TRANSCRIPTION RE:

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

Interview with Suzanne Worcester
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Sleeter: *Okay. Suzy, there are seven main themes that we're gonna talk about.*

Worcester: Okay.

Sleeter: *We'll just start at the beginning. Tell me why you decided to come to CSUMB and what things were like when you arrived.*

Worcester: All right. Well, I learned about CSUMB quite a long time before it opened because I knew faculty at Moss Landing Marine Labs, just up the Bay here. They had the big earthquake in 1989 which destroyed the Marine Labs. There were every so often, at conferences, presentations about what was happening to the Marine Labs. One of the things that came out of one of those was that there was a new campus getting formed right near Moss Landing, right here on the Bay. My husband and I, Steve Moore, were like, "Oh, my gosh! When is there going to be an opportunity for two people who study the ocean to come in a place next to the ocean and potentially both get jobs?" We didn't know anything about the campus except that it was located on Monterey Bay. So we started looking and looking and looking, when this advertisement came out. And we both applied in the first round. Let's see, after Marsha, and you, right? You're in Marsha's round. They had that open letter for faculty. They wanted anybody to be in the sciences. It was just like this, you know, anybody. I know our disciplines are massively different so it was an amazing call. So we both applied and Steve got an interview.

Sleeter: *Where were you at the time?*

Worcester: Oh, where was I at the time? I was a post doc at UC Santa Barbara. Both Steve and I went to Berkeley. He was still at Berkeley doing a post doc. He did his Ph.D. in Bioengineering and then he moved on and did a post doc in Integrative Biology, which was my department. So that's how we got together. So anyway, we had planned to get married here, actually, in Big Sur because it was halfway

between Santa Barbara and Berkeley. And of course we love the redwoods, we love the outdoors, we were near the ocean. So we were already going to get married. Then Steve got a job interview here. The first thing I did is I called Bill Head, who was the person who led the search, and I said, "Wait, I was in the pile, too. But you didn't call me." I was just really forthright about it. And he said, "Oh, we pulled you out of the pile. You're actually at the top of our pile but we're not hiring a biologist this year." And that was it. I was like, "Okay." So anyway, we were both really excited about it and Steve got a job the first year in '95.

[3:15] So then I came up and helped to develop the program because I would just commute up here anyway, and I would come and sit in on meetings and that helped me apply the next year because I knew exactly what they wanted, and that helped me in. Me and Henrik Kibak both got hired on the same job as a biologist. I'm the ecology, kind of organismal field biology person and he was hired as a molecular and biochemist. Bill was very good at getting two positions out of one position. That's how I got here. At the same time I learned about the Vision, I learned about all the things here, and I had really become someone interested in social justice because when we moved to Berkeley, I had lived a sheltered life in small town Oregon and small town Utah. I had never seen homeless people. I had never seen the poverty because I lived in a place where there's a lot of maybe working class people but everyone had a home, everyone did okay. Everyone was sheltered. So I really got into homelessness when I went to Berkeley because I thought, "Oh, my gosh. This is not right. This shouldn't be happening in America." So I started really getting into the social justice movement. When I knew that was something that was important here [at CSUMB], I felt like I could connect with that as well and be a biologist who can utilize the local resources. So I felt compelled on both elements on coming here. So that's my story.

And then when I arrived I was also very excited about the fact that you had something new, you could do something different. I was being hired to think out of the box and do something interdisciplinary, which is really where my heart was. I was in Integrative Biology and I did integrate across things. I didn't ever want to study just plants or animals. I enjoyed looking at the impacts on people and how these things

all relate together and I thought I had the opportunity to do this. My degree is in Biomechanics so I had a lot of physics and engineering. So I got to be able to integrate all these different fields together and that's what Bill wanted us to do, was create an interdisciplinary science program which we thought was the best thing ever. We started Earth Systems Science and Policy. Back at that time, NASA had started something about we should be looking at all the components of the Earth and not having individual biology departments and chemistry departments and physics departments, we should look at all of it together because what really matters, things like climate change, are all at the intersection of all of these things. **[5:49]** So we started that. It was very exciting. It was a very busy time. As you know, we worked around the clock. There was no down time. But we were all loving it and we were all committed and we felt empowered to do what we needed to do. And it was, you know, exhilarating. We felt appreciated, too. It was okay to work hard because you were making a difference and you were doing something that mattered.

Sleeter: *Yeah.*

Worcester: That was a huge, huge thing.

Sleeter: *What exactly was your job the first year or two or three?*

Worcester: Well, boy, so much of it was just creating. . . everything. We had nothing. So from science we had no labs, we had no equipment. You are supposed to be teaching students the latest techniques and that requires glassware , supplies, lab equipment, or for me, field equipment to go outside and do things with. We needed state of the art equipment. We had nothing. We had no staff. When Steve started we had nothing. We had one, you know, administrative assistant and that was to order everything we needed, order all the supplies. Students started, of course, in '95 as you remember. They walked in the door. We were literally ordering kits. When Steve started it was actually in the playground at the school that is now the Dual Language Immersion school. He made all of his stuff, his work in physics he did out on the playground. So we started teaching in what is now the University Center. I remember my first class was "Intro to Environmental Science." And it was all windows. We were basically where the kitchen is,

where Monty's is. It had all these big windows so we couldn't show pictures of anything. We had round tables where you would sit around so that was like the cafeteria. And we had a little, tiny whiteboard, I mean like this size whiteboard on the wall, and then we were supposed to like teach the class. So one of the great things is we just started going outside right from the beginning. We would just go out and we would measure things outside with really simple equipment because that's all we had. And people drove their own cars, we walked, we did whatever we could to get to where we needed to go. Everybody, the students, were gung ho. Every student wanted to do something. They were there because they believed in the idea of something new and they didn't mind the fact that we didn't have any of the classic stuff, no microscopes, you know. So it was definitely a really exciting and fun time. But yeah, with very little stuff and spending any extra time you had, if you weren't teaching, either building the programs and the policies and procedures. Certainly later on, a couple of years in, we were starting to figure out like, well giving tenure … you served on everybody's committee, everybody did. [technichal interruption]. Anyway, it's hard to remember because we worked to many hours!

[8:59] Sleeter: *Well, let me prompt with some specifics from [audio skip]. You're doing great. We were organized at the time in terms of Centers.*

Worcester: Yes.

Sleeter: *Do you remember anything …?*

Worcester: About the Center?

Sleeter: *Yeah, and what grouping you were in?*

Worcester: Yes, a-huh. Yeah, I should have thought about it. Well, our Dean… I should have gone back and gotten these names out --, he was Cherokee, I remember that. We would have our meetings at the hotel, that just changed names, but up where the great salad bar is in Monterey. Do you know right off the freeway on Munras? Because that's a Native American owned hotel. It was.

Sleeter: *I didn't know it was.*

Worcester: Yeah. So we would have meetings and things in that big conference room that's there and yeah, he was a lovely man. And so yes, that was my job before now, to go look up all the old names and I didn't. I can see his face clearly. So it was us and Computer Science. And back then it wasn't called computer science. It was TMAC [Telecommunications, Multimedia, and Applied Computing]. And before that it was even earlier name. So I am sure you are interviewing somebody, Bob Van Spyk or certainly Marsha, it was her department. So we started as STIR, Science Technology and Information Resources.

Sleeter: *It's changed a lot.*

Worcester: Yes. We've evolved a lot. I guess everybody has but maybe we're a little bit worse than some others. It's kind of interesting to think about what that was like. We of course had Bill Head, who was a bit of a bull dog around the campus, getting the things that he needed. But for the rank and file, us Assistant Professors he was an incredible mentor and leader. One of the things I really remember about when we started, me, Angie Tran, Gerald Shenk, [is that] we became close friends. I mean Angie and I continue to this day to be in touch with each other and go on walks. We collaborated across disciplines. We sat down in those rooms together and whenever we did things as a whole group. . . . We knew people across the whole campus. I mean I knew every faculty member across the entire campus. Something that I really miss now is that there's lots of people I don't know. The sense of collegiality that we had then, that we would all work together on shared values and that we were doing something together was just a fantastic, incredible experience. I don't know many other scientists who had and still have the kind of collaboration that I have across disciplines. The Humanities, the Languages, the Social Sciences. These are just disciplines that other people don't even know any faculty in. They're friends. And that has continued. That is just an incredible experience, just from the very beginning that we were together as a team. Yeah. [Those are] some really strong memories and really positive memories that I think has helped get us through to the the crises of the last two years. Yoshiko [Saito Abbott} was there at that time as well and Yoshiko and I worked a lot on trying to have them continue a language requirement in EO [Executive

Order] 1100. I'm jumping ahead to the future, but people wanted to just throw everything out! And of course many of the new faculty in my group of course wanted to throw it out.

Sleeter: *[audio skip] Let's stay focused on the earlier[struggles].*

Worcester: On the old stuff.

Sleeter: *Were there any drawbacks that you experienced? Or if you had it to do over again things that you would think, "Well, hmm."?*

[13:20] Worcester: Well, [long pause] I think that starting the university without having a little bit more in place was never an easy thing. Building the bicycle while we're riding it? You know, that metaphor. Or you're flying the airplane when you're building it.

Sleeter: *You mentioned lack of equipment. Were there other specific things that impacted on you?*

Worcester: We didn't have labs. When I first said that [we lacked labs], it was about teaching labs and how to teach new students. But we were still supposed to be publishing papers. So we didn't have any research labs either. We had no physical space for them. We were in Building 13 which was the old dental office. That was two years into it, so that's not even the first year, we didn't even have that. We were in Building 15 [in the first year], which is where the library is now and it was just an office building. So we had no space to do science. So all of us did stuff outside. We had to because we had nothing besides a computer. So for the people who did modeling that was great. But for everybody else who was supposed to actually do experiments we had nothing. So we had to constantly innovate about ways we could create new things. So as a marine scientist I had worked in the low inner tidal zone on surf grass. I don't know if you ever go out, it's the long, green plant that grows out in the ocean. I was a biologist who studied sea grass communities. And I studied both eelgrass and surfgrass, but it's very low intertidal. You had to follow the cycle of the moon. When it's a new moon and full moon you were working all the time and in between those times you would sleep. You had to work in the middle of the night. It was whatever the time of the tide cycle. It changes throughout the year. You had to change your literal cycle throughout the year. Well,

there was no way with all the committee work. We were constantly meeting and doing things and planning things. I couldn't continue to do the kind of research that I had been doing. So I completely abandoned the work that I had been doing and started finding things on land. One of the things I did was vernal pools. They're these little bodies of water. They had little animals that I knew about because of the ocean. They are related kinds of species. They're freshwater. So I thought, "I can walk to these. I can ride my bike out here. I could start studying something." So I started that because I couldn't get out and do the same work that I had done before. Just physically, there was just no way that it would fit in the schedule that I had.

Sleeter: *That's interesting. I didn't know that.*

[16:05] Worcester: Well, yeah, well you guys weren't going to be too critical of our research. As long as we were doing something, I guess that was okay. [Chuckles] One of the things I did was I really switched to Teaching and Learning, because not many people were thinking about how do you engage students. So the fact that we were doing all this applied work out in the field with community partners, scientists weren't doing that. They were all working in the lab. We were taking students out and they were getting these real life experiences. We were turning lemons into lemonade. So then, I actually started getting grants from the National Science Foundation showing how you can do project-based-learning out in the community. So that ended up being a great thing because I could actually show that I was doing something different and novel at the time. I worked at Moro Cojo Slough, part of Elkhorn Slough, which has all this kind of history of freshwater and land use and the farmers, fishes, the people that live there. That connected with the kind of animals that are there. A really rare snail lives there. A bunch of things. So we could tie that all together into our educational experiences. In "Introductory Biology," which usually is kind of dry stuff, we were out in the field doing wonderful things. Getting students into waders, marching around in the mud looking at birds and insects and plants and it was a very rich experience for them. And it was fun! That was neat to the National Science Foundation because we were showing that you could do something different and get

students out and excited about *real* biology in the *real* context of real people in the community, even starting as sophomores. So I guess there's a lemon and lemonade experience. Yeah.

Sleeter: *That's a great story.*

Worcester: Cool. Cool.

Sleeter: *Let's move back to the Vision because you had mentioned a little bit about it. Talk some about what it meant and particularly what it meant at the time you came, both to the University as well as to you personally.*

[18:16] Worcester: Well, I thought the idea of educating for all and not the few [was important] and that there were whole groups of people who were not being seen in the system, especially going to a place like Berkeley. At that time Berkeley was still fairly diverse. When I started, they started clamping down and basically really making it a White and Asian school only. Not only, but much more so than it had been when I was there. I was starting to see the elitism of the higher ed system in terms of not meeting the needs of all these people. As I said, I had this sort of coming out experience about homelessness and all these people, and the military vets and all the people with mental illness, that faces all things that the society is not paying any attention to. So I really felt empowered, that we were going to bring in the people – any student was here. So we had a lot of returning students at the beginning who wanted to do something different. There were a lot of female students who actually had kind of horrible husbands that had left them. They had been beaten. And they were going to start their life over and they came to CSUMB. I learned a lot from them because I had a privileged life in that my parents were nice. They helped pay for my college. I didn't have to experience any hardship. Of course, you know, as kids you think you are not privileged because your family was not rich by American standards. But then, once I realized what real hardship was, I realized that I had almost none. So it was great to be part of those people's lives. I just saw one of those students, Nancy Ayala. We were out at breakfast and I ran into her. She was one of those early pioneer students. It was great to hear her story.. She worked for the Health Department. She got it [her job] right

out of graduating from CSUMB. The Monterey County Health Department, and had worked in surveying where there were places where there were septic tanks and making sure that they were all clean and safe for people. She would also go through businesses and make sure that everybody was sanitary and doing things correctly. So she got that job, which was great, from this degree. But at the same time I didn't realize that she was slowly buying these trailer homes and renting them. She had been doing this in Coalinga. She did it because she was from Coalinga. She was able to make enough money having done this that she now has her own business. So she sold all those things and now she runs her own business helping people out in the community who need someone who knows how to do all these inspections and plan for their own homes to be safe and septic systems off the grid. So it's kind of cool.

Sleeter: *[audio skip][How does that tap] into the Vision at CSUMB.*

[21:09] Worcester: Oh, okay. I brought her up only because she had been totally beaten and abused and she turned her life around.

Sleeter: *Yeah.*

Worcester: Well, the thing about this Vision, one of the first things that I did that again scientists don't usually do, is I did a Service Learning class right from the beginning. I started a Service Learning class with Laura Lee Link. If you remember Laura Lee.

Sleeter: *I do.*

Worcester: Yeah. A that time we called it: Interpreting Monterey Bay Natural History for the Community. Anyway, it was about communicating about nature and we realized that most people who are traveling to national parks or even to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary were middle to upper class whites. And they were not all the people who lived here! We would go out and work in schools, have students work in schools -- in Seaside High for the longest time--, who had never gone to the beach. At Seaside High! They're looking at the beach. They had never studied the ocean. They didn't know what the ocean was. They didn't know the values the ocean provided. The cool weather that we have and all these

things, they had no idea. So we had students going into a biology classroom. We had a wonderful teacher who still works with us, Julie Haas. She's now at Los Arboles [Middle School] but she still works with us. We would have students go in and work with kids on communicating about [audio skip] print messages that were associated with nature in our area and connecting kids to parks and what nature can do for kids. It was really an amazing experience. They would go every week for 10 weeks in the middle of the semester and work with students on these projects and get to know them and bring some of the students back here and experience what college was like. A lot of them weren't from families that had gone to college. They're very diverse classrooms in Seaside. Every kid is from a different place. You know, with the whole military history. Kids of all colors and languages. Just a true diversity across many, many axes. It was a fantastic experience. So, I have been, except now that I'm Chair, I've been teaching Service Learning for I would say, well I guess it's 25 years. . . I'm here 23 . . .

Sleeter: *23 years, yes.*

Worcester: Yeah. So I would say I've done it for 20, because two years ago I realized I just couldn't teach all these things. I wasn't doing it well, as Chair, I was just spending too much time doing other stuff. But we'll come to the new stuff and I'll talk about Service Learning later. But I really felt like the way I could connect with the Vision was getting science students to really think about where we fit in society and their role in society and reflecting on difference. Reflecting on their positionality in society **[24:09]** that we have, by exposing them and thinking about it. And then there are students who come who were much less privileged than I, who got me to think about all of my privileges and putting those together. Having those kinds of honest reflections in classrooms. Again, that was never part of my undergraduate education, never anything like this. So it was just fantastic to have the wonderful mentorship that I had. The Service Learning Institute has been a fantastic place for continuing conversation and getting us to keep reflecting on what's happening in society and what's our role to make a difference. So to me that's a big part of the Vision, is how I can do that with my niche, which is science students.

Sleeter: *I noticed when you were talking also about working with Yoshiko, that language seemed important. And often people think that over here in science that languages aren't… so talk to me a little bit about ….?*

Worcester: The Language [requirement].

Sleeter: *Yeah.*

Worcester: Yeah. So yes. So I'm sitting in a challenging position. Do you want me to stay in the old or in the new? Do you care? Do you want me to stay old?

Sleeter: *Stay old for now because* [audio skip] *then there are some questions related to the past and then we'll come up to the present.*

Worcester: Okay. Yeah, I think from the beginning I valued how important language was as a skill and something valuable. I know that our group had a lot of trouble figuring out how to get all of our requirements in and the expectations for students to be able to get a job in science and have all of these other requirements. So yeah, we are guilty for that. At the same time I always felt like language was a very important one [requirement]. And Culture and Equity. I also had a Service Learning and Culture and Equity class. So I tried to double count things as much as possible, which I think in some ways was great in that students could see it in their own discipline. They got to see how it was relevant. On the Language part. We had a lot of students who then took advantage of their language skills and used those, because so many people didn't have [another language] especially in their peers that they are competing with out in the field. So it was an advantage. But at the same time we were struggling in how to make things to the level of rigor that was necessary for our students to be competing against graduates from UC schools and everything else. We continue to have a really high success rate. Our students do really well. But we've also tried to sculpt our curriculum as much as possible so that we can get as much of the math and statistics and quantitative skills and build them in with the soft skills, really being able to communicate well and work with a wide group of people. I would say compared to our peers when you go to science conferences, our students are

hands down the best because they can communicate to a wide variety of audiences and not just be in their little tiny world with all their language – I'm talking technical language here – that no one knows except for the small group of people. And they do fantastic. I think that's because that's part of what the training was here, to think broadly. Some students hated the Language. Some people left because of the Language requirement other than English. But others took it and ran with it. And. You know. I guess that's it.

[27:43] Sleeter: *Okay, the next set of things to talk about relates to the campus culture during the early years. And we've actually talked a lot about this but let me just throw out some topics: key creativity contributions to teaching, learning, scholarship, community; first experience in the classroom; workload; nature of relationships among faculty; administration; strong key personalities and their influence on the formation of the University, etc. You've talked about some of these but are there things that you haven't talked about?*

Worcester: Well, I mentioned the key relationships across campus and the fact that I knew faculty members across campus and did things with them. We would go out and do things together and be not just friends on campus but friends in East Campus [faculty housing area]. That was one of the advantages of living in East Campus, in the 'Hood,' as I liked to call it. [Chuckles] Because you could just go out on the street and you knew everybody. It was friendly and collegial and that was a fantastic thing. And for raising kids. We're focusing on the first three years. I didn't have a kid until 1999, he was born. But it was a fantastic place. You may remember this. I would go to meetings and carry him in my sling. I'd walk around Building 1 [administrative building], that big table, rocking him. He was very quiet. I would go through whole meetings with him. We always had this family friendly thing which was just, again, as a comparison where I was at Berkeley, women were not allowed to have children. Basically you were told if you were going to have children you would not be a successful scientist. Flat out.

Sleeter: *Oh, my!*

Worcester: Yes. From the generation above me. Yeah. *Your* generation at Berkeley. Yeah, it was what we were taught. None of them had children, any of the women that had made it through tenure didn't. Young women that were hired and had children didn't get through tenure. So it's probably changed a bit now, I hope. Well, yeah, I know a few people so it's changed a bit. But yeah, that was the message I had. So you came here and not only were you allowed to have children, they were part of the family. Here outside the window here, on the Science building, I have a little tile for the building that I paid for, for our son, that says, "Born into the ESSP CSUMB family." And that's outside. It's forever. So people go by and they will see, Kyle Worcester-Moore. He is literally baked into the place because people accepted him. That is true of all the families. We work so hard to support the families here. We would rearrange classes so that people at different times were able to have families. So it's just a different environment. So that's one thing that's a really positive

[30:53] environment. Another thing, back in ESSP we used to go out and just do things together. We would hike. We're all outdoor people. We even went on ski trips. Lars Pierce, I don't know if you ever remember Lars, really tall.

Sleeter: *Yeah. A-huh.*

Worcester: We taught together. His family had a cabin in Tahoe. And so we would all go to Lars' cabin with the hot tub and send the entire department to this cabin and go there in the wintertime on a weekend. So these are things that I kind of want to build up again now if I can. It's a little harder as we get bigger. But just the collegiality, the camaraderie that we had helped us work those long hours together. And that was a fantastic thing. In the neighborhood we were always walking out and around the flowers. So that was across many disciplines. We were out walking and enjoying and seeing each other all the time and that was great. Even all these complications with Peter Smith, I would see him out jogging and I could talk to him. We had a President at least who would talk to us as a social thing. Now we have a hierarchy where we don't have those kinds of relationships, where we are workers.

Sleeter: *Yeah.*

Worcester: Yeah. I like the fact that we could all sit around the table together, even with the challenges that existed, and actually talk about things. Across all levels. I felt it was a very flat structure. I felt very empowered even with all the people who were my superiors and like yourself who were evaluating me, I felt like I could come and be at the table with you. That was just an incredible experience. I'm really, really appreciative and really really miss it now.

Sleeter: *Well, speaking of challenges back then before we come up to the present, can you think of like a key moment or a key challenge that we faced and how that played out or got worked through?*

Worcester: I think across campus each of the times that we had to go through a new GE [General Education] revision, the three of them, each one of them has been a crisis on campus. A crisis of identity. I think for me, what I see over time is just this contraction to be a CSU. We started with a vision that we could do anything and be interdisciplinary and not have boundaries, work across these different Institutes. People could do different things. Really huge freedom. Now, each time new people [administrators] come in, they want to put us in a box. I feel the boxes shrinking down, heavily. Sometimes I see a Star Wars image with the dark side, you know? [Chuckles] Like, "Oh, these novel things we did are gone now and now this is gone and another piece is gone now." You know?

[34:03] Sleeter: *Tell me more about that. Now how things have evolved? What was lost, what has stayed, what you are struggling with?*

Worcester: Well, what was lost? Right now I'm working on hiring somebody for a class that we've had forever [Water Resource Management, Law and Policy]. I'm skipping the name of it. Our Civic Engagement in the past. What did we call it? Where you had to go out. A class that would be a social science class. You had to go out and be in the community, not just Service Learning but DP, Democratic Participation [requirement]. I loved that, but look at what's happening right now! We have people so disengaged. We had students across the entire time out in the community thinking about their civic

responsibility. That was a big thing. We had to throw that out for some external criteria? I mean obviously that wasn't my field --this particular class is on water law and management. The students would go out and be involved in water projects and in their community, whether it was their own communities or here. And water! We all need to drink it. Water is a huge issue and yet people don't realize they can have a voice and they have a way to have a voice and they were learning that here. We were teaching those kinds of skills and values that it's important to be part of your community. From many different ways. Not only from diversity but also from civic action. Some of that civic action is about diversity. Some of it is about access to clean water. Any of those things are all important. They help us to have functional, happy, healthy communities. I so regret having lost some of these elements in the name of tradition, uniformity. Even now, maybe we've been lucky, because we had the longest time, that Marsha was still our Dean, with a lot more flexibility. But now that we've got a new Dean, we have much more expectations for tradition and less vision for interdisciplinary working. I spend a lot of time working across campus and when we get to the modern stuff I'll talk about that a little more. He doesn't see why I'm spending all this time. I'm supposed to be here working on Science. And I'm like, "No, we've always been fluid. We don't see us in a box that we're just Science. We work with Business. We work with Languages. We work with Humanities. These are our friends. These are our colleagues and this is part of making a campus." So I see us getting more and more siloed and I think that's one of the things that is. . . giving away some of our values. We've been able to keep Service Learning. That's something I've really worked on these last two years, because Service Learning was on the chopping block. These are important values. This is what makes us different. Distinctive. I want to be a different campus. We've done something special here and I want to keep that specialness. If you just want an average CSU there are plenty of them to go to. There are 22 of them or 21 of them. They're not cookie cutter but they don't have the values and vision that we have and people came here for our vision to make a difference, to change the world and I want to keep that Vision and I do see it kind of getting cut away, cut away, cut away, cut away. In lots of cuts.

Sleeter: *Why is that happening?*

[37:35] Worcester: What? Why is that happening?

Sleeter: *Yeah.*

Worcester: Well, I think it started when we switched Chancellors. It was Barry Munitz who was very supportive of what we were doing. We could have different numbers of units for classes. We could interpret Title V the way we wanted to. We could interpret things. Being able to have students be able to leave the campus easily to go elsewhere was never a big focus. The focus was we needed to get them in here and provide an interesting opportunity for them. There was always the challenge of trying to meet the needs of all of our students and. . . . a lot of our goals and a lot of the extra things that we had, that I think made our campus rich, also made it hard for community college students to come because our requirements didn't match perfectly. So it made it [time to graduation] longer, which makes it more expensive for students. So I can understand that problem. At the same point, I felt like we were doing something different and that mandate should have been ahead of the other mandates to make ourselves a seamless part of this Community College/CSU/UC California system. I feel like that is what came in. When we switched Chancellors that really changed, a lot. I felt like it came from there and of course then Peter Smith then was the one who started saying, "Okay, we've got to do this, this and this." Dianne Harrison was very much more so. It was not that she wasn't open to new things. She wasn't approachable. So I felt like our ability to really vision and work together across the different disciplines really fell apart in a lot of ways. I don't know if that just happens in every larger organization, as we get big, or if that was because of a lack of vision at the top for us to continue that kind of interdisciplinarity and thought of a broad community in a broad tent. I don't know.

Sleeter: *To what extent now do faculty from different disciplines interact in committees, Senate? And does that get in the way or does that help?*

Worcester: Well, there's definitely some, but it's a select set of faculty. We definitely had a phase, at least in our growth, and I think this is true across campus in other disciplines as well, where faculty were hired to work just in their discipline and they stayed in their discipline and they didn't have to. When we started, we had to be on two University-wide committees. That was like a requirement for us. That's not really a requirement here. You can get started, you can do a little bit, maybe serve on the Senate, but not necessarily engage in all of the other committees and all the works that get you across campus. So we have faculty that haven't done that. They don't have those relationships. Is that because we're bigger and we didn't need to? I don't know.

[41:08] Sleeter: *What about now, the commitment to social justice. What's happened?*

Worcester: I feel like we have two groups of people. We have a whole group of faculty really committed to social justice, partly hired in that way, and some who [pause] don't think about it. That's a big issue for me. It's one of the things I would have been working on this year if the Dean hadn't basically forced me to departmentalize all of our School of Natural Sciences and turn it into sub-departments. I tried to not have that happen but that's what we're going through right now. I would have spent a lot more time on the social justice issue because this really came up the year before, in the EO [Executive Order] 1100 conversation, when Kinesiology and many of my colleagues were strongly against Language [requirement]. They wanted to narrow down and make GE [General Education] as small as possible to make more room for science. And I was reaching out with Yoshiko [Saito Abbott], Marylou Shockley and creating an alternative model that somehow allowed our students to be able to graduate on time with this new very capped 120 units. You know, throw people in. That's part of it. Students are supposed to graduate fast. We're supposed to take all students with no prerequisites and graduate them in four years with no support. I'm like, these don't go together in this kind of model of throwing all the students into a pipeline and putting them out the other end. Who cares what they come out with? It's just that's how I feel, I feel like we are getting pigeon-holed into it. And it feels very uncomfortable. We want to have all students but we

need to give the support to all those students to make that possible, and that may mean we need to add some other classes, courses that help create that context that they may not have had in their home situation or wherever. We need to be able to offer those. We're getting kind of squeezed on both ends. So that's where this, you know, EO1100 is just kind of like the nail on the coffin on all this, of cutting us into a little tiny box. And then pitting the faculty that aren't thinking much about social justice against the faculty that are. It was very ugly. It's very horrible. I'm sure you heard about it. Or maybe you tried to stay out of it, but it was horrible.

Sleeter: *I did get pulled in, especially around Language.*

Worcester: So…yeah. So, I was part of the "Model 14." That was me and Yoshiko and Marylou in particular. I called Marylou because Business had the same problems we had. I said, "Marylou, we can sit down and figure out something that's a compromise that will allow us to move forward." I had faculty in my group, male and tall, and they would just yell at me because I wasn't doing what they wanted me to do. I'm supposed to be their Chair. I'm supposed to be out there fighting for them. I said, "I'm fighting for the University and the values of the University and what I'm doing is, I'm not saying that we're going to have three semesters of language for everybody, or five semesters, which had come out in one of the models." I said, "I know that that's untenable. But I'm trying to keep the concept of language and culture. This is really important in society. We have to keep some of this together." So we worked on that alternative which I know initially people were like, "Well, gee, this is not as much as before." But I said, "It kept looking like it was going to be nothing." And so I felt like it was a good compromise. We'll see how it **[44:34]** works. I mean this is the first year we're doing this 350, Culture and World Language class. I'm hoping we get some of those values still about thinking about it. Language is definitely taking a hit nationally. I know you heard that at Middlebury Institute of International Studies. They're cutting their language requirement. I mean this is not -

Sleeter: *No.*

Worcester: Yeah. They are now allowing students to come who don't have any second language which before they had to have a second language. And now they're offering opportunities for students to have language proficiency but they're not requiring it.

Sleeter: [groan]

Worcester: Wow. So that's right here in the language capital of the world. So this is obviously a national pressure.

Sleeter: *Yeah.*

Worcester: And it seems terrible. So I feel good in that I tried to uphold some compromise between the two. Yes, we don't have the original Vision. But the campus didn't get completely torn apart. But we did expose huge gaps and wounds and I really wanted to spend this last year working on gaps and wounds. It was a horrible situation. Now we're departmentalizing and that hasn't helped. That just made it worse. Now we just literally have the groups of people who are charging to do something different. So now they're going to be in their own department starting in a couple of weeks. There will be an announcement coming out. And I'm going to be with the old guys. I'm Environmental Science and Environmental Studies. So the old guard is staying together. With some new young faculty who also believe in interdisciplinarity. So we are the big tent group. And then the others are much more disciplinary focused. So that's what happened. I was actually called out in those meetings during departmentalization. They said, "Well, you never followed it through across the campus, why do we trust you now?" It's like, "Okay." So I'm the pariah in my own group for standing up for what I thought was right.

Sleeter: *As a last question, if you could identify what you see as your main legacy which actually at this point in the history of the campus is, I think, probably well worth thinking about and letting people know, what would you say is your main legacy to the campus?*

[47:13] Worcester: I would say my main legacy… probably I'll go back to science in a community focus and being not just in the classroom but out in the community. Whether that was in Service Learning, which

I think is probably a fairly significant legacy, because besides Language I focused really hard on Service Learning and continue to see how can we make Service Learning be core and center and not lose it. So you know the new version of Service Learning. But it's still there. There's still a lower division and an upper division. I have no idea if we can do it in three units. I'm quite worried about that. But we have something. So the concept of being out in the community whether it was thinking about diversity in the community and bringing social justice to the Sciences and thinking about that is something really important that I have [work]ed on. We started Environmental Studies – this is what David Takacs would have wanted from the beginning, if you remember David [early faculty member starting 1995 in ESSP]?, we just have a whole major now that's really focused on social justice in the environment. We pulled apart from Environmental Science and it's really focused on a lot of these things. I was a major player in that. I still am. It's going to be a program within my department as Chair. And that's a really big thing of again, connecting Science and community and thinking about the ways that we can do that. So I think even in my Environmental Science class I'm constantly working with a resource manager in the area to help manage rare plants and endangered plants, our animals. We never just do projects that don't matter to somebody in the community. So I think the community focus and continuing that as part of Science and not just other disciplines is probably what I think my legacy is.

Sleeter: *I think that's really important because I think it's actually key to the survival of the world.*

Worcester: Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. This is not an ivory tower. All we do … it matters. What we're teaching matters. And students need to see that and they need to see it in context and the only way to do that is you do it with real people in the community. So that's, I would say, my personal piece of the Vision.

Sleeter: *Thank you, Suzy. This has just been absolutely lovely.*

Worcester: Well, thank you. Thank you for your patience. I know it took us a little while to get to this point.

(END OF RECORDING)

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