right now that we should have stayed under William and Mary as a part of William and Mary. I feel that staying under it as long as we did was an advantage to us. The only thing we gained from William and Mary was its name, and that we traded on very heavily to the extent that we (Judge Hooker and I) almost had some fistfights in the board meetings of William and Mary over naming this division. I used to change the name of this institution quite frequently. I think one of the things this college has is that probably it has had more variations in its name than any university in the world: we went from the Norfolk Division of the College of William and Mary to the Norfolk Division of the College of William and Mary and the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and then we changed to

the College of William and Mary in Norfolk, the Norfolk College of William and Mary, and several other variations including "Virginia Polytechnic Institute" in it. If you look at some of the old catalogs you will see the variations in title, and when we formally asked the board to declare that it be the Norfolk College of William and Mary, Judge Hooker objected very strenuously, and at that time I was pushing it very strenuously. I think the rector had to finally say, "Look, you boys settle down and quit beating on each other" because he did not want us to overshadow William and Mary - - which we were doing. I mean we were getting more publicity here than William and Mary was because the only thing that they had there that would bring publicity was the athletic program or something of that type. They weren't near a source of news media such as newspapers or radio; it was off the beaten track. Here if we announced a new course, the paper carried an announcement of it. If we announced certain things the students were doing, it was in the paper, it was in the news. Many people in Norfolk when someone said "William and Mary," they didn't think of Williamsburg; they thought of Norfolk, right here. "Oh, yeah, I know where William and Mary is." And one of the things that finally broke the camel's back was when some of the board members came in to Norfolk to meet here, and they stopped coming in to ask someone directions. They asked, "Do you know how to get to the Norfolk Division?" And the man said, "No, no, I don't know anything about a Norfolk Division."

They said, "It's a division of William and Mary." He said, "Oh, yes, William and Mary. "I'll tell you how to get to William and Mary. You come this way and end up here," That was a pretty hard blow.

Williams: But you think typical?

Webb: Typical, yes. The average person in Norfolk when you said "William and Mary," they thought of this Norfolk part of William and Mary. But that's what publicity'll do for you. But that's what we traded on. We got no help financially or academically; we traded on the name, which may sound a little harsh, but in my opinion it's very true.

Williams: I have read the same, so I can understand that. Let me go on now and ask you a little bit about the grade-fixing scandal because I'm getting ready to talk about separation proposals and since that was the first one~~s~~ from what I read, I got the feeling that the faculty here first blew the whistle on Dean Hodges's actions. By being a faculty member at the time, do you remember this as being true?

Webb: Oh, yes. The tip-off -- if you want to say that -- came I think from one of the secretaries who had to make the grade changes and reported it to a member of the English department, and he in turn went to the faculty as a whole and they decided -- not as a whole, but as a group of faculty -- to go directly to the ^{President} ~~present~~ of William and Mary and report that this had been done and the investigation started. The entire faculty was not wholly apprised of all the facts in the beginning. We didn't know how much depth was

involved. Actually, some of my grades had been changed. I didn't know it. I was supporting Dean Hodges as a very fine gentleman and very earnest man, hard worker, and I liked him a great deal. I couldn't believe the charges which were presented against him until finally they said, "Well, look here Webb, do you know that one of your students, Mr. X's, grade was changed from a D to a B in physics?" "No, I did not. I'm astounded." "Well, it was because he wanted to get into the Naval Academy and couldn't get into the Naval Academy with a D in your physics course." The dean knew that and changed it to a B. A fine boy; he made a good naval officer, but the dean felt that he was the lord and he knew what was best for that boy and that boy should get a B so his career would not be ruined, and he was put in the Naval Academy. So that was the basis of the dean's support the fact that he did this only for the benefit of the student; that was his feeling. "Can I help a student, or would changing Webb's grade from a D to a B help that boy's career?" He felt justified in doing that. But, of course, you cannot do that, and that's when the investigation started.

Williams: There was a great storm here in Norfolk, a protest over Mr. Bryan's actions.

Webb: Oh, yes. Mr. Bryan roughed things up pretty well. You know, he told me, "My goodness, what he did was a sin against the Holy Ghost." Of course he was joking, but he meant that honor was a very strong thing and that it was not an honorable act, that he couldn't condone it, and he was going to make no bones about his condemnation. But Dean Hodges was a very popular man.

He knew how to talk with people; he met with Rotarians, with Kiwanians, and with the school people; he was part of the community here and people loved him. Nice old dean. And when the axe came, not too much came out in the papers of what had happened. An indication of a change of grades didn't sound too serious to the man on the street. "Look," he said, "Dean Hodges is worth a lot more to this community than changing of a grade," so they were vehement in their protesting the firing of Dean Hodges. Quite a spot.

Williams: And then Mr. Bryan sent Charlie Duke down here as Director. He was criticized for sending a nonacademic like Mr. Duke. Why did you think at the time, he was doing this?

Webb: Why did he send Mr. Duke? Simply because the only relation was through the finances, and Mr. Duke was the financial officer, and that's all they knew was the financial arrangement between the schools. Mr. Duke had absolutely no academic background, except for a B.S. from William and Mary in business or something, and he didn't pretend to be an academic leader. I knew Charlie very well, liked him, worked with him, but he was a hard man, and he was sent here to lay down the rules and to see that the rules were enforced. So he did for several years commute back and forth; in fact he lived at the beach the first year and devoted quite a bit of time to this division, and then he started coming down three times a week, twice a week, and realized he needed someone here, so he appointed me the Assistant Director. I was really the Director because Mr. Duke would only come down or call me up there, and I would report on the conditions and what was going on. Then in '46, he appointed me

the Director. He came down none at all then, maybe once or twice a year, but in the beginning he came down very faithfully until the situation calmed down and he saw things were moving along as usual.

Williams: At the time when you became Director was when there was a post-war flood of veterans. Was this felt at the Norfolk Division in the way that it was at William and Mary?

Webb: Yes. The only thing that kept this school going during the war was our war training program -- evening, afternoon program, even day programs -- in training women and 4-F's for work in the war effort in the navy yards, the naval bases, and places around. And so we had a pretty good student body. Actual male -- not male, but full-time student enrollment during that period was very low. The only thing that carried us was the evening and day group of these war trainees. So when it was over we filled up quickly. Had very limited facilities at that time. The one old building (the old Larchmont School Building) and the old academic building were all we had. William and Mary was looked to to furnish education for the returning veterans. In Norfolk our limited facilities were over subscribed quickly. And they (the William and Mary Board) knew we didn't have the funds to build to take care of this horde of veterans that would be coming back. We had all the assignment to look for a site with facilities available. I helped in the search for a site -- looked at some close to us. You see, there were a large number of army and naval installations that were being closed, and the facilities were available. So they finally selected St. Helena's, which was a pretty good-sized site, having barracks and classrooms and some play area as well. They took the students we wouldn't take

academically or that we had no room for. That school was operating completely separate from this institution (Norfolk Division). It was operated from William and Mary. We did help. We helped in the selection of the faculty; we supplied critical needs in the way of equipment and know-how. Actually the St. Helena Division was operated from William and Mary, and Mr. Duke was involved in that a great deal. They hired a man, Colonel Fitzroy, who served as Director of that division during the three or four years it operated. After the closing of St. Helena he was supposed to come here as my assistant director, but he had an offer to organize and head the Richmond area university center, which consisted of a consortium of colleges. William and Mary was a part, University of Virginia, University of Richmond -- all the colleges in the Richmond area. It would help in certain programs to bring outstanding scholars to the area schools and was subsidized by Rockefeller, I believe, in the beginning. So he went there instead of coming here. St. Helena -- (a Coast Guard base near the Berkeley section of Norfolk).

Williams: Was it not a part of the Norfolk Division?

Webb: Not a part of our Division.

Williams: Now, I talked with you earlier about a proposal I found in 1951 in the Board of Visitors' minutes to separate both Norfolk and Richmond from William and Mary. You said that was a common occurrence.

Webb: Is that the Works' Study you're referring to?

Williams: I think it was.*

*I was in error -- the Work's Report came out in 1941.

Webb: They had that study shortly after this big scandal here to see what William and Mary should do. It was kept secret. We never saw the Works' Study and its recommendations until years and years after it was done. If it appeared in 1951 in the board minutes, it indicates the board didn't get it right away either because that study was done sometime in the early '40^s. I saw a copy of it through devious methods finally when we were talking of making another attempt at separation. That proposal never reached the light of day here.

Williams: Why would the Norfolk Division, which was then a two-year college, have desired separation, as of, say, about 1950?

Webb: It wouldn't actually. We had no desire to separate because we weren't strong enough. At that time (in the '30^s and '40^s and even into part of the '50^s) this division could have been killed off very easily with very little complaint on the part of people. ^{and} And we knew that this could happen; there was no way we could operate on our own. We were just beginning to get a little state aid, very little but some. There was no way that we could operate without some connection with another institution. We were working for our own accreditation, which we got very quickly by the 1950^s as a junior college, but we didn't want to separate in 1951 or 1948. It wasn't timely then, and I certainly wasn't pushing for it. I met in Richmond when they were talking about the R.P.I. separation - - that was very seriously considered (separating R.P.I. from the College of William and Mary.)

Williams: Why would it have been more likely to separate than the Norfolk operation?

Webb: R.P.I. and Norfolk were quite different in the beginning; we had a much stronger academic background than R.P.I. R.P.I. developed as a group of social work, semiprofessional-type courses, and when they finally separated and finally had to get on their own, they had to do a great deal of work on the first two years in English and history and liberal arts. They didn't have - - there was a gap from the graduate work down, and the reputation R.P.I. enjoyed was not particularly good at that time, either. It was not reflecting on William and Mary as they felt it should. So there was serious consideration of cutting off R.P.I., but Norfolk was not brought into the picture right then.

Williams: What about Dr. Pomfret? How did he feel about the divisions?

Webb: Dr. Pomfret was more a scholar than a leader in the development. He suffered us. He came down a few times, but he never had a great deal of interest in it at all. Whereas he didn't try to harm us in any way, he certainly never went out of his way to cause any great improvements. He wasn't the type of dynamic leader such as J.A.C. Chandler was or Mr. Alvin Duke Chandler and that group - an entirely different type, which may be they wanted or needed for "dear old College of William and Mary" at that time.

Williams: Would you attribute it, then, to the interest of the president of William and Mary that in March of '51 (spring of '51) there was serious talk of separation, and then in the winter of '52, after Alvin Chandler had come in, that the Board of Visitors was suddenly hearing reports from the president talking about strengthening the

the divisions rather than separating the divisions?

Webb: That's right, absolutely. Mr. Alvin Duke Chandler had a real vision of the role William and Mary was to play, and it included service to the entire Tidewater area, to Richmond, Norfolk, Williamsburg -- the whole group would be served by this magnificent institution (university) centered in Williamsburg. So he wanted to strength the Norfolk Division very much, and he wanted to strengthen William and Mary in Richmond, then bring the name of William and Mary into the picture, and he did. He did a great deal to get financial support for these institutions, not to the extent that it would hurt William and Mary, because he always kept that first in his thinking, which was proper -- but he wanted to develop this -- I'll use the word "empire" -- for this seaboard (Eastern Virginia) -- to be the dominant institution. And he almost did it -- very close. The feeling that he was going to do it is the thing that caused the final break-up because the University of Virginia realized what he was doing, saw what he was doing and was right influential in the legislature to see that he didn't do it and that it was broken up. I blame the break-up on the University of Virginia, and I'm sure if you talk with Mr. Chandler, he'll have the same feeling -- that he could have accomplished this if the University of Virginia had left him alone. Now, by the University of Virginia, I don't mean necessarily the administration of the University of Virginia; I mean graduates of the University of Virginia who place the university as the keystone of education in Virginia. They're the people who are in the legislature by a good bit, and they have the controlling sway of the legislature, so all you had to do was say to them, "Look, this will hurt the university," and you killed off the new consortium.

That definitely happened. The University broke up the William and Mary satellite system.

Williams: Let me ask a couple more questions then before the Colleges of William and Mary were set up. In the early '50's in the Board of Visitors' minutes, reports start to show up from you and from Dr. Hibbs regularly. Also there's talk of the "William and Mary System." Was this significant, maybe, of a tighter control or greater interest would that be a more accurate word?

Webb: I'd say greater interest. Academic control was never there, but the interest was, and Mr. Duke and Mr. Chandler both then tried to find ways to develop these institutions, to get buildings, to get funds coming here. You see, the first funds we got were somewhere around 1944; \$5,000 -- practically nothing. So it took a long time to get us to a position where we were even in the budgets of the State. I'd say Mr. Chandler deserves a great deal of credit for that. I'm sure he feels rather bitter that the break-up occurred, but it had to come, and we're all better off for it now. William and Mary's better off; we're better off, and the service for the area is for the better.

Williams: Also in the early '50's there begins to be some indication in the board minutes of a desire in Norfolk for a four-year college, and this kept up through the early '50's, into the mid '50's. There seemed even to be confusion about whether the board had committed itself to Norfolk expanding to a four-year college. Why, given the tremendous growth rate of the Norfolk Division, couldn't the board see the need for a four-year college?

Webb: You'll have to ask a board member that. It probably was an educational process that took time to accomplish. We'd work and get kicked down and work

and get kicked down and continue to interject additional requests for additional courses: the third year in the ~~School of Business~~ (which they were not doing much with, and we had a tremendous need for a ~~School of Business~~), the third year in the school of education. They let us get a little further, reluctantly, and finally, of course, they agreed to allow us to give a restricted four-year program. The first programs -- and again, so much has gone under the bridge that I can't remember, but I think the field was in business and education first. And then we added, little by little, until we got a program that was workable. But we had to demonstrate each time that this would require no additional courses, no additional faculty, simply combining existing courses to get the degree put together. The Board of Visitors, of course, continued to oppose that development into a four-year college, probably because they feared the overshadowing of the main College of William and Mary. The four-year degree program was bound to happen. I think lots of them saw that it was going to happen, but Mr. Chandler was reluctant at first. I got him to meet with the local citizens who wanted the four-year college every time that we met (and we had a group of very high-class men.) You see, when I took this job in 1946, I agreed to take it on the condition that I could select a group of fifteen citizens to be advisors to me to help me in planning the future of this institution. The Board of Visitors was a William and Mary Board of Visitors -- no men representing the Norfolk Division, no men representing Richmond. They all were selected for the College of William and Mary; it was their board. We needed something, so I picked fifteen of the top people in Norfolk, and when Mr. Chandler would come down and meet with these people, he knew top people when he saw them. He respected

them and he knew they were going to get what they wanted, so he worked with the group to see we did move ahead.

Williams: There was no objection to your starting this board, I take it?

Webb: No, well, nobody objected. They felt, "Well, give him something there to meet with. They have no power whatsoever." And this ~~Advisory~~ Board, as it was called, was quite proud; they probably had more to do, more problems put upon them and less power than any group ever. They could absolutely do nothing but recommend and advise and use their influence, but if they said, "I'd like to get the grass cut," they had no way to get the grass cut. They were a very effective group to have absolutely no power, but they had tremendous power, of course, as it ended up.

Williams: They could mobilize public opinion?

Webb: They could mobilize public opinion at the drop of a hat. They were presidents of banks, owners of newspapers, they were the top lawyers in town, they were doctors -- they were picked very carefully, and they were very dedicated. Once they saw the vision, what was needed, you couldn't have swayed that group from anything but working for this institution. And many of them still work very hard for this institution.

Williams: Before we get into the creation of the colleges: in the late '50's George Oliver was appointed as coordinator of the branches. Why was coordination necessary?

Webb: It was an attempt on the part of Mr. Chandler to bring in some academic control of the institutions by the parent institution. Mr. Chandler was not an academic leader, and he felt that we needed someone in that field. Dr. Oliver was familiar with the institutions. I knew him; he was a real close friend of mine; I worked with him very cordially. He was quite friendly

to both divisions and did much to solidify the group. Of course, later he was president of R.P.I. and served in Richmond, and I worked with him very closely while he was president there, too. His role was really to oversee academic quality of the work, to see that we didn't get into another scandal, poor grading, poor academic work. I don't think he enjoyed the task because he was not one-by domination to tell you, "Do this, do that." He was a very easy man to work with, a very fair man to work with, and our relations were good. I have nothing to complain about with George Oliver.

Williams: Moving now into the Colleges of William and Mary, whose idea was it to set up the Colleges of William and Mary?

Webb: You mean the satellite system?

Williams: The system, right.

Webb: That was Mr. Alvin Duke Chandler's. That was his idea to develop the Norfolk campus of William and Mary, the Richmond campus of William and Mary, and of course one later in Newport News and one in Petersburg. This group was to serve the educational needs of Tidewater Virginia. There would be some coordination necessary to prevent duplication, especially on the graduate level, which I feel that he felt chiefly belonged at William and Mary, although at Richmond they had a strong social work program and certain courses in rehabilitation and medical-type courses. At that time there was no thought of including the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond with it at all. I'd say it was Mr. Chandler's idea to bring the whole area together under one big University of William and Mary.

Williams: Did he consult with you on this before?

Webb: Oh, yes, yes indeed. He wanted help. He wanted the Norfolk group to work with him and he wanted the Richmond group. He was very active in

soliciting support for this idea everywhere he could get it. We talked many times at considerable length over how to develop, where to emphasize, and where to put the strength of the different groups. And as I said, he almost pulled it off. The legislature made the final decision for separation that broke it up. We felt that when it (the Division) got further along that it was obvious that the Norfolk part, at least, should be separated so as not to hinder the development of a college or university here in Norfolk. That's when the local people got behind the separation. Although he (Mr. Chandler) tried to dissuade them in this movement he was unable to so do. He realized that they were going to demand a separation, and the bill was put into the state legislature to separate. At the last meeting of the William and Mary board which I attended in Richmond we were briefed by the board as to what our role would be in keeping the system together, and we were told very positively that the board wanted the system to stay together. We were expected to work toward that end. It was quite a historical meeting of the board. They met, I believe, in the Virginia Club first. In that evening meeting we were told, "Tomorrow morning at 10:00 AM the main board meeting will be held at R.P.I., and each one of you division leaders will report and give your ideas on how you feel about the separation." It was a real farce: several of the presidents of the divisions failed to appear due to sickness, and I was about the only one that appeared. I told them very frankly that I felt that Norfolk must be separated, and in no uncertain terms they let it be known that if it was not separated that I certainly was going to be separated. So I either had to win or I'd be out in any case. They were right. If they were going to keep together and I was for pulling it apart, then they had to get rid of me or I had to get the school extracted from it, one or the other. As a result,

I am still here. I guess it's self-evident we were able to extract it, but the extraction came as a last-minute deal.

The legislators were pretty well in favor of keeping it together (it looked like the vote would be to keep it together¹⁾)

Williams: The vote in the board or the vote in the legislature?

Webb: The vote in the legislature seemed to be favorable to holding it together. Disruption is a pretty rough thing, especially when the institution was doing well, and what reason did you have to break it up? There wasn't too positive² feeling why should you break it up. It was more positive -- they're doing all right; they're organized; it's their thing, leave them alone. So the legislature -- not all, but the majority, I would say, of the legislature felt, "Leave them alone, let them do what they're doing." But some of our Norfolk people got to the governor and persuaded him that the interest of education in the Norfolk area would be enhanced by the separation, and he (Gov^{error} Albertis Harrison) came out that morning with a statement that he felt the separation should take place. There was almost a landslide of legislators that went along with him. The thing was carried with no difficulty at all. But it was only when the governor said, "I feel that this must be done," that the legislators that were disinterested -- lots of people in the western part of the state had no interest at all, it didn't make any difference to them, one way or the other -- suddenly took the side of the governor. So when the governor said, "I think we ought to separate," they said, "Yes."

Williams: You think that explains the sudden switch?

Webb: Sudden switch, yes. One of the interesting sidelights came to me several years after the action. Mr. Chandler felt very bitter

naturally about not being able to hold it together. I think he blamed me a great deal for what had happened, maybe justly so. At any rate I wasn't mad, and I tried to continue our friendship. We were at a meeting downtown one day, and he asked me to drive him back to the college here to meet his wife, which I did. And he said, "Lewis, I never told you this, probably, but do you know when I knew the stand of the governor?" I said, "No. I didn't know a thing about it." He said, "He didn't have the courtesy to talk to me at all to hear my views on whether the college should be held together. He made up his mind from talking to others. I was never asked or talked to, and I was on my way to Richmond. Do you remember that the alumni of William and Mary were giving a cocktail party for all the legislators that night, and the alumni were told to work on the legislators to keep this thing together? The party was planned and all the liquor was bought, instructions were given, "Work on the legislators to keep William and Mary intact," and I was driving to Richmond about 2:00 PM. I had my radio on, and I heard on the radio that the governor had decided to recommend the separation of the Colleges." He said, "Do you know what I did?" I said, "No, I don't know, Mr. Chandler, what did you do." He said, "I made a U-turn in the middle of the road and never went to the cocktail party." I said, "No, I didn't see you there, but it was as dead a cocktail party as you've ever seen in your life." Once the word came out it was obvious that it was no use working on the legislators. They were committed; they were going with the governor and the Norfolk Division and R.P.I. would be separated.

Williams: Who was talking with the governor, then?

Webb: Some of the local men.

Williams: Local Richmond, local Norfolk?

Webb: Local Norfolk. I won't bring in their names without their permission.

Williams: There had also been a study by the Junior Chamber of Commerce here in Norfolk a couple of years before recommending such a move. Did that have any bearing on the separation?

Webb: That was used. That was a very nice study, a very well-prepared study, a well-documented study. It was submitted to the board of William and Mary, but it had no effect because they felt regardless they were going to hold together. It was used by the local people in appealing to the governor -- this isn't just something that we'd thought of; it was something that'd been studied and the separation is recommended. So it was definitely used.

Williams: I found in the report that the state council made to the governor, a quote from a letter by Dr. Dabney Lancaster, written in 1960. I wondered if you'd respond to this statement: he said, "Fortunately, the sympathetic and progressive attitude of the William and Mary administration toward community service has served to restrain local impatience for educational autonomy" -- and he was talking about in Norfolk.

Webb: Well, you see, what he's saying is in order to keep the hue and cry as soft as they could that there was a putting out of small fires. In other words, when they yell loud, "We don't have a certain thing," -- all right we'll give it to you. "We don't have this!" "we'll give it to you. So there was a great deal of that going on -- trying to meet the needs of these communities without giving up the whole plan.

Now Dabney is quite right.

Williams: He also wrote in the same letter that in Norfolk there was local dissatisfaction with what he called "absentee control". Was this an accurate statement?

Webb: Yes, very accurate, and one of the probably most irritating parts of my connection with William and Mary was the board meetings. We would prepare a quite elaborate report on the progress and requests of Norfolk Division and the Richmond Division. We were invited to the board meetings; we sat in the hall and waited for our appearance, which was generally ten minutes before lunch, and they'd call us in and say, "You've been given the report of the Norfolk Division. Anyone have any objections to what they want to do? No? It's passed." And that was about all the interest you could elicit from the board. I mean they were there to spend their time for William and Mary -- or to see a football game almost in every case. Ten to fifteen minutes of their time was all that these divisions got, so that was the reason they called "absentee control." We needed our own control.

Williams: Did Norfolk deserve the blame or credit, depending on which side of the fence you were on, that they got for this separation? Some of the people on the board felt very definitely, I could tell, that a prime factor in the separation was the Norfolk Division's desire to be autonomous.

Webb: Yes, they were quite right in blaming the Norfolk Division, actually. Dr. Oliver was at R.P.I. in Richmond, and Dr. Oliver was very near to retiring. I talked to him, and very frankly he felt that the best thing that could happen to R.P.I. was a separation and independence,

but he was not willing to fight for it in any way.

He felt, "Well, I have a good thing here. I'm president of this institution, I have a nice home, and I'm going to retire in two or three years, and why should I get my neck chopped like you're going to get your's for agitating to break it up?" No, he wouldn't go on the stand at all except to me, and I know very frankly that he felt that it was in the best interest to separate. He felt his personal interest was stronger at that time, and he let Mr. Chandler do as he wanted to keep the group together. But he supported holding the group. Of course, that meant the only agitation that was coming, was coming from Norfolk and me.

Williams: In saying this, though, is that not ignoring a desire in Williamsburg to be out from under this colleges set-up?

Webb: Yes, you touch on a different aspect of it. You see, as we said in the original talk, there was very little association between the faculties. They had no interest and looked down on the faculty here, although we probably had just as strong a faculty as they. They looked down on the faculty and had little or nothing to do with it. And they did not want a large university development at William and Mary. So there was dissension right in its own group. The faculty of William and Mary wanted to break it up and to leave them alone and let them be a small, first-class, liberal arts college. The faculty: "This is what we want. We don't want to be a great university. We want to be a top-flight liberal arts school." And so undercover -- very few of them came out in the light of day on the separation; I happened to know many of them and know who they were

working with -- they worked to break up the system. Some of them were right ^{high} up in the administration under Mr. Chandler. Of course they couldn't show their face and still feel secure in their job while under Mr. Chandler.

Williams: One of the people on the board at the time was Fred Duckworth, who was mayor of Norfolk. What was his stance at this time?

Webb: Fred was convinced that we didn't have the strength to stand on our own. I talked to Fred -- he was a real good friend of mine and he helped develop this institution in many ways -- but he felt that it was giving up too much in the name of the College of William and Mary. Whoever heard of the Norfolk Division, Podunk University, or what ever we were going to be called? Nobody had heard of it and it was giving up the reputation of two hundred years or so of William and Mary. So he opposed the separation, but he was one of the few Norfolk people that opposed it. Of course, he was pretty well worked on by the members of the William and Mary board to start with, and he did not want to see the separation come. But once it came it was all right; he didn't resent it or pout, things like that. He still worked to help us.

Williams: At what point did you yourself decide the separation was advisable?

Webb: In about '55, I guess -- along in there, as soon as we obviously could stand on our own and get help from the state. We were in the state budget, we were supplying the community with graduates that now were taking their place and showing that the college meant something to them. I felt that the time had come. We would be held back rather than move forward if we continued under

William and Mary. So I probably began agitating in the early '50's -- not as early as '51, maybe '54, '55, along in there. Time passes quickly. The past is a bucket of ashes, they say.

Williams: In 1960, when this system was formally set up what advantages and disadvantages did you see for Norfolk and how were these borne out in the two years that the system operated?

Webb: Well, mainly in that we could now develop programs that would fit the needs of the community better, that we could go to the legislature and use our influence and get our buildings and get our money. These things take time, but if you feel that you have the permission to do it rather than say to William and Mary, "Here's my budget. Will you see that it works through the legislature?" Now we're on our own. We've got to get in there; we've got to sell the governor; we've got to sell the budget committee on this institution. The sale of it is the big thing. It's got to be an educational process. Many, many of these people in the legislature have no interest at all in Norfolk -- not a bit. The power is from Richmond west, and we had to show them this is a need; only we can fulfill these needs, and we can do it economically, operate on much less budget than the University of Virginia, V.P.I., or William and Mary. And we can get support from the community; the others weren't in a community to get support. So it was a project of getting them to understand what we wanted and why. It's still going on; we're still in the development stage.

Williams: So political pull would have been an advantage for the consolidation. Is that what you're saying?

Webb: If we had stayed together the advantages should have been in that in

Norfolk , Newport News, and Richmond, all those legislators would have worked for William and Mary, for the total program. That is the advantage of staying together. As it is now, you see, until we can receive more identity, the Newport News people, they're not going to work with us; the Portsmouth people will if they're sending some students here; but Richmond people, they're not going to work with us. So, Mr. Chandler's idea was, "We'll get enough political power to get this thing really moving ahead."

Williams: So in 1960 when you found that Alvin Chandler was going to be the chancellor of this set-up, (the Colleges of William and Mary) then what disadvantages did you foresee, if any?

Webb: I saw the disadvantage in that we were going to be restricted in our development. In other words, the same thing -- the power would be in Williamsburg and we'd be given enough to keep down the local hue and cry, but they certainly wouldn't be able to expand in the direction I felt we needed to go. This type of institution, an urban university, is not like the College of William and Mary and never will be. We've got to have departments and divisions and perform services that are never needed by a college like the College of William and Mary. And as long as we were under them, that same board would be appointed, which was a William and Mary board. We had to get a separate board. We proposed a number of ways -- allow five members to be selected to represent the Norfolk Division and five from Richmond, ten from William and Mary, anything to give these institutions some representation on the board, but such things never came.

Williams: Can you foresee under any circumstances that this system could have worked?

Webb: Yes, oh, it could have worked.

Williams: That Norfolk would have remained a branch?

Webb: Yes. It could have done just that and very nearly did, but I'm glad it didn't because I still feel it was not the proper solution. Very few of these satellite things work. Sooner or later they all want the independence, like the North Carolina system. That's ^e system, they said. But what is the relation between the college in Raleigh and the college in Chapel Hill and the college in Greensboro? It's not a close-knit system; they're all independent, and it would have been the same way here.

Williams: Did Admiral Chandler, then, see this system as a permanent arrangement?

Webb: Yes, very definitely, and he used illustrations like the California system and so on to show that there was logic in the way he was developing this. Of course, all those systems have since changed, but there were a number of them that were developing as satellites from the main university. He justified his dream in many ways. I mean he was able to document that such things would work. I hated to see it happen to him (that this break-up came) because he really put his heart and soul into the development of it, but it just wasn't to be.

Williams: You said that as early as '55 you could see that Norfolk should be separated. When the colleges were set up, did you see instantly that this wasn't going to work to the benefit of the Norfolk Division, or I

believe this was while it was Norfolk College (talking about the change in names)?

Webb: Oh, yes. It was obvious many, many years ago that something had to be done to develop. You see, this was the largest center of English-speaking people in the world without a four-year college, and change had to come. An area this large, a large metropolitan area which was going to grow -- had to have its own college. It couldn't possibly survive with a little help from a two-year branch. That was one of the things we traded on: that this was the largest area of English-speaking people in the world without a four-year college. And then we extended that further -- without a graduate school -- and then without a university, so now we have used that argument up.

Williams: Did you communicate this dissatisfaction to, say, the state council, to the governor, to the General Assembly?

Webb: Yes, indeed. Over and over and over. And it took time. I worked with the state council when it was formed, and again the director of the state council could be persuaded and was persuaded, but he still had his management group to persuade. And things don't move quite as fast as you say, "This is a good idea; do it." It doesn't move that fast. It takes repeated pushing to get what you want. (You're young! you'll find out.) But every opportunity was used to push the idea that more was needed. Little by little it comes, but it still has a long way to go. That's the reason for the recent move (three days ago) to remove the president here. The board indicated that they needed a different type of individual, not one that was a scholar and would sit back in his office, but one

that would get into town and meet with the clubs and meet with the leaders and meet with the legislature and meet with the foundations; in other words, he's got to be a developer, someone that's willing to do that, and everyone isn't willing to do that type of work. They're not equipped to and they don't like it. The job of president is no longer that of an academic leader only; he's got to be today a businessman, a promoter, an educator -- the whole works.

Williams: This is true in all colleges now.

Webb: Yes, indeed. It takes a great deal of man's time, energy, and ability to do it right. I hope we find one.

Williams: This is a question after that period that had occurred to me: when VARC was set up, why was Old Dominion not made a part of it?

Webb: Let's forego because that's going to be quite involved.
(Will discuss this in next session)

[Apparently a mistake was made in pagination at the beginning of session 2; this has been corrected.]