

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

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

**Interview with John Ittelson
Professor of Multimedia and Instructional Technology
Science, Technology and Information Resources Center
College of Science**

**Interviewer, Rina Benmayor, Professor Emerita
School of Humanities and Communication
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

Transcribed by:

**Carol Roberts
carris.roberts@gmail.com**

Narrator: John Ittelson

Interviewer: Rina Benmayor

1 **Benmayor:** Okay. Today is October 10, 2019 and this is Rina Benmayor. I am here with John
2 Ittelson for the CSUMB Founding Faculty Oral History Project. John, do we have your permission to
3 record this interview?

4 **Ittelson:** Yes, you do. And it's like old times. This is great fun.

5 **Benmayor:** Yes. Thank you. Okay, can we start by asking you to state your name and what
6 position you held at CSUMB? And something about your background, but just very briefly.

7 **Ittelson:** Okay. The name is John Ittelson. I was a faculty member at CSUMB, one of the I think
8 twenty seven founding faculty members. I taught our classes and for a while I also directed what was called
9 the DOL Project, which was the Distance and Online Learning. So this was in the early days of CSU
10 Monterey Bay. We were trying to develop new and exciting ways of providing instruction not only for our
11 students on campus but for people who could not make it to campus.

12 **Benmayor:** I heard a little noise in the background. Is that your computer?

13 **Ittelson:** I'm a tech guy. Yeah, that was one of my alarms letting me know that somebody walked
14 in front of the house.

15 **Benmayor:** Oh, my goodness. Okay. [Laughs] All right. I want to take you back to the very first
16 moment when you heard about CSUMB. Where were you? And how did that happen?

17 **Ittelson:** Well, it was actually two moments that come to mind. The first being part of the
18 California State University system, because I was a faculty member at CSU Chico or Chico State. So we
19 knew that a new campus was in the works. But I first found out about it when a colleague of mine that I had
20 been teaching asked me to write a letter of recommendation for him. He and I worked at the American Film

21 Institute for Sony doing workshops in L.A. He was living in Monterey because SONY had moved some of
22 their operations to doing CD ROM's, that tells you how long ago it was. He asked if I would write a
23 recommendation. I said, "Sure, I'd be glad to write you a recommendation." I did that. Then the next time
24 was a more chance one. I was dating a woman who I'd worked with in the cable industry. She was the
25 Executive Director of Cable in the Classroom and there was a conference in L.A. She was flying from
26 Washington, D.C. to San Francisco to go to the conference. I was flying from Chico to San Francisco to go
27 on to L.A. And we decided we'd connect on the plane and go together. This was early in our relationship.
28 As we were flying from San Francisco down to L.A. we passed the beautiful Monterey Bay and pointed out
29 Santa Cruz and pointed out Monterey. I said, "See that big pile of sand? That's going to be the next CSU
30 campus on the former Fort Ord." She said, "Why don't you transfer there?" I said, "It doesn't work that
31 way. They're gonna hire new faculty members." She said, "Why don't you just apply?" And I said, "Well,
32 I could apply but I've been at Chico for 17 years. I'm one of the old guard. They're not gonna want the old
33 guard, they're gonna want new guard. A friend of mine is applying and I'm writing him a
34 recommendation." She said, "Well, you're not trying to date him."

35 **Benmayor:** [Laughs]

36 **[3:50] Ittelson:** So I thought if this is gonna make someone I'm trying to date happy and at that time I
37 think stamps were 48-cents. So I said, "Sure, I'll apply." I did apply. Of course the next thing I heard was
38 late May when they said you are invited for an interview. But that was the first moment when I pointed out
39 the window of that United Airline and said, "See that big pile of sand?"

40 **Benmayor:** Wow. That's a lovely story. What year was that?

41 **Ittelson:** That was 1995.

42 **Bobbi Ittelson:** Four.

43 **Ittelson:** No, 1995. The campus ... my wife is in the room so she'll make sure I'm correct. No, the
44 campus opened in '95 and so the founding faculty were there for the year in '94. Then they started doing

45 interviews during that summer. My interview was in May. I didn't get to meet the President at that
46 interview because he was still not even on campus. In fact, the term campus is sort of a misnomer. There
47 was no campus at that point. Then I met Peter, and after I was offered the job then I met Peter Smith
48 [President]. I wasn't going to give up a position at Chico and go to this crazy new campus if I didn't at least
49 know who was going to be leading it. And then after that I accepted the position.

50 **Benmayor:** Um hmm. So you and I were in the same cohort, then.

51 **Ittelson:** We were part of the first cohort. I think the term we used was pioneers. Some of my
52 colleagues at other campuses referred to us as the crazy faculty but we were definitely pioneers.

53 **Benmayor:** A-hah. Okay. Can you remember what you thought or your impressions were when
54 you first drove onto Fort Ord for this interview?

55 **Ittelson:** Actually I can give you the impressions I got in anticipation of going onto it. I got the
56 invite and then I said, "Well, I should prepare for this." I wanted to make a presentation and I wanted to get
57 a little bit more information about the campus and who would be in the committee. You know, being an
58 academic you want to be prepared. So I said, "Well, where on campus are we meeting?" And they said,
59 "Well, we're really not meeting on campus. It's still being worked on." There are some former buildings, in
60 this case it was the old dental facility that was one of the better buildings. They said we were going to be
61 holding interviews there. And since it was a position involving technology and multimedia I said, "Well,
62 will you have a computer and a screen or a television set so I can give examples of some of the student
63 projects that I do and some of the activities?" And they actually said, "Well, we don't know whether there
64 is even a television or screen there."

65 **Benmayor:** [Chuckles]

66 **[6:50] Ittelson:** So being the "be prepared" I came down with my own projector, my own screen, my own
67 computer and it was very strange driving in. The gate was still there but clearly not manned. The sign that
68 normally said "Welcome to Fort Ord," you could see where the letters had been removed. [There was]

69 almost almost no signage. We wound our way and finally found the building. We were there early and of
70 course. The interview is important and driving all the way from Chico. we didn't know how long it would
71 take so we got there considerably before the interview. And then we said, "Well, we'll just find someplace
72 near. A coffee shop or something." It turns out there's not a lot near there. There was still the Commissary
73 and there was I think a Burger King but it was run by the remaining army groups there. So we just sort of
74 wandered around what looked like a deserted movie set until our appointed interview.

75 **Benmayor:** And tell me about that interview. Do you remember who was on your committee and
76 what that was like?

77 **Ittelson:** Oh, I should. Gee. Now I should remember all.

78 **Bobbi Ittelson:** Marsha Moroh.

79 **Ittelson:** Yeah, I should remember who it is. I know Marsha Moroh who later became Dean was
80 there. She was representing the department. She was a founding faculty member. Bob van Spyk was on the
81 committee because he was also a faculty member. There were a number of other people there I should
82 remember.

83 **Benmayor:** That's okay. It doesn't [matter].

84 **Ittelson:** From Sociology... No, I should know because I ran into his brother recently. [Chuckles]
85 Anyway, but so it was a very informal setting. It was a little different because I think I was the only
86 committee member who walked in with a cart of equipment. I think that helped because I was able to
87 demonstrate the sort of projects I do with my students. I've always been interested in having hands on
88 experience for my students and having them work on projects that had an impact off the campus. I did that
89 in Chico. We did public service announcements for the schools. We recorded basketball games. Essentially
90 what the students were doing in my classes in Chico were trying to figure out how to apply their skills to
91 the community. That had resonated with the committee and the best way to show it was to show other
92 students' work that I directed before.

93 **[9:43] Benmayor:** Now, coming from Chico I was curious, were you offered a position with tenure?
94 Without tenure? How did that work?

95 **Ittelson:** Well, you may recall that none of the faculty, the 27 faculty were hired with tenure. So at
96 Chico, I had been there 17 years and never had had a sabbatical and those are fairly hard to get. So I'd
97 managed to get a sabbatical from Chico for the '95-96 academic year. I was going to have a sabbatical with
98 CNN News. They had a student programming show called CNN Newsroom. So my sabbatical was going to
99 be looking at that program. In addition to the on-air show they had a web portion to it. So already I was
100 scheduled to be gone for a year's leave. And then I had the opportunity for this position. So that worked out
101 well. So I went back to Chico and said, "Rather than doing the leave at CNN, I'd like to take the leave to do
102 one year at CSU Monterey Bay." I figured that's sort of a safe way of trying it out. Plus, Peter Smith
103 originally had indicated he was trying to have a campus that did not have tenure. So yeah, I did not have to
104 give up my tenured position until I was granted tenure at Monterey Bay. But when I joined I was just like
105 the rest of us 27, ready to take on a grand adventure.

106 **Benmayor:** Right, right. So were you in the first group that went up for tenure? I don't remember.

107 **Ittelson:** Oh, okay. So I guess you want the little secrets of it all.

108 **Benmayor:** [Laughs] Well, whatever you want to talk about is fine.

109 **[pause]**

110 **Ittelson:** Okay. I didn't know we were going to get into issues of tenure and RTP.

111 **Benmayor:** Oh, I'm just curious. That's all.

112 **Ittelson:** Well, it's an interesting story and it's fun because, you know, tenure for academics is
113 such a sensitive subject. So the first 27 faculty were hired without tenure. Peter Smith made a decision that
114 he was going to try to have an alternative to tenure on our new campus. When I interviewed with Peter,
115 when I was given the job offer I was told that no one was granted tenure. When I interviewed with Peter he
116 explained how they were going to try to have a campus that was an alternative to the traditional tenure

117 model. In those discussions at that point the woman who had suggested that I, apply, Bobbi, my wife was
118 now my fiancé. The little challenge that we had was I proposed to her when I lived in Chico but she didn't
119 agree to marry me till I moved to Monterey! She was a Washington woman. So Chico and the rural
120 community was not going to work for her.

121 **[13:31]** So when I went to interview with Peter, get to know him and for him to get to know me, in the
122 discussion about tenure it came up. I said, "Are you going to have tenure?" And he said, "No we're not." I
123 said, "Well, look, I've got tenure. I have the sabbatical that I'm taking now, so I don't need to worry about
124 it." But I basically said, "If you're going to have tenure I want to have tenure. He said, "Well, I'm not
125 hiring anybody with tenure." I said, "Well, you don't have to hire anybody." With the coaching of my wife,
126 who has known the academic community, she said, "Why don't you use your sabbatical application as your
127 tenure application?" And so, I said, "Peter, I'll take the job but on the condition. I don't have to be granted
128 tenure, but I want to be reviewed for tenure as soon as it's determined that we're not going to have tenure."
129 And that's what happened. The campus opened up. Those early crazy meetings, where we were all meeting
130 at once, and then the decision came from HR that all the tenured faculty were going to meet to decide the
131 tenure process and the untenured faculty were going to meet to figure out how we're going to apply. At that
132 point it was going to be the twelve tenured faculty members, which were the founding faculty. But they had
133 reviewed my application and decided to grant me tenure, so I was the 13th tenured faculty member. So I
134 was tenured before the first crew, the 27. A number of my colleagues go, "How did you do that?" I said, "I
135 put it in my contract." Because a number of people said, "Why didn't I think of that?" But that's how I got
136 tenure in probably the first round.

137 **Benmayor:** Right. I remember there were eight of us who presented our stuff to the committee of
138 12, the founding faculty who had tenure. That was I think in January? February? Of '96? And Ken Nishita,
139 who was our union rep was encouraging all of us to go for it even though it wasn't in our contract.

140 **Ittelson:** Right.

141 **Benmayor:** Anyway. So tell me about your first assignments. What center were you in? What were
142 you hired to do? And what did it really turn out to be?

143 **[16:15] Ittelson:** You know, there were [chuckles]. We had so many different things going on there. I was
144 at the MLC, the Media Learning Center. And we had Information Technology and Communication Design.
145 So it was sort of a computer science-like and a multimedia and design [program]. The campus was trying to
146 do things differently. It was trying to be integrated. There was a Center for Online Learning that eventually
147 disappeared. That's when the distance online learning program started which eventually the DOL
148 Department, which luckily they changed the name but eventually became our Extended Ed. At the
149 beginning, you know, in some disciplines if you have a faculty member, a log and students you're in
150 business. You can sit and talk. You can converse. You can ponder the great issues of the day. But if you are
151 in a technology program where you have to teach people networking or you need to be able to create a
152 multimedia experience, do a video recording, you need labs and you need those facilities. I mentioned
153 when I came for the interview there weren't even televisions to look at things. So I remember showing up a
154 few days before class opened and we were in one of our what seemed to be continuous faculty meetings
155 and ad hoc meetings. You know, there was seven in the morning until seven at night. Somebody said,
156 "How do I get a television and VCR to play a videotape in the classroom?" And there were blank looks all
157 over the place and we didn't have any. Luckily at that time my wife, who worked Cable in the Classroom
158 and they provide VCR's and television sets for schools across the U.S. that were getting free educational
159 programming from the cable system and they were being distributed through the Home Shopping Channel,
160 I said, "Peter, I could maybe see if I could get that price because it's discounted and they know how to
161 deal with schools." At which point Peter handed me his credit card and we went on the Home Shopping
162 Channel and ordered VCR's and television monitors and a cart. It came with a cart. So that was the start of
163 the audiovisual support at CSUMB. But, so the early days, you know, in our classes where we were
164 teaching how to do computer programming for multimedia, how to set up networks, those students, the true

165 pioneers, learned about the technology through setting up the labs. I remember the classes, we had a
166 syllabus, I had the goals of what I wanted to do. I taught very similar classes at Chico. But I had a lab full of
167 20 computers. I had monitors. I had a network. And I remember going to that class and saying, “You are
168 really going to learn this from the ground up.” There were piles of boxes in the back of the room. And I
169 said, “Okay, each one of you get a box. You’re gonna open it up. You need to save all the paperwork. We
170 need to make sure that we don’t confuse things from other things.” Our campus was a campus of
171 convenience. It was never on the California masterplan. So it wasn’t in the budget. And it happened so
172 quickly that we were actually purchasing furniture and computer equipment using GE financing.

173 **Benmayor:** GE. GE meaning General Education?

174 **[20:32] Ittelson:** No. General Electric.

175 **Benmayor:** Oh. GE!

176 **Ittelson:** GE. You know, like you buy a car or you buy a refrigerator you get financing. You know,
177 it was borrowing on credit. So we were putting in orders for the equipment. The founding faculty and then
178 the new faculty as we came in started making lists of things that we needed to teach with. The strange thing
179 is that all the hardware was showing up but none of the software to operate it. We finally went to
180 Purchasing and said, “You know, we’re getting close. You know, we finally got it all hooked up but now I
181 need to get some software so that we can teach the students.” And they said, “Well, that’s on hold.” I said,
182 “What do you mean?” Well, the GE, and that’s when I learned GE finances, was willing to buy the
183 hardware because it could be repossessed but the software has no value so they, you know, once you
184 crack that seal on the software. . . . So then we started realizing that we had to put a little software on every
185 hardware order so that it sort of got blended in. But I remember waiting almost a week to get some of the
186 first applications that we wanted to run in the labs for our students because had the hardware but none of
187 the software yet.

188 **Benmayor:** Wow. [Chuckles] And were you always in the MLC or did you have to teach classes in
189 a temporary building somewhere?

190 **Ittelson:** No, the Media Learning Center was one of the first open buildings. You know, we –
191 [chuckles]. There was one class that we had, it was not a technology based class and since there were a
192 limited number of classrooms and maybe you had some of them. I think it was Fitch Middle School.

193 **Benmayor:** Um hmm.

194 **Ittelson:** So I remember going there and trying to explain to the students that were attending this
195 class that this was higher education because they were sitting in chairs that were designed for elementary
196 school children.

197 **Benmayor:** [Laughs] I remember that.

198 **Ittelson:** Well, you know, one of the sort of amazing things, I think amazing for us as faculty but I
199 think even more amazing for the students and I question their parents' value system, we didn't get to set
200 foot on campus until literally three days after the campus was supposedly open. Any other time you want
201 on campus, and some of us had to go there to look at some technology things and cabling, you had to put
202 on shoes and a hard hat to go around the buildings because the buildings were being worked on literally up
203 till the day we opened and still worked on through most of the first three years.

204 **Benmayor:** I think they were preparing for Clinton's inauguration of the campus, right?

205 **[23:25] Ittelson:** Well, that's an interesting event. I don't know if you got to talk to Hank Hendrickson.
206 Hank was the former Base Commander and then he became Peter Smith's sort of Executive Assistant. The
207 dedication of the campus was going to be done by Clinton because the campus exists because of the Base
208 Closure Act. And Leon Panetta was the Chief of Staff of Bill Clinton at the time. Literally instrumental in
209 getting the campus here. So the opening of our campus was also going to be the announcement of his
210 running for his next term. It was originally scheduled to be held in the playing field, the football field on
211 Fort Ord. That was a nice little stadium. We use it for graduation. But it became obvious that the numbers

212 that were going to attend were going to be much larger. So they decided to hold it on the Quad of the
213 campus where there the Media Learning Center was. There was the building that was the cafeteria or Food
214 Services. There were the dorms that had been converted to housing. They were the old Viet Nam era
215 volunteer Army dorms but they were being upgraded. But it was just sand and dirt. When they decided to
216 move from the stadium to that Quad, the Secret Service had come by and there were drainage ditches along
217 Inter Garrison and they were filling those full of sand bags because they couldn't let that gully be there.
218 The next thing I see, there's fencing coming up. They were fencing in the whole Quad. I'm seeing these
219 people putting up all the fencing around here and I walked outside the Media Learning Center and there
220 was Hank Hendrickson. And they're painting the buildings at the same time that they are leveling the dirt
221 with all the dust blowing! I said to Hank, "This is crazy." Luckily the color of the paint, which Sally Smith
222 I think helped Peter Smith pick, I said, "It's lucky the paint looks pretty close to the color of sand but isn't
223 it a little crazy painting with all this dust?" And he said, "Well, we got the bulldozers leveling out the
224 Quad." I looked at him and said, "Well, Hank, I guess you need to do that. When is the Astroturf coming
225 in." And I thought I was joking. At which point Hank said, "That should be arriving around six tomorrow."

226 **Benmayor:** [Laughs]

227 **[26:14] Ittelson:** I guess in oral histories you want the little clever notes! So as Hank's telling me this he
228 takes a phone call and then I said, "Go ahead, take it." He got off the phone and he goes, "Damn CIA. I
229 mean FBI," or ... [chuckles]. And the next morning Bobbi and my son, Brendan and Sara came down and
230 we watched them roll the Astroturf like a movie set for the Quad for the opening of the campus.

231 **Benmayor:** [Chuckles] That's a wonderful story, John. I remember that very vividly but nobody
232 else has told us the story, so you have a great memory.

233 **Ittelson:** Well, and the Media Learning Center was where Bill Clinton and his team were. The
234 Secret Service brought them there. And then moved them to where the podium was. My office was one of
235 the offices closest to the door. So one of the Secret Service came in at some point and had a dog and

236 smelled my office. It was a crazy time. And of course if you think of what it takes for a campus to do any
237 of that and I have to say....

238 Well, another funny story, okay, on this. The faculty and staff were excited that President was going
239 to open the campus. So we thought, "Wouldn't it be great? We're going to get to meet the President, the 27
240 of us. He's going to come meet the faculty because we're opening the University." Well, it turns out we
241 weren't all gonna get to meet the President. So they said, "Go to the Administration Office and there is a
242 big bowl and you are to put your business card in the bowl." I don't know if you did that.

243 **Benmayor:** No.

244 **Ittelson:** No? But they said if you want a chance to get the meet and greet with the President prior,
245 because 200 of his close personal friends who were contributing to his campaign . . . But they said,
246 "We're going to select a number of faculty. It will be done by lottery." So I went over to the President's
247 office, I dropped my business card, there was somebody from the President's advance team. As I dropped
248 my business card in I get, "You know, the last lottery I entered sent me to Viet Nam!" I figured that ought
249 to get my card taken out and ripped up. It turns out my card was drawn so I did get to go to that reception.
250 And there were about I think 150 people. Prior to coming to campus. . . It was held...I'm not sure where it
251 was. It was one of the parts of the military base that the military still had. They had a reception line and I
252 got to shake hands with Clinton. It was an amazing experience. Anybody who has met him says, "You
253 know you feel like you are the only person in the room." I was wearing a tie, he commented on my tie.
254 Then two weeks later I had a picture of me shaking hands with Bill Clinton.

255 **[29:49] Benmayor:** That's lovely. That's a wonderful story. Yeah, we were all very envious, I'll have to
256 say. I don't remember about putting the business card. Maybe I did. But yeah, we were envious. I think
257 Richard Bains also got to go.

258 **Ittelson:** Richard was there.

259 **Benmayor:** A-huh. Yeah.

260 **Ittelson:** And we were trying to figure out how we got it. Neither of us were very lucky at things.

261 So. [Chuckles]

262 **Benmayor:** So, switching a little bit, you told a story about how you learned about the campus. But
263 the campus also had a particular Vision and I was curious about how you connected with that Vision and
264 what in the Vision Statement did you see as pertaining to you?

265 **Ittelson:** Yeah, the interesting thing about the Vision Statement is it really existed prior to the
266 campus. When we applied, the founding faculty and the community had worked on “Who should this
267 campus serve and how should it serve it?” So you had to respond to that in your application. So it, was a
268 conscious decision. But it’s not one I made just for this campus. Actually all my degrees are from
269 Northwestern University. Even a high school summer program. I went to a high school summer program
270 and then that convinced me to go there as an undergrad. I went as an undergrad and then I went off to Viet
271 Nam. I went back and did a master’s and ended up staying and doing my doctorate. My doctorate was in
272 Industrial Engineering. My master’s was in Educational Television. And my undergraduate was in
273 Broadcasting. But when I was working on my doctorate in Industrial Engineering, I got involved in this
274 new trend, this amazing thing, the potential of using computers for teaching. It was called CAT. Computers
275 and Teaching. So that started my, you know, career really involved in instructional technology and using
276 technology to teach. But being at Northwestern, a research institution, I think the assumption was I would
277 go off to some research institution and teach the way you do at research institutions. I actually had a job
278 offer at Chapel Hill in their Instructional Technology program. Then they put a freeze on all hiring that year
279 because there had been some discrimination issues. So they said we’re postponing, literally three days
280 before I went out for the interview, they said “We’re putting all on hold for a year.” I had one more year
281 left in my contract at Northwestern but one of my best friends at Northwestern’s wife was from Pasadena
282 and they were not going to stay in the Midwest. They were going to go to California. When I made my
283 resumé for Chapel Hill, I printed 100 of them so I had 98 of them left. So to appease my California friend,

284 every Friday we'd go have a hot fudge sundae in Chicago, which is hard to do because most ice cream
285 places aren't open, look through the Chronicle of Higher Ed for positions in California, and as a ritual, he
286 [33:23] would send off his applications and I'd send off mine. A week after I had the notice from Chapel
287 Hill that the search was on hold for a year, I got a letter from CSU Chico, Chico State. Would I be
288 interested in an interview? I did the interview. Got offered the job. I went to my mentor -- you know
289 everybody who has a positive doctoral experience has a mentor within the field --, Claude Mathis. He was a
290 Southern gentleman. I joke that I didn't really get a Ph.D. in Instructional Psychology but I got one in
291 trying to be a Southern gentleman and failed. I remember Claude saying, "You know, you've really worked
292 hard. You could stay here but it's not going to teach you anything new. Why don't you go out to California
293 for a year? Then Chapel Hill will be available or you could see what you want to do?" So I took the
294 position at Chico. I always knew I liked teaching but I really loved teaching. I loved the small community. I
295 got to learn more. . . . I was from the Midwest so I had the vision of California as all the crazies, you know,
296 California on the edge, that nuts and fruits went there. I found out it wasn't quite as crazy as I thought
297 although I did arrive the year Prop 13 passed.

298 So it was really the direct teaching experience. . . Chico, not to the extent that we were able to pull
299 off at CSUMB, had a lot of first generation students graduating from Chico. Chico had been around for
300 much longer. It was an ag [agricultural] community. But it drew a lot of students from the San Francisco
301 Bay Area and from the L.A. area that wanted to get out of Southern California. So I also have a learning
302 disability. I don't consider it a disability but how it was defined. I'm dyslexic. The arrangements of letters
303 on a printed page don't mean a lot to me. I do stay up at night and wonder, "Is there is a Dog?"

304 **Benmayor:** [Chuckles]

305 **Ittelson:** And so I ended up doing a lot of work with the students for Disabled Services at Chico
306 and again working with students who had been disenfranchised or didn't have opportunities. So when a
307 campus really said its theme is to provide the broadest educational experience to underserved Californians

308 with a focus in teaching and equity I said, “This is great! What better place to be?” It’s sort of like my
309 experiences at Chico had really helped prepare me to take on what was a challenge. The CSU was not as
310 strong as it needed to be to provide access. We had students who were ill prepared to take the challenges of
311 college courses not through any fault of their own but through an educational system that did not provide
312 equity in schools, so you had some kids from really great schools that prepared them for college and you
313 had other kids who graduated from high school and they could not get through a freshman math **[37:13]**
314 class or do the Freshman Comp. So the fact that there was a campus that was going to serve the Central
315 Valley. . . . It’s an incredible microcosm we have here. We have some of the wealthiest members of the
316 state and some of the poorest underserved within Monterey County. [Phone rings] So, you know, having
317 that inequity staring right in our face and saying this is something we are going to solve, and our Service
318 Learning which became an early theme of CSU Monterey Bay. . . . When I was at Chico we had our own
319 little Service Learning but it was sort of indirect. I would get a call from a community group that needed to
320 create a multimedia experience for a charity event. I mentioned that my students did Public Service
321 Announcements for the local television station. In Chico there were student groups that served the
322 community but there wasn’t really an active push from the faculty. And there clearly wasn’t a curricular
323 experience. So when we actually had the Service Learning courses both at the lower division and the upper
324 division, so our lower division students could get involved and learn about the community and in the upper
325 division they could apply what they learned to a need in the community. . . . I still think of a Capstone
326 project that I supervised where my students ended up as their Capstone project creating an internet network
327 for a halfway house that gave those individuals access to the internet. These were two boys that did a joint
328 – two men, as I get older, but anyway --, two men who did this project for this not for profit organization. I
329 think they at one point envisioned they were going to go off to Silicon Valley and get tech jobs for the big
330 networking companies. They ended up staying engaged with community organizations and there are so
331 many of the Capstone projects that we worked on where students changed their career, changed their

332 attitudes based on the Service Learning requirements, and that Service Learning requirement comes out of
333 our Vision Statement. The Vision of who we serve and how we use our skills and knowledge to serve those
334 communities.

335 **Benmayor:** So you taught Service Learning all the time?

336 **[40:17] Ittelson:** No, no. I actually did participate. Service Learning grew. We eventually had an
337 individual faculty member who taught the Service Learning course. I believe I taught it a couple of terms.
338 You know, we rotated courses. But eventually we had certain faculty who ended up being more permanent
339 because it's a lot to learn, a lot of moving parts. But I taught the Capstone classes for a number of years.
340 And the number of Capstone projects that were either an outcome from a Service Learning course or
341 became a theme of a Service Learning project that our students did I think just like our campus early
342 on said teaching writing is not the purview of the English Department or whatever we called it at that point,
343 that Service Learning is just not the purview of those faculty in the Service Learning Center or a Service
344 Learning faculty member. It's part of the thread intertwining of our campus activity.

345 **Benmayor:** The Vision Statement also had a pretty important part on technology. You know, the
346 campus is going to be very technologized and do things, new things and differently. Did you have some
347 input in that?

348 **Ittelson:** Well, the Vision Statement existed. I had input in that our department ended up teaching
349 the Tech Tools, which was the course that we created to help meet the goals of the Service Learning. Boy,
350 if we had any idea of what technology would do! We were ahead of the time but behind the potential. What
351 is it, that people predict much quicker at adoption of technology, so we predict technology changes will
352 happen faster than they really do. But we also minimize how much the effect will be over time. I know with
353 Tech Tools our goal was to make sure our students had the skills to be able to take advantage of the
354 technology. If they were going to be writing papers, many of our students did not have access to
355 computers, they didn't have experience with mobile media, and writing, for example, the ability to do a

356 first draft. To cut and paste. So we wanted to make sure that our students had the power that technology
357 was at that time primarily just being offered to business and industry. But the challenges were ... When the
358 campus opened there was a story that it was not going to have a library. I believe it was *Newsweek* that
359 [43:42] talked about the new high tech campus in the CSU for the 21st Century. And at some point
360 somebody said it was not going to have a library. In fact, we really didn't have a traditional library. It was
361 going to have books but the difference with our library is it was focusing on access rather than acquisition.
362 So we may not have the biggest library but because of technology and Inter Library Loan and PDF's we
363 could get access. And that theme of access carries through with our campus. Our campus was the idea of
364 access. People who didn't have access to higher education for whether it's socioeconomic, cultural,
365 whatever those issues, we were going to provide that access.

366 Technology helps facilitate that access. So I think the Tech Tools was a goal of making sure that the
367 students had the basic skills to be able to use technology to continue their education. It used to be part of
368 GE [General Education requirements]. It's not now part of GE. But at that time it was a Learning
369 Requirement. The hope was that the Tech Tools rather than being in one center with our Technology, that
370 every program would eventually have faculty who had the same level of technical skills so that you could
371 be teaching technology skills at the same time you are teaching your subject matter. So in the World
372 Languages and Cultures the lab director was helping students learn how to videotape what they were doing,
373 learning how to make multimedia presentations but doing it in the target language that they were learning.
374 In what used to be ESSP --Every Simple Science Possible --, they've now got different divisions, but ESSP
375 was a unified science program. But they were very active in the early days of GPS. Again, a technology, we
376 know the GPS technology now is driving all our maps, making us incapable of finding our way on our own
377 because we rely so much on technology. So there were lots of discussions around tech tools and I'm not
378 sure it was universally loved as some of us in the tech side of the house. But I think the goal behind the
379 emphasis on technology was again one of access, just like the library wasn't collecting objects, it [47:02]

380 was making access. And think back to '95. We still had newspapers. We were still buying magazines.
381 Digital photography had not taken off. Cable was thousands of channels of useless programming. Social
382 media -

383 **Benmayor:** It still is.

384 **Ittelson:** Yeah, it still is. Social media didn't exist. On our campus we really didn't have a Student
385 Union. In fact, they are just dedicating a Student Union now after 25 years. So I know somebody came to
386 our program early on and they were looking for interns. And they said, "Where do you post things?
387 Where's the Student Center?" The people they were sending out to try to recruit students were used to
388 going to a campus where there was a Student Center and there would be a Jobs Board. And there would be
389 a Ride Board. Well, we never had that on our campus. That was our, you know, electronic bulletin boards.
390 We never had a physical space like that. So technology really became the backbone of a lot of our
391 communications. I do remember early on, I don't know if any of the 27 founding faculty ever slept because
392 I remember teaching all day, we would be having dinner, and then we would be having various committee
393 meetings afterwards. And during the first semester right when classes were supposed to get out we would
394 get in our cars, drive to the Quad and pull in and turn our lights on because they didn't have electricity to
395 lights in the Quad. And I just remember driving down there and then coming back and being tired and
396 going to sleep and then waking up the next morning and realize that my colleagues had been up till two or
397 three sending emails.

398 **Benmayor:** Yeah. I was going to ask you about the workload and how that was for you. Compared
399 to, for example, your workload at Chico.

400 **Ittelson:** Well, at Chico I had been there 17 years. At the time that I left I was the Faculty
401 Coordinator for the Master's in Instructional Technology. I was a senior faculty member. And we had a
402 four-course-per-term teaching load because we had three unit courses there. But typically I had one course
403 load release for the graduate program which actually took more time than teaching a class. But I usually

404 had some sort of grant or contract. So I had a very reasonable life. I was able to get things done. When the
405 campus opened up, part of the discussion at the interview was this is a start-up. This is gonna be new. And I
406 had started a startup. At Chico I left for a couple of years to start a software firm in San Francisco. I had
407 just gotten tenure, so I went down to San Francisco, I took a leave from the university to start this company
408 with a colleague at Northwestern. When I joined the firm we moved it from his living room to an office. As
409 we were looking for offices we couldn't find any that we could really afford. We found one that we could
410 afford but we couldn't afford the custodial service. So I remember Jim and I on a regular basis waiting till
411 everybody left for the day and then we'd go down to the custodial closet, get the vacuum cleaner, get the
412 dusters and clean the office. [Chuckles] We didn't want our staff to realize we were too broke to afford
413 somebody to service the office.

414 **[50:56]** When you're in a startup you do everything. So I remember the interview. They said, "Do you
415 know that startups are crazy and have a lot of work?" And I explained, "Yeah, I didn't think in a startup I
416 would be the one vacuuming the office after hours!" The other thing I didn't realize is that I'd be paying
417 employees more money than I was earning and they would be coming in two hours later and leaving two
418 hours earlier. I said, "I think I've got an idea that a startup is all hands on deck and every day is a different
419 day." I said I really enjoyed that and I sort of feel at Chico I was doing startups because every time we took
420 on a project. . . . We did some satellite video conferences as part of the outreach and each one of those
421 was like a different company because each videoconference was a different theme. So I think naively I had
422 a good idea of what a startup was going to be. I think when I came here I'd had no idea what it would be
423 like. Literally unpacking boxes, driving on the campus so the students could see, and I think the chaos that
424 happens. . . . This was so much different than a startup because with a startup, you're starting a company
425 or you are starting an organization, it has a theme. It has a limited number of people and you are growing
426 on it. We were like 27 startups. Every faculty member was starting up their academic program. We were
427 nine centers. I remember a faculty meeting, I think it was late November, it might even be early December

428 and somebody said, “How do we turn in grades?” [Chuckle] And I remember another faculty member go,
429 “Oh, no. We’re like Santa Cruz. We’re not doing grades.” And somebody said, “Oh yeah, we’re doing
430 grades.” And somebody said, “Well, who put a grading thing in their syllabus?” I wanted to say, “Gee, we
431 don’t even know whether we are giving letter grades or not? We don’t know how to turn them in. This is
432 clearly a startup! Peter Smith – I’m not sure if this was just his personality or this was a thought out plan--,
433 but his [approach] was “Let a thousand flowers bloom and run until you are tackled.” I remember talking to
434 Hank Hendrickson because I was trying to get some technology stuff hooked up and it was going to involve
435 a satellite dish and some other things. Hank was explaining all the procedures and processes. He says,
436 “Then again, you know you are on a campus where you run until you get tackled!” [Chuckles] He sort of
437 gave me permission. I said, “Okay, Hank. I’m running. Chase after me.” Because, you know, it was herding
438 cats. It was herding cats.

439 **Benmayor:** Yeah.

440 **[54:16] Ittelson:** And to go back to the Vision Statement, so many of the discussions were centered around
441 the Vision Statement. Where on most campuses you are dealing with your own faculty in your own
442 discipline, you know. Is this important or is that important? Should we teach that or not? But with us, I
443 remember those faculty meetings, having the discussion [about] should Tech Tools be required or not
444 required? Should it be taught within the discipline? Who is responsible for the introductory writing classes?
445 How do we deal with the students who need math remediation? We had a common language around what
446 the goals and objectives of the campus were. It was good because I think that’s part of the reason the
447 campus is as strong as it is today. But also you have to listen to people with a lot of different opinions and
448 ideas and see different perspectives. Not that I worry, because I think CSUMB is going to do fine, but I do
449 miss that “we’re one group fighting the battle of meeting the Vision Statement.”

450 **Benmayor:** Yeah. That’s very well put. There were also conflicts on the campus around all sorts
451 of issues. Did any of those affect you in any direct way? How do you remember them?

452 **Ittelson:** There were considerable conflicts. Whenever you have a group of people who are
453 motivated and have a goal and an objective that is not universally understood by everyone there's gonna be
454 conflict. Peter Smith was not one to shy away from conflict. There were staff that were here before Peter
455 came on. So there were administrative conflicts. There were academic conflicts. There were limited
456 resources even though just even "Can I find a classroom?" I tried to avoid the conflicts as much as I could
457 where I didn't feel I could be either a facilitator for reconciliation or if the conflict was going to impact my
458 ability to connect with my students. I think, luckily, I think most of the time the conflicts that we had we
459 really never brought the students into the conflicts and the battles, which I've seen on some campuses,
460 where the faculty members are upset and then they get their students upset. It's not a positive experience
461 typically. I would say that I think some of the people who came to the campus and left, I'm really sorry
462 they left because they had conflicts with the administration. I thought their voices were reasonable and
463 **[58:03]** should be heard. I don't think it's possible to not have conflict when things are moving so fast.
464 Particularly when you have a faculty that cares about their students. I have to say I think there weren't any
465 conflicts that I felt were personal vendettas. I think they were philosophical differences on how to do the
466 Mission and the Vision of the campus. As I think back I don't know if there could have been a conflict-free
467 establishment of a university. I also think that the timing of, you know, those years, nothing like we're
468 having now with the MeToo movement and the Black Lives Matter, but it was the beginning of a lot of
469 individuals who had not had a voice beginning to hear their voice. So I think those conflicts, if anything,
470 sort of were the first signs that a lot more people are going to have to come to the party and there's gonna
471 be a lot more discussion, a lot more interaction. But there's no doubt that there were philosophical battles
472 and to some people it became very personal. But I don't think I lost any friends, I may not have made any
473 friends, because I don't think I took stands when people wanted me to. I thought the easiest focus was is
474 this helping our students persist, which was a challenge on campuses and still is, helping them persist and
475 helping them obtain their educational goals. If you use that as your focus, then it doesn't matter whether we

476 did this particular policy or [whether] that course was counted in GE and this one wasn't. I mean they all
477 impact but I have four classes or three classes and I've got 26 to 35 students and I've got some Capstone
478 students. If you focus on that you don't have much time to do much of anything else.

479 **Benmayor:** Right, right. So kind of in summary because you must be tired, we've been talking for
480 a long time. Or you've been talking for a long time. . .

481 **Ittelson:** That's my norm but I assume that's what you want in an oral history.

482 **Benmayor:** Yes, indeed.

483 **Ittelson:** I'd love to flip cards and talk to you! You and I know that part of one of my joys on
484 campus was working with you and you remember Troy Challenger, who now works there, and the work
485 that you did in oral history which you're doing now which I think is so critical -- like I wanted to do today -
486 - is, "Hey, there's a new technology that can make your life easier." And you would always say, "I'm not
487 sure it would make it easier." But then Troy and I would try to figure out how to do it and I think I helped
488 with some audio recording procedures and eventually some video.

489 **Benmayor:** You did.

490 **Ittelson:** I did a lot of work with our World Languages and Cultures. I think we did touch on the
491 fact that we considered someone that had a language already an asset rather than a negative and that we still
492 think foreign language is incredible and really important and having a global viewpoint. So it was being
493 able to reach out to disciplines that weren't my own was one of the joys.

494 **Benmayor:** Well you were known as the Tech Toys Guy. Because whenever we had a question as
495 to how would we do this with technology we would always come to you and you would have a new toy to
496 train us with. [Chuckles]

497 **Ittelson:** Much to the chagrin of my wife.

498 **[1:02:32] Benmayor:** So what, in summary, what do you think were your greatest accomplishments and
499 contributions to the campus and what were some of the things that you wanted to do that you weren't able
500 to do? Or maybe start with that first.

501 **Ittelson:** Yeah. What I wasn't able to do. I think when the campus opened there was talk of greater
502 interdisciplinarity. I was in what was the Information and Technology and Communication Design which
503 had multimedia and computers and the world wide web and its great expanse. Then we had Teledramatic
504 Arts with ...

505 **Benmayor:** Luis Valdez.

506 **Ittelson:** Luis Valdez. And at that point, since I had a Radio, Television and Film background, I
507 ended up teaching some classes in TAT. So even though we had departments the lines were very were
508 dotted. Maybe not even dotted. I'm not even sure we had lines. And Luis had an introductory class for
509 Teledramatic Arts and clearly there's nobody better than Luis to talk about the arts. But I was the gadget
510 guy, so Luis asked if I would team teach the Intro to Teledramatic Arts with him. I just remember going,
511 "You want me in the same room with you?"

512 **Benmayor:** [Chuckles]

513 **Ittelson:** I was doing the technology stuff. And Luis was very much, he clearly, he'd done films
514 and stuff but he was the writer. He was the heart and soul of what he created. He had other technology
515 people. But he wanted to learn this. He really wanted Teledramatic Arts to be emerging. I just remember
516 team teaching with him and just in awe, like the students were. I mean I could listen to him for hours. I
517 would talk about some part about the technology and something about history of broadcasting. I just
518 remember Luis coming up to me and giving me a hug and just thanking me for being willing to teach with
519 him. I was going, "Willing to teach with you? You're thanking me?" I said, "This was one of the best
520 teaching experiences I've had because you're teaching all the media, they are learning how to make the

521 widgets work, but the widgets aren't important, it's the message that comes out from the widgets. And it's
522 the story." And Luis was talking about those stories. And as I said it sort of amazed me then.

523 **[1:05:25]** As the campus grew and resources got somewhat limited and some of the battles that you talked
524 about, there was less and less interdisciplinary work. And eventually I wasn't teaching in Teledramatic
525 Arts. Teledramatic Arts really had shifted to being more of a film and traditional media. The World Theater
526 sort of separated. But at the beginning the start of the World Theater, the Teledramatic Arts, and our
527 program really were blended and we weren't able to sustain that because of the way Academic Programs
528 worked, the way hiring works. So that's probably my greatest disappointment, that we weren't able to
529 continue interdisciplinary work. And that's a problem in all higher education. The silos are tall and deep.

530 Probably if there was a greatest success it would be the Capstone experience. In the Capstone class
531 you really are a guide on the side. One of the greatest things going through the Capstone experience is
532 students would come into their projects and they would be seeking approval and wanting to know, "Is this
533 what I should do?" I'm a great idea person. I could say, "You could do this, you could do that, you have to
534 decide." They would go away confused. Again, I'd use technology. I had a tablet where I could write on it
535 what we discussed and have that sheet and hand it to them and say, "This is your next step." When they
536 would come in the next week or a week after that, I'd pull up my electronic copy so we knew what we
537 talked about, they knew what they talked about. I just remember one student in particular going, "Look,
538 every time we come here you give me a different idea. You give me this ... Tell me what to do!" I said,
539 "I'm not going to do that." He finally came back and he said, "Okay, I've looked at all the stuff. This is
540 what I'm gonna do." I said, "Great. You now own it. This is what I've been trying to do for the last four
541 meetings. I don't have to like what you're doing. You have to like what you're doing."

542 **Benmayor:** That's right. That's right.

543 **Ittelson:** I saw that happen so many times. I think probably the best one of this was not only the
544 project but we had the Capstone presentations. So not only did the students have to do the work but they

545 had to share it to a public. I would have practices for the Capstone presentations. My wife, who was a
546 professional presenter, would come and we would both coach them. We'd come in. I remember two
547 students who were Korean and they did an incredible project but they were having a great deal of difficulty
548 presenting. You know, they were very shy. You first have to speak loud enough that people can hear you. I
549 mean it was that level.

550 **[1:08:54]** And I made a promise to my students. I said, "Anytime you want to practice it, I'll be there to
551 help you." Well, these two women decided they really wanted to get good at this. So they wanted to
552 practice every night.

553 **Benmayor:** [Laughs]

554 **Ittelson:** Bless my wife, for about a week she met with them for about an hour every night. I met
555 with them about two other times. Not only was their project wonderful. It was done at the DMVC which
556 was the Defense Data Center. That's where they did their Capstone project. They ended up getting a job
557 there based on their Capstone project. And they invited the Director of the DMVC to come to the Capstone
558 presentation and he had never been to one of our Capstone presentations. And their presentation knocked it
559 out of the ballpark. The joys on their face at the end of the presentation, and their parents came up to me
560 and said what have I done to their children? I mean they'd never seen them this vocal. About a week later
561 they came into my office still on a high. And I said, "Well, was it a good experience?" And they said, "Not
562 only was it a good experience. That Director of DMVC asked them to make the same presentation to the
563 whole DMVC." So I you can't claim full success for all your students' successes unless you're willing to
564 wear every one of your student failures. So I can't say this is my greatest success but it was my greatest
565 happiness to be part of the success of our students. Now I'm retired. What's scary, being 25 years since the
566 campus opened, -- and the joy of Facebook --, I have former students who are now retiring.

567 **Benmayor:** Wow.

568 **Ittelson:** Sending me notes about the careers that they've had. My son who was in middle school
569 when we started at CSUMB, just recently contacted me. He says, "You know, I'm now working with one
570 of your former students." And he remembered the student's Capstone. The student remembered Brendan as
571 my kid. Now all three of us talked and he said, "I never thought professionally I would be dealing with
572 your son." [Chuckles]

573 **Benmayor:** That's beautiful. [Chuckles] I remember Brandon. He came and set up my computer at
574 home.

575 **Ittelson:** Yeah. He's still in that biz. In fact, when I told him I was talking to you, I wanted to
576 verify that the transcription feature [in Zoom] was on, and at which point Brendan said, "Oh, you've got
577 other things you need to tell her." But one reason you may want to look at it, even though you have
578 somebody else that can transcribe [the interview] is there's another service that they're looking. The Zoom
579 conference. And you get a transcript. Then you edit the transcript like you would edit a paper, and it takes
580 that edited transcript and automatically edits the video.

581 **Benmayor:** Wow!

582 **Ittelson:** Yeah. So this is about technology empowering creative-

583 **Benmayor:** John, you continue to be the Tech Toys Guy who gives you great ideas and teaches
584 you how to follow through on it. So I'm going to be looking forward to a session with you on this.

585 **Ittelson:** Well, for old time's sake let's schedule not a formal oral history and I can tell you the real
586 dope, but let's schedule a time that we can show some of the new technology. Yes, Brendan who helped
587 you set up your computer can even do more magical things now.

588 **Benmayor:** That's wonderful. Well, John, I want to thank you so much for this lovely interview.
589 You have wonderful stories to share so you've made a real good contribution to our oral history project.
590 Thank you for that. And I will be contacting you in terms of the paperwork.

591 **Ittelson:** Sounds good. I know technology, I'll sign the PDF and send it to you.

