

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

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

**Interview with Chris Hasegawa
Professor Emeritus
College of Science**

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

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Narrator: Chris Hasegawa
Interviewer: Marsha Moroh

1 **Moroh:** It's recording now.

2 **Hasegawa:** Okay.

3 **Moroh:** Okay. So this is Marsha and Chris Hasegawa. The date is what? July 29th. And we are at
4 my house which is on Oak Street. And we're doing our oral history interview. So I have a couple of
5 questions just to get us going.

6 **Hasegawa:** Sure.

7 **Moroh:** And then we're just going to have a conversation.

8 **Hasegawa:** Okay.

9 **Moroh:** So it's kind of about CSUMB in its early days and where we are now and where we
10 thought we would be as opposed to where we are. So there you were in Sacramento, right, happily
11 ensconced in a job and then you came to CSUMB. So what was it that brought you, that got you to come?

12 **Hasegawa:** Well, Denise and I had always thought that Monterey would be a place that we would
13 want to live someday. So when I saw the offering I was thinking about putting in an application but Vicky
14 Jew, Victoria Jew was a professor and a teacher in the department at Sac State and she came over in the
15 early days. She came back and she said, "You know, they really need someone that's thinking out of the
16 box." She said, "I was thinking more in terms of what we were doing at Sac State. But there they have an
17 opportunity to do something that's different." So she talked to me a lot about coming and applying and
18 then I did.

19 **Moroh:** So was there anything about what CSUMB was doing? I guess you didn't know yet.

20 **Hasegawa:** No, we didn't know what CSUMB was doing but the original ad for multi-disciplinary
21 people that were interested in developing plans and the rumor around the CSU system, being at CSU
22 Sacramento, was that CSU Monterey Bay was going to be like a charter college and so there would be
23 opportunities to do some things that we wouldn't have an opportunity to do other places.

24 **Moroh:** So, describe your first impression when you first came on campus.

25 **Hasegawa:** Oh, yeah. [Chuckles] I remember coming onto that campus and seeing the
26 tumbleweeds and seeing all the dirt and dust. So I kind of drove in first, and they had directed me back to
27 the housing, actually, I think to a house that was very close to where we ended up living, 1710
28 [Eichelberger]. We had one of those duplexes. I was in that duplex with Kevin Saunders. We had never met
29 before. So Kevin and I are sitting in this place because we'd both driven in the night before and we were
30 supposed to meet with people early in the morning but we hadn't really met with anybody at that point. So
31 we're sitting there and [I asked], "Well, what job are you applying for?" He said, "I'm not really sure.
32 What job are you applying for?" "Well, I'm not really sure either." [Chuckles] So we talked about what we
33 were doing. He said that he was looking for an administrator position. I was looking for a teaching position.
34 But yeah, we just didn't really know what we were doing. So we went out and had a nice meal and had
35 some drinks and just kind of a "blue skied" for a long time. The next morning we went down for our
36 interviews. The campus was at that point barren. I don't think any of the buildings were in really great
37 shape at that time. The one that was coming the closest was the student dorm on the corner where I ended
38 up doing my Extended Ed.

39 **Moroh:** The 201?

40 **Hasegawa:** Yeah, 201. But we weren't yet in the interview. The first person I met on the campus
41 was Priscilla Angulo, who said, "Hi, now, honey." [Laughter]

42 **Moroh:** She's still saying it.

43 **Hasegawa:** “Okay, sweetie, you need to go back and talk to Donna Davi” ... it was ... it wasn’t
44 Donna Davi but ...

45 **Moroh:** Donna Kaser.

46 **Hasegawa:** Kaser. Yeah. Donna Kaser.

47 **Moroh:** And she’s retiring at the end of this week.

48 **Hasegawa:** Ah. Yeah, so I saw Donna and she sent me in to see John Halcón.

49 **Moroh:** Halcón.

50 **[4:55] Hasegawa:** Yeah, who I knew, Halcón, yeah. I knew him a little bit. He’d come and done some
51 part time teaching at Sac State. So I knew him a little bit. But he was just in a hurry. He needed to get lots
52 of things done and get lots of people to different places. He pointed me towards these different places to go
53 for my interview. And my first interview was with the Science, I don’t know what committee it was
54 because it was pretty weird. But I went in and I think you were you there?

55 **Moroh:** Maybe.

56 **Hasegawa:** So I got introduced to the committee. And as I’m sitting outside I hear somebody
57 playing an accordion and singing Mexican songs. [Chuckles]

58 **Moroh:** Tomás [Kalmar]!

59 **Hasegawa:** Yeah, and I’m thinking to myself, “I’m here to interview for a Science/Math/Education
60 kind of position and I don’t know what this Mexican singing is. . . . I must be sitting outside the wrong
61 room. So I stuck my head inside the room and I said, “I’m Chris Hasegawa. Am I in the right place?” I was
62 told, “Yes.” I came in and sat down, and we went around the table and got introductions. But before any of
63 that settled into my mind, this guy comes running in, sits in the chair right in front of me. Everybody else is
64 kind of sitting around a table around the perimeter. And Bill Head comes running in and sits right there,
65 [laughing] asks me like three questions and goes running out of the room. I was, “So is he part of the
66 committee?” [Laughs] I felt like I’d just had a little drive-by!

67 **Moroh:** Some things never change! That's fascinating.

68 **Hasegawa:** After I finished that interview I distinctly remember going in to meet Peter Smith. He
69 was sitting at his desk crying, because the head of the Foundation had died, I guess that day. So he was
70 crying. So I went in and said, "Well, geez, we can do this interview some other time. This doesn't seem
71 like a great time." He says, "No, no, no. I'm back to back to back with meetings. I really want a chance to
72 get to know you." So then he talked to me for about half an hour and I left. I don't think I said anything to
73 him, really. [Laughs] So I kind of left at the end of that day having gone through different things with really
74 no idea what was going to happen. I went back and told Denise that that was one of the strangest
75 experiences of my life. [Chuckles]

76 **Moroh:** [Chuckles] This is a funny question but how did what you were brought here to do differ
77 from what you ended up doing?

78 **[8:05] Hasegawa:** At the beginning not so much because the Teacher Ed program was taking in students
79 for a year, you know, [the] teacher preparation program. The year before, I had written the accreditation
80 document for Sac State. So when we got here the first thing I did was write the first accreditation document
81 for the Teacher Ed program for CSU Monterey Bay. It was basically Sac State's accreditation document
82 with a lot of cut and paste. Really no conversation with very many people about what we were actually
83 going to do, it was just kind of like we needed to get some paperwork in to be accredited. We made it by
84 the skin of our teeth. Because I had written a document, that next year was pretty much, "Okay, what's the
85 next thing? What else are we doing?" We kind of went through that process with the Teacher Ed program. I
86 think I taught three or four different courses in the Teacher Ed program and supervised student teaching. So
87 it was pretty much like what I had been doing at Sac State, except at Sac State I had done that over the
88 course of six years, taught four different classes. [Laughs] At CSU Monterey Bay I did that in the first
89 semester. [For] the first group of students, I was like their professor. We just went from room to room.
90 "What class are we in now?" [Laughs]

91 **Moroh:** Describe your first class. Can you remember your first class? Is there anything that strikes
92 you interesting about your first class?

93 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. Well, the first class was in the what later on became the Student Activities
94 Center. It was the part of the building that used to be a kitchen. We were in the kitchen because they were
95 clearing another space where we would have class later, which was on the other end of the building where
96 the current classrooms are. But they weren't ready for us there so we were teaching class in this kitchen. I
97 thought since I had a stove I would take advantage of that. [Laughs] So I had them make chocolate chip
98 cookies and we took different ingredients out so that I could teach them what a science experiment was like
99 and we did it with chocolate chip cookies. They all thought that was pretty weird. My first class with
100 Teacher Ed program students is typically one that I teach in the language that I made up just to give them
101 empathy and some sense of what it's like for students that are being taught by people that don't speak the
102 same language as you. So their experience that day was, first they came in and I was talking in a language
103 that I'd made up they didn't understand. And then they finally got the point of that and we worked through
104 that exercise and we did some introductions. So we started making cookies and I think they thought it was a
105 pretty weird day.

106 **Moroh:** [Laughs]

107 **Hasegawa:** Yeah, I do remember that. And then I remember right before that going out with Steve
108 Moore to an elementary school, because he was going to teach a science class at this former elementary
109 school and we were trying to figure out how to utilize all the playground equipment. He was going to teach
110 physics – and how we were going to use that to teach physics. So that was kind of a fun day. It was fun
111 working with Steve and having the freedom to be able to say, “Hell, this is the first time this is ever going
112 to get taught here, so this is what we are going to do.”

113 **Moroh:** You use what you have, huh?

114 **Hasegawa:** Yeah.

115 **[11:53] Moroh:** So how did the campus differ from what you expected?

116 **Hasegawa:** Well, coming from Sac State I kind of expected a campus. We didn't really have a
117 campus that first year. [Chuckles] I mean there were all sorts of odd things. For example, that first year we
118 took the students out on kind of an Outward Bound thing, because I don't think the dorms were ready for
119 them. So we were out in tents on the beach with them for a couple of days. Because the Teacher Ed
120 students were in a different place than the undergraduates, I kind of went back and forth between being on
121 the beach and then coming back and doing the Teacher Ed program. So there was a lot of driving. I thought
122 one of the big advantages of coming here was that I could live in the campus housing and not have to do
123 this commute. But we were going up the coast a little ways. So that was different. Then the other thing that
124 happened, I remember distinctly, was Tuesday night was my night to put on my lights in the parking lot so
125 that students could find their way from the Multimedia Learning Center to their cars, because there wasn't
126 any lighting on campus. Some of us took different nights to go down there and turn on our car lights so the
127 students could find their way, and Tuesday was my night.

128 **Moroh:** So as the campus started to take shape were there some key times of change where
129 something was different that you recall?

130 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. Well, what was different for me was of course the Science Center. Raising
131 funds for the Science building. I was at that time the Chair of the Science Department and I had never
132 raised a dollar of donated money in my life up until that point. Peter Smith came in and said, "The first
133 new building on campus is going to be the Science Building and you're in charge of raising the money." I
134 said, "I've never done this before." He says, "Oh, you'll be great." [Chuckles]

135 **Moroh:** You were.

136 **Hasegawa:** Thanks. It was really a shock but getting through that process and getting people to
137 donate enough money and having the Chapmans come in kind of at the last minute to name the building
138 and get that donation in, it was amazing. The first day that I went out with, what was her name, Beverly

139 Grova, she did a little training with me in one of the conference rooms. Then we went out to ... Granite
140 Rock. No, Granite Construction, and talked to Dave Watts And he wrote us a check for \$100,000. And I
141 thought, "Yeah, this is easy." [Laughter] Then after that it didn't get so easy. [Laughs] But that whole
142 process was something that just opened my eyes to a whole different part of being an academic that I'd
143 never had a chance to do before. So getting that done, that project was really amazing for me.

144 **Moroh:** This is a great follow-up for that. What do you think your key accomplishments were? I
145 mean, if you look back at your legacy and what you left.

146 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. Well, certainly the Teacher Ed program, the way that it was if I hadn't been
147 there. And that's good and bad. You know. Because I didn't stay in it very long.

148 **Moroh:** How long did you stay?

149 **Hasegawa:** I'd have to look for sure but I think it was two and a half years before I came over to
150 your college and said, "Please."

151 **Moroh:** And then you did Computer Science and ITCD [Information Technology and Computer
152 Design] and then you went to Science, or was it the other way around?

153 **Hasegawa:** That's right. So that was important. The Science Center. Certainly the Library and
154 getting that funding. Forming relationships with all those folks that were so good to the campus, I think was
155 pretty important to the campus.

156 **Moroh:** And still is.

157 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. It's just being there. The RTP [Retention, Tenure and Promotion] process. You
158 know, talking through that whole thing was pretty amazing.

159 **Moroh:** So that was you and ...

160 **Hasegawa:** Sharon Anderson was involved in that. You were involved in that.

161 **Moroh:** And Bill. I think Bill Head. The usual suspects.

162 **Hasegawa:** It seemed like a lot of Science folks. But there were a lot of people involved in the
163 conversations. But actually getting things written down, I felt like that was Sharon.

164 **Moroh:** Really. And kind of related to that? Who do you think the most influential person or
165 people were on the work you were doing?

166 **[17:10] Hasegawa:** Well, you were because I wouldn't have stayed there if it hadn't been for you, Marsha.
167 I would have been back in Sacramento.

168 **Moroh:** [Laughs]

169 **Hasegawa:** So it must have been two years, because I took a two-year leave from Sacramento.
170 Diane Cordero de Noriega was my Dean back in Sacramento.

171 **Moroh:** Dean. Oh, right, right.

172 **Hasegawa:** And she said, "Instead of resigning why don't you take a two year leave from our
173 campus and go over there?" So it must have been at the end of the second year when I came over to you
174 and said, "Please." [Chuckles] Because I told Denise, "This is just really hard. And it's so intense." We
175 were working 70-80 hours a week. I was like, "I need to get back to something where I can spend some
176 time with Matthew and Leslie and you." And she said, "Well, we're gonna miss you here if you go back to
177 Sacramento." [Laughter] "Because we really like living here."

178 **Moroh:** Oh, that is so funny.

179 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. So yeah, you were really instrumental for me. Peter was huge for me because
180 Peter's idea of "run till you're tackled" was something that I fully embraced. Being able to go through that
181 process with him and having him be so open, almost overly open about the things that he was thinking
182 about and the things that he was worried about. . . . Peter was for me just a revelation in terms of thinking
183 about the University from a different perspective than I had before. I mean I came here as the Assistant
184 Professor in Teacher Education/Science Education. And you know, you pretty much think about your
185 classes and your department, those kinds of things. And Peter was thinking about such big ideas. He didn't

186 have an aversion to any idea. He liked everything, and for a little while would entertain them and then some
187 of them would slip by the way and that was fine. But it was just really interesting to get that perspective on
188 something so freely. It used to scare me to death driving places with him because we would get involved in
189 conversations. He would turn to you and start using his hands and talking to you. And I'm like, "The road's
190 that way. You're driving. You ought to pay attention to this." Some of those conversations were life
191 changing. So that was important. Beverly Grova helped me understand fundraising in a way that I'd never
192 understood fundraising. I always thought fundraising was going about asking people for money. She really
193 made it into understanding that it's community building, getting people that are not us to start thinking
194 about being us and being part of that team. Going out and talking to Bob Antle. I mean Bob was huge in
195 my development because when I first met him I went to him and I said, "I don't really know how to do
196 fundraising. People ask you for money all the time. What works with you?"

197 **Moroh:** [Laughs] That's quite an approach.

198 **Hasegawa:** And he was so willing to give me time and to talk about that, to tell me about things.
199 Bertie Bialek [now Elliott], too, tell me about things that absolutely did not work with them. And when I
200 asked them for advice they did end up becoming part of the team. You know, Bob would finish my stories
201 when we'd go out at those dinners. Bertie called up with a hundred – a million dollar matching fund
202 because she thought that would help. So they were all revelations for that.

203 But I think the other thing is that that beginning faculty were all fascinating people. I used to say I'd
204 like to be on a train ride with any one of them, you know, so that we could have a long time just chatting
205 and find out what it is that they were doing, what they were interested in. It was a group of people that had
206 big ideas, big thoughts. In a way most of us – you're kind of the exception to this – but most of us were
207 kind of outliers in our professional lives coming into this place. We were people that were on the fringes,
208 kind of doing stuff and stirring up problems for the bureaucracies at our respective campuses because I
209 started my own foundation and I had my own grants and projects running, that were separate, different than

210 what other people in my departments were doing. A lot of us were like that. Ruben Mendoza. George
211 Baldwin. They're all kind of outliers in terms of what they had accomplished. It wasn't because of the
212 infrastructure of the University, it was kind of ...

213 **[22:06] Moroh:** In spite of.

214 **Hasegawa:** In spite of. [Laughs] Yeah, right. And so we were all kind of entrepreneurs or seekers
215 of different pathways. Figuring out then how to build an infrastructure around us that worked for us was
216 pretty interesting.

217 **Moroh:** So what were the biggest obstacles to achieving what you wanted to achieve? Or your
218 biggest frustrations?

219 **Hasegawa:** Well, three. I've been thinking about this before coming over here. One was that there
220 were lots of promises made at the beginning, in terms of what the University was going to be. 'Cause like I
221 said, we thought that it was going to be a charter university and Peter Smith had come into us talking about
222 multi year contracts instead of tenure and things like that. Then immediately it became, well, getting
223 positions and getting tenure and all of those kinds of things, and that idea fell quickly by the wayside. I was
224 really excited about the potential to come in and say, "Okay, look, this is what I've accomplished in this
225 three-year contract and I'd like to negotiate the next one based on my successes here." And continue to
226 work that way with people. I think that tenure is important for being able to say things in classes. I
227 understand the importance of that. But because I was going to be promoting an activity-based
228 /developmental approach to education, I thought it would be interesting to see how that would really work
229 if we were coming into it with the same rawness or difference that students were coming into it. So I was
230 pretty excited about that and some of the other ideas that I'd heard early on but never got played out. The
231 second thing was what I was talking about before. Many of us came in kind of being successful on the
232 outskirts of our former universities, or succeeding in spite of the university infrastructure. So I think that at
233 the beginning, we set up an infrastructure that was pretty easy to get around. [Chuckles] It took us a while

234 to firm that up so that it could actually be effective. I think we really siloed the business of the University
235 from the educational ideas, the things that we were trying to do. By keeping those two separate instead of
236 integrating them really well and having some of those early conversations. . . . I think that there were
237 some willing partners in that on the administration's side. But I don't think that some of us on the academic
238 side were smart enough to really figure out that we could have done much more if we weren't trying to set
239 up our own little kingdoms and fiefdoms, you know, the things that happened on campus. I am sure that
240 many of our majors would have succeeded a little bit better had we not been siloed from each other. So that
241 kind of disappointed me. And then the last thing, when we first moved onto Eichelberger, we had a
242 community of folks that was just perfect for raising my kids. We had an exchange of ideas that was free
243 and easy. My kids and I got to work with people in the Science department and the IT department in the
244 neighborhood and there was just an opportunity to really build a learning community of people. And then
245 we lost that. People started leaving campus, which makes sense that they did in terms of housing and
246 things. But I don't know, it just got a little bit drier and less interesting and less fun. That was one of the fun
247 parts about it. I have to admit that having Peter Smith come down and pick up his mail and then stop in at
248 the house to discuss things on an evening got old after a little while.

249 **Moroh:** In his pajamas.

250 **Hasegawa:** In his pajamas, yeah, or you know, when he's coming around looking for Snowball
251 [dog] But, you know, there was a vitality in that community that I am sorry we lost.

252 **[26:32] Moroh:** Anything else?

253 **Hasegawa:** You know, I've gone through the whole list.

254 **Moroh:** It's been a wild ride, huh?

255 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. It was a wild ride. I remember a meeting where we were meeting at the I want to
256 say Doña Elena's, but it wasn't that, it was one of the restaurants in . . .

257 **Moroh:** San Juan Bautista?

258 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. And we were up on the second floor or something.

259 **Moroh:** Oh, yes, yes, yes. It was right off the square.

260 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. We were up there and it was like our second meeting with the whole group.
261 Betty McEady, who was also from my campus, and I drove over there together and she said to me, “Chris,
262 what do you make of this founding faculty?” I said, “Wow, they’re really interesting.” She says, “I don't
263 think that they know how their classes are going to be set up, or what the class schedule is going to be, or
264 who is going to teach things, or how many units classes are going to be worth.” I said, “Oh, yeah, Betty,
265 they must have talked about that.”

266 **Moroh:** [Laughs]

267 **Hasegawa:** And she says, “Well, I’m going to ask.” Betty is absolutely fearless, so she walked
268 into that meeting and started asking some very direct questions about things that we thought were very
269 basic. And people kept saying to us, “You know, that’s a really interesting question!” I remember Betty
270 just blowing up saying, “Wow, you should have thought about this by now,” and kind of changing the
271 whole tenor of that particular conversation that day.

272 **Moroh:** It is true there were a lot of dreamers.

273 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. A lot of ideas about what things were going to be. We had spent one day really
274 hearing a lot about that. But then Betty, and me, too, to a certain extent, just needed to be a little more
275 concrete and practical so that we could move on because we were getting hired in July, right? In June or
276 July. And we were going to have students in August. [Chuckles]

277 **Moroh:** There was that. Yes, yes.

278 **Hasegawa:** Yeah. So we wanted to know what it was exactly that we were going to do. I had my
279 marching orders pretty quickly in terms of the Teacher Education program. But I remember Betty just
280 being really upset.

281 **Moroh:** I remember that, too, yeah.

