

Kevin Ann Oltjenbruns, Ph.D.

Human Development and Family Studies, 1974 - 2010

Personal Background

Growing up and Family

Kevin grew up in the Park Hill area of Denver where she attended Catholic schools, retaining many of those early friendships till this day. She was very lucky to grow up with two sisters and two brothers who remain good friends today. She had always been interested in computers, which led her to pursue a degree in math in college, the only major that included computer courses at the time.



It was during graduate school where she met her husband, Ken. He grew up on a farm in North Eastern Colorado and worked as a Design Engineer in Fort Collins when she first met him. He took over the operation and management of the family farm when his father retired a number of years ago. Ken's current goal is to help his family farm reach centennial farm status, as it will have been owned and operated by the same family for 100 years. They look forward to reaching this goal in 2017.

Kevin and Ken are both third generation Colorado folk, lucky to still have three parents and three of Kevin's four siblings living in Colorado. Ken's sister and brother also live in the state. They both enjoy spending time with their many nieces and nephews.

Education

Kevin was awarded the Boettcher Foundation Scholarship, which allowed her to attend the Colorado undergraduate institution of her choosing. With many of her friends attending CSU, Kevin followed suit, taking up a degree in Mathematics (Computer Science Concentration). She was excited about the innumerable opportunities that she was given beginning her freshman year in 1967. Interestingly, she did not love math, but found that she was good at it. During her junior year at CSU, she had a moment of serendipity: she needed a five-credit elective class to fit in a very specific time slot. One of the few classes that met her specifications was Dr. Judy Kuipers' Child Development class.

Within a few weeks, Kevin realized that she was not doing well in that particular course. After being encouraged by her friend Richard Witkin (who actually dialed the phone and handed it to her), Kevin (who did not understand at the time that it was acceptable to simply call a teacher) contacted Professor Kuipers and scheduled a meeting. This was something she would never dream of doing with any of her math professors. Making that phone call changed her life-course. She confessed to Dr. Kuipers that she struggled with the class because she was used to straight-forward mathematical answers, instead of the emphasis on individual differences. After that initial meeting, Professor Kuipers became her mentor, who encouraged Kevin to take many more human development electives and suggested that she continue her education with a master's degree. Her eyes were opened to what learning could become when truly excited about her major.

While working on her master's, Kevin got a taste of teaching as a graduate assistant for a field experience class. The course introduced speakers to her undergraduate students to highlight the various career possibilities available to them post-graduation. Kevin found that she was comfortable at the front of the classroom from her years in the Speech Club in High School. She also enjoyed working with this age group.

She returned to Colorado State University a year after earning her bachelor's to earn her master's degree in Child Development/Family Relations. A number of years later, in 1989, Kevin completed her Ph.D. in Educational and Psychological Studies from the University of Colorado.

Upon graduating from her undergraduate program, Kevin decided to travel and work abroad with friend and fellow student, Diane. They lived in Germany together for almost a year, working at a data control company. While staying at an International Women's Boarding House, Kevin became friends with women from all over the world and still remains in touch with a friend from London. Thanks to the many German holidays and generous vacation time, she took the opportunity to explore Europe. One particularly interesting trip took her to East Germany. A friend from the boarding house requested that she and Diane visit her family to let them know she was safe and happy in West Germany. Kevin found that the family was very friendly, taking them around East Germany, but there was a sense that the world was grayer on that side of the wall. It seemed that there were armed guards everywhere, which was "unsettling" to say the least. This travel-abroad experience broadened Kevin's understanding of the world and implanted a drive to keep traveling. The same was true of her husband, Ken, who was one of the first two CSU students to do a formal CSU study abroad program. He chose to live and study in Mexico. That may help explain why they have taken many trips to that part of the world.

While in Germany, Kevin learned first-hand the struggles of living in a country where she did not speak the language and translated that new understanding to her studies when she returned home. She carried that insight with her into a major professional activity at the University – becoming involved in helping to facilitate the diversity-related curriculum infusion professional development program.

Employment at CSU

When applying for a position at CSU following her graduation from the master's program, Kevin felt that she was in the right place at the right time. A temporary position was available for a key advisor for the department, which quickly led Kevin to an open full-time position. She was extremely lucky to share an office with Jill Kreutzer who became a mentor in the areas of advising and teaching.

Just as she was lucky to find a mentor/friend in the areas of teaching and advising (Jill Kreutzer and other HDFS colleagues), Kevin regarded herself as very fortunate in building a close working relationship and friendship with another colleague – Alicia Cook – who shared her passion for teaching and writing in the area of dying and grieving. Together, they wrote the first textbook that looked at those important life topics from a developmental perspective. They co-authored two additions of a text entitled *Dying and Grieving: Lifespan Family Perspectives*.

Once Kevin became a faculty member in child development, she made her way through the academic ranks. She was first employed as an Instructor in 1974. By 1980, Kevin earned tenure-track status as an assistant professor. In 1984, Kevin became the Assistant Dean of the College of Human Resource Sciences, now known as the College of Health and Human Sciences. She coordinated the College's many different efforts related to undergraduate education, recruitment,

and retention. While the name of the College was changing, so did her position title, as she moved from the Assistant Dean to the Associate Dean. In all of these changes, Kevin felt that she had the opportunity to work with a number of incredible mentors including Deans Helen McHugh, Brad Sheafor, Ellie Gilfoyle, and Nancy Hartley.

From 1991-1993, Kevin served as the Interim Dean of the College of Applied Human Sciences, where she provided leadership while a national search was underway.

Reflecting on her many positions, she thoroughly enjoyed serving as the Associate Dean because it was during that period that she was offered some intriguing invitations from various departments in the College. In 1994, the Department of Industrial Sciences, now the Department of Construction Management, asked Kevin to act as their Interim Department head. She worked there on what was supposed to be a one-year stint, which quickly turned into a two-year position. Kevin then returned to the role for four years before being asked to serve as the Interim Head of the Department of Design and Merchandising.

She enjoyed (and did well) in positions which challenged her and thought, “Why not go to Design and Merchandising? I had so much fun and learned so much in the Department of Industrial Sciences!” Once again, a one-year position turned into two before she was able to return to her Associate Dean position. Two years later, she was approached by Provost Peter Nichols to be the Interim Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies. Shortly after accepting the position, she was given the position on a permanent basis.

Three years into her role as the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, Kevin retired after 31 years as a CSU faculty member. She announced her decision to the council of deans, but was quickly contacted by the Director of Continuing Education, Rick Simpson, who wanted to meet with her before she retired. Her retirement was short-lived (or possibly non-existent?), as she was invited to become involved with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute on campus. After co-writing the grant with Jean Morgenweck, the institute was provided grant monies funded in 2006 and has been offering classes since. Co-directing the project, Kevin works with an Osher member curriculum committee to provide a broad selection of non-credit courses for area residents ages “50 years and better.”

Once again, Kevin planned on finishing her years at CSU as a co-director for the Osher Institute, but only a few years into that appointment, she was invited to become the Interim Director for the School of Education that was in the process of looking for a new department head. In July 2012, she stepped down from the position and continues to work at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

Kevin has found that doors often open because they are supposed to and she took that lesson to heart by diving fully into each position that came about. She can hardly wait to find out what the next adventure will be!

