

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

**CSUMB Founding Faculty
Oral History Project 1995-98
Rina Benmayor, Project Director**

**Interview with Christine Sleeter, Professor Emerita
Teacher Education
College of Education**

**Interviewer, Marsha Moroh, Professor Emerita
Former Dean, College of Science**

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Narrator: Christine Sleeter
Interviewer: Marsha Moroh

1 **Moroh:** This is Marsha Moroh and I am interviewing Christine Sleeter. Today is October 8, 2015
2 and we are in Christie's house. And we are about to begin. Oh yes, state your name and that you're doing
3 this not under duress.

4 **Sleeter:** Christine Sleeter and yes, we have full permission.

5 I'd like to talk to you about the very beginning days and your coming to CSUMB. We all have
6 stories that bring back the memories of what brought us to CSUMB, so could you describe the moment that
7 you first heard about the university and tell us what it is that grabbed you about this particular opportunity?

8 **[1:00] Sleeter:** Joe Larkin, my partner, and I were thinking about moving anyway. We'd both been at our
9 institution, University of Wisconsin-Parkside about as long as we wanted to be there. It was not a bad place
10 to be, it was just that I had outgrown it. I was teaching the same courses over and over again and was
11 getting tired of that. And Joe had had kind of a fallout with some of the administration there and was
12 working for Milwaukee Public Schools at the time on a desegregation project. So both of us were interested
13 in relocating. So we subscribed to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which at the time was all in print, not
14 online, and started plowing through the job ads. I remember when saw the job for faculty at CSU Monterey
15 Bay. I was like, "Wow! I've never seen a job ad like this before!" What resonated with me was that it was
16 asking for people with backgrounds in ethnic studies, women's studies, disability studies, postcolonial
17 studies and I was like, "I want to be a part of that, that really speaks to me!" It also said that they were
18 interested in non-traditional job arrangements, which for us meant the possibility of job sharing. As it
19 turned out, we applied together. We actually wrote a cover letter that was for both of us and had our
20 resumes stapled onto it.

21 [2:53] I later figured out that when it got here, they were like, "Uh, job sharing? Uh, we don't know how to
22 do that," and they separated the resumes. So they interviewed me and not Joe. But the other thing was that
23 I had been told . . . and I've been trying to remember this morning who I heard this from. I don't think it was
24 Steve Arvizu. I think it was a colleague of his and also of mine at the time, a guy named Henry Trueba who
25 was really well known in multicultural education. He is a Mexican anthropologist who had come to the
26 U.S. and for a while was Dean of Education at UC Davis. For a while [he] was Dean of Education also at
27 University of Wisconsin-Madison. And I don't remember exactly where I got to know him along the line,
28 but I think it was him [sic] that had told me about hearing that there was possibly going to be a think tank
29 established in California around the Fort Ord area in multicultural education and that I might want to think
30 about at some point becoming a part of that. And so when I saw this job ad and remembered hearing about
31 the possibility of this think tank. . . . That may have been something that Steve was thinking about initially
32 that never quite materialized, because once you get into the CSU system it's not exactly set up for academic
33 think tanks. But that was something that was in the back of my mind. Anyway, it was the job ad. And what
34 I saw in the job ad in terms of my interest in multicultural education, ethnic studies, women's studies, and
35 that really pulled both of us here, because for both of us, it was like, wow!

36 **Moroh:** So can you describe your first feelings when you got here, when you first came to the
37 campus?

38 [4:56] **Sleeter:** When I first came to campus I wasn't sure what to picture. I remember coming in
39 November. It was before the WASC [Western Association of Schools and Colleges] meeting. I met you.
40 Who else did I meet of the founding faculty? I remember sitting in a room. [Dean] Dorothy Lloyd was
41 there.

42 **Moroh:** Armando [Arias].

43 **Sleeter:** Armando was there. There were some others there but I can't remember. It was a rather
44 small group. I was just excited. I don't remember if it was at that meeting. . . . I came here previously for

45 an interview before that meeting and at one of those was driven around the campus. I was in a car with
46 Steve Arvizu and a couple of other people and he was talking about the vision for the campus. We're
47 driving around this closed military base [laughs] thinking, "Well . . . okay . . . , there's potential here." I
48 remember having somewhere in my mind that there was going to be more put in place than was actually the
49 fact. I guess if I had thought about it, here it was a closed military base and I was one of the first wave of
50 hires. But I do remember having in my mind that there would be infrastructure there. I even envisioned a
51 parade and celebrations and stuff for opening up this new campus!

52 [6:32] And so when we got here, it really was just meeting in these buildings that had been vacated by the
53 army and nothing had been done since the army left. It didn't diminish the excitement, but it made the job
54 in front of us look a bit more daunting. [Laughs]

55 **Moroh:** Now that you are remembering those early days from a perspective of much later, how do
56 you feel now about those early days, putting in perspective all that has transpired since then?

57 **Sleeter:** Well, yeah, the early days, it was exciting. I'm getting all of these mental pictures. Just to
58 describe a couple of them: One of them, I remember meeting in Building 84? I still get the 80's mixed up.
59 There was this munitions room with the grated door. María de la Luz Reyes and I were climbing all over it
60 and taking pictures of each other. [Laughs] It was like. Wow! I remember meeting Josina [Makau] when
61 was staying in a hotel. That was when we had really heavy rains. We need them again. And she and
62 Carole had lost the house that they were staying in [to the flood]. Because they had a cat, and pets weren't
63 allowed on campus. I had two dogs and I was like, "Well, oh dear! What am I gonna do?" Right around
64 then [President] Peter Smith changed the policy when he saw the result of not allowing animals on campus.
65 But I remember that was how I met Josina.

66 [8:38] I remember just vestiges of the army all over the place. On the lintel of one of the buildings that we
67 would walk into, above somebody had painted a sword and below they had painted on the ground blood,
68 the sword with blood dripping down. It was this juxtaposition of us coming with a vision of building

69 something that would be revolutionary, inclusive, and coming into this place that was a symbol of U.S.
70 military might. The clash in visions for me was just jarring. But it also, I felt like there was one vision that
71 was replacing another vision, so the idea of swords into plowshares. We were coming in as part of the
72 plowshares. Even though there was almost no infrastructure when we first got here, no library, no food
73 service, not much of anything. It was still really exciting because there was the opportunity to reimagine
74 higher education and to reimagine it from perspectives of people who have traditionally been excluded. I'm
75 white so I'm not one of those people that is traditionally excluded, but the work that I've done to try to push
76 back the walls and bring in diverse perspectives and diverse people and make school so that it works for
77 diverse people, that was really exciting.

78 **[10:37] Moroh:** Was there a moment when you really felt confirmed that you were really in the right
79 place? Did that happen right away for you or did it take some time?

80 **Sleeter:** No, it was all along. I knew I was in the right place right from the beginning. There were
81 times that were frustrating. As you know, I've always tried to balance my work here with my external
82 national work. So I wanted to keep up my publications. When I came here [in January], I had a workshop
83 someplace else and a conference to go to. So for me it was always trying to balance these two worlds. The
84 CSUMB world and the work that I do outside of CSUMB. And I think that ended up being the biggest
85 struggle that never completely came together. Steve [Arvizu] did try to acknowledge that faculty needed
86 time to do their research by giving us, I think it was Friday, when there were no meetings. But just the
87 around-the-clockness of the work, and then when the 5,000 or whatever applications for faculty positions
88 came in, telling you that you had Friday to do something else didn't make the piles get shorter. [Laughs]

89 **Moroh:** So as we finish this section, when did you actually retire from CSUMB? What year was it,
90 do you remember?

91 **Sleeter:** It was when I turned 55. I just turned 67.

92 **Moroh:** So, what was it that prompted that moment?

93 **Sleeter:** The retirement moment?

94 **Moroh:** Yes. What motivated you to leave at that time?

95 **Sleeter:** I was getting so tired and frustrated. It was the culminating result of a lot of things that
96 happened. I was so tired and frustrated, trying to do as much as I was doing, that I would come home
97 sometimes and just start crying. And at the end of a break, when we would go back and have meetings, I
98 would come home frustrated and crying.

99 **Moroh:** Well, we'll come back to that.

100 **[13:29] Sleeter:** When Joe found out, being a year older than I am, that you could retire when you were 55
101 and we could also take our retirement from Wisconsin at 55, even though it wouldn't be full retirement and
102 I would still have to keep working to have a livable income. For my sanity, that's why I did. But I'm still
103 glad I came here.

104 **Moroh:** Okay. [Chuckles] So let's talk about exactly what your first assignment was when you got
105 here. Do you want to talk about a particular incident that happened in your first role here and what you
106 were assigned to do?

107 **Sleeter:** Okay, well, I had multiple roles. One of the roles was as a member of the Teacher
108 Education faculty to write the document planning the Teacher Education program that would go to
109 [C]CTC, the [California] Commission for Teacher Credentialing. That was a first role. That involved me,
110 María de la Luz Reyes, Vicky Jew and a couple of consultants, one of them from CSU Chico and one who
111 had worked for the California Commission of Teacher Credentialing. What I didn't realize when I first
112 came here was how much the state regulations around teacher credentialing would define the Teacher Ed
113 program. I came here thinking that -- and Maria did the same because we had spent a lot of time talking
114 about it --, based on the work that I'd done in teacher education and the research that I'd done for
115 multicultural education that I could distill what I thought were the most powerful forms of teacher

116 education and kind of play with a new program, kind of rethinking those. For me, one of the big things that
117 had been very central to my own learning was community-based learning.

118 **[15:35]** Here I learned the language of Service Learning, and they're very similar, not completely identical
119 but very similar. So, I wanted to have community-based learning as central to the Teacher Credential
120 Program. That was something that I was really excited about. And María was excited about the idea of
121 being able to use more literature through the program and have students discuss literature as a way of
122 learning and then link that back to the research and texts. So she and I would talk with great excitement
123 about the possibilities. But when it came to writing the document, starting from Day One, it became,
124 "Okay, this needs to go in to the CTC by something like April 1st. And here we are in February, so we
125 need to get on it really quickly." And I remember Vicky, who had helped write the CTC document, handing
126 me the requirements, and I wasn't even moved in yet, and saying, "Take a look at this and here's how
127 we're approaching this and see if you can see anything missing." I looked at the document and in some
128 ways didn't realize that I was misinterpreting what she was asking. So I looked at the CTC documents and
129 identified what I thought were a couple of large areas that were missing from what the state was requiring.
130 And so I wrote it up. If I were going to rewrite them here's what I would add. I took them back and I was I
131 proud and excited of my work, because it reflected what I brought to the table. Vicky looked at it and she
132 said, "Oh, that wasn't really what we meant. We're writing to what the CTC is asking and we wondered if
133 there was anything we were leaving out." I felt like all of a sudden the task of creating a Teacher Credential
134 program had been turned into fill in the blanks. Vicky didn't know me very well and didn't know my
135 background very well. At one point she asked, "Well, do you think you could teach the Ed Psych class?"
136 My background isn't Ed Psych and, anybody who knows what I do knows that that isn't what I do. There
137 **[18:04]** also got to be this tension between bilingual education and multicultural education which I never
138 expected to have be a core tension here. María, who is strong in bilingual education and also strong in
139 multicultural education sort of helped --I thought she was kind of a bridge person --, but since both of us

140 were from outside of the CSU, it turned out to be a non-CSU versus a CSU CTC struggle. And so I
141 eventually just pulled out of the role of working with the Teacher Credential program. Over the time that I
142 was here, I occasionally taught a course in the program. But I just pulled out of it, and it was really painful
143 to do that. I would sometimes talk with Dorothy [Dean Lloyd] about, "Why did you hire me if the expertise
144 I brought can't be used?" And she was, "Well, yeah, it can be used. It can be used" But there was this
145 friction going on that I don't think she knew how to mediate. Vicky's style of working was also really
146 different from mine. At one point she was saying "I love a good fight." And for me a fight just shuts me
147 down. I want to leave. And it was the same thing with Maria. So that was a difficult part of my role.

148 A second role that I got –

149 **Moroh:** Can I ask you a second question about that?

150 **[19:46] Sleeter:** Oh, yeah.

151 **Moroh:** So what eventually happened with that? So the vanilla document just went in and that's
152 what the program became?

153 **Sleeter:** It just went in. That's what the program became.

154 **Moroh:** Okay.

155 **Sleeter:** Yeah, some of the material that I guess was closer to me got put into Liberal Studies. But
156 to me, that still wasn't working with the whole issue of teacher preparation. I felt for a long time that the
157 program didn't exactly get beyond being a collection of courses. There was another piece to all of that, too,
158 that I remember. Coming in, Dorothy wanted to work with the schools, which makes good sense. And so
159 she organized what she called this collaborative. She contacted largely the administrators from Monterey
160 County, to come in. And so we had this November meeting with administrators from around the county.
161 Maria, Vicky, me and Dorothy were the four people representing Teacher Education. It was a room with
162 about 100 people in it. All of them, with the exception of maybe two people, were white Monterey County
163 administrators. And actually the four of us were kind of sitting there thinking, "This is going to be really

164 interesting trying to plan teacher education for a county where the majority of students are Latino, when
165 there's hardly any Latinos, María and one other person. Otherwise with the exceptions of Dorothy and
166 Vicky, it's an all-white group. That was really frustrating for Maria because the group that she was
167 [21:42] assigned to work with came in with their idea. Nancy Kotowski I think was part of that group, I
168 may be wrong on that. But they had their idea of what teacher education should look like and it didn't
169 come from a multicultural, sociocultural, linguistic perspective. It just didn't. María was just so frustrated.
170 She probably talked about that in her interview.

171 **Moroh:** So I'm sorry, I interrupted you. You had said the second part of your assignment?

172 **Sleeter:** Yes, so the next part of my assignment [was that] Peter Smith gave each of us as planning
173 faculty an assignment that had to do with the university as a whole. So he asked me, because I seemed to
174 know what outcomes-based education was, and he was really interested in that, if I would be the
175 Assessment Coordinator. [Sigh] I didn't know how to think about that, really. I agreed to do it. I had
176 absolutely no interest in running a testing center. But the idea of linking our curriculum with the outcomes
177 that we had brainstormed at that [planning] meeting over in San Juan Bautista and using that as the
178 backbone of our curriculum so that we would stay true to what I thought was the Vision that we had
179 articulated, that was interesting to me. And when I could see that my role in Teacher Ed was a little more
180 tenuous than I thought it would be, then I agreed to do that. At one point, somewhere along the line,
181 [23:32] this was years later, I don't really remember if I had retired by then, I was looking at something on
182 the [CSUMB] website and it said something about the analogies that I gave about learning to drive a car --
183 It's not how many hours you spend learning, it's whether you pass the test and you get your driver's
184 license! That was still on the website! And I thought, "That's my legacy from CSUMB?" [Laughs] I was
185 like, "Oh, my God!

186 Another role that I thought about was when we were looking for somebody to direct Service
187 Learning. And I'm actually glad I didn't do this, but for a while I thought about applying to be Director of

188 Service Learning. I had done a lot of community-based learning before I came here. And I was really
189 interested in Service Learning, in the whole potential of what service learning could be. But I realized that
190 that would take me away from the work that I'd been doing, the larger work in education and teacher
191 education and I didn't want to just dump that. Maria had been informally designated as the point person to
192 put together the MA in Education program. She and I began working on that. And then when she left, I just
193 allowed myself to slide right into the role of coordinating that program. That turned out to be probably the
194 best thing I could have done because that *did* give me a teacher education program that didn't have the
195 CTC constraints, where I could bring to bear everything that I knew and had been working with around
196 education and multicultural education and working with teachers, and so the program that we put together
197 and that I was able to run for about six years was, I think, one of the most exciting things I *have* done in my
198 life. And the teachers that I worked with, the faculty that I worked with, the planning process that we went
199 through, the things that we put together, and the things that I was able to see actually working with
200 students, that was for me a real highlight here. So directing the MA in Education Program was another role.
201 [26:02] Then there were also the other roles involved with putting together the university. Being on a
202 zillion search committees, helping to get the [Faculty] Senate going, helping to get. . . Program Review. I
203 think I wrote one of the first Program Review guidelines helping to get some of that stuff off the ground. . .

204 **Moroh:** G.E. [General Education]

205 **Sleeter:** GE? Oh, yeah. Leading. . . until Joe came along and was able to take that up. [Chuckles]

206 **Moroh:** Here's a great question for the early days. Describe a typical day during the early months.

207 **Sleeter:** Oh, God! Oh, my! [Laughs] Well, first of all I am not sure that there was a typical day
208 except that they were all. . . . But, okay, so: Get up, go to Building A-D, whichever it was, and have one
209 of the planning meetings. The Planning Faculty were meeting. I remember when I got to my first planning
210 meeting, Bob van Spyk was running it. He had this chart. That gave me the illusion that there was actually
211 a plan for planning. I realized by about the next meeting that there wasn't because we had these rotating

212 chairs and he happened to be in charge that day. And then the next time somebody else was in charge and
213 then we moved to a different topic. I'm like, "Oh, okay, we're making this up as we go!" [Chuckles] But
214 sitting around the table, we would have really interesting discussions about what we wanted the university
215 to be like. Also in the process we'd be getting to know each other. So that was really interesting. We also
216 had the calendar of how many days until the students arrived and we'd kind of look at that, and it was like,
217 "Oh, gulp, oh God! What all do we have in front of us before they arrive?!"

218 **[28:08]** And then maybe sometime during one of those meetings somebody from the administration or
219 from Student Services or something would come and meet with us. And then we would realize the
220 disconnects between our discussions and discussions that were going on elsewhere. Like the time when, I
221 think it was Bert Rivas came in with the majors that they had been recruiting students for. And we were
222 like, "But those aren't the majors that we're developing!" [Laughs] So, that would be the morning. And
223 then lunch would be either having what now is "Dishes," at the time was "Pronto Deli," come in and deliver
224 stuff. Or when one of the [food] trucks came, we could actually go out and buy our own food. That was
225 great, having one of those trucks there. As I remember the afternoon, we would go back and work on either
226 programmatic stuff or search committee stuff. Or there may be other stuff to get the university going. That
227 would be more meetings, either plowing through resumés. . . . I remember sometimes plowing through
228 some of those resumés and just getting almost like punch drunk, sitting there with Ken Nishita doing the
229 "paper, rock, scissors" or laughing! [Laughter] Some people would send in pictures of themselves. One
230 woman sent something in with herself in a bikini. I was like "Oh, my God!" Somebody who had gone to
231 clown school applied for a position. And so there would be some of that levity that would help you get
232 through what was really this enormous task of trying to figure out who the next faculty would be.

233 **[30:03]** And then I had dogs to walk. Sometimes, I would just have to [say], "Okay, I've got to go walk my
234 dogs" and that would be a way of "Bye, see you later." But then, since we all lived in the same area, you'd

235 go home, walk the dog but continue to have meetings out on the street because the people who you were
236 working with you lived with. So it was kind of this round-the-clock exciting but also kind of exhausting.

237 **Moroh:** And how would you describe the campus culture during the first several years?

238 **Sleeter:** The first several years? I'm still in the first year.

239 **Moroh:** Well, in the first year.

240 **Sleeter:** One of the things that I think got to be dysfunctional is a culture of constant work. I've
241 come to realize with myself, that if I overwork, I become so much less efficient and so much less creative.
242 If I get enough rest and have time to reflect and time to kind of recreate a little bit, I can come back to tasks
243 and do them much faster and much better than when I'm exhausted. But, we did have this sort of culture of
244 "Oh, I'm working 80 hours a week." "I'm working 90 hours a week." "What? I'm only working 70 hours a
245 week?!" And that's not good. I think we also were having to deal with the tension between what the CSU
246 requires and the visions that we brought. There did end up being, I think, a tension between people who had
247 been hired from within the CSU system and people who had been hired [from] without. The people who
248 had been hired within tended to take for granted more of the CSU ways of doing things. Not always
249 entirely, and this was not necessarily completely true of everybody. But there was that tendency at least
250 among the people I worked with. And the people who came from without would [ask], "Well, why does it
251 have to be this way? Why can't you do this?" So some of those conflicts around becoming CSU'd were I
252 think tensions that were a part of the campus culture.

253 **[32:49]** As the students got here, they were asking us on the ground what all of this stuff actually means?
254 On a whole lot of levels that also became, I think, an important part of the campus culture. One area would
255 just be the whole area of planning, and students wanting to know what was expected. And we weren't sure
256 what was expected. Us trying to figure out how to prompt student learning in an open-ended way, partly by
257 necessity because we didn't have a lot of stuff planned, but also gradually realizing that we needed to have
258 more structure and more in place. There was that tension between open-endedness and students needing to

259 know what to do. But also around issues related to multiculturalism, to racism. The students were coming
260 in expecting that this would be a place where, particularly students of color who had felt not welcomed in
261 many areas of education where they had come from -- this may have been more true of African American
262 students but there were also some Asian American students and Mexican American students who were also
263 experiencing the same thing – and then, coming here and realizing that this wasn't a place where
264 everything is just absolutely wonderful. One of the things that I thought we would do as faculty is have
265 discussions of how do you plan a curriculum when you have students coming in with widely varying levels
266 of ethnic identity, with white students who haven't grappled with race and ethnicity at a very deep level at
267 all, and students of color who have, or students of color who haven't and this is their first encounter. How
268 do you plan the kinds of growth and learning and dialogues that will bring people together? And we never
269 [35:03] really had those discussions. So things would erupt and we didn't really have ways of dealing
270 with it except then a task force would be convened. I was on two of those task forces over the years I was
271 here. We would come up with plans and then things would sort of die down. Then, later, another issue
272 would erupt. And then another task force would be convened. I would be [saying], "Wait a minute. Here
273 are the notes from the last task force and what do we do with that?" [Chuckles] Because I think in some of
274 the initial planning we were trying to do it so fast, some of the deeper questions about I go back to
275 the initial job description that I got. If you're coming in and you're trying to build something around ethnic
276 studies, postcolonial studies, women's studies and you are trying to infuse technology and deal with
277 historically underserved students in the tri-county region, what does that mean? I feel like I'm babbling.

278 **Moroh:** No, no, no. It's very interesting. So let's move from the very first days to sort of down the
279 road. So as the campus started to take shape what were key moments of change or of struggle that stand out
280 for you beyond the very earliest days?

281 [36:24] **Sleeter:** This is going to be what happens to pop into my mind. One of them was around who
282 controls the curriculum. The administration or the faculty? I remember for me a key moment. I was

283 feeling increasingly that the faculty through the Senate didn't have much power over decision making.
284 Having come from Wisconsin, which has a long tradition of faculty being very active and having a lot of
285 control over stuff, and it's non-unionized faculty. But there is a real strong tradition in Wisconsin of
286 faculty control over the university. I was really troubled by what I saw as just the assumption that faculty
287 will ratify things put forward by the administration. But there are things that faculty don't control. This was
288 particularly around curriculum. I don't remember the exact struggle at the time but I remember saying
289 something in one of the Faculty Senate meetings. William Franklin, a young African American guy, this
290 was his first job and this is sort of reflective of a lot of beginning faculty members who didn't bring
291 experience one way or the other with faculty governance, he really got excited about that. He said "Faculty
292 should control curriculum!" and he wanted to run with that ball. But for me, that was a moment of struggle.
293 There's always the tension between who controls, how much control does the faculty have, and how much
294 control does the administration have. This has continued to be a tension. I think early on Peter [Smith]
295 tried to minimize that by trying to have committees that had on them faculty, students, administrators and
296 staff, which actually I think is a good idea. But then, -- some of this probably had to do within the
297 institution of the CSU in which the administration does have more control I think across the system than it
298 does in Wisconsin, where I came from --, you can start one way but the system tends to pull you another
299 way. And so that was a key moment.

300 **[39:12]** Another key moment of struggle around multiculturalism had to do with when Peter [President
301 Smith] got rid of Steve Arvizu [Founding Provost] over Thanksgiving during the first year, after the
302 students were here. At first, when I saw the email that he sent out, I didn't know what to make of it. And
303 then Maria said, "Well, [it's] the competing vision. There's Peter's vision, there's Steve's vision, and Peter
304 has more power and he is just simply getting rid of Steve so that he can put in his vision." Peter didn't
305 come with a vision of multiculturalism and that was the heart and soul of what Steve was trying to build.
306 And doing it [removing Arvizu as Provost] over break, when people aren't around, meant that there was

307 going to be less pushback. People would come back and be really busy and dive back into the work. And
308 that for me signaled kind of a watershed, of what I thought we were building as a group maybe we're not.
309 Maybe the tensions around multiculturalism run way deeper than I had thought they did. The next provost
310 was hired, Dell [Felder]. I knew Dell a little bit because she had worked with Carl Grant who had been my
311 mentor and my ex-husband, and so I knew just a little bit about her. But she came in asking the question
312 well, "What is a Chicano? I don't know what a Chicano is." If you come in as a provost to a university that
313 is trying to build itself with an ethnic studies core for working class students in the county that has the
314 largest proportion of Latino students and you are asking the question "What is a Chicano?", to me that
315 shows a level of understanding that you either need to dig in and really start bringing your understanding
316 up or it's going to be a problem.

317 **[41:29]** What ended up happening was she made enough comments about the students here that were
318 overheard by staff who, I was told, she kind of regarded like the furniture. So she would say stuff not
319 realizing that here are people that she is basically talking about. So CLFSA [Chicano-Latino Faculty and
320 Staff Association] was formed as an organized protest really against what she was about. So I think those
321 are some of the key moments that really stand out for me.

322 **Moroh:** [Chuckle] So if you were to look back what would you say were the key accomplishments
323 of your being at the university?

324 **[42:21] Sleeter:** Okay. One of them, I do think that the MA in Education program, as we had it while I was
325 directing it and maybe for about a year or so afterwards, was wonderfully exciting. I developed a level of
326 deep appreciation for classroom teachers, because of the people who I was working with. That has really
327 stuck with me. Many of the people who were in the program I've stayed in contact with. Some of them
328 who were my students in my classes like fifteen years ago I am still in contact with. Some of them have
329 gone on to do really exciting and wonderful work. And when I would go out into some of their classrooms
330 and see them doing. . . . Like one elementary teacher, I remember walking into her classroom and I

331 [thought], "Wow! this is kind of like being in one of our MA classrooms!" in terms of how she had
332 structured it around project-based learning, and high academic expectations and a combination of structure
333 for the student work, with a lot of open-endedness and flexibility for students to ask questions, and select
334 some of their own materials but still have to perform at this really high level. She said, "Yeah, that's what I
335 learned watching you guys!" So how that program functioned, while it was functioning, was really exciting
336 to me. I was hoping that when I left it would have been institutionalized enough and it wouldn't be just
337 dependent on a few people to hold it together. But gradually people left. Kani [Blackwell] retired and went
338 to Hawaii. Bob Hughes went to the State of Washington. So we had an attrition of faculty. Then Liz
339 Meador, who had worked with the program and kept it going for about a year, she left and so as it got
340 handed off. Even though I still see the description of the program on the web, I think the heart and soul of
341 what made it work left with the people that made it what it was. But for me that was maybe the most
342 exciting accomplishment, not a lasting accomplishment but an exciting accomplishment.

343 **[45:11]** Another thing that I think CSUMB has really held onto really well has been the project-based
344 learning and I hope it continues to. It wasn't just me that made project-based learning. There were a lot of
345 people who were working with project-based learning. But through the Center for Teaching, Learning and
346 Assessment [TLA] and the work that Amy Driscoll did, there's been I think a change of the campus culture
347 throughout to honor project-based learning and really take the scholarship of teaching seriously. When I've
348 been on other campuses talking about the potential of faculty and project-based learning and faculty
349 learning teaching through working together and having the faculty seminars that we would have, sometimes
350 other people would look at me and go, "Wow, I wish I could work in a place like that!" So that's a real
351 positive.

352 The ethos of struggling with multiculturalism still continues. I don't know if it's productive because
353 I'm not there anymore. But from what I hear, at least the students are becoming if anything more diverse.
354 We are continuing to graduate large numbers of historically underserved students who are going on and

355 doing things. The UROC program [Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program], even though I didn't
356 have anything to do with it, there's a philosophical similarity with it and what we were doing with the MA
357 in Education program. At the time, I was keeping data. About a quarter of our MA in Education graduates
358 were going on for doctoral programs and they were mostly from historically underserved groups. The thesis
359 that we would require was a thesis that, I've heard back from a lot of the students when they went to their
360 doctoral programs, was kind of like a doctoral dissertation. So when they got into a doctoral program it felt
361 comfortable because they'd gotten pushed in their MA program. In fact, some of them said that the
362 doctorate was almost easy compared to the pushing that they were getting from us. So at least seeing that
363 [47:35] enacted in the UROC program, I walk into that and say, "Okay, this is something familiar to me,"
364 in terms of taking historically underserved students and really pushing them academically so that they are
365 doing really super things.

366 **Moroh:** Let's go back to where we were talking about the reasons for leaving and beyond the
367 workload and the other things that you had mentioned that you wanted to expand on.

368 [48:15] **Sleeter:** Well, for me it did get to be the workload. Because, as I said, I was always trying to
369 balance the external work that I do with what I was doing at CSUMB. = I felt very much like the external
370 work that I was doing greatly enriched what I was doing at CSUMB. As an example, for several years I
371 was editing a series of books for the State University of New York Press. I would get manuscripts from
372 book authors and I learned how to give really good feedback. I also did this with other people I was
373 mentoring, giving really good feedback to people on their writing. So I would bring that same kind of
374 writing feedback and helping people learn how to frame research, to do research, into the work that I did
375 with students here. Including Liberal Studies students. I had taught for a while in Liberal Studies and sort
376 of turned it into a kind of a mini research class, and the students really liked it. So there was this reciprocity
377 in my life between the work here and the external work where both were enriching each other. But I
378 couldn't keep doing it all. With the MA program, as Director of the program, everybody who wanted to

379 come into the program would come and meet with me. We got very few applications just out of the blue.
380 We got some, but most of the time people wanted to come in and talk with me. And then we would assign
381 advisors. Often, if I had been the person who met the person, I would start off as first advisor, the academic
382 advisor. I was really glad when my administrative assistant learned how to do the advising because that
383 took a load off of me. But then the thesis advising was huge. And every thesis had two advisors, the person
384 teaching Capstone and somebody else. I think I was probably for a while thesis advisor for about half of the
385 [50:24] students. I remember we had an external reviewer come in during the WASC review, Patricia
386 Gándara. She said, "Christine, you can't keep doing this." She said, "When I interviewed the students and I
387 was asking them who is their advisor, all of them were saying you were! And you can't keep doing this!"
388 And I said, "I know!" So in putting my budget together I worked with Joe [Larkin] on trying to figure out
389 how to work in release time for people for thesis advising. We would use formulas like from science
390 around labs. So I kept trying to bring up to Dorothy [Dean Lloyd] that there was this desperate need for
391 thesis advising because we just couldn't keep up. I refused to give up the rigorous quality of what we were
392 doing. I knew we could go back to a master's degree that didn't have a research thesis. But I wouldn't do
393 that because for me there was an ethical issue here. Students who go to the CSU's are mostly working
394 class students who can't afford to go to a UC, who can't afford to go to Stanford, who are going to where
395 they can afford to go to. We have an obligation to give them the most high [sic] quality education possible.
396 I didn't want to give them a cut rate education even if the funding wasn't the same as the funding at a UC
397 [University of California]. I would sometimes talk with some of my UC colleagues about some of the
398 funding differentials. With one of my friends at UC Santa Cruz, we get together for lunch every once in a
399 while. Even though I know they have some big classes there's also enough of a differential in funding that
400 they can offer a doctoral program, they can have graduate students. We would talk about how we had the
401 [52:35] diverse students. Their students were mostly white in their graduate program. And so it's not fair
402 to scale back what we offer our students. But you can't also just do it on the backs of faculty. So I kept

403 trying, for about three or four years, through the budget process, through advocating, through showing data
404 of "Look at how our graduates reflect the demographics of California! Isn't that wonderful?" And people
405 were going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's nice. Let's go on." And it just didn't happen. For about a year I was
406 telling Dorothy that "I'm not going to last!" "I'm not going to last!" And then, finally, "I'm retiring."

407 **Moroh:** So maybe a good group of questions to end with were the ones about the Vision. You said
408 a little bit about what it meant to you and what attracted you, the pieces of the Vision. Maybe you want to
409 talk a little bit about that. And then what it is that you see was actually realized on the campus as you were
410 leaving. Kind of your reflections on that.

411 **[53:52] Sleeter:** It's real hard to speak about the campus as a whole because I was so invested time-wise in
412 the program I was working with, which did, I think, a really good job of enacting all of the parts of the
413 Vision. Certainly the multicultural part was like core to me. I learned a tremendous amount about
414 technology and using technology as a tool in teaching. Then, working with Bob Hughes, who came in with
415 a stronger tech background than I did. We started putting a lot of stuff online not for purposes of doing
416 distance learning but for purposes of making our syllabus and some of what we were doing in classes a lot
417 more accessible to students. So while they were studying at home or if they missed a class or something,
418 that the stuff was still there. In terms of serving students out in the community, we took a cohort of the
419 Master's program up to Watsonville and physically traveled up there to offer some of the classes in the
420 library of an elementary school, as a part of trying to do outreach to the community and make things
421 **[55:16]** accessible. But I think there were parts of the Vision that helped me expand what I was doing and
422 technology, I think, is a big part of that. In terms of the campus as a whole at this point, I don't really
423 know. I always felt sort of an affinity with HCOM [Humanities and Communication] because their classes
424 just resonate [with me]. For a while I probably could have taught in HCOM as easily as I could have
425 taught in Teacher Ed. Then VPA [Visual and Public Art] around multiculturalism in the community, the

426 RUAP [Reciprocal University of the Arts Program] project that Amalia [Mesa-Bains] was doing, was
427 something that I got really excited about. But as I say, I mostly know the things I was working on.

428 The Teacher Credential program itself, I think, has always been more tied to CTC [California
429 Commission on Teacher Credentialing] than to the vision of CSUMB. At one point early on I just decided
430 there's nothing I can do about that. I remember I used to talk with Teacher Ed faculty about things that I
431 thought were really missing from the Teacher Ed program. The focus on bilingual education is good and
432 important, the focus on language, but it needs to be linked with the focus on racism and ethnicity. We don't
433 teach our students, for instance, anything particular that is going to help them become successful teachers
434 of African American students. I would get met with things like, "I thought that happened in another class."
435 Or "Well, can you give me a reading?" That's just like – it misses the point.

436 [57:13] With community-based learning, that for me was central to my own learning to teach and there's a
437 body of research that confirms that. I would go to Teacher Ed meetings. The Teacher Ed faculty [said]
438 "Well, come to our meetings. We are going to do some re-planning." So, okay. I don't really like going to
439 meetings. But I go to a Teacher Ed meeting and argue for community-based learning [that] needed to be a
440 part of Teacher Ed. There were two faculty members in Teacher Ed who were always with me on that.
441 Others, as we would start, "Okay, well, we can only offer so many credits. So okay, we'll give that two
442 credits. Oops, we need one of those credits over here. Oops!" And so it would just sort of fall off the table.
443 For me the question would be around how do you best prepare teachers to be excellent teachers of the
444 students in this region? The central question would be, "Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, well here is our last
445 CTC. . . " So I was just like, "You know, I've got better things to do."

446 **Moroh:** So any last thoughts about, say, what you wished you had accomplished that you weren't
447 able to? It kind of ties right into what you were just saying.

448 [58:38] **Sleeter:** Well, no. I'm glad I came here. There are times when I look at some of my colleagues
449 who are in Research One [R1] institutions and who didn't retire when they were 55 because they got

450 exhausted, and I think that could have been a path that I could have taken and it wouldn't have been a bad
451 path. Ultimately, I think I have always chosen to be...it's not like I've chosen not to go to an R1, but I've
452 more chosen to work in places where most of the students are working class students because I enjoy
453 teaching and they're the students that I enjoy teaching. But it takes sort of a toll. Yeah! [Chuckles]

454 **Moroh:** Any last thoughts? Any last share about your experiences?

455 **Sleeter:** No, it's brought up a whole lot of stuff I hadn't actually thought about for a while.

456 **Moroh:** Really. For me, too.

457 **Sleeter:** Anything that you'd like to ask me that you wondered about? Or...?

458 **Moroh:** Well, I learned a lot from this interview. [Laughter] Let's see. This is maybe a hard
459 question but if you had it to do it over again knowing what you know now, would you have approached the
460 beginning differently? Maybe it's an unfair question, but I'm just thinking, we know a lot about how things
461 unfolded and how we thought we had this great freedom to think through a university. And then somebody
462 forgot to tell us that there were all these rules that we actually had to follow. So would you have
463 approached the whole thing differently?

464 **[1:00:32] Sleeter:** One little anecdote about that. Do you remember Peter Hoff? He was working with the
465 CSU system. He was working under [CSU Chancellor] Barry Munitz for a while. And he had for a while
466 been in Wisconsin. So I had met him. I didn't know him well but I had met him. I remember when I first
467 got hired here, running into him and now I don't even remember if it was here or if it was in Wisconsin.
468 And he said, "You have a window. Be as innovative as you can." And that was coming from the CSU. So I
469 think there was a shift. The CSU does have its ways of doing things. But there may have been an open
470 window that closed . . . and we didn't know that.

471 **Moroh:** We didn't realize. We didn't see it, or see it coming.

472 **Sleeter:** Yeah. I think if I had had something to do differently and I don't know – I mean I really
473 loved working with the MA in Education program and I really wish I wouldn't have burned out as

474 thoroughly as I did. I didn't even FERP [Faculty Early Retirement Program], when I retired. I just retired
475 because I was so burned out. But maybe I would have tried to get more specific about why I was being
476 hired for the Teacher Credential Program and how much creativity and latitude I would have. Because that
477 turned out to be a very large disappointment.

478 **Moroh:** And made that deal up front before you got here.

479 **Sleeter:** Yeah. Yeah.

480 **Moroh:** Interesting.

481 **Sleeter:** And if I had known that . . . I don't know if I would have even gotten an answer to that, but
482 if I would have known that the reality of the expectation was one of fill-in-the-blanks, I'm not sure if I
483 would have come.

484 **Moroh:** But you're not sorry that you did.

485 **Sleeter:** I'm not sorry I did. I just sort of wish I hadn't burned out when I did. But I did.

486 **Moroh:** Thank you.

487 **Sleeter:** Thank you.

488 (END OF RECORDING)

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