

**TRANSCRIPTION RE:**

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

**Interview with Dan Fernandez, Professor of Applied Environmental Science,  
Department of Applied Environmental Science, College of Science**

**Interviewer, Kristen La Follette, Lecturer,  
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**Narrator: Dan Fernandez**

**Interviewer: Kristen La Follette**

1           **La Follette:** Today is October 25, 2019. This is Kristen La Follette and I'm here in the Chapman  
2 Science Building and I'm interviewing Daniel Fernandez. What I'll do is I'll ask you a little bit about your  
3 background and then we'll talk about the early days of CSUMB. Okay. Actually, what I usually do when I  
4 start an interview is ask somebody to tell me their full name and to explain how they got their name or if  
5 there is any story or significance behind it.

6           **Fernandez:** Sure. My full name is Daniel Martin Fernandez. And I guess one interesting thing  
7 about my name, my first name, Daniel. My mother is of Jewish background. My father is of Spanish  
8 background. I think they were trying to find a name that could work for both. And Daniel worked. My  
9 middle name, Martin is also my father's and my grandfather's middle name also. Yeah. Middle name. My  
10 dad is often called Martin but it's his middle name so that follows that trend.

11           **La Follette:** Oh. Could you tell me a little bit about where you grew up?

12           **Fernandez:** Sure. I was born in New Haven, Connecticut but I grew up in Rochester, New York  
13 from the age of two until graduating from high school. Rochester is right near Lake Ontario. When I say  
14 New York people often think of New York City but it's not. That's where my parents met but where I grew  
15 up was far to the north.

16           **La Follette:** Could you describe Rochester a bit for somebody who has never been there before?

17           **Fernandez:** Sure. Rochester is the home of Eastman Kodak which is why a lot of people work  
18 there. Also Xerox was there, too. Kodak is no longer really there. I guess there are remnants of it in certain  
19 ways but it was a big company in those days. George Eastman, who invented a lot of aspects that became  
20 modern photography back in the day started Eastman Kodak. So it was a photographic company. Right on

21 Lake Ontario. I said right on but where I lived I was probably about ten miles away but we could go to  
22 Lake Ontario, kind of like being at the ocean, you can't see the other side. Let's see. When I was there...the  
23 kind of community. As far as the people. Probably different areas were mixed. The area I grew up in I think  
24 was a lot of – I don't know how much racial diversity there was there at that time. Not as much, certainly,  
25 as there is in California. I think most people I knew there were Catholic. A lot of Catholics. And I wasn't.  
26 So that's an interesting little side. I was raised Unitarian Universalist. And we attended the Unitarian  
27 Universalist Church of – in Rochester there. And to think if there's anything else about Rochester. It's a lot  
28 hotter than Monterey is in the summer. And a lot colder in the winter. We get a lot of snow in the winter.  
29 Skiing is big there. Never really did that in high school so I wasn't part of that group. I did it later. But I did  
30 a lot of shoveling of snow. [Chuckles] Clearing our driveway. I'm trying to think if there's anything else  
31 special I can say about Rochester. I remember growing up I could smell the pollution from Kodak. And my  
32 dad actually at one point worked in Health and Safety in Kodak. And it's just interesting how back in those  
33 days, and I'm sure it still happens now, but back in those days it wasn't even thought of that a company  
34 could self-regulate. It's like, "Oh, Kodak determined that these chemicals aren't a problem," when they  
35 actually were problems for some people. I remember smelling – there are certain parts you drive through –  
36 I just remember this really acrid smell associated with some of the chemicals they made in the photographic  
37 processes.

38 **[4:10] La Follette:** Did people tend to get ill in Rochester? Do you think potentially. . .

39 **Fernandez:** I knew of people who had environmental illness. I don't know if that's where they got  
40 it. But I knew somebody, a person who had environmental illness who lived in Rochester, who said  
41 "Kodak's a real. . . " – at that point I was probably more on the side of my dad -- because they said  
42 "Kodak's a real problem." I said, "Kodak claims the things they are producing are not problematic, that  
43 they're safe, that they don't cause problems for humans." But I think that would be reversed now.

44 **La Follette:** Could you tell me a little bit more about your parents?

45           **Fernandez:** My dad was an immigrant from Spain. He came when he was 12 years old and I think  
46 around 1949. And he had a really tough go here. His mom became ill and when he was an early teenager he  
47 basically had to take care of himself and work and go to school. But he did end up going through school,  
48 getting his bachelor's and then later getting his Ph.D. in Chemistry. So he valued education highly. He also  
49 valued having a stable job. Stability was a big thing for him. My mom, she was the middle child of Jewish  
50 immigrants from Poland who came before World War II fortunately. She met my dad and they she was the  
51 first to marry outside the faith. So she was the one who did what you're not supposed to do. And there was  
52 a lot of, I should say ... secrets that weren't discussed. Like whether I was going to have a Bar Mitzvah or  
53 not. Which I didn't. But I wasn't supposed to say that in certain groups. In other groups I wasn't supposed  
54 to say that I had a Jewish background from my mother. So it was an interesting ....

55           **La Follette:** Yeah, that's interesting. You kind of had to negotiate two different worlds or sets of  
56 families.

57           **Fernandez:** Yes.

58           **La Follette:** Yeah. And what part of Spain was your dad from?

59 **[6:20] Fernandez:** My dad was from – he was born in La Coruña which is in Galicia, which is the  
60 northwestern province in Spain. And he also spent a lot of time in Madrid. He and his mother, he was an  
61 only child – his father was actually a bullfighter but not a – not a very reliable person as far as maintaining  
62 a stable household. So they went wherever they could and eventually they managed to make it to the United  
63 States on tourist visas. [chuckles] He was an immigrant and he came in on a tourist visa and thought, part  
64 of the stress that his mother and he had were that he'd have to leave. And he actually got a - somehow he  
65 was able to get, I have it somewhere – an article or a bill from the local congressman that allowed him to  
66 stay. Now I don't know how a bill can allow one person to stay but he has it and I have a copy of it.

67           **La Follette:** Yeah. You know, one of my cousins who came from Italy, she had to get some sort of  
68 Congressional something like allowance to stay. Like there was a certain quota and like, yeah.

69           **Fernandez:** Exactly.

70           **La Follette:** Oh, interesting.

71           **Fernandez:** So – but he got it and he stayed. And then later he met my mom. Not much later. I  
72 think he was like 16 and she was 14. They're still together. They're still both doing really well and they're  
73 still together.

74           **La Follette:** I'd love to get more into your childhood and living in these different worlds but I guess  
75 we should kind of move forward.

76           **Fernandez:** Move to CSUMB. At least in this direction.

77 **[7:57] La Follette:** [Chuckles] So was there a time in your life when you felt your interest in Science first  
78 became apparent?

79           **Fernandez:** Yeah. I became interested in Science, I was in elementary school. If that. My dad was  
80 a scientist so it might have something like, "Oh, I'd like to be like dad" at that age. But I was always  
81 interested in Science. And so from as early age as I can remember pretty much. Yeah.

82           **La Follette:** And so when did you first get training in the Science field or start to study it in  
83 school?

84           **Fernandez:** Well, interesting. I mean I certainly took all the Science courses I could in high  
85 school. I took a lot of AP classes. A lot. I took AP Bio and AP Chemistry. I took all the basic science  
86 courses. I took Earth Science. I was always interested in all of those. In college I actually didn't major in  
87 Science. I majored in Engineering which has a lot of science in it but it has its own flavor of how it  
88 approaches Science. And all my degrees are actually in Electrical Engineering. Which is kind of interesting  
89 because I don't teach Engineering. We don't have an Engineering program yet here. I teach Physics. I love  
90 Physics. Maybe I should have majored in Physics but I did whatever I did and here I am. [Chuckles]

91           **La Follette:** So did you teach anywhere before you ended up coming here?

92           **Fernandez:** Yeah. When I was a graduate student at Stanford I was a Teaching Assistant for one of  
93 the graduate classes on antennas, the design of antennas and antenna systems. I think the teacher had me  
94 lecture a couple of times back in the days where I thought people learned by telling them things. [Chuckles]  
95 At Stanford I think there was that assumption that that was the case. I think, you know, you explain things  
96 clearly and that's as good as you can do and that's gonna be the best thing students can learn – way  
97 students can learn. Then I was a post doc at UC Santa Cruz and a researcher at UC Santa Cruz where I also  
98 had the opportunity to fully have my own class. I taught a class on – it was a Basic Circuits class taught to  
99 their Computer Science Computer Engineering majors. So I taught that one semester and that was a good  
100 thing because that's probably what helped me get here. They wanted to see some teaching experie  
101 nce.TA'ing was probably good but having my own class probably helped.

102 **[10:34] La Follette:** Yeah, well actually could you tell me how you first heard about CSUMB?

103           **Fernandez:** Oh, yeah. I was at UC Santa Cruz. I was on a soft money position, which means I  
104 wasn't going to be able to stay there. I didn't know how long I had there but I was not sure where I'd go. At  
105 that point I was married and had either one or two kids. I can't remember exactly whether my daughter was  
106 born yet or not. She was born about a year before I started here. But when I first heard of CSUMB I heard,  
107 "Oh, Fort Ord is going to be closing and they are thinking of opening a university there." And I was  
108 literally just down the road an hour north at UC Santa Cruz. I remember somebody saying, a guy who  
109 worked at MBARI [Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute], writing to us all saying, "There is a  
110 University happening. They hired a President, Peter Smith." So he was actually laying down some of the  
111 roots of that. And I was like, "Wow, this is interesting. Then at one point I got a phone call from one of the  
112 founding faculty members, Marsha Moroh, who called me and said, "Myself and two other faculty  
113 members, Bill Head and Bob Van Spyk, would like to come up and see you, to find out about the program  
114 you are working on at UC Santa Cruz." So I actually got a visit from three founding faculty members  
115 before classes started. I think they were just trying to get the lay of the land. And they came up to see me

116 which to this day kind of blows me away that three folks would come to see me up at UC Santa Cruz. I was  
117 a post doc up there. I don't know how or why they heard of me or but we had a great discussion. They told  
118 me about CSUMB. I kind of got a little excited and I thought, "Well, maybe I'll apply there." And so that  
119 was the initial thinking of CSUMB. And I have another pre-CSUMB story.

120 **[12:28] La Follette:** Sure, yeah, go ahead.

121 **Fernandez:** When I was a graduate student at Stanford I had researched down along the Big Sur  
122 coast on Highway 1. Just off of Highway 1. So I would often be going from Stanford down to there maybe  
123 a couple of times a month. And at one point my car was low on gas and I had to get some gas somewhere.  
124 So I took this exit that was the Lightfighter Exit. I didn't know it at the time. It's the main entrance to  
125 CSUMB. And I had gone into this giant army base and somehow they let me in because they shouldn't if  
126 you don't have a military sticker on your car. But I guess the car I owned had a military sticker from a  
127 previous owner which I wasn't even aware of. But they just saluted me in and I was on base! And it was  
128 this just incredible experience of seeing all these people in uniform walking around what is now the Quad  
129 and the whole central area. I was kind of driving through there. I was just like, "Oh, my gosh!" And I ended  
130 up trying to find my way out getting lost and heading down Inter-Garrison Road which is the main  
131 thoroughfare through campus and seeing a sign saying "No Hunting," which also blew me away. It's like  
132 hunting. It means that there's animals out here that people can hunt and that there's even people  
133 considering hunting out here! It was just this huge experience of "Oh, my gosh!" I felt like I was going into  
134 the backwoods, boonies, I didn't know where I was going. So I turned around, came back, asked some  
135 directions and I think I got gas, hopefully, and found my way out. Little did I know that that's the road that  
136 I would be frequenting and the place I'd be living more than any other place I've lived at my life at that  
137 point. So.

138 **La Follette:** How weird that you just kind of ended up here where you were going to eventually  
139 come anyway.

140           **Fernandez:** Exactly.

141           **La Follette:** Oh, wow. So then could you tell me about your applying and then your formal  
142 interview? That's so interesting that they came and sought you out.

143 **[14:27] Fernandez:** This was another funny story. Okay, so I kept asking Marsha, "When are you going to  
144 be looking for new faculty?" Not kept asking, I asked her once or twice. I'd email her. And she got back to  
145 me and said, "Not yet, but soon. Keep your eyes open." I was like okay. And then of course I had other  
146 things to do and this and that. Then I happened to be talking to somebody who was affiliated with  
147 CSUMB, a guy named Gary Sharp, who was one of the early folks involved with the generation of the  
148 campus. And he just happened to mention, "Oh, yeah, there's a . . ." I don't think he was targeting it to me,  
149 he just, "Yeah, there are some faculty openings and it closes this coming Friday." And it was like Tuesday  
150 or Wednesday. I was like, "It closes this Friday?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, are they looking  
151 for Engineering because that's what I do?" And he said, "No, no. They don't really have Engineering." But  
152 that planted the seed and I looked on it and I saw that they had two positions open that I could possibly  
153 apply for. And so I applied for both. One was a position called Practical Computing. Because I was  
154 working in a Computer Science / Computer Engineering Department at UC Santa Cruz, I thought I'd apply  
155 for that. And the other one was a position to teaching Physics. And so I said, "Well, I've had Engineering,  
156 Electrical Engineering, I've had a lot of Physics classes. I like Physics. I'll apply for that, too." So those  
157 are the two I applied for. And I applied just in time, I think the night before it was due because it, you  
158 know, it was due that Friday and I just found out about it. So I fortunately was able to apply. And then I  
159 found out a little bit more about the Department. There were a few faculty who are still here, Susan  
160 Alexander who is right next door. And Steve Moore, whose office is now in Building 13. They were here  
161 before me. They weren't quite founding faculty. But they were hired in the small cohorts that were hired  
162 for the first year or during the first year of school. And I contacted Steve. I was real excited. I thought,  
163 "Great, my wife is from California. She'd love it if we could stay in California. Monterey is a great place.



164 It's not far from Santa Cruz." It seems like it could be a good match if I could get in. So I was trying to  
165 figure out how can I get in here and I started talking to Steve. It was fortunate. Susan was a graduate  
166 student at Stanford at the same time I was, so I knew her from there. Actually, her major advisor was my  
167 co-advisor. Even though she was Biology and I was Engineering, I had this interdisciplinary thesis I was  
168 working on, so I knew her. I think that helped, the fact that, "Well, he's a known quantity. He knows Susan,  
169 Oh, okay, good." So I ended up getting interviewed for that position. The funny thing was, this was the  
170 beginning of the Internet. I tried to do cute things on the web like, can I play music and play a song? You  
171 know, so I was trying to do these things that were just kind of just starting then. Like, "Can you use the  
172 World Wide Web? Wow, that's a big deal!" And it was a very sought after position. There were like 80-  
173 something applicants. Or maybe even more than that. There were a ton of applicants. So it was actually  
174 fortunate that I knew somebody and I made some contacts. And they were like, "Oh, okay this guy is  
175 somebody maybe we'd like to have work for us." And they interviewed me and I actually wasn't the first  
176 choice. I was the second choice. It's always fun when that happens! But Bill Head was a real pusher. He  
177 was guy who was the Chair of the Department called Earth Systems Science and Policy. And he said, "We  
178 need a few Physics people." So he was gonna hire that person and then also hire me. And I also didn't want  
179 to go in as full time. I wanted to go as half time the first year because I had the gig going on at UC Santa  
180 **[18:15]** Cruz still. So it turned out the first person didn't take it. She didn't want to come here. So I was  
181 the main person for Physics and I was the only person for Physics really. It pretty much has been my thing  
182 for the last 23 years since then. The other funny part of the story is at the same time I also got an interview  
183 for the Practical Computing position. Marsha Moroh was a faculty member. She was Chair of what is now  
184 ITCD [Information Technology and Communications Design], -- it's changed names so many times --, of  
185 the department that became our Computer Science Department later. And I got an interview there. And  
186 even though I had already been on campus, I couldn't find my way to the interview. I had a meeting in San  
187 Jose right before. And I thought, "Oh, I can make it from San Jose to Monterey in an hour," and I

188 completely misjudged it. And I got to campus at the time the interview ended. And I didn't know which  
189 building. It was just this harried experience of trying to call people to let them know, and left all these  
190 messages with Marsha and all these other people. It was so embarrassing. So I got there late and it was  
191 really embarrassing. And they scheduled another interview for me. Needless to say I didn't get that  
192 position. [Chuckles] But it's okay because I think I am much happier where I ended up being. So.

193 **La Follette:** Yeah. There are so many stories of people getting lost in the first – like the early days.

194 **Fernandez:** Yeah.

195 **La Follette:** You know, because some of the roads have names that are basically the same.

196 **Fernandez:** Right.

197 **La Follette:** And they intersect one another.

198 **Fernandez:** Right. But I had already been on campus a couple of times. Part of it was I was just so  
199 late, and then when you're already late and have that stress going. And then you can't find the building  
200 you're supposed to be in, it just ramps up the stress level and it was very stressful. I won't forget that  
201 interview – the interview I missed. John Ittelson, who was one of the earlier faculty members joked after I  
202 got to my interview, he said, "Oh, here is the late Dan Fernandez." [Laughs] I still know John so it's kind  
203 of funny.

204 **La Follette:** Well, you kind of touched on a little bit, what was your motivation to come to  
205 CSUMB? It was so new and, you know, different. Why here?

206 **[20:54] Fernandez:** That's a good question. It was certainly the location, that was a big thing. But the  
207 Vision Statement really did draw me in, because I thought the Vision spoke to what I grew up with as  
208 values, being a Unitarian Universalist growing up, being a spiritual person but not a religious person,  
209 working to care for others and communities without necessarily being sanctioned by a higher power or by  
210 God or anything like that. I didn't see that in there, but I saw caring for the community in it. And that really  
211 spoke to me, it really did. I think that was a powerful motivator. Because quite honestly I was nervous

212 coming in. But then again, I was a new faculty member, completely green. I was a post doc at UC Santa  
213 Cruz but I had all my degrees in Engineering. A lot of the work I did was very isolated in its own way. I  
214 didn't have a lot of people I worked with. Although I knew a lot of people, I wasn't working on a project  
215 with a lot of other students, typically. A couple here and there but not a lot. At UC Santa Cruz I was a bit of  
216 a fish out of water where I was, with my background doing what I was doing. So I didn't really have a big  
217 agenda of, "This is where I'm gonna go, I want to be a professor someday." I was sort of like, "I don't  
218 know what I'm gonna do, but this place looks like it might work, based upon the Vision that they're putting  
219 out and my own personal values." So that was a big motivator for wanting to come here, too.

220 **La Follette:** Yeah, and like with the Vision Statement then how did you see that kind of playing  
221 out within like ESSP or the classes that you were teaching?

222 **Fernandez:** You know, once I got here I got really confused, I'll be honest. It was like okay,  
223 there's this Vision but I'm not seeing it permeating everywhere. I'm seeing it talked about. I'm seeing some  
224 people striving for it and talking about it beautifully, eloquently, but I'm still not quite sure where I fit in  
225 here. I'm a Science person and there are Science people here but they're not talking about the Vision in the  
226 same way. And then just the ethos. Like the ... the vending machines. This may sound snobbish or  
227 something, but they were like selling pork rinds in these things. I mean, when I think Vision I was thinking  
228 "Okay, we're all going to live in this like maybe vegetarian community. And we're all forward thinking.  
229 We all think like I do." And. I wasn't vegetarian but still, pork rinds? I mean it's just like something about  
230 it just didn't speak to me. But there was another culture that did have that. So I wasn't aware of that. I was  
231 **[23:41]** very green but very aspirational. Maybe I can put it that way. Then I remember, quite honestly the  
232 new President, Peter Smith. [sigh] As a person I got along with him okay but I just – I just wasn't really  
233 able to connect with him as a leader at the time. I wasn't sure how does he connect to the Vision. He's not  
234 from this area. I didn't connect. I really wasn't aware of issues. I mean I knew of race, of course, but I  
235 wasn't really aware of issues of privilege and all that. But if I had my – what I knew now back then I'd say,

236 “Hmm, there’s a lot of privilege here in the positions of power and I am not sure that that really reflects  
237 what I see in the Vision. And so there was a lot of that going on. And of course there were a lot of issues  
238 around, and I’m not sure if there is a right or a wrong, but there were a lot of conflicts around email blasts  
239 that were just difficult to read because they were so searing and so intense.

240 **La Follette:** Well, actually that’s kind of one of the areas that we look at in the interviews. I mean  
241 because it was strong personalities here in the beginning.

242 **Fernandez:** Oh, my gosh, yeah.

243 **La Follette:** Could you kind of explain like what some of those email blasts were?

244 **Fernandez:** Yeah. Well, a lot of them were directed, I’d say directed at – it seemed to be at Peter  
245 Smith. Or folks in his administration. I know he had I think fired the Provost at the time, Steve Arvizu and  
246 there was a big issue around that. I didn’t particularly know Steve. I didn’t even connect with him either. I  
247 didn’t feel like I connected with him. So I was kind of in the dark but seeing all the conflict made it  
248 challenging for me to kind of think this is a utopian vision society. You know, this Vision here. It just – it  
249 wasn’t adding up in a lot of ways. That wasn’t adding up. In a way the Science Division was kind of a  
250 refuge because just as scientists they weren’t going to dive in in the same way as folks maybe in other parts  
251 of the campus. I think they appreciated the Vision but it was spoken about in a different way and perhaps in  
252 a more moderate way, which might have been a bit of a refuge from all the conflict and turmoil going  
253 which I don’t think I could have handled at that point. I joked that I came in as a freshman to CSUMB even  
254 though I came here to teach because I was really so naïve in a lot of ways. And so just ... green  
255 academically. I mean I had never been an academic anywhere. I was a student all my life and then I became  
256 an academic here at a place where there were no other Physics people. I was doing my own thing again. So  
257 there’s that isolating factor as well that happened. And then seeing these email blasts. And some of them  
258 were from different faculty members, too. I was just – the allegations that were flying around were just  
259 incredibly strong. And I remember that some of the meetings we had during the first year or two of campus

260 there was a ... it wasn't a focus group. What is the right word for it. They had a mediator come. And  
261 everybody got together into one room and she tried to work on issues. I think she did a good job at it. I  
262 remember her name. Gallegos was her last name. I was the only one from Sciences who went to that. And  
263 it was good that I went because one of the people involved who was setting it up was Sarah McClellan,  
264 who was one of our early students I think at that time, who was working for the Science department and  
265 was a big player in setting this whole thing up. She said before I got there people were coming to her and  
266 saying, "So there's nobody from the Sciences here." And that then I got there and she said those comments  
267 [27:02] stopped. So I was present. I was probably shaking in my boots the whole time. Half the time.  
268 Because there was just this conflict going on. I kind of understood but ... it was just so strong and people  
269 were so entrenched ... on different sides of something. One person, who is not at all of Chicano  
270 background, asked, "Is this University designed to be a Chicano university?" You know, in a very pointed  
271 way. He happened to be of a different ethnic background and he asked that. The room kind of fell silent at  
272 that point. I remember that. And the medi- and then another guy, Ray González came forward. He is no  
273 longer alive, I believe, but he was one of the founding folks, and said, "No. But the predominant population  
274 of this area is Hispanic, Chicano, so the University is naturally going to head in that direction. But that's  
275 not ..." So I thought he gave a really good answer to the question. But there were things like that that  
276 happened. I really didn't know how to deal with it. I didn't know how to deal with conflict that well. And  
277 differences of opinion that were powerful and strong on so many fronts, whether it's developing the ancient  
278 ULR [University Learning Requirements] system which has gone through several revisions since then, to  
279 many other things. On so many decisions. It just seemed like there was so much contention that I didn't  
280 even understand. I didn't have the language to understand the contention or to play a role on either side of  
281 it. So I would say my entry was, personally, I was rather gradual. I was not an outspoken person  
282 particularly. I have become much more outspoken since then on many things. But even then, I'll reserve  
283 myself a bit. But I remember at the Senate meeting where Peter Smith – it wasn't a Senate meeting, it was

284 an Assembly meeting, I think, where Peter Smith ... there was a vote of No Confidence. I mean I don't  
285 support it or not right now – but the discussion in the Senate meeting was, “Oh, this isn't a vote of No  
286 Confidence on Peter Smith. This is a vote of No Confidence that he is the right person to lead a  
287 multicultural University.” So there was this play on words. And so that was kind of the way it was voted  
288 but when it came out it was a vote of No Confidence. So I mean there was all this kind of shifting of [sigh]  
289 what the intention was of the vote and all that, too. So it wasn't pleasant. It wasn't a pleasant time. And that  
290 was actually three years in. That wasn't immediate. That was several years in. Yeah, I don't know if that  
291 gives you a thought of [chuckles] fodder for ... for putting in there. And I have no problem sharing any of  
292 this. I was stunned in many ways. And I did want to leave. I did want to leave. I was looking back to go to  
293 UC Santa Cruz. I mean go to a place where I know the structure, we're not trying to do something. And  
294 then we get a change in Chancellor. The original Chancellor, Barry Munitz said, “You can do whatever you  
295 want.” Then he left. And a year or two later we got Charlie Reed who said, “No, you are a CSU. You have  
296 to follow all the CSU's. You have to follow the –“ And I was thinking, “Well, if we are a CSU don't we  
297 have to follow what the CSU's do? It kind of makes sense. How can we do our own thing and then be ...”  
298 But we all thought we could do, we had license to do whatever the heck we wanted. And it didn't always  
299 **[30:34]** work for students either. So it was – it was not an easy like, “Oh, this is the right way to do it/this  
300 isn't the right way to do it.” It was very complicated, confusing and troublesome in many ways. But I did  
301 find some relief being in this Science Division where they were pushing for really strengthening the  
302 Science what used to be an Institute back – was it Institute? Yeah. We were called Institutes. We weren't  
303 called Departments. It was the Institute of Earth Systems Science and Policy which of course made no  
304 sense when you're applying for grants because they don't know you are a part of a campus if you're an  
305 Institute. So yeah, that was – I guess challenging times. And on top of that I was the only one teaching  
306 Physics so I really felt rather isolated. And I didn't know what research I could be pursuing here. It was – it  
307 was challenging.

308 **[31:49] La Follette:** So when you thought about potentially leaving what kept you?

309 **Fernandez:** Well, I didn't get an offer. I applied, I actually applied to UC Santa Cruz. I didn't get  
310 it. But I didn't want to go to Kansas. I didn't want to go ... so I didn't apply anywhere. I applied maybe to  
311 that one place and didn't get in. And realized, "Oh, I'll just stay here." And things did get much better. I'm  
312 happy now. I mean I've been here 24 years. Things did change. I think once I got tenure. . . . I think the  
313 lack of structure I found very troublesome, personally. On so many fronts. The lack of structure on the  
314 University front. I didn't feel that there was structure that I could understand. Even in my department, even  
315 though they were working on a certain goal and there was a relief from the University politics by being in  
316 the department, I didn't know where I fit in in the department. So there was that. I was struggling a lot with  
317 that. But it got better, I'd say, when I became more involved with things on campus. I think – what  
318 happened, I was asked to be the Curriculum Committee long before it's in its current form. I ended up  
319 chairing that and that pushed me into a leadership role and I stayed with that. I was involved with  
320 Teaching, Learning and Assessment. There were times when we'd work with other faculty on teaching  
321 techniques. And I got a lot of great perspectives and ideas from my faculty both within ESSP and from  
322 other parts of campus like how to teach better. My teaching the first semester, I'm used to this teaching to  
323 people who were Engineering majors. They weren't Engineering majors here and they didn't know what I  
324 was talking about. So it was like oh, boy, this isn't working. I have to think of another way to teach physics  
325 that will be appreciated by the students. So being at CSUMB, I would say it forged me. I went through the  
326 fire [chuckles] on how to teach, on how to be in a community like this one and flourish in it.

327 **[33:41]La Follette:** Yeah, and you kind of touched on what I wanted to ask about how you felt that the  
328 maybe student body here was different from students you'd worked with before and how that impacted  
329 your – like how did you have to adjust to teaching?

330 **Fernandez:** Well, the students here, we had a major called Earth Systems Science and Policy and  
331 those were the only students I was really teaching in Physics. There were a couple of other classes I might

332 have taught here and there but they weren't Physics students other than being in my class. So there wasn't a  
333 Physics major. There wasn't an Engineering major. There were students who were interested in Science  
334 many of whom maybe had had Physics before or maybe even had some challenges in Science classes in  
335 school and weren't gonna be at a UC campus where they already knew going in, "Oh, this is what I want to  
336 do, I want to do this." They came in, "Oh, Earth Systems Science and Policy sounds kind of cool. Maybe I  
337 can do a little science." I don't know what they were thinking because the major itself wasn't that well  
338 defined. Some students jokingly called it Every Single Science Possible. Or Every Stinking Science  
339 Possible. Or you can put a lot of other words in there that was the name used. Because it was a great  
340 program, I think, for students who got into it and figured out what they were gonna do and it led a lot of  
341 students to some really great opportunities. But it was also hard to communicate it to people outside the  
342 campus. And even to people inside the campus. What's Earth Systems Science and Policy? Is it an Earth  
343 Science major? Is it a Policy major? You know, we didn't really do much policy but we thought we wanted  
344 to so it had that name. So it was a group of students who – definitely had some very strong students and  
345 also some students who were challenged and they didn't want to work and I didn't know how to deal with  
346 that in a way that was fruitful, at first.

347 **La Follette:** Yeah, and it would seem like coming from a Science background you kind of would  
348 want things to be structured and ...

349 **Fernandez:** Yeah, [chuckle] an Engineering background, yeah. Even though I'm not that  
350 structured a person they were pretty unstructured, yeah. And I was not, I just wasn't used to that level. It  
351 was the Wild West, as many people call it. You could kind of do what you wanted in many ways. If you  
352 needed to drill a hole in your wall to get something outside that you're gonna measure you could just do it  
353 and people just did that then. You just can't do that now. And with good reason. With good reason. And  
354 there was a lot of uncertainty. Students didn't know whether their classes would transfer out when they  
355 wanted to leave the campus, which was the general direction students wanted to go. They came here like



356 “What is this?” They’re here for a semester or two and want to leave. They wondered if their classes are  
357 going to transfer out. So we’d get questions like that. And it’s kind of disheartening to have all these  
358 students wanting to leave campus. And then the campus not having itself together to know whether the  
359 courses are equivalent to courses elsewhere and .... It’s not our job to determine that but based on the  
360 names of the courses as first, like the Physics course I taught didn’t have a PHYS prefix. It had an ESSP  
361 prefix. The very first year. Then we realized, “Oh, no, no, no, this is a problem. We can’t do that.” So we  
362 really went through the learning curve on so many fronts. I mean we were teaching all these different  
363 [37:00] majors, a Biology class, a Physics class, a Chemistry class. They can’t all have the same prefix or  
364 the course will be unrecognizable to anybody else. And so we changed that quickly. But that’s just a kind  
365 of example of the things that we went through during those first few years that were quite tumultuous.

366 **La Follette:** Yeah, wow. And was there like a student who stood out to you in those early days?  
367 Like somebody that -

368 **Fernandez:** Oh, there were many students that stood out to me that I thought, “This is great.” A lot  
369 of the students we had were very outspoken. I wasn’t used to students being that outspoken, quite honestly.  
370 Especially in Science classes. I mean, you sit and listen. Right? You don’t complain about things. And then  
371 I realized feedback is important. It really helped me be able to take other people’s feedback in a lot of  
372 ways. And I still do. I do that now. I’m soliciting feedback a lot and I want it in class. And it really, it  
373 actually points to me some of the areas in my own education that I think were very lacking. And I got a lot  
374 of that out of being at CSUMB.

375 **La Follette:** What were some of those areas?

376 **Fernandez:** Most of the schools I went to are R1 universities, where research was the focus and  
377 teaching really wasn’t. The professors, I don’t think their concern was with student learning. [sigh] I think a  
378 lot of times professors, maybe here but certainly many other universities, they want to be heard. I don’t  
379 know that they want to be necessarily – they don’t want disrespect. They want to be heard. The assumption

380 is that if they tell you something that the student will therefore know it and have learned it because the  
381 professor said it once, therefore it's there. Sometimes the professor doesn't even say it once but the student  
382 is supposed to know it because the professor knows it. That's not stated but it's implicit. And it's really  
383 only after teaching here for so many years that I realize, "Oh, my gosh, I grew up in a very different  
384 paradigm and my education was in a very different paradigm than that which I feel like I am providing  
385 here. And there are some advantages maybe to the other paradigm. Maybe it will make students show up  
386 more or something. But, I don't know. I like having opportunity for students to express their concerns, their  
387 disgruntlements. It may have nothing to do with me. It may have to do with other challenges the students  
388 are facing in their lives that the professor knows nothing about. You know, maybe the student had a death  
389 in the family. At another school would the professor know or care or be able to ask that question? I don't  
390 know. Not always. Here I feel like – maybe not everybody is that in contact with their students, but I feel  
391 like I became more able to be, and that has made a difference in my teaching and for my ability to be, just  
392 to be present with others.

393 **La Follette:** Yeah. Because you become much more than teacher. You're like a surrogate parent  
394 and a counselor. [Chuckles]

395 **Fernandez:** Yeah. And there are so many health issues. Mental health issues and other issues that  
396 weren't in the forefront. They may have been there when I was a student. I know I had them. I know I had  
397 my challenges as a college student. I went through periods of depression and didn't know it. And I didn't  
398 know where to turn. I just was unaware of it. Here I think there's much more cognizance of it. I think it's  
399 more the day, in this day there's more cognizance but certainly on our campus as a result of a lot of the  
400 work that Caroline Haskell and others have done on personal growth and counseling and just mindfulness  
401 and awareness. I mean our campus has really embraced a lot of that which I think is completely in line with  
402 our Vision, but I didn't see so much in the early stages but I think it's grown with the campus.

403 **[40:54] La Follette:** Well, yeah, and actually I wanted to kind of think about, too how you feel that  
404 Monterey itself, maybe the environment or even being on a former military base, does that present  
405 interesting or new opportunities for looking at Science? Or?

406 **La Follette:** Oh, yeah. There's no question. I'd say particularly in Biological, Environmental, and  
407 Ecological Sciences and Marine Science. I mean we're on Monterey Bay. It is a center of marine research,  
408 a world wide center. So we have many students coming to study Marine Science which is now it's own  
409 department. It's no longer in the same department as me, as of this year. And – there was a Marine Science  
410 in the beginning, it was part of ESSP. So I have seen that evolution, how these departments have grown and  
411 then split with good reason, I think, into their own units. But also for Environmental Science. I mean Fort  
412 Ord is just an amazing mecca of diversity in life and in land that was really not developed as a result of the  
413 presence of the military, which is not something I would have thought of before I came here. But once I'm  
414 here it's like this is just an amazing place we have, that I hope continues to be preserved as it has been for  
415 so long but even more so now with more intention of taking care of it. You asked about other opportunities  
416 for Science. The presence of the military, I think the former presence, there's an incredibly rich history. We  
417 have 75 years before the University where the military was here. There's an amazing array of stories and  
418 histories. And I know that Rina [Benmayor] and others have been involved with that. So there's just no  
419 question of that. Personally, one of my own research areas I think centers around one of the environmental  
420 features of this region, and that's the fog. And that's something I've become heavily entrenched in. Now  
421 I'm one of the probably leaders of fog research both nationally and internationally, partly as a result of just  
422 being in this location. And then realizing, "Oh, my gosh, we have fog here. In my backyard practically I  
423 can make these measurements of it." And I became part of that community probably eight, nine years after  
424 I started here.

425 **La Follette:** Yeah, could you tell me more about how that research kind of came about? How you  
426 got the idea for it?

427           **Fernandez:** Sure. Well, I was actually...it's so entwined with CSUMB and with my development  
428 at CSUMB which is kind of neat. Basically, after I got my tenure I took a year sabbatical and then came  
429 back. Things were much better then than they had been in the beginning. I felt okay, I'm on this campus  
430 now and I don't know what my research direction is, but I am happier here and I see where I fit in a little bit  
431 more. One of my colleagues, Henrik Kibak, who started around the same time I did, he had become Senate  
432 Chair the year before. And I was like wow. I remember I was in Spain on sabbatical. We went to Spain for  
433 a year. And I wrote to him saying, "Wow, Henrik, better you than me," something like that. And then I  
434 come back and I'm back a couple of months into the semester and then Henrik and Sharon Anderson, who  
435 has also been a huge leader on campus in many ways, they came up to me and said, "You know, Henrik  
436 doesn't like being Senate Chair and we think you'd make a great Senate Chair, would you be Senate  
437 Chair?" [Chuckles] And my jaw dropped. I'm like, "Are you kidding me? Senate Chair?" Because I was at  
438 other Senate meetings and I just experienced them as being so contentious with this or that issue coming  
439 up. It was just like oh, my God, I don't know if I can deal with that. But I eventually agreed. I said, "Okay,  
440 [44:46] I'll do that." And I realized if I'm going to become Senate Chair, I'm going to have to maybe learn  
441 how to meditate. [Chuckles] And I had heard about this way that you can attend a meditation retreat, a ten-  
442 day silent meditation retreat for free. You pay at the end, you donate. When I first heard about it I looked at  
443 the schedule and I saw okay, at 4:30 a.m. you are up and meditating. And you are basically meditating in  
444 these different chunks of between one and two hours all day with an occasional break for a light meal and  
445 maybe to rest for about an hour. Other than that you are meditating like 10 or 11 hours a day. And I was  
446 just like, "Oh, my God. I can't do that." After I agreed to become Senate Chair, a neighbor of mine came  
447 and said, "I just went to this meditation retreat! It was just amazing!" And it was the same organization. I  
448 was like, "Okay, it looks like I need to do that." So I arranged to do that, took 10 days, and it was tough  
449 because at that point I had a 9 year old and six or seven year old So it was a lot on my wife for me to be  
450 gone 10, 11 days. But I did it. And while I was at the retreat it was a really hot location in the foothills of

451 the Sierras, and I was in a tent because it was so full that there was no room in the dorm. So they let people  
452 tent. It was just a really packed retreat. But it was so hot, it was in the hundreds. And I was in a tent. And I  
453 was in the mid-day trying to get some rest outside because when you're not meditating you are just  
454 exhausted because it takes such a toll. And I was lying in the tent just sweltering, it was so hot, thinking,  
455 "How can I cool off this tent?" So I got a towel. "I'll go put a towel, try to put some shade on the tent." I  
456 did that. It didn't help. It was just so hot. "What if I get the towel wet? I'll go get the towel wet, cover it  
457 with water, there's water there, and put it on the tent." And that actually provided like a natural air  
458 conditioning. It's kind of using Physics knowledge to cool the tent. I was like, "Oh, this helped. Huh! Isn't  
459 that neat that "- and I was thinking to myself, "isn't it neat that a little bit of water in this hot area and I can  
460 cool myself down." And I started thinking about water. Monterey has all these water issues. I started  
461 thinking, "We also have fog, which this area doesn't have because it's in the foothills of the Sierras, it  
462 doesn't get a lot of fog, but we get fog in Monterey. Huh. We have water issues. I wonder if we can get  
463 water from fog." So I started to think during this meditation retreat. I just kept obsessing over that because  
464 when you're meditating you are trying to clear your mind of thought. In this type of meditating you are  
465 supposed to look at your body sensations, just observe, you know, am I sensing anything in my head? And  
466 you scan your way down. And you scan your way back up. And that's what's supposed to occupy your  
467 attention. But when I wasn't occupied by that I would be distracted by, "Can we get water from fog? I  
468 wonder if it's possible to get water from fog. I wonder if anybody has ever done that. Wow, I wonder if I  
469 can get famous doing it." You know, all these thoughts started going through my head which is just, I  
470 guess, normal. When I got back I did some research and I found out that I was not the first person to think  
471 of it. People had been doing it for thousands of years. But I got in touch with a non-profit that was involved  
472 with that and that started my fog research. Long story short.

473 **La Follette:** That's so interesting.

474 **[48:10] Fernandez:** Yeah. So as a result of being selected for Senate Chair and doing this meditation  
475 retreat I thought about fog and then now it's one of my main research areas. So.

476 **La Follette:** Yeah, it's kind of like the meditation focuses your mind, right?

477 **Fernandez:** Yeah. Um hmm. Yup. I did two more of those ten-day retreats since then and a few  
478 weekend retreats, even brought my kids to kid retreats. My kids are now all grown up. But it benefited  
479 them, too. So yeah, the meditation was a huge addition to my personal repertoire that I indirectly associate  
480 with being on campus that it directed me in that direction.

481 **La Follette:** Wow. And so now like you and your students work on collecting the fog to collect  
482 water?

483 **Fernandez:** Yeah, to collect – to measure how much water you can get from fog. What are the  
484 purposes, what can you do with the water. What's in the water. It differed in different places. When does  
485 fog happen? So I just got a grant that's going to allow me to purchase instruments to make really fine  
486 detailed measurements of fog droplets that I can use to better understand the different types of fog, of  
487 which there are many, and how they affect how much water you can capture from them. And also certainly,  
488 are there any things we can do with the water we capture from fog or that different ways that it can benefit  
489 different ecosystems. And are there better ways to capture water from fog than others? That's a fog catcher  
490 right there, that mesh. And there are other types of mesh. Are some of them better than others? So I have all  
491 of these experiments going on all at once.

492 **La Follette:** Oh, wow.

493 **Fernandez:** Many within campus but throughout the whole state of California. I even have a  
494 couple that were just deployed in Chile. So I have connections in Chile now as well.

495 **La Follette:** Wow.

496 **Fernandez:** Because that's where a lot of the fog work started.

497 **La Follette:** Oh, really?

498 **Fernandez:** Yeah.

499 **La Follette:** Wow. Oh, I did want to go back.

500 **Fernandez:** Sure.

501 **La Follette:** So you did the meditation retreat as a way to potentially cope with being Chair of the  
502 Senate. How did you find that position to be?

503 **Fernandez:** I grew a lot, let me put it that way. I grew a lot. I found that partly as a result of the  
504 meditation I was able to be a little bit more equanimous? Because some of my concern about the Senate  
505 Chairs is I saw them getting kind of heated over things. I found that when that happened I tended to lose a  
506 little bit of confidence in the process of what's going on. And I think by meditating I worked on not getting  
507 heated by things. Although there might have been times I should have been heated by things that maybe I  
508 didn't get heated partly because of, "Oh, I don't need to get heated about this." But in the big picture I  
509 think it was a real positive thing. But it was a big growing experience because there were often fires that  
510 came up that had to be put out. And it marked the start of a lot of additional leadership roles that continue  
511 to this day on campus although I've really tried to take a back seat so I can be more involved in fog  
512 research and other things. But it really helped me, I would say, nurture my own ability to engage in  
513 leadership which I didn't have to that extent before. I was also, when we were all one Science division, I  
514 was Chair of the Science Division after I was done being Senate Chair. I was Senate Chair for three years. I  
515 finished Henrik's one-year term and then I had another. I thought, "I'm already here. I'll run for another  
516 term." And people are usually glad when there is somebody who runs for Senate Chair. It's not like, "Oh,  
517 we have ten people running for Senate Chair, we have to vote for them." It's usually like, "Who can we  
518 find to be Senate Chair?" That's often how it is. Then after that I was Chair of the Division of Science –  
519 Division of the School of Natural Sciences for six years. So it's kind of like being Department Chair.

520 **[52:10] La Follette:** That's a long time.

521           **Fernandez:** It was a long time. Then there's other fires that happen, in some ways bigger fires  
522 when you're a Department Chair, because you are dealing with a lot more personnel related issues than  
523 when you're Senate Chair. When you're Senate Chair it's more policy and things like that. Yeah, hot  
524 things come up but it's not about hiring or firing people directly, whereas when you are a Department Chair  
525 you have more of those sort of issues that can come into play.

526           **La Follette:** And those can be I think more challenging.

527           **Fernandez:** Those can be more challenging. Yeah. Yeah. And very personal. Although Senate can  
528 get personal, too. Yeah, so that was the birth of a lot of leadership positions. I'm not, I'm really not afraid  
529 to take leadership positions on. It's more a question of time. I realize time is more the issue. It's not about  
530 "Okay, I'm afraid to chair that committee." No, I'm not afraid to chair that committee. It's just I don't  
531 really have the time I need to do the job I need to do as probably as well as I should. But I got used to being  
532 able to juggle a lot of things when I became Senate Chair. I go to one meeting to another to another, many  
533 of which I'd have to run with almost no preparation. So I got good at being able to prepare. And I think it  
534 also helped my teaching because sometimes I don't – I'm not able to prepare as much but I can still pull off  
535 I think what I need to do. Hopefully. But that's just what happens when we get overburdened which on this  
536 campus tends to happen more because there are so many things that need to be done and basically a fairly  
537 limited pool of faculty who are often available to do them.

538           **La Follette:** And having like tenure line faculty available. There are so many – the majority of us  
539 are Lecturers.

540           **Fernandez:** Are lecturers, exactly. And you know, Lecturers, unless they are paid for it, it's done  
541 on a volunteer basis which I appreciate when they are able to but it's not fair and equitable to them. Yeah,  
542 there are so many challenges around the whole issue of Lecturers. Yeah. Not only on our campus but  
543 certainly on our campus.



544 **[54:10] La Follette:** So during your time here is there something that you really feel like you wanted to  
545 accomplish and haven't been able to do or like you were working towards and didn't happen?

546 **Fernandez:** I'm still working on things that I want to accomplish so I'd like to say I'm hoping that  
547 things will still become accomplished. I'd certainly like to publish more journals and publications, but ones  
548 that are going to be of interest to the general public. Not ones that are going to be read by a group of 20  
549 people in the world and that's it, which is true about many different academic areas. I am much more  
550 interested in can I write things that are going to be of interest and engagement to people outside of the  
551 traditional academy. And I'm actually working on a couple of books right now, as I speak, along with  
552 everything else so that they often take a back seat. But I've been working on them for several years. And  
553 those have evolved. And I think my experiences at CSUMB have definitely shaped what I am able to put in  
554 those.

555 **La Follette:** Yeah, and so there's something that you've accomplished that you feel really proud of  
556 like having achieved while you've been here?

557 **Fernandez:** [pause] I think particularly as Senate Chair I think there's many things that I was able  
558 to do that maybe it took more effort in some cases from more different people but it was able to happen.  
559 And just holding that space I think was really big at that time.

560 **La Follette:** Could you tell me maybe about one of those?

561 **Fernandez:** Yeah, at that point there was an issue around [sigh] -- the same issue that just recently  
562 came up with the whole EO1100 thing but an earlier version of that. I would say a less intensive one but at  
563 that time it felt intensive to me and to the campus. Just dealing with our curricular models and helping  
564 different majors get to the limit that was being imposed upon us by the CSU. That was big. It was a step.  
565 One of many steps that were going to have to take place that have led us to where we're at now. So just  
566 being able to manage that at the time I think was big. But also my work with sustainability on campus, I'm  
567 really proud of that. I think not just as a result of my efforts but I was part of it. I think the ante has been

568 raised on our campus in terms of addressing issues of sustainability and making them more apparent. So  
569 I've been a key part of that for over the last decade. So I'm happy and pleased about that as well. And also  
570 the educational model. I was Coordinator for Environmental Studies the last couple of years, and there's  
571 only two tenure track faculty, myself and Tori [Victoria Derr], who is newer. Next door. We're the only  
572 ones. So the fact that we are able to run that program and the students that are coming out I think are  
573 getting some great opportunities through being at CSUMB. And I'll also say the Sustainable City Year  
574 Program.

575 **La Follette:** Yeah, I was going to ask you about that.

576 **[57:20] Fernandez:** Yeah, that's been a huge accomplishment. And it's still a lot of work to keep that  
577 going because it's a whole program that's run on really not much funding and none of it comes from the  
578 campus. I've managed to get all funding that's running the program to come from outside the campus. And  
579 then a lot of my own quote-unquote volunteer time but it's part of the undescribed time as a tenure track  
580 faculty member that is unaccounted for that you just put into what you're gonna do to make it work. So  
581 that's been real positive. I think the impact on the communities near us and that often see that "Oh, we're a  
582 University but we don't really see what the University is doing." Well, they're seeing because they are  
583 working with our students on projects that they want to have done that become part of classes on campus.  
584 And that's just been such a powerful experience. It's given students opportunities maybe in those cities that  
585 they're working with. We're working with San Juan Bautista this semester and Pacific Grove. And we've  
586 also worked with Seaside and Salinas the last four years. So that gives the students opportunities in those  
587 cities but also in other cities. They can say, "Hey, I did this project in the City of Seaside and this is what  
588 we did." And so when they are interviewing for jobs or opportunities or whatever they are doing in their  
589 lives, that adds to the repertoire of their experience.

590 **La Follette:** And so could you explain a little bit more about specifically what Sustainable Cities  
591 does?

592           **Fernandez:** Yeah, what it is, the Sustainable City Year Program is a partnership between a local  
593 entity, a local municipality, I should say, which involves having an elected body that governs it. Usually  
594 it's a city. And most cities actually, at least the ones around here but even nationwide and even globally, at  
595 the local level cities want to do things that are going to improve the lives of the residents and the local  
596 environment. So that speaks directly to issues of sustainability. You know, maybe they want to lower their  
597 carbon footprint. Maybe they want to look at water conservation measures. Maybe they want to make it  
598 easier for people to get around in manners other than by driving their own car that runs on gasoline. So  
599 those are all directions that cities might want to take plus many, many others. And often cities want to make  
600 these changes but they don't have the person power, or the resources, or necessarily the expertise, or the  
601 attention to address those projects head on. The idea is well the campus does. And we have a lot of  
602 students on campus who want to be involved in the their local communities, who want to make a difference  
603 and are interested in issues of sustainability. And so wouldn't it make sense if the city could work with a  
604 campus faculty member who could make these projects that the students are engaged with ones that the city  
605 wants to do. And so we've actually formalized that, where we make a contract with a city each year and  
606 **[1:00:12]** within that contract we say, "Okay, this class. . ." – and there are classes across the campus.  
607 We've had several classes in the CAHSS College {College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences].  
608 Estella Porras. I don't know if you know Estella? She's been great. She's done some wonderful work with  
609 local communities --she's on sabbatical this year --, with local communities that have made a huge  
610 difference with her Journalism students. I do it with my Capstone students. We have students who take  
611 Geographical Information Systems classes, who do things the city needs to have done to help a city track  
612 what resources it has, like cross walks or fire hydrants. Which ones need to be fixed. Which ones are  
613 broken. The city has to track all this stuff. These are projects that I think drive city staff crazy, because  
614 there are so many little things to do that the students can help with. And the students can make a big  
615 difference. And sometimes the students suggest ideas and directions to the city that it hadn't thought of

616 before that are great for the residents. My students in Pacific Grove right now are looking at ways of  
617 making bike lanes through the city because if you've ever biked in Monterey, the bike path ends in PG.  
618 You can't – I mean there are streets there but there's no bike paths. So how can the city formalize the bike  
619 paths and connect it to the existing bike trails that exist in other cities. Those are just a few examples of the  
620 kind of projects they're doing. Students in San Juan Bautista, I'll say one more. San Juan Bautista wants to  
621 remove single use plastic items because they are concerned about plastic pollution. Right on for them. But  
622 that transition is a challenging one because businesses are used to buying straws. They're used to buying  
623 paper or plastic plates to serve. Well, what are the opportunities? What are the alternatives? And my  
624 students are looking at those and creating educational brochures and educational pamphlets that can help  
625 these businesses make that transition. So those are the kinds of projects they do. And it reaches hundreds  
626 of students across campus each year.

627 **La Follette:** Yeah, so really far reaching in the campus and in the community.

628 **Fernandez:** Exactly.

629 **La Follette:** How do you see the University because it's shifted and grown quite a bit since you've  
630 been here.

631 **Fernandez:** Yeah.

632 **La Follette:** How do you envision that happening in the next few years?

633 **Fernandez:** You know, that's always a question and the best person to answer that is probably the  
634 President but even his answer changes, because it depends upon how much growth we're allowed by the  
635 Chancellor's Office, which depends on a number of factors. Part of it depends on the physical limitations of  
636 the campus in terms of the water. That's always an issue. Some people say, "Oh, there's plenty of water."  
637 Others say, "Look, we're depleting our ground water and we're not really measuring it so how can you say  
638 that we have plenty of water?" So that's a big issue, is how much access to water do we have on campus?  
639 That affects physically the amount that we can grow. Another one is, we have plenty of space. We don't

640 have plenty of buildings but we have plenty of physical space. We're the second highest CSU campus in  
641 terms of space. It's my understanding. And we are building more buildings which you need if you're gonna  
642 grow your students because we've run out of classrooms. So that's a constant juggle. But it's dependent  
643 upon how many students they predict that we will have. The Chancellor's Office tells us how many we can  
644 have. It used to be that we couldn't get enough. Then I remember when the transition happened where all of  
645 a sudden we were getting more who are applying than we can take in. So that was a very, I mean that's a  
646 better problem to have but it's not better for the students. But for the campus it's better in terms of the fact  
647 that we're not like, "Gosh, we need more students, we need more students." Now it's like okay, we have to  
648 draw the line somewhere. It's a different kind of a problem. But it's also going to depend upon the demand.  
649 Is there going to be an ongoing demand for students who want to get into higher education? I know in  
650 certain schools in the Midwest they are actually closing campuses because the demand has gone down,  
651 because there's fewer college age students right now than there were ten, fifteen years ago. I know the  
652 University of Wisconsin, for instance, is an example of that. I don't know if that's going to happen here.  
653 Eventually I think it will. Maybe in a little while. But these are the factors that can affect our growth.  
654 There's a number of them. Whether it's the physical immediate environment, like issues like water, the  
655 Chancellor's Office saying this is how many you can take, and/or the demand coming in. Not to mention,  
656 well, the funding which is what comes from the Chancellor's Office. It's all tied into that. So it's a really  
657 difficult question to answer. I see us growing. I don't see nor do I recommend enormous growth in any  
658 given year because that just sends ripples through the campus in terms of availability of resources, whether  
659 those resources are us as instructors or space. It's really hard to jump huge numbers in a year. It's better to  
660 accrue gradually and hope that you don't see a sudden shift down for one reason or another. That's as  
661 specific as I can get. That's not a number. Because I know I've seen numbers as big as 25,000 and as small  
662 as 10 or 11,000 for how big our campus could get. We are a little over 7,000 now.

663 **[1:05:41] La Follette:** Wow. And that's even grown so much since I was here.

664           **Fernandez:** Exactly. Yeah. And since we started with 700 that first year or something like that.

665           **La Follette:** So do you see the purpose or the Vision of the University having changed over time or  
666 changing in the future?

667           **Fernandez:** Well, that's currently a little bit of a hot topic, I think, on the political front on campus.  
668 I know the President is wanting to change the Vision and part of his argument, which I do understand is  
669 that our Vision Statement is not what's known as a vision – generally a Vision Statement is something  
670 that's like a few words long and our Vision Statement is much longer. So it's not a true quote-unquote  
671 Vision Statement from the generally accepted definition of Vision Statement. Yet it's a powerful testament  
672 to, I think, the formation and growth of this campus. So I think it's going to be retained as the quote-  
673 unquote "Original Vision Statement." Maybe it would have been nice if it weren't called Vision in a sense  
674 because it has a different meaning in different contexts. I still see that original Vision as being an undergird  
675 even if it's not *the* Vision Statement of the campus. I think it has some very, very important statements  
676 made that while they haven't always been followed, they do provide I think an ethical and moral  
677 background to future campus development and to continue campus development. Even though not all  
678 players on campus follow it, it's something that we can always come back to. So I'm hopeful that that will  
679 remain in whatever form it's called.

680           **La Follette:** And then how do you see your continued role on campus evolving or, you know, what  
681 do you see that being in the next few years?

682           **Fernandez:** Yeah. Well, I love working with students. So I want to keep teaching as long as I'm on  
683 campus. I would like to see the Sustainable City Year Program continue to grow, or at least continue at  
684 least in its current size. And my research, I'm hoping and I don't anticipate that's going to be going away.  
685 It seems to be garnering more interest over time. I'd like to become a little bit I'd say more of a writer-  
686 scholar on campus and off campus. At one point I thought maybe I'd get involved in leadership on campus,  
687 administrative. I'm less interested in that at this point. I'm more interested in providing contributions that

688 will be received by others both on and off campus in a way that's beneficial to them. So whatever form that  
689 may take whether it's my fog research. Maybe whether it's the books that I hoping to write. Or the  
690 program, Sustainable City Program or other issues associated with sustainability because I'm very  
691 concerned about our planet. I shouldn't say about our planet because the argument is our planet is going to  
692 go on, but how changes on our planet will affect both human and other life on our planet. That's a big  
693 concern of mine. I see it ... most scientists and many – most – many others see it. It's a concern and I'm  
694 hoping to be involved with ways to address that concern on multiple fronts.

695 **[1:08:54] La Follette:** Yes, so what do you – I guess it's kind of related, like what do you hope that your  
696 legacy on campus will be once you retire?

697 **Fernandez:** What I hope that my?

698 **La Follette:** Your legacy on campus.

699 **Fernandez:** Oh, my legacy?

700 **La Follette:** Yeah.

701 **Fernandez:** Oh, wow. I would say it would be helping the campus become a leader in and  
702 maintain a leadership role in being an advocate both sustainability and social justice, which I think are  
703 really cornerstone to a lot of what I've seen as the aspirations of many of the folks on campus.

704 **La Follette:** I think those are most of the questions I had.

705 **Fernandez:** Okay.

706 **La Follette:** Is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to add?

707 **Fernandez:** You really were pretty comprehensive. [Laughs] So I think you got a lot. Yeah. At  
708 the moment I can't think of anything.

709 **La Follette:** Yeah, if anything comes to mind let me know.

710 **Fernandez:** Sure.

711 **La Follette:** Thank you.

712           **Fernandez:** Thank you, that was fun.

713           **La Follette:** I really enjoyed this.

714           **Fernandez:** Yeah, nice trip down memory lane for me, too.

715    (END OF RECORDING)

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