

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

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

**Interview with Ilene Feinman
Professor, Humanities and Communication;
Dean, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

**Interviewer, Rina Benmayor,
Professor Emerita, Humanities and Communication,
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Narrator, Ilene Feinman
Interviewer, Rina Benmayor

Benmayor: *Okay, today is May 6, 2019 and I'm here interviewing Ilene Feinman for the CSUMB Founding Faculty Oral History Project. Ilene, do I have your permission to record this interview?*

Feinman: Yes, you do.

Benmayor: *Thank you. Could you start by stating your name and what year you came to CSUMB?*

Feinman: Sure. My name is Ilene Feinman and I started at CSUMB in the Fall of 1996, the last year of my dissertation writing at UCSC [University of California, Santa Cruz].

Benmayor: *Great. So let's start out with going back to those times when you were finishing your dissertation, etc. How did you find out about the University and did you apply for jobs?*

Feinman: Yes. This is a fun story to tell. I love to tell this story. So I was a graduate student in the History of Consciousness program at UCSC and prior to being in that graduate program I had also been an undergraduate at UCSC, and my work as an undergraduate was studying social movements. I was studying the movement before the Free Speech Movement up at Berkeley [SLATE]. And I was involved in civil disobedience trainings for activists who were trying to shut down the Fort Ord.

Benmayor: *Oh.*

Feinman: And so I was familiar with the base having lived in the area for a long time. I was happily helping to obstruct the Lightfighters from going to Central America, as an undergraduate. As a graduate student in '94 I saw the announcement of the conversion of the base and I saw the Vision Statement for the campus. When I saw that Vision Statement I realized that though I was being groomed to be a theorist and to go off to an R1 [Research 1 university] and do my academic work what I wanted to do was to come and work at, teach at the Cal State Monterey Bay that was newly formed around this vision

that embodied everything that I valued in higher education. The opportunity to serve a community and to be part of a swords to plowshares project was just mind-blowingly exciting for me. So I came down as an ABD [all but dissertation] student from UCSC and I walked into the Personnel office which was one of the offices in Building 2. The floor was covered with boxes from applicants who were trying to apply for that first wave of jobs. I didn't have my Ph.D. yet so I was immediately cut from the pack. But I was determined. In the Spring of 1996, there was an advertisement for someone to come and teach a course in American Cultural Heritages. Alberto [Ledesma] was hiring for the second section of that course which at the time was upper division and lower division combined. I got a call from him while I was vacationing with my family on Maui, and we had really common terms. He had just come out of the Ethnic Studies program at Berkeley. We understood each other. We understood how that class might look. And he brought me into the office to interview when I came back and Rina Benmayor was the Chair. I met her that day. And I met Cecilia [O'Leary] and I was hired to teach a class. Then that teaching load increased for several years and I became a full time Lecturer. And then a tenure line faculty. And the rest is a long history.

[3:57] Benmayor: *Um hum. I suppose you already knew Fort Ord from having been an activist down here, so walking onto the base was not new for you. Is that correct?*

Feinman: Oh, I had never walked on the base before because the gate was closed as a military base. I had helped people blockade the gates. But the first time that I drove onto the campus, though, the kiosk was still at the front entrance and the threat level sign was still at the front entrance and it was mind-blowing to drive through the no longer gated kiosk and to see "Threat Level: Normal" on the side of the road.

Benmayor: *So what did you see when you first drove onto campus? Paint the picture for us.*

Feinman: Okay. So I came in through the main entrance and found my way up Divarty Street. I saw the military street names and many very funky dilapidated buildings. There was a little bit of construction. I had been on the site once before because when then President Bill Clinton came to inaugurate the campus, I came down with my family just to experience that event. So then I was standing in the sand in what's now the grassy Quad listening to Bill Clinton sort of inaugurate the campus in '94 [1995]. So I had been there for that. But coming onto a campus to interview for work I was stunned by the number of buildings and the number of then dilapidated and partially under reconstruction buildings that formed the center of the campus at that time. It was just one of the dorms and the 201 Building where HCOM lives now, till this summer, and sort of a scrappy here and there buildings and construction going on. I think I interviewed in what is now Heron Hall, what is now renovated to the Psychology Building. I interviewed in one of the offices behind the classrooms. And that space had already been renovated.

Benmayor: *That was your interview with Alberto Ledesma?*

Feinman: Yes, that was my interview with Alberto in August of 1996 and then I started teaching in late August 1996.

Benmayor: *Okay. How was that interview?*

Feinman: It was delightful. We had already had quite a long discussion on the phone prior. We talked about the books that we were going to use because we were going to each teach a section and we were paralleling each other. So it was a really wonderful way to start teaching because we were teaching basically the same course, so we got to give each other feedback on what was happening in the classroom each time and the way the students were responding to the readings. We were teaching, as was the case with most of the classes those first two years or so, we were teaching upper and lower division at the same time. So we had these two registers going in the way that we talked to students about the material. Really effectively we were teaching all upper division. So those lower division students were getting an

[7:22] accelerated education. But the space that we were teaching in was pretty hilarious. It's now the University Center. It was the old Pomeroy Hall which was the Officers Club space. It was dilapidated, quite dilapidated. There were broken windows. The electricity frequently went out. There was no furniture designed for classrooms. So there was a table on which I put my materials. There was a whiteboard leaned up against the back wall. And there were chairs and little tablet desks that had come from some of the school houses that had been taken apart. So the classroom was sort of cobbled together. This was the first time I taught on my own. And I was standing in front of the class and I'm talking about the reading that we did and having this conversation, and I lean back on the table listening to students and monitoring the conversation that's happening in the room and the table went out from under me.

Benmayor: [Laughs]

Feinman: And I'm, I don't know, three weeks into teaching on my own for the first time. I sort of ad libbed and made a joke about the instability of our ideas or something, the table fell and I didn't fall with it entirely but we were all laughing. It was quite typical of that time, of kind of just piecing things together and we couldn't really rely on physical spaces very well. Gerald Shenk taught down the hall from me in Pomeroy and there was an extension cord that brought the electricity out to the room he was teaching in, which is now Monty's [Café], because the power was always out on that side of the building. So we put up with many things to get the place up off the ground.

Benmayor: *Yeah. And tell me a little bit about your first students.*

Feinman: They were extraordinary. These were the pioneer students to CSUMB. Some of them came in in that Fall of '96 and some of them had been in since the prior Spring. They understood themselves in a way that I don't think any generation since has been able to experience. That is that they were, like all of us, lecturer, tenure line faculty, administrators alike, we were all building the campus together. It didn't come in ready-made, you know, just add water. We were building the curriculum. I was involved in building the curriculum. The students were involved. They had no problem speaking out in

class and saying, you know, “This book isn’t working for us. We’re hoping to gain this kind of knowledge from the class and that book is not going to do it. You really should consider changing the book next time.”

You know, the kinds of things students don’t say now. They take for granted that the faculty are leading.

[10:25] But I think that early group of students, the pioneer students, really understood themselves as part of the project to build the campus. So they were working very closely with the faculty. And in fact, some of those students have come back as faculty, as they progressed on through graduate school, because of their sense of ownership of the building of that curriculum and the building of the University.

Benmayor: *So walk us through a little bit how you moved from teaching that course and how your assignments began to grow and how you managed to stick it out [Chuckles] with us.*

Feinman: Well, you can see the gray hair in the video. It wasn’t there when I started. So the first semester I taught one section of American Cultural Heritages with Alberto. By the second semester we had had a series of meetings in HCOM to actually build the Human Communication curriculum. It’s now called Humanities and Communication. So we were building the curriculum and as a lecturer I was included in that conversation which I found very powerful and wonderful. To be coming out of an interdisciplinary graduate program and helping to build an interdisciplinary bachelor’s degree was just a stunning gift. So we were part of that conversation. I was teaching those classes. Then I was invited by the second year to create some of the lower division classes as we started to just split out the curriculum to lower division and upper division. I was invited to build some classes that met the University Learning Requirements which was then our model of General Education. And I built out some classes there. Then I was invited to build out another class in the upper division, a Feminist Theories and Methods class. I kept being invited to build classes that we needed for the HCOM curriculum. By 1999, the program had grown so much that we had opportunities to hire tenure line faculty. So we started hiring tenure line faculty and the curriculum I had built had created a space for me. It was obvious that that curriculum needed to carry on and was integral to the program. So I applied for a job that I had helped create. It was an absolutely marvelous opportunity and it was a national

[13:06] search and I competed in the search. But I felt a sense of commitment and ownership around the curriculum and the program and the Vision of the University as a whole. I was delighted and privileged to be selected to be tenure track faculty. I was given credit to tenure because I had been there for a while and contributing to both the building of the curriculum, the University Learning Requirements, and the degree curriculum. The minute I became tenured [sic: tenure track], that Spring [2000], I was asked if I would step up as the Chair of the University Learning Requirements Committee, since I had achieved [a tenure track position].

Benmayor: *When you were going to be tenured? Or tenure track?*

Feinman: Tenured.

Benmayor: *Oh. That was the first year?*

Feinman: So then...[long pause] I might have missed that date. No, when I was going to be tenure track. I'm sorry. Can we rewind me?

Benmayor: *Yes.*

Feinman: [Laughs] So when I became tenure track, then I stepped up as Chair of the University Learning Requirements Committee. I served in that role for two years. I was being asked if I would step up and be Senate Chair. I said "I can't do that until I'm tenured." There's no way I'm going to be willing to step up into that kind of a controversial role. At the time we were still much engaged in some conceptual struggles with President Peter Smith about how much power inhered to any organization on campus. I didn't feel like as a tenure track faculty member it would be good for me to take that on. But when I became tenured, I got asked to step up as the Chair [of HCOM] [in 2004 as Associate Professor]. And then, when I stepped down as Chair of HCOM I got asked again to step in as the Faculty Senate Chair [as Full Professor in 2009], and I agreed to do that. Then I served as the Senate Chair during the first of the major curricular overhauls of the General Education to the Otter model. I stepped down from the Chair of the Senate, as I gained Full Professorship, and I thought, "Oh, fantastic! Now I can just go back to my

writing and my teaching and I'm a senior faculty and I paid my dues and no one's going to mess with me anymore." I started that Fall term in 2011 and my Dean stepped down and I got asked to step up as Interim. And when I got asked to step up as Interim Dean, I actually burst into tears. I thought, "Oh, God, I don't [16:22] want to do this. I just want to teach, I want to think, I want to write." But I'm worried for the college. Because we had begun to move in directions where things that I thought were our common terms across the campus were being challenged. Challenged by new generations of administrative leadership. Challenged by new generations of faculty who had different commitments, who hadn't cut their teeth on building the campus. So I thought, "Okay, let me do this. Let me try this out. I can at least hold ground for us because people are asking me to step in and I can hold faith with that." So I did that as Interim. Then when it was time for the national search I thought, "Okay, let me try this for a while. I can do this and I can hold this ground for the college." I ended up doing that. And that was eight years ago now.

Benmayor: *Wow. So it's really quite an honor that you've had. [Chuckles]*

Feinman: [Chuckles] Um hmm [affirmative].

Benmayor: *Let me go back to the beginning when you... let's say when you first got your tenure track position. No, actually previous to the Lecturer, what were your responsibilities as a lecturer and how did those change as you became an Assistant Professor?*

Feinman: Oh, that's interesting. Well, you know, in the early days of the campus there weren't really that many of us who were fully engaged. So we were the usual suspects for everything. I think now as a Dean when I talk to junior faculty coming in I say, "I want you to be able to do University service that fits your interests and your passions but I want you to go slow and not jump into the middle of everything because you have the luxury of taking your time and in the early days we didn't have that luxury." So when I came in as a Lecturer I was, you know, bright eyed, bushy tailed and really wanted to help build the campus. So I dove into everything. I participated in the building of the curriculum for Humanities and Communication. We had a big retreat where we met and talked about what we were going to do for the

Major Learning Outcomes and how the Concentration areas would roll out and what it would look like for us over time. I very much wanted to participate and was very much invited to participate in that kind of work. With the University Learning Requirements, I ended up being the Chair of that group ultimately because I had been involved since the beginning in thinking through particularly the Democratic Participation University Learning Requirement and the Culture and Equity Requirement because those two were very close to my disciplinary homes. So I was engaged as a Lecturer in a lot of ways. I think the group of us that came in as Lecturers in those early days were very engaged. It wasn't unique to me. We were very engaged in helping to build the campus. There also was a kind of inevitability, because we were so small and we were growing very rapidly, that those of us that were involved and engaged had pretty strong openings for being able to step up into tenure line positions and support the campus in that way. So that growth into a tenure track position ended up being a bit more of the same and some opportunities for chairing and leadership that I didn't take as a Lecturer and shouldn't have taken as a Lecturer. They sort of built on that trajectory.

[20:31] Benmayor: *You also applied for another job on campus, did you not?*

Feinman: No.

Benmayor: *You didn't apply for a Social and Behavioral Sciences job?*

Feinman: Oh, when I was rejected when I first applied to the campus, yes. There was a Political Science position in SBS [Social and Behavioral Sciences] and it might have been either the interdisciplinary sort of U.S. History position or a Political Science. I don't even remember now. But it was that moment where I was still ABD and all those files got tossed.

Benmayor: *Yes. [Chuckles]*

Feinman: And that was the year before I came in to teach American Cultural Heritages.

Benmayor: *Aha. Okay.*

Feinman: Good memory, Rina. Thank you.

Benmayor: *Well, I was on that committee so I remember. [Laughter] We liked you but we were outvoted. So you didn't have any other administrative experience or anything like that as a graduate student in Santa Cruz?*

Feinman: I did, actually. I had been involved as a student organizer. I had been involved in organizing a student group. I had organized a student group that helped to protest against the military interventions out of Fort Ord from the Lightfighters. And I had been involved in a group that was an anti nuclear research arm of the University. We brought a debate about Star Wars to campus. So I had been involved that way, in organizations rather than structural. Then late in my undergraduate I had been working with a faculty who was in History and who had moved over to the History of Consciousness where I did my graduate work and I was a Research Assistant around international peace organizations. We had pulled together some conferencing that way.

Benmayor: *So actually your training was interdisciplinary but bringing together History, Political Science ...?*

Feinman: ...Cultural Studies, Popular Culture. And Feminist Theories and Feminist Studies.

Benmayor: *Which is why you were so useful at the beginning -[Chuckles] – in terms of curriculum development.*

Feinman: Yeah. I mean it was a very interesting moment. No moments are free of any kind of conflict and it was an interesting moment when we were building the Humanities curriculum, the HCOM curriculum, because both Alberto and I had come out of graduate programs that were explicitly interdisciplinary. So as we contributed to that conversation with our very senior colleagues about how the curriculum ought to look and how the students would move through, gaining interdisciplinary knowledge and skill, we had a different perspective than some of our senior colleagues who had come through disciplines and then acquired various interweavings of multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary work as they developed in their careers. So there were some vibrant conversations about what pieces of the curriculum

were interdisciplinary, how far any given faculty member could stretch across fields. You know, reasonable concerns about well, if we had a General Theories and Methods course what would happen to those faculty who hadn't been trained in theory, in a course like that. So it was an interesting starting place but yes, I had come out of an interdisciplinary program and I was mind-blown to be able to help create an interdisciplinary undergraduate program. Many of my peers at other institutions were awestruck that there was such an opportunity in the world because they had gone off to institutions with set curriculum and their course list was built and they could invent a new course every other spring or something like that. So it was quite a different experience for a junior faculty to come in and actually be able to build all the courses I was responsible to teach.

[25:01] Benmayor: *So, the tenure track position was listed as a position in what?*

Feinman: It was Democratic Participation and U.S. Cultures.

Benmayor: *Oh, okay.*

Feinman: You know, one of those really simple names.

Benmayor: *[Laughs] Which meant that you had to teach lots of things.*

Feinman: Yes, I was teaching in the lower division, Politics and Participation. And I was teaching the lower division Intro to Women's Studies. Then at the upper division I was teaching the Pro Seminar, the Capstone and also the Feminist Theories and Methods course, Topics in Social Movements course. Yes, a good range. But I had created all of them except for the Pro Seminar and the Capstone, so it was really quite thrilling to be able to do that work and keep developing those courses over time.

Benmayor: *Yup, yup. So let's move toward talking a little bit about the Vision. You talked about the Vision Statement as something that you had read in 1994. I don't know how you read it in 1994 but ...*
[Chuckles] ...

Feinman: When it was published, was just after the Clinton convocation of the campus.

Benmayor: *That was already '96 because I came in the Summer of '95 and the inauguration... maybe it was September '95, that was the inauguration.*

Feinman: Yeah, that makes sense. So it was out on the ... I was going to say the internet but we didn't have – Al Gore hadn't invented it yet ...! So it was published and I saw it and I read it. The idea of having multilingual, multicultural global competencies, serving the Tri-County area and bringing that kind of collaborative work to educate into the communities, the service of the Tri-County, thinking about being able to take a state institution and teach at the level of an R1 and share that kind of knowledge and skill with students was so visionary and so fabulous to me I thought that that was the best of all possible worlds. It was not without controversy because that idea that we pitch this education at that very high level, very interdisciplinary and innovative and creatively engaging faculty, students, staff, community, was the kind of thing you would expect out of an R1 with a lot of resources behind it, with big funding to give people time to build out sort of these collaborative think tank kinds of environments. We weren't going to have that. But the implant of the Vision Statement's aspirations was there that we had permission to do that kind of work. We had some interesting conversations amongst clusters of faculty about, "Well, we're bringing in students who are first generation to college. We're going to need to really not push them too hard," things like that. And I would just be horrified and say, "My God! This is an opportunity for us to bring knowledge and skill to communities who are repeatedly told that they don't deserve it, that they're not capable of absorbing it and that they wouldn't know what to do with it. But we can bring that knowledge and skill because we've been trained in these high powered institutions and we're able to bring it through this public institution to students who don't expect that they belong there and lift up a community by being able to be present with them and say, 'Guess what? You're theorizing right now. What you just said is theorizing about your own experience and that matters and we can build on that. And here are some other people who have thought similarly or some tools you can use to advance your thinking about that and bring it back to your communities and grow that knowledge and skill more broadly.'" That was a dream come true. So that

Vision Statement, I believe it continues to be fully resonant in those kinds of ways, for the aspirational work that the faculty and students and staff do.

[29:54] Benmayor: *So how did you translate that Vision into your teaching and your work on the campus? Was that a direct connection?*

Feinman: Yes, very direct because in terms of disciplinary structure the callout for interdisciplinary work and multicultural competencies spoke directly to my work in feminist theorizing, in social movement scholarship, thinking about communities fighting for social justice and engaging with all the available knowledge and all the available tools in their communities to grow community advocacy. That's the kind of work I was interested in. The secondary stream, the work that I had done about feminism and the military and thinking about how militarism operates in a democratic culture and what kinds of discourses happen there to be in this experiment of a base conversion to a public university was also always resonating behind the scenes. It's a little bit behind the Vision Statement but part of that context for me. But the Vision Statement's commitment to calling out global competencies and what we need to be able to do together to communicate across difference, to engage inequities in relationships of power was all about the kind of work that I had learned to teach and that I was thinking about as a scholar. So it fit perfectly for me.

Benmayor: *Were you involved in any controversies over the Vision at that early stage?*

Feinman: [Chuckles] Yes. There was quite a ruckus which I was a little bit to the side of because I was still a Lecturer and a little bit informed just enough to get in trouble. I had enough knowledge to be in trouble about this. But the University community and the Chican@ Latin@ Faculty and Staff Association [CLFSA] had been very active in countering moves by President Peter Smith early on in his administration. There was a fair amount of conflict in his administration. The role of Latinas in the President's office and the higher levels of administration at that time had been contested. There were several court cases and fights over appropriate treatment, appropriate placement, appropriate hiring and firing. CLFSA had been very engaged in this conflict and had called for the President to resign. Twice. And called for the first

[second] Provost to resign with him. There was a moment where the campus community had gathered under the flagpole and was going to march into the President's cabinet meeting which was happening at that time. CLFSA was going to demand the President's resignation. I felt that these issues needed to be aired and that people needed to understand what was going on and that the administration needed to be held accountable for its behavior. I was part of the community moving into the President's office to witness the demanding of that resignation. So there was a moment of that. And you were there with me. [Chuckle]

[33:53] And there was another moment where there was a vote of No Confidence and this was one of two votes of No Confidence taken in the President at the Faculty Assembly. I was a lecturer at the time and then the second time I was tenure track faculty. The Assembly had gathered to take this vote and I think people assumed that the President wouldn't show up there. And he walked into the room. We were in the Meeting House. And I thought, "Wow, that takes a lot of nerve." Then there was a buzz all around me. So the first time I was a Lecturer faculty. The second time I was a junior faculty, tenure track. I felt in this very high stakes environment on the campus that we had made some significant claims about what we were going to do as a university, and I had signed up for this based on those claims resting in the Vision Statement. If we couldn't stand for that in this moment that there wasn't really any point in being there. So I couldn't understand some of my senior colleagues sitting in the Assembly who were afraid to raise their hand because the President would see that they were voting, "Yes, we have no confidence in you." I thought, "They have nothing to lose. They're tenured faculty, they can't be fired. Why would they not take this stand?" For me, I felt that I had come to the University based on the Vision Statement, based on a commitment to what I felt were our shared values in how we wanted to grow this University. If I couldn't stand up for what I felt was right at any given moment then there was no point being there, then it was just like any other institution that I might become a member of but not have a commitment to. So I raised my hand as a Lecturer and as a junior faculty and had no problem with the President witnessing that I was one of the people that said I have no confidence in you right now. Now it turned out that over time he and I

[36:19] had a testy but very positive relationship but it was important to call him out on the way that he was behaving at that time. We've now lived through several presidents and they each have strengths and challenges, as we all do, including myself, and if we can't actually hold each other accountable then I don't know why we would want to build a community project together. It seems like an essential component. I guess that's my democracy training.

Benmayor: *Yeah. Remembering those particular moments is very precious because we don't all remember the same thing. So bringing back that vote of no confidence is very interesting, yes. So let's go back a little bit. You talked a lot about the campus culture and the work of building the campus together, etc. Talk a little bit more about the work that was involved in that, how you experienced that work, because at first you were a Lecturer but you were involved in committees.*

Feinman: Yes. My goodness. Okay, so on the one hand I was involved in as much as I could possibly be involved in. I didn't turn down any opportunity to learn the workings. That included being willing to sit on many committees deliberating on how the curriculum would work, thinking together about what kinds of processes we needed to build, because for whatever marvelous and crazy reason we inherited very little from other CSU's and we invented nearly every wheel. As we liked to say, we were building the bicycle while riding it. So a lot of the work that I did was on those committees building curriculum. Building curricular processes and . . .

Benmayor: *When you say building curriculum you mean creating classes?*

Feinman: Creating the outcomes for the University Learning Requirements. Creating outcomes for the Major Learning Requirements in HCOM. That meant both large group discussions about, you know, how do these all fit together? Then stepping in on Major Learning Outcome Number 5, Critical Cultural Analysis in Human Communication, and sitting down with a small group and going, "Okay, well what should be the set of outcomes? How will we measure those outcomes and what are we talking about?" So, from that mid-level scale to the very minutia of building out particular areas in the curriculum to the very

large discussions which were sometimes maddening, sometimes hilarious and sometimes enlightening around: What do we mean by outcomes based education? And what is it that we're trying to accomplish here? And can this thing be actually an outcome? And how would you measure it?

[39:33] Benmayor: *Have you ever heard of outcomes based education before?*

Feinman: No. No. No. Everything I know I learned from Joe Larkin and he's not responsible for any of my misunderstandings.

Benmayor: [Laughs]

Feinman: But we spent quite a bit of time thinking about how do you measure learning in these areas? And that's an important conversation to have. How do you think about the way that a student moves through the different layers of learning? So it gave some more depth and breadth to the way we built the curricular components than it might have otherwise. So I feel like, all jokes aside, I really did learn a lot from thinking about it that way. Then there were also other kinds of things. Like in the University Learning Requirements we had learning communities. We had the outcomes laid out. For instance, Democratic Participation. Then Lecturer faculty would come in --this was in the wild, wild west days --, and in order for them to be able to teach the next term they had to invent a course in Degree X. I am not going to name the degrees outside of Humanities and Communication. So they had to develop a course that would meet a University Learning Requirement in order for them to be rehired for the next term. So they came to the learning community with no knowledge of the Constitution, U.S. or California, no knowledge of political systems or how to talk about democratic participation or even social movement theory, and wanted the learning community to teach them how to teach this course and even how to build a course in the first instance. So we had this kind of boundarylessness around our processes that incidents like that caused. . . . Gerald [Shenk] and I had very long conversations afterwards like, "What do we do about that? Because we're a learning community and we are sharing knowledge and growing our modalities of teaching together but this person just came in from a completely different field and wants us to teach them how to

teach this curriculum. Is that what we're supposed to be doing in the learning community?" So we had many discussions about where do the boundaries of our work lay. When we're talking about interdisciplinary curriculum, and this is a struggle that continues, what do we mean? Do we mean you need to be trained in the interface between disciplines? You need to be trained in a discipline and you can pick up some handy tips about another discipline and stick it in your course and that counts as interdisciplinary? Obviously not. That's very hyperbolic. But what do we do as a community to articulate what we're talking about when we mean this kind of moment in the curriculum? Like right now we have a similar process happening around Ethnic Studies. So we're trying to engage curriculum and mark curricula that's doing Ethnic Studies. Well, what is that about? Is it a faculty member comes and gives you an injection of Ethnic Studies sensibility into your otherwise Ethnic Studies-absent curriculum and now you can check that box off? How do we think about these things? So, I think we still struggle with some things that we struggled with at the very beginning around how to understand what is legitimate inter or transdisciplinary curriculum and how to allow our experts to be experts in the areas in which they have expertise and respect that in each other.

[43:36] Benmayor: *So in this culture of creating things new and the gift of being able to create them based on what you had been trained to do, how did that play into your relationships across campus? You know, with other colleagues from other disciplines. We were institutes at the beginning. . . . [Chuckles]*

Feinman: I can remember that. Yes.

Benmayor: *And so can you talk a little bit about that? And any anecdotes that come to mind please share.*

Feinman: Absolutely. Thank you. I think in some ways it was really challenging and I kind of hinted at that with the conversation about building the Human Communication degree where Alberto and I came out of interdisciplinary graduate programs and had a sense of what interdisciplinary curriculum should look like or would look like and where spaces for that were appropriate, where there's appropriate

spaces for disciplinary expertise. As I did that work both in HCOM and then in the Democratic Participation ULR community, which were the two sort of deepest spaces in which I did that kind of work, and the Culture and Equity University learning community which I didn't chair but was a member of, there were many times conversations around, again, what do we mean by interdisciplinarity? How do you know it when you see it? People were doing it different ways. It was also a fairly new scholarly concept. So there was actually a moment when Renée Curry came in as Dean and I believe we were doing the Strategic Plan in that moment, and we had these sort of task groups to think about concepts that we regularly used up until that time and that we didn't really have commonplace understandings of. One of them was interdisciplinarity. So we had a group where we walked out and looked at where is the pedagogical scholarship that is talking about interdisciplinarity and how you do interdisciplinarity and whether you can do it in a bachelor's degree program or whether it has to be in a Ph.D. or an MFA program, something post-baccalaureate for actual depth. We had a lot of conversation about that in the task groups. When we brought it back to the larger campus community ... we had started as a campus to move toward "let's relax a little bit in regular disciplines. Let's spin this off into a discipline. You know, let's stop doing interdisciplinary work all the time. People don't know what we're talking about outside of the campus."

[46:46] There had begun to be this move to thinking about spinning off disciplinary degree programs. So people were less responsive or felt less urgency around figuring out interdisciplinarity and it became like, "Well, you can do that over there if you're into it but I'm gonna go build a discipline over here." So the campus started to shift in this way. The nomenclature of the degree program started to shift as well. So the Institute for – I'm not even going to get it right – but what is now the Business degree program was an Institute for International Entrepreneurship and Innovation or something like that. It became the business degree. And in the College of Science the School of Natural Sciences used to have an interdisciplinary science degree and it's now begun to morph out multiple disciplinary degree places. The students seem to be looking for that. Certainly community partners recognize it more. And the efforts to explain our

innovative and still cutting edge approaches around interdisciplinarity got pushed a little bit to the side. So there were moments where degree programs spun out like Psychology in our College spun out into its own program. Then there are moments where that hasn't happened like Human Communication, now Humanities and Communication did not end up having a spinoff as of yet for a disciplinary degree. And there was a push for it. The prior dean was really hoping that English would become a separate degree. Some of the Communication faculty were moving in that direction. But it didn't end up happening that way. So I think the campus is quite a mix now of disciplinary and interdisciplinary degrees. Maybe that's a fine thing but the conversation around what counts as interdisciplinarity never really finished, so as Ethnic Studies becomes a requirement on campus that conversation is back up and people aren't quite sure what to do with it.

Benmayor: *Yeah. It's interesting that you've been able to see the full spread of the shifts as they've taken place from the very beginning. And also from a vantage point of being an administrator as well as being a faculty member.*

[49:23] Feinman: Yeah, it was very interesting to move standpoint into the administrative side and to really have to look at, okay, well why does this faculty group see it in their interest to become a degree program? What is it that they're hearing from their students? What is it that they are feeling in terms of pressures from their disciplinary homes as scholars? And how does that interface? Can the two live happily together? Do they contradict each other? But then also being able to be, even in the administrative role, to be a voice for the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship and curriculum has been a gift. I've been glad I could continue to validate that for folks.

Benmayor: *So coming from UC Santa Cruz as a student and then coming... because Santa Cruz was also very innovative within the UC system in its day.*

Feinman: Yes.

Benmayor: *Did you expect that our campus would eventually shift?*

Feinman: Ouch.

Benmayor: [Laughs]

Feinman: Well, when I started at UCSC in 1984 as a re-entry student, I was there in my bachelor's degree days as the shift was beginning to happen. There was a fight over an Engineering R&D park. And that fight got half-won and half-lost and the Sciences and Engineering became much larger. Obviously the computer software development wing of UCSC became stronger as Silicon Valley grew. Those pressures were definitely coming to bear. Then when I was a graduate student and I was on the other side of the famous/infamous narrative evaluation process -- that was the grading apparatus at UCSC--, I watched that shift happen and I saw it from a student perspective in terms of the way that my narrative evaluations as the campus grew became more boiler plate. Then as a Teaching Assistant writing student evaluations for my labor, I became more familiar with the challenge of scaling up such practices, such very personalized practices and the pros and cons of losing that ground. By the time I was at CSUMB, the narrative evaluations [at UCSC] had gone away and grades were the coin of the realm. So as we built these very intensive, very interactive face-to-face processes, I wondered what's going to happen at these different moments of our own development and what things can we scale up? Like master's level, capstones for bachelor's students. That's a big ask to scale up. It's one thing when you have 12 to 18 students and quite another thing when you have 30. I experienced both versions of that in the Capstone. So when you think about the growth and maturation of an institution it's really interesting to see what ends up leading, the vision of the institution or the sort of functional practicalities of scaling up. Because smart, creative, intellectual people can find ways to do what they feel they need to do. You don't simply have to be led by the scalable practicalities. There are creative approaches. UCSC certainly didn't have the heart to figure out those creative approaches in the ways that we might have hoped. At CSUMB, the jury is still out. There is potential for thinking about those creative approaches and holding ground but there's a lot of ground that's slipped by becoming larger and falling prey to those protocols of scalability. It's interesting. On the other

[53:54] hand, we're about to open a building for the college that is extraordinary and that is centered around the Humanities and we did that in 25 years and it took UCSC 50. So. . . .

Benmayor: [Laughs] *Yeah.*

Feinman: There are some pros and cons.

Benmayor: *Okay. I don't want to take too much of your time but I thought if we could sort of stand back and say what you felt or feel now were your chief accomplishments in those early years. And were there any missed opportunities or challenges that you faced?*

Feinman: Yikes. That's a really big question.

Benmayor: *I know. [Chuckles] But just thinking about the early years what did you feel most accomplished for?*

Feinman: They're collective accomplishments. So there's nothing I am going to take individual credit for. But I think that the way that we built the first iteration of the Human Communication major and dealt with those questions around what is the interdisciplinary part of this curriculum and what needs disciplinary focus, I think as a collective process I felt like I was able to contribute from my interdisciplinary training into that process in ways that were really important. The conversations that we built around that were very valuable and I appreciated being able to engage that. That curriculum has now morphed again and happily it's morphed even more towards an interdisciplinary curricular flow, curricular scaffolding and I think that's really wonderful. So I am happy to see that. I think that the group of us that built the Democratic Participation ULR did some very extraordinary work together to build a lower division introduction to the political systems of California and the U.S. and a requirement to actually build a political project as part of that set of criteria for passing that University Learning Requirement. I think that was incredibly valuable and it's part of the constellation of civic engagement that the campus has built, that has partnered now with Service Learning and that will be an interesting new phase. So I think those moments are really valuable. Yeah.

[57:07] **Benmayor:** *Anything that you felt disappointed about?*

Feinman: Yes. I mean certainly there are moments all along the way where I wish that we collectively and me individually had done a better job of holding ground around things that we valued. I think we've evolved and learned all along the way in some significant ways. I think that one of the hardest places for me at this stage of the University is to have now gone three times through a struggle around the curriculum of our requirement for second language acquisition for all students. Having watched the struggle through the public school system, the K-12 system when my kids were going through public school in Santa Cruz County and having held such a rich ground for second language acquisition as a requirement for CSUMB and then struggled with these three iterations both affirming the concept of the campus but whittling down the scope of the requirement, the level of proficiency and the majors who would be benefitting from achieving the requirement has been very challenging. I think there are many things that are challenging in a university coming to its maturity in a system that presses on it from all sides. But for me, I think that is the most heartbreaking piece, I have to say, because it really goes to the heart of the aspirational space in the Vision Statement about being a multilingual, multicultural, globally competent community. I feel like we have lost some of that ground and I am sad for that.

Benmayor: *Um hum. Well, just by way of wrapping up because I know your time is limited I just wanted to say is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to share?*

Feinman: Yeah. this was an interesting thing and I didn't think of this in advance but I would say that we have this moment with President Ochoa where he wanted to pick up the Vision Statement and enshrine it as the Founding Vision Statement. He orchestrated a day-long retreat for us to really talk about what still resonated for people and to sort of reclassify the components of that Statement into actionable items and resonant value statements and so forth and so on. Now it is called the Founding Vision Statement. I have watched over the course of the year that it is something that can't be kept down. It keeps being referenced. It keeps being called up. He keeps referring to it. It's like it can't be shelved. It's

amazing to see the ways in which it is a living document. You may want to reconfigure component parts so that you can in the 21st century CSU parlance be able to measure your outcomes on components of it and report them back as part of the graduation initiative or what have you. But the Vision Statement as a whole continues to be resonant and I think there is something very hopeful about that and that it leaves a place for future generations of faculty and staff and students to hook back in and reamplify important parts. You know, the story is never done.

Benmayor: *Wow, that's very encouraging. Why is it called the Founding Vision? Is there another Vision that is...?*

Feinman: Well, in the Strategic Plan there is a placeholder statement that is the New Vision of the University but it has not been fully ratified yet. It may end up being what gets pointed as the Vision going forward with the new Strategic Plan for the University. But the Founding Vision Statement is kind of like the photo bomber. You know? It just keeps coming back into the background or the foreground or it's getting mentioned again. It is a very, very strong thread that runs through the community and the institution. It's not going to go away.

Benmayor: *Well, on that hopeful note I think I want to thank you very much, Ilene for contributing to this project and for members of the Founding Faculty to leave a legacy of feelings and thoughts and experiences for the future. So thank you very much.*

Feinman: It was my honor to do it. Thank you for inviting me.

Benmayor: *Okay. And I will end the recording here.*

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