

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

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

**Interview with Donaldo Urioste
Professor Emeritus, Spanish Language and Culture
School of World Languages and Cultures
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

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

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Narrator: Donaldo Urioste
Interviewer: Rina Benmayor

1 **Benmayor:** *All right, today is January 4, 2016. Happy New Year.*

2 **Urioste:** Happy New Year to you.

3 **Benmayor:** *And this is Rina Benmayor and I am interviewing Donaldo Urioste for our CSUMB*
4 *Faculty Oral History Project. Donaldo, do we have permission to record this?*

5 **Urioste:** Yes, you do.

6 **Benmayor:** Okay. Could you state your name?

7 **Urioste:** My name is Donaldo Urioste.

8 **Benmayor:** *And let's start out by asking you to talk a little bit about yourself, where you came*
9 *from before CSUMB, your background.*

10 **Urioste:** Yes. Before I came to CSUMB in 1995 I was a faculty member at California Lutheran University
11 in Southern California. I had been there for 13 years. A wonderful little place. It was private. It was not
12 very wealthy as a university and salaries were much, much worse than we have in the CSU. Before that I
13 was at the Colorado College in Colorado Springs. I was there for four years. I received my Ph.D. from the
14 University of New Mexico in 1978. Actually, I received it in 1985. I finished my coursework in 1978. At
15 that point I started working at Colorado College. Like I say, I worked there for four years. My area of
16 specialization is Chicano Literature. I wrote my dissertation on the Child as Protagonist in Chicano fiction,
17 back in 1978 to 1985. I did my graduate work at the University of New Mexico. And came to CSUMB in
18 1995 when the university opened. I was not looking for a job but that year my son had been admitted to UC
19 Berkeley, your alma mater, and on our way to visit him we stopped here at Fort Ord to visit a friend who
20 had started working here. They had just opened with the thought of opening a new university. Dr. John
21 Halcón, you remember John, I'm sure. And he had just started working here at the university and he and

22 Steve Arvizu at the time were the only two people living on campus. They had just moved into the
23 apartments here on ...

24 **Benmayor:** *On Patch. Or Simpson?*

25 **Urioste:** On Simpson Court. Simpson Court, yeah. Steve lived in one and John lived beside him. So we
26 dropped by to visit and John was not up to receiving any guests because the place was just so desolate.

27 **[3:14]** So we stayed at a local hotel and visited John. And he planted the idea, “Well, why don’t you think
28 about applying here? Because it might be a nice place, especially if you want to be stateside.” So I thought
29 about that. And eventually I did apply. I think that visit was probably in ... gee, I really can’t tell you. John
30 had just started working here so it must have been late ’94 or early ’95 because there was no campus here,
31 there was nothing! I thought about it and eventually applied. And as things would have it I made the cuts
32 and I came in with you.

33 **Benmayor:** *That’s right. We were in the second group of faculty hired. When was your interview?*

34 **Urioste:** My interview was probably in mid-summer of 1995, maybe even earlier. I came in June 5,
35 of 1995. So it must have been maybe in May or something of that year. I don’t recall the exact dates. I
36 recall coming up and I recall being here and starting in June but that was after having to come up to
37 interview. Then I think we had a couple of day sort of workshop and then came in June something and we
38 started.

39 **Benmayor:** *What was your first impression of the campus when you first came to visit John and
40 then when you first came for the interview?*

41 **Urioste:** Well, when we first came to visit John, it was not late at night, but it was dark. I called
42 John. I assume we probably talked on cell phone, I don't remember.

43 **Benmayor:** *I don't think we had cell phones then!* [laughs]

44 **Urioste:** [laughs] So we talked and he says, “Well, I’m now on campus living here.” So he gave
45 me directions and he says, “You’ve got to get off the highway and get off on Lightfighter exit. And there’s

46 going to be a little booth with a soldier there. You'll have to ask him for directions because it's a little
47 complicated. Once you get on campus, once you get on the Fort there's nobody around. It's very, very
48 desolate so follow directions very, very carefully." So we did that and it was like you say, it was night. Or
49 it was evening and you could see the abandonment. There was no life. We didn't even see any animals at
50 the time. It was pretty desolate. So when we saw John I don't think we even got out of the car, if I recall, he
51 said, "Let's just go someplace. We'll have to go someplace to have a bite to eat." We followed him
52 because we [6:29] didn't think about coming back over here. So that was my first impression. Now, when
53 we came back later, when I came back to interview and the like it was still very desolate. There was not a
54 whole lot. But I think if I recall, they had worked on some of the buildings here in Simpson Court. In this
55 area here. So there were people living here already. I remember staying in one of the apartments here on
56 Simpson Court when I interviewed. In fact, that's the apartment that I eventually got to live in. There was
57 more life, of course. When I came back you could notice in a sense the beauty of the forest. You know,
58 because it was very foresty. Small forest. But it was forest nevertheless. And I really thought it was very,
59 very nice to have a campus community in the midst of that natural life. Yeah. Of course we were all down
60 in Building 86. We all had cubicles. And we all had Macs. Well, when we first got here everybody got a
61 little Mac. We had no choice but it was very pleasant. I think that the idea that we were building a new
62 community amongst all of us was something that I thought was very, very unique. I'll remember those
63 moments for a long time because we'd have these meetings and it was all about community building. It
64 worked for a while. It worked for a long time, I think it worked for many years, for a long time. It's still
65 working. But after the complexities of administration started to fall apart then the community was
66 hampered also.

67 **Benmayor:** *Do you remember who was on your interview committee and what happened during*
68 *that interview?*

69 **[8:47] Urioste:** I remember two people. One was María de la Luz Reyes, fortunately for me. And another
70 was Gina Nuñez, who I met. She was a graduate student at San Diego State University. The others I don't
71 remember. I'm sure there were probably two others, I just don't remember who they were. I remember it
72 was a very informing process for me because I had never been through an interview like that. In the
73 interview they asked me about my approach to teaching, what my approach to just language in general. We
74 talked about that for a long time. They asked me also about the Vision. And of course, to me, the Vision
75 was something that was probably for most of us at the time, or all of us at the time, was probably the
76 calling factor for me. Because after having been at Cal Lutheran for 13 years and at the Colorado College
77 for four, two small private institutions that had a very, very miniscule Latino populations, I really wanted to
78 be in an institution where there was going to be masses of Chicanos/ Latinos. And with this Vision I knew
79 this was going to be the place. Both because of the Vision and because of the demographics. I was familiar
80 with the Salinas Valley and knew that it was very much like Oxnard. But when I was in Oxnard not many
81 Oxnardites wanted to go to a private university. Whereas here we would attract the local Latino Chicano
82 population to CSUMB. To a CSU. And that was tremendous. So we talked about that some. The young
83 woman, Gina Nuñez, she was a graduate student from San Diego State University. She was apparently on
84 the graduate level student council or whatever. And because of her position she was in the process here for
85 hiring faculty. It just so happened that she was I think a political science major for her master's degree but
86 because of her skills in Spanish she was teaching in the Spanish Department. So we got along very, very
87 well. I think her presence and the presence of María de la Luz Reyes and I don't know who else, they
88 extended me an offer.

89 **Benmayor:** *I am curious. What did your offer say? What position were you hired for?*

90 **[11:53] Urioste:** I was hired for a World Languages and Cultures Professor of Spanish. Because we began
91 a language program from scratch.

92 **Benmayor:** *So it did say Spanish Professor?*

93 **Urioste:** Yes, yes. It did say Spanish. But I was going to be the language coordinator.

94 **Benmayor:** *I am curious because mine said Multidisciplinary Faculty. [Laughs] What's that?!*

95 **Urioste:** [Laughs] No, I'm pretty sure it was Spanish. Or World Languages and Cultures. Because
96 unbeknownst to me they had established already the idea that CSUMB was going to have a language
97 requirement. That was fine. I mean that was great, in fact. But the level that they were talking about was
98 2+, which is, 2+ is equivalent to a superior in the ACTFL [American Council of Teachers of Foreign
99 Languages] book. Two plus is what they can do with students at the DLI [Defense Language Institute] in
100 two years. But that's intensive instruction, seven hours a day, seven days a week, whatever it is now. There
101 was no way we were going to be able to do that. So it took that knowledge to then say, "Okay, we can't do
102 that." But it was quite pleasant. I remember in that interview process, because I had to interview with the
103 committee, and I interviewed with Steve Arvizu and I think Armando Arias, because Armando was also an
104 administrator at the time, and I particularly remember the interview with Peter Smith because he was down
105 in Building 80 and he had one of those little offices in the back. I was interviewing with him he was sitting
106 very, very, very relaxed and with his legs extended on top of his desk, you know? I was just sitting there,
107 "Oh, my goodness, you know, and this is the President!" And I remember what he says. He says, "Well,
108 Donaldo, if we do hire you, you have to know that you will never work so hard in your life because to build
109 a university is going to be very, very, very difficult." And I said, "Okay, well I'm ready, willing and able."
110 And eventually I got the offer. So here we are. 20 years later. [Chuckles]

111 **Benmayor:** *Yeah. I know you've probably spoken about those early days of arriving here and*
112 *beginning. We had a couple of months before classes opened? Are there any particularly stories that you*
113 *remember from that time?*

114 **[14:44] Urioste:** I remember first of all just meeting all of our group. You know, our cohorts. You and
115 Tomás Kalmar I remember because you guys came from the same part of the country and Tomás was a
116 good friend of yours. I remember Tomás dearly. And then of course meeting those from the first cohort, the

117 planning faculty. We were not Planning Faculty. We were Founding but not Planning. I think the meetings
118 that we had initially, I remember one particular meeting. It was all of us. We created a big circle. I met
119 Chris Hasegawa for the first time, I think, and we had to create community amongst us. That was
120 enlightening. That was something that was very enchanting to me because the idea of creating community
121 and being part of community was something that I've always tried to abide by, live by. And here we were
122 creating a community. That was one. I don't know if you remember that meeting? It was in what is now the
123 University Center.

124 **Benmayor:** *I do remember that meeting. [Chuckles]*

125 **Urioste:** We met all of our cohort. Betty McEady was one of our group. And there were some fine
126 people that came with us, you know? Then a lot of the meetings occurred down in Building 86, because we
127 did all of our work there, if you recall. I remember sitting around, because the planning faculty had already
128 created some things that we were going to do. We had to begin to understand what outcome-based
129 instruction was.

130 **Benmayor:** *[Laughs]*

131 **Urioste:** What outcomes were. And how those outcomes were going to apply to our disciplines. I
132 think those meetings were very, very informative for me because I had not dealt with that at all. But one
133 thing I did understand from the conversations that we had back then is that when we deal with language,
134 language is very outcomes based as it is. So the difficulty for me and then, of course, for my colleagues that
135 came in with me afterwards, of creating outcomes for languages was fairly, fairly basic, you know?
136 Especially once we got the guidelines from ACTFL, as I mentioned earlier, the guidelines that had been
137 applied were from DLI and they were very, very different type of guidelines.

138 **Benmayor:** *Just for the record what is ACTFL?*

139 **Urioste:** ACTFL is the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages. It's not a governing
140 body but it certainly has helped language instruction across the country with guidelines for proficiency

141 based instruction. So having those meetings were really neat, too. I remember those who were in the
142 planning faculty, Josina [Makau] and Judy Baca at the time and others who were in our area, because we
143 were in the Humanities, the other artist, I don't remember her name, she was only here for a year.

144 **Benmayor:** *Suzanne Lacy?*

145 **[18:13] Urioste:** Suzanne Lacy, yeah. They were sharing with us about what they had decided. Of course
146 María de la Luz was in a different discipline. But sometimes we were all in the same meetings. We were
147 very, very small if you recall. There were, I think, 12 planning faculty and 17 first year cohort, something
148 like that. Is that how many there were of us?

149 **Benmayor:** *There were 13 planning faculty and then we were 21 or 22.*

150 **Urioste:** Yeah, because there were 37 total, right?

151 **Benmayor:** *I think so.*

152 **Urioste:** So it was a small group of people. I remember one of the meetings we had, it was I think
153 in the summertime, we had it up at San Juan Bautista in the Mission and then in the park. Well, not the
154 Mission but actually the building across the park from the Mission. At one of the hotels or something. I
155 can't remember exactly. But we went up there to continue creating community, new faculty and the like.
156 That was pretty pleasant, yeah. That's the first time I met Luis Valdez. We knew Luis Valdez as this
157 cultural icon, you know, right? And then wow! To be in the same presence was to me, for my discipline,
158 sort of, "Wow, you can't beat this!" You know? And then of course Phil Esparza was part of that group. So
159 it was very, very nice.

160 **Benmayor:** *Do you remember any of the exercises that we did for creating community?*

161 **[19:58] Urioste:** I remember only that one particular meeting where we were in the University Center. I
162 don't remember the exercise – but I was working with Chris Hasegawa. I don't remember the exercise but
163 we had to reveal and tell about ourselves to the others – introduce ourselves and vice versa. And then
164 introduce the other individual to the community.

165 **Benmayor:** *Right, right.*

166 **Urioste:** Chris and I became fairly good friends. Every time we'd see each other we would
167 remember that particular day because we became good colleagues. But the people that I met back then,
168 Tomás who just was here just a couple of years, I remember Tomás because he was a mathematician and at
169 the time, we had to create of course outcomes for language and the process by which we would assess those
170 outcomes. Part of it was going to be oral interviews but they've got to be guided and they've got to be
171 done with certain criteria. Tomás was of the opinion that because he spoke Spanish and he teaches math,
172 that he could have a student talk to him [in Spanish] in his class and then give him credit for languages. We
173 said, "Tomás, it doesn't work that way!" So we had that discussion for a while. One of the persons that
174 was with us back then was Alberto Ledesma. He is still such a wiz. I follow his work on Facebook and he
175 is now at Cal [UCBerkeley], and just doing wonderful work up there. But I haven't had a conversation with
176 Alberto since he left. I do on Facebook, I try to communicate with him. He was a wonderful colleague. He
177 was just with us for two years, I think, right? Through the second year?

178 **Benmayor:** *No. No, he was here longer. He made the decision to leave, as I recall, because his*
179 *wife was.... She was a student up there but then she got a position in a medical center in Oakland.*

180 **Urioste:** Exactly. She was up there, because they had their first child and it was hard for him to be
181 here.

182 **Benmayor:** *Right. Yeah. So he was here quite a while, I think, as I recall.*

183 **Urioste:** At least through '96/'97 probably.

184 **Benmayor:** *Oh, no. He was here through I want to say 2000?*

185 **Urioste:** Really?

186 **Benmayor:** *I think so. I might be wrong. Anyway. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that your*
187 *position was more clearly defined than other people's, because we had these sort of strange formations of*
188 *who went where. Do you remember any of that in terms of the Centers and Institutes and all of that?*

189 **[23:22] Urioste:** Yeah, when I came, because we had at the time Center 1, Center 2 ... three or four
190 centers. I was in the Center for Global Business Learning. The Center Dean was a woman by the name of
191 Barbara Robinson, I think.

192 **Benmayor:** *Brenda Robinson.*

193 **Urioste:** Brenda Robinson. Yeah. Her area, I assume, was more Global Business Learning because
194 she knew nothing about language instruction or language development whatsoever. When I came they said,
195 “Well, besides doing all the paperwork for developing the language program, you’re going to have to hire
196 faculty. And I thought, okay, I understood that since I’d been dealing with language instruction for almost
197 18 years at the time. So I knew what it would take to do that. I was very fortunate we were in this area
198 because we had the Defense Language Institute here. Making the necessary contacts, I was able to get
199 faculty very relatively easily. One of the problems with Brenda was that when I was trying to hire faculty
200 for that first semester, and we didn’t know how long those people were going to be here to teach, but we
201 certainly needed to have classes. So the first year we only taught Spanish, I think. No, we had Japanese,
202 too. We had Japanese. We didn’t know how long this faculty would be hired for. We certainly needed
203 people to teach. So I got names of people from the Peninsula because they were teaching already at the
204 local community college, Hartnell or Monterey Peninsula College. They already had positions. People from
205 DLI. And we had people on our campus. Cecilia Burciaga, I think she had a master’s in Spanish. I know
206 she had Spanish teaching credentials. And Gina Nuñez. She was teaching as a TA [Teaching Assistant] at
207 San Diego State University. I worked as a TA. TAs are very, very good instructors for what we needed at
208 the time, first year language instruction. Well, every time I brought these names up: Emilio Esquivel, he’d
209 been teaching at MPC for 20-some odd years; Ovidio Casado Fuente had been teaching at MIIS [Monterey
210 Institute for International Studies] for all his life; the only faculty member who would ever be tenured at
211 MIIS, Ovidio Casado Fuente. Cecilia Burciaga and Gina Nuñez. Well, four people all with Spanish

212 surnames. And Brenda would continuously question my hiring or my considering. “Are you sure they’re
213 qualified?” They don’t only speak Spanish, do they?

214 **[26:49] Benmayor:** *Oh, my goodness.*

215 **Urioste:** So we didn’t hit it off too, too well. I said “Brenda, look. Three of them have a lot of
216 background in instruction. Gina, she is the youngest in the group. She’s been a TA at San Diego State
217 University for two years teaching Spanish 101. That’s what we’re going to have her teach here and that’s
218 what we need. She’s got the ‘ganas’ [desire].” You know? But she would question everything that we
219 would do. Finally I just complained to Steve and to Peter about that. I don’t think it was because of that ,
220 but was not too long before they decided to consolidate two of the Centers. It was early in the first year.
221 Global and Business Learning was dissolved and we went over to Center One, that Josina headed. I think
222 Armando was the first Dean of Center One.

223 **Benmayor:** *Yeah, and Josina came in [as Dean] in January, I think the second semester.*

224 **Urioste:** Yeah. And that’s exactly when we came into Center One and Josina was the greatest dean
225 ever. I just love Josina.

226 **Benmayor:** *Yes. Not everybody agreed but I certainly did.*

227 **Urioste:** Yeah, I think she was just the greatest dean ever. She was our Dean and on Fridays
228 because I was department chair, we were always around. So I would go drop in on her at 2 o'clock or
229 whatever, and we’d just chat for an hour, just having a good time, having coffee and chatting. Just a
230 wonderful, wonderful lady. I love her so much.

231 **Benmayor:** *Yeah. And she did amazing things to build the Humanities.*

232 **Urioste:** And you know, she always advocated for faculty, and that’s why I think she was not too
233 liked by administration. Always. She never took the side of administration. She was our leader.

234 **Benmayor:** *So, earlier you spoke about the Vision and how it was a calling card to all of us, I think*
235 *to you and to most of us, because it was so unusual. How was it for you to begin to enact the Vision. And*
236 *was the Vision commonly shared by everybody?*

237 **Urioste:** Well, I think maybe the first ten years, if not longer, the Vision was always discussed.
238 I understand that for some people, their focus on the Vision was perhaps different than mine. I always saw
239 the multicultural aspect of the Vision and the language aspect of the Vision, the parts of the Vision that to
240 me would create a whole new type of student body at CSUMB. But it had other aspects. The scientists
241 would look at something differently. And others, different things. But they couldn't get away from it
242 because it had different core values, right? In fact, today, last year, we hired a new faculty member in
243 World Languages and Cultures, and we still had questions about the Vision. We sent him a copy of the
244 Vision. We said this is a document we abide by. I don't know if all programs or departments are doing that,
245 but certainly there are some of us who are still doing that because some of the core values of the Vision are
246 **[30:59]** so central. I think, given our first several cohorts of faculty, I think we have in a sense lived that
247 Vision. We have a university that is very, very multicultural. I don't know if it's because of the Vision or
248 because of demographics but I think it's a combination of the two. Today, students no longer read the
249 Vision. I talk to students and they say, "What's that?" You know? It's too bad because it's such a beautiful
250 document to look at. And it's still there. We had a conversation with our current President last spring
251 semester. I was in one of those TLA [Teaching, Learning and Assessment] workshops and it was on
252 Hispanic Serving Institutions, HSI's. So I asked the President in our meeting -- because we wanted us to
253 meet with him--, about the CSUMB Vision and why is it sort of second tier today. It's no longer in the first
254 page of the website. It's there but you have to look for it. He says well, "The Vision is still an important
255 document for the university but not everything is applicable today." He said something to the effect that. . .
256 I can't remember how he put it. I can see his point. We have changed after 20 years. This is the 21st year.
257 But we are still a university that is in the midst of a very, very diverse community and that Vision is going

258 to continuously help us to continue to bring Chicanos, Latinos and other peoples of color to our university
259 as long as we believe in the Vision. I think if our faculty and our staff and our students stop believing in the
260 Vision we could be like a lot of other CSU's, only relying on the demographics.

261 **Benmayor:** *Is that what he said?*

262 **Urioste:** No, no. that's my vision. I can't remember exactly what he said. He said, "Well, you
263 know, the Vision is still the important document but not all of the Vision is applicable to today."
264 Something to that effect. Yeah. I sort of understood but I didn't necessarily . . . you know. Because one
265 [34:03] of the things that we were trying to do when we met with him is that, we are an HSI. And what
266 does that mean? We pride ourselves being HSI because we get federal money for being an HSI, but we
267 have certain responsibilities that we have to abide by because we are an HSI. Now, how do we make sure
268 that our faculty are knowledgeable, because if we are going to be an HSI and continue benefiting from that
269 we have to inform our faculty that we are indeed an HSI and because we are an HSI there are certain
270 responsibilities we have as an institution to be sure that we attract or we continue supporting students who
271 are Hispanics. I think he is cognizant of that.

272 **Benmayor:** *You said that in World Languages and Cultures you do emphasize it when you hire*
273 *faculty.*

274 **Urioste:** Yes, we do.

275 **Benmayor:** *Which makes sense because language is such a key part of the Vision.*

276 **Urioste:** And not only that but we want to be sure that whoever comes to our campus is embracing
277 that Vision, not strictly linguistically, but also multiculturally and [in terms of] gender, and whatever
278 encompasses the Vision. We don't want to bring in anybody who is going to go against the Vision.

279 **Benmayor:** *Do you think other departments continue to do that?*

280 **Urioste:** I think those of us who are in the Humanities do. Maybe, maybe parts of Education. They
281 have a Dean there now who is Latino. But I can't say that Business and the Sciences have done that. Yeah.

282 And despite Business and Sciences, they had a very good dean that just retired, Marsha [Moroh]. But I
283 think sometimes the dean can't control what the faculty is going to do in the department.

284 **Benmayor:** *That was true from the very beginning. [Laughs]*

285 **Urioste:** That's true, yeah.

286 **Benmayor:** *I remember witnessing these very contentious meetings amongst the planning faculty,
287 you know, around issues. I wanted to sort of try to capture some of that tension because you and I lived
288 through that and I think it's important for us to document that.*

289 **[37:13] Urioste:** That revolved around a lot of issues. This was not so long ago. I'm not talking back at
290 the very beginning, but language has always been sort of an issue with a lot of faculty. If you recall, when
291 we started our university in 1995, we started with an outcome that was what we call Intermediate Mid or the
292 equivalent as a fourth semester as a requirement for all students. Now, that's four semesters. I was very
293 proud that we were able to achieve that. But given the curricular space that it takes, at one point it was
294 going to be an issue. And that came up six, seven years ago. I don't know if you remember when it was
295 decided there were going to be high unit majors and those high unit majors were going to be exempt from
296 certain requirements. We had that meeting in the new Science Building at the time. It was one of those
297 very, very contentious meetings because there were people saying, "Language, we don't need language that
298 much," blah, blah, blah. But I knew that from the very beginning, that it was going to take a hit. And it took
299 a hit then. It continues to take a hit. Finally, I think after we had the meeting just a few years ago to change
300 from ULR's to Gen Ed, I think we're now at the point where it's going to be safe. We now have a third
301 semester requirement for all students except transfer students who come in with the Gen Ed requirements
302 completed.

303 But some of those other contentious meetings, yeah. I don't know if you want to go into this area
304 yet, but I remember back in our very second semester when we had a meeting because our then President,
305 Peter Smith, decided that he was going to relieve Steven Arvizu of his responsibilities as AVP. Vice

306 President for Academic Affairs. Which is the Provost. And he did that when Steve was gone to a
307 conference at the national association for anthropologists, the AAA [American Anthropological
308 Association]. From what I understand, Steve Arvizu got the news that he was being relieved of his duties
309 via email. And he was sort of devastated, because he was in Washington, D.C. at the time. The next
310 [40:17] week we rallied around Steve to try to save his position. I think Christie, Christine Sleeter from
311 Education, called the meeting and we got a petition going. There were 37 of us who were faculty, and I
312 think we got 36 signatures to send that petition down to the Chancellor's Office. The Chancellor then was
313 Barry Munitiz, as you mentioned earlier. Well, there was very little that we could do but we tried to salvage
314 Steve's position. It didn't work. As a result of that, as we said earlier, I think we knew as a group of faculty,
315 if not as a group of Latino faculty, we knew that at one point Peter was going to be coming after others.
316 Rumor had it that it was because Steve had a lot of support from faculty that Peter didn't have. True or not,
317 I don't know. But certainly, for whatever reason, there seemed to be some type of envy there. It had
318 happened earlier, we had seen already before Steve. I don't know if you remember the person who was a
319 head of the ...EEO, was it called? What was his name?

320 **Benmayor:** *Ron Cisneros?*

321 **Urioste:** Ron Cisneros, yeah. I think he was alienated. He was, in a sense, released I think even
322 before Steve. It was around the same time. When the administration decided to move from Building 80 to
323 Building One, who was left behind? Ron Cisneros. I didn't know this at the time but I remember it was
324 [42:34] on a Tuesday, in fact, I remember seeing him on a Tuesday. Ron Cisneros would come around
325 campus and he walked into my office. I was in Building 12 at the time. This was before we moved to WLC.
326 He came in to chat and say hello. He was just walking around campus. It didn't dawn on me that he was
327 still down in Building 80 and all the other administrators were in Building One. That night, that night Ron
328 Cisneros hung himself in Building One.

329 **Benmayor:** *In Building One?*

330 **Urioste:** In Building 80, excuse me.. It was shocking. It was not till later we put things together but
331 the fact that he was left behind without any support told him something. That to me was one of the most
332 revealing things about Peter Smith. That one way or another, he would isolate you. Change your position
333 somehow, isolate you and then wait for you to just leave or disappear or go on your own. Or if not, he'd
334 fire you. So when that happened to Ron Cisneros it was very revealing – it was revealing, I think, to most
335 of us. Certainly to me. There was not a whole lot we could do at the time. I don't know if you recall when
336 Steve, at his release, we tried to organize around him, we sent that petition, as I mentioned earlier, to the
337 Chancellor's office. But it didn't have much weight for the Chancellor.

338 **Benmayor::** *Which his kind of interesting because Barry Munitiz was supposedly championing*
339 *Steve.*

340 **Urioste:** Steve, yeah. But I think the Chancellor is always going to be supportive of the President. I
341 didn't know Barry Munitz that much but I did know Charles Reed [next Chancellor]. Charles Reed said,
342 "Don't even talk to me about administration." We met with him one time after we were trying to get Peter
343 to resign and he said, "Personnel matters are my concern. You guys have no business talking to me about
344 [45:08] personnel matters. So it didn't surprise me that Munitz didn't support Steve. I think one of the
345 things that I remember, Steve used to say this and I think John used to say this as well, "We are at the
346 bidding of the President and the President can make those decisions." And he made those decisions. But it's
347 the way he made them. It started with Ron. Then he went to Steve. I think when we talked earlier about
348 Romelia Morales.

349 **Benmayor:** *Who was Romelia?*

350 **Urioste:** Romelia Morales was a faculty member in the School of Education. Liberal Studies, I
351 think. She was hired, this was probably our third year. Maybe our second year or third year. She was hired
352 in Education and she was struggling. I think the idea of the ULRs [University Learning Requirements], but
353 nevertheless she did get a vote of confidence for retention from the committees that decide those things.

354 Well, Peter decided that she shouldn't have. And he turned that around. Probably within his authority. But
355 Romelia came and she asked for support. She came, I think, because she had signed on as a union member.
356 From my recollection this was when we decided we would have to create an organization, a loose knit
357 organization or association that would support faculty. It was the beginning of CLFSA, Chicano Latino
358 Faculty and Staff Association. We did try to do things for Romelia but it just didn't pan out. There was no
359 way he was going to change his mind. So in effect she had to leave at the end of that year. However, we did
360 create the Association. Peter being who he was, he was not going to stop with Romelia. He was not going
361 to stop. But with CLFSA we had a little more clout. We could as a group oppose his decisions openly. So I
362 think the next time that we had a situation was when he fired Cecilia Burciaga, if you recall, this was 1999.

363 **Benmayor:** *What did he do?*

364 **[48:06] Urioste:** Well, he got rid of Cecilia as his Chief of Staff and he put her in another position. He did
365 it very, very slyly. I think it was not in consultation with Cecilia. It was just done. I don't remember what
366 position she was going to be going to but it was a different position.

367 **Benmayor:** *It was, I think, an Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.*

368 **Urioste:** Yeah, I don't remember. Anyway, it was not something she had agreed to. As a result of
369 that, Octavio Villalpando who was in a different position on campus, resigned his position. I am sure you
370 remember the meeting we had with Octavio. He revealed to us that he was going to resign. We witnessed
371 his resignation with Peter. He had already spoken with him. I think we knew that Cecilia wouldn't be the
372 last or Octavio wouldn't be the last. Octavio was not fired, he resigned. Bert suffered the same fate.

373 **Benmayor:** *Bert who?*

374 **Urioste:** Bert Rivas. Bert Rivas was the Associate VP for Academic Affairs. They [Rivas and
375 Burciaga] had been, as far as I know, strong supporters of Peter. Even in the time when there was conflict
376 between Peter and Steve I know Bert was avidly, avidly against Steve. Cecilia was working with Peter.
377 She was Peter's Chief of Staff. We had a conversation. Because I remember that meeting that we had with

378 Christine Sleeter, when Steve was released of his Provost position. I said, “What’s going on here?” I spoke
379 with Cecilia about that. She said, “Well, there’s nothing we can do.” I said, “What do you mean there’s
380 nothing we can do? There’s got to be something we can do.” She said, “There’s nothing we can do.” And I
381 said, “Well, why didn’t you let us know?” She couldn’t. Of course she was ... if she had any knowledge
382 of it. But Bert – I don't know. Anyway, then Bert. At that point, as CLFSA, we had to do something. So if
383 you remember, we went in and we asked for Peter’s resignation along with the Provost’s after having a
384 [51:00] very, very lengthy meeting of CLFSA. I remember there being a lot of people in our building, in
385 Building 49. It was our biggest classroom. It was overly crowded. We had community people and the like.
386 It came out at that moment that Peter was a different animal as far as administrators are concerned. We also
387 had a Provost who I happened to like as an individual, but it came out in that meeting that she also had
388 written a document back in 1974 that was very, very anti-Latino. This was Dell Felder. As a result of our
389 conversations in that CLFSA meeting– I don't know if it was the next day or that week or something – we
390 went and asked for Peter’s and Dell’s resignation.

391 **Benmayor:** *And how did we do that?*

392 **Urioste:** That was one of those experiences that was a very, very scary moment. I know we had
393 met because of the situation with Octavio and Cecilia and we had witnessed Octavio’s resignation. We kept
394 meeting in that light. At one point in a meeting it was decided that we would go and ask for Peter’s and
395 Dell’s resignation. That was a very scary moment because to go in and, you know. . . . I mean we all had
396 tenure but who knows what tenure is going to do, right? I know you were there. I know, Amalia, Richard,
397 myself, Ruben, Ray, we asked for their resignation.

398 **Benmayor:** *It was a whole slew of us.*

399 **Urioste:** Right.

400 **Benmayor:** *We walked in. Do you remember where we ...?*

401 **Urioste:** It had to be Building One. Yeah, it was in the conference room. I was very scared. You
402 know, like I say, Dell Felder had been supportive to me as an individual. But even Peter. He couldn't keep
403 doing what he had been doing. He had been doing it for too long. So we had to have his resignation. And
404 Dell, well, she saw the light and she did resign her position at the end of that semester, I think. That was in
405 **[54:07]** April of 1999, wasn't it April? I think it was April. I remember because the day we asked for
406 Peter's resignation and for Dell's resignation Maria Santos was on campus. I remember we had a rally on
407 the outside of Building One. We were reading stuff. I read a poem by Lorna Dee Cervantes, about the
408 young white man who didn't know about ... I don't remember the title. I am sure you are familiar with the
409 poem by Lorna Dee. Maria Santos said, "What's that poem?" Because I knew Maria Santos when she was
410 an undergraduate. She was an attorney for the Chancellor's Office. Because we had been having these
411 conflicts with Peter for such a long time, she was on campus to try to get some type of information. I don't
412 think she knew that we were going to ask for Peter's resignation on that particular day. But she was on
413 campus. I remember her because she was an undergraduate at the University of Colorado, Denver when I
414 was a counselor there. So I had known her since then. I hadn't seen her for such a long time but I knew she
415 was at the Chancellor's Office. So she came by and she asked me about that poem so I gave her a copy of
416 it. I'm pretty sure it was April of 1999. I remember is that day because it was so decisive for us that we
417 would go in and ask for the resignation of the President and the Provost. I mean, it didn't happen. Well, it
418 did with the Provost. But Peter was still around for another seven years. [Chuckles]

419 **Benmayor:** *Wow.*

420 **Urioste:** And that was because of CLFSA.

421 **Benmayor:** *Then how did CLFSA's actions relate to the faculty's vote of No Confidence?*

422 **Urioste:** I think the way it related is, given Peter's actions we would send out newsletters to the
423 entire campus community. We are all tenured faculty and tenure still meant something. The only one that
424 wasn't tenured was Ray, by the way, Ray González. But Ray was an old politician. So, we would write

425 newsletters to send out to the entire campus. Because Peter, at the time had also started sending out letters
426 on his own. And we would try to keep him honest. So I think in that way there was some type of
427 relationship. I think the faculty took their own vote of No Confidence. I remember the vote of No
428 Confidence but I don't remember CLFSA taking the lead. But of course Amalia, yourself, other people
429 were in the faculty who were members of CLFSA who were having a voice also. So it may have been
430 because of CLFSA but I don't know that it necessarily was CLFSA. CLFSA members for sure.

431 **Benmayor:** *Those were really difficult times. But on the other hand there was this campus culture*
432 *of creativity going on. How did you experience the creative part of those early years? I mean you helped*
433 *create the department. It wasn't called the department then. But the program. You were involved in so*
434 *many other things.*

435 **[58:42] Urioste:** I think it goes back again to what we were trying to create relative to our Vision. We
436 were creating a campus, right. In my case it was a Language program. Eventually not only language but a
437 department. And I recalled because the Vision said that we would – I think it was in our Vision – that we
438 would recognize local heritage and Pacific Rim languages and cultures. So what did that mean to us as a
439 program? I said well, heritage, of course local heritage languages and cultures, the entire Salinas Valley
440 was Latino, Mexicano. So we had to certainly focus on that area. But also the Pacific Rim. The Pacific
441 Rim -- What are the main cultures of the Pacific Rim? Well, we figured it was Chinese and Japanese, and
442 we also tried Korean, by the way. So we started with courses in those three languages and cultures. Another
443 local heritage language was Italian. So those are the five languages that we started with. And we tried to
444 create a program around those.

445 **Benmayor:** *Was that your idea? Or were you working with others?*

446 **Urioste:** That was principally mine in discussion with Arvizu, who was our Provost, because I was
447 the only person who was in Language. And it worked. For the first year we brought in a woman to teach
448 Japanese. She was from San Jose and seemed to be a really nice, nice young woman who worked very,

449 very hard. But then about the fourth or fifth week in after she started. . . . She was only teaching two
450 classes, right? Her salary was not that great. Two classes as a Lecturer. So she said, “I cannot live on this.
451 This was not what I expected.” So Steve was able to get her some more. But by mid-semester or even a bit
452 later she decided she couldn’t be here. So I had to find another Japanese instructor. Fortunately we were
453 **[1:01:10]** close to DLI [Defense Language Institute]. The first year was difficult because we were teaching
454 so many different foreign languages. But we had a whole community of language instructors here on
455 campus. As we defined who we were going to be as a program, early on it was going to be Spanish and
456 Japanese, with other Pacific Rim languages to be introduced as we developed. So by the second year I was
457 able to bring in Maria Zielina and Yoshiko Saito Abbott to help create the program as a department. And
458 that’s where I think creativity sort of started. How were we going to be different or the same as other
459 language departments and programs? The first thing we decided was that we would be more Latin
460 American than Peninsular [Spain and Portugal]. You, as a former Spanish faculty member, know that most
461 departments are Peninsular. In fact, for the first five or six years we taught no Peninsular classes
462 whatsoever. Until we got ourselves going. And it worked, I think. But eventually we realized also that we
463 couldn’t ignore the Peninsula. That’s what gave us in Latin America a start, right? So we had to start
464 offering some classes relative to the Peninsula. We were too small. We can’t offer those unique classes like
465 Quijote or strictly Siglo de Oro [Golden Age] type literature. So we offer them in our survey classes. In that
466 way I think we are still relatively unique. But we’re now 20 years later and we’ve made the transition from
467 WLC with an emphasis in Spanish, World Language and Cultures with an emphasis in Spanish, to a
468 Spanish BA. And we’re waiting right now to be approved by the Chancellor’s Office. So we’ll see how that
469 goes.

470 **Benmayor:** *And in that you will have more monographic types of courses?*

471 **Urioste:** Well, we will continue offering what we do offer until we get more students, you know.
472 We’re now in our 21st year. Zielina is in her last year or FERPing [early retirement]. Some of the courses

473 she offers, wonderful courses, but sometimes they don't attract students. So we have to find ways of
474 attracting more students to some of these classes. I'd love to have taken a class in Afro Latin Literature
475 when I was an undergraduate, you know. But sometimes the class makes and sometimes it doesn't.
476 Hispanic Women's Literature, the same. Sometimes it makes, sometimes it doesn't. La Narrativa
477 Hispanoamerican *igual*. So we do offer some very good courses but sometimes they just don't make,
478 because students speak with their registration. If you recall, in the early days we were able to hold classes
479 with 12 or 15 students. That's pretty impossible anymore. Got to have 30.

480 **[1:05:04] Benmayor:** *When you think back over the last 20, 21 years what do you think your greatest*
481 *accomplishments have been on the campus? Or what you are most proud of.*

482 **Urioste:** Oh, my goodness. I think the fact that [I] created a program that I think has been
483 successful. It's had its ups and downs. I think for the longest time, at least while I was Chair, and I was
484 Chair for the first 11 years, I think we had a reputation of being a very, very caring program. Caring
485 faculty. Over the last few years we've sort of lost that. Now there's a lot of infighting. That's true with
486 most departments. We do have that. But I think the fact that I have been part of a program that has been
487 successful. I think what I cherish the most are the colleagues that I've had at this university, we mentioned
488 Josina, Amalia, yourself. You know. People who came to live a vision 21 years ago and we're still in a
489 sense living that Vision. Having been part of that, you know? I think what we did as CLFSA, that was, to
490 me, very, very, very important. I think it still continues to be important. I wish the younger faculty and staff
491 would continue, and there are some. Every year we go to a Chicano Latino graduation and to be there and
492 document that. . . . And you and I, we started 20 years ago reading the names at Commencement and we
493 are still doing it.

494 **Benmayor:** *[laughs]*

495 **Urioste:** And to read out of a thousand students? We're reading Latino names. That's important,
496 you know. So our Vision is alive. So those things are very, very, very gratifying. I had colleagues from

497 three different institutions before I came here and that's some good people, good people. But none like I've
498 met here.

499 **[1:07:44] Benmayor:** *What makes it different?*

500 **Urioste:** Well, we did a lot more together. We were, we *are* a community. I remember when I
501 first met Amalia, before we even started CLFSA. She was here to visit Richard. We were in Building 86
502 and I saw this lady driving up in a black Mercedes. I think she left the lights on. So I said, "Ma'am, you left
503 your lights on." "Oh, thank you!" [In a high voice:] You know, how Amalia is. I didn't know who she was
504 but that's how I met her. Then maybe later that day Richard introduced me, I think. But not knowing her
505 and we've become such wonderful friends. I mean a *comadre*, that's how we talk to each other now. Ray

506 González, the guy was in my program and I couldn't have had a better colleague. In very different ways. I
507 mean Ray, because of his wisdom, his knowledge of politics. I've always had, I think, that desire to want to
508 make a difference. But I think having had Ray in my program, it helped me along. We talked about Josina
509 **[1:09:06]** already. There were so many wonderful colleagues. When I left California Lutheran University
510 after 13 years, I've never gone back. I've never gone back. I mean I had good colleagues there. But they
511 were colleagues. The ones I remember in my department, they were *conocidos* [acquaintances], you know.
512 They never became the gel like the colleagues we had here. And I think it's because of all of the things that
513 we did together. From the very first days. You talk about those early meetings. Those early 'get to know
514 each other' meetings. And then of course the activities that we went through. It brought a lot of gray hairs.

515 **Benmayor:** *[Laughs] And where are you now? You're still teaching full time.*

516 **[1:10:06] Urioste:** No. I'm teaching half-time now. I just did my first year of FERP. Faculty Early
517 Retirement Plan. So I started that this year. I still want to be engaged. Laura, my wife, she'd like me to pull
518 away as much as possible and I will eventually. But I think right now in my program we are going through
519 difficult times. I still want to be engaged. I think because of the nature of our difficulties, I've got to be
520 engaged. Otherwise, my particular program, the Spanish program, will fall apart. I don't want that to

521 happen. So I want to fade out slowly. I have five years to do it. But rather than doing the FERP program as
522 perhaps yourself or others did it, instead of doing it just one semester on, one semester off, I'm doing it
523 year round. Maybe I'll go to that later. I think I have a right to do that. But right now it will keep me on
524 campus. Just to try to get some type of continuity and calmness to the program because we're having
525 problems now.

526 **Benmayor:** *Yeah, it's amazing how so much of what we ... somebody else who was interviewed*
527 *mentioned that from the very beginning CSUMB was very personality-based. And I don't know if it's not*
528 *the case in other universities, I think it is, and that is always a challenge.*

529 **Urioste:** And because we are still relatively small. I think as we grow, personality doesn't matter
530 anymore because you get more and more faculty and you just don't even know faculty anymore. We knew
531 everybody by first name! Now, I see colleagues and I don't know them. Even when I go to the Academic
532 Senate meeting half the people I don't know in that room. At one time we knew everybody. Everybody
533 knew everybody. And it's not true anymore. But I think we have a good younger faculty. One of your
534 colleagues, Maria Villaseñor, for example, she's been a wonderful colleague. I think she is going to be
535 around for a long time, I think as long as she is happy here.

536 **Benmayor:** *But the work load is really extraordinary. Do you have any sense of the percentage of*
537 *Latino faculty?*

538 **Urioste:** I don't. I know at one time it was relatively high in the first couple of years. I think there
539 are still many around. I know in my program, for example, the vast majority are. But they're all part time.
540 They're all Lecturers, right? But the full time faculty in Spanish are all Latinos. There's myself – well, I'm
541 no longer full time. Rafael Gomez, Maria Zielina, she's no longer full time. And Gabriela Zapata. And then
542 the part time faculty, I think they are all Latinos.

543 **Benmayor:** *Well, it's because it's Spanish.*

544 **Urioste:** Yeah. Exactly. But in other disciplines I don't know. I think it's diminished. I think there
545 are still programs. HCOM has representative numbers, *todavía*. VPA has Angelica and Dio, they're both
546 full time. But the numbers have diminished, I am pretty sure, yeah. We talked earlier about HSI. As an HSI
547 institution we should have a good representative number to support those masses of students that make us
548 an HSI. Because 33% of our student population is Latino. Otherwise I'd hate to see us become like
549 Hartnell. Hartnell has a very, very small population of Latino faculty though they probably have 70% , well
550 50% student population. And why, I don't know. The dynamics of that is because people have made a
551 decision they don't want to hire Latino faculty. I think CSUMB, when we started 21 years ago, because of
552 **[1:15:04]** its Vision made a decision that they wanted to have peoples of color. And we happened to benefit
553 from that as Latinos because of the demographics in this region. But it should be something that is just
554 natural because the demographics should in a sense dictate that. But it doesn't always happen.

555 **Benmayor:** *I think we've covered everything that was on the topics for the interview. I was just*
556 *wondering if there is anything that you want to talk about that I haven't asked you about. Or something*
557 *that may have come up?*

558 **Urioste:** I think as I mentioned earlier, the 21 years have been, it's not always been a bed of roses
559 but certainly it's been very rewarding. I have no, no qualms or regrets of ever having come here. I
560 mentioned earlier that I was teaching in a small private university before I came here. It was a nice little
561 place. But it was not the place I thought I wanted to be at because I really wanted to be in a place where I
562 was going to be teaching Latino students, Chicano students in my areas of Latin American and Chicano
563 literatures. It's the area that I have a passion for. I've not always been able to teach that here because not all
564 students want to take Chicano Literature. But I have been able to teach some classes and Literatura
565 Mexicana which is also a language and other Latin American Literature and the like. And just being around
566 Chicano and Latino students, I have been for the longest time an advisor to the MEChA [Movimiento
567 Estudiantil Chicano de Atzlán] group here, and it's something that I have done since I started. As a young

568 student myself, I was part of a similar group, the United Mexican American Students at the University of
569 Colorado at Denver. I remember back then how we needed guidance from faculty, to guide us into what to
570 do, what type of functions to have. We became very, very successful at that small urban university. When I
571 went to Colorado College I was also the advisor to MEChA there. I think it was MEChA at Colorado
572 College. And when I went to Cal Lutheran I was the advisor to the students there. So to me it was second
573 nature to come here and be advisor to Chicano/Latino students. We've had very successful student groups
574 here. We not only have MEChA but we also had the Mujeres en Maíz and others. And they have their ups
575 and downs. But one of the things that I am very, very proud of our student Mechistas, every year they put
576 on this event for commencement, they put it on under CLAGA, the Chicano Latino Graduate Association.
577 But they're all the old MEChA students. And every year it's getting bigger and it's getting better. And it's
578 wonderful. But there were a couple of occasions where they used to provide a dinner for campus workers.
579 And I went to [1:18:47] those and I documented those on film, on camera. And those are the moments I
580 think that as a faculty member at CSUMB that have made me most proud because it was students doing
581 things for others. I remember --Dianne Harrison was the President at the time --, I made sure that she knew
582 about those. I made sure she got the pictures because I wanted her to understand these were our students
583 doing things for the workers of campus. You know. They haven't done it the last couple of years but
584 they've certainly done a lot of that. And those are things that I think really make the life of a professor at a
585 university memorable and great.

586 **Benmayor:** *How about some of your students? Some of the majors in your program. Do you still*
587 *keep in touch with them?*

588 **Urioste:** With some. I've purposefully not Facebooked friended a lot of former students because it
589 can be... Facebook gets enough attention just without that. But there have been some memorable ... Wow!
590 that's a good question. I haven't thought about this.

591 **Benmayor:** *Or student achievements that you're ...*

592 **Urioste:** I'm trying to think. Without thinking in the last year or two, you know, I've got to go
593 way back. We've had some good students. We've had some bad students.

594 **Benmayor:** *Any students that you personally have influenced or that became particularly close to?*

595 **Urioste:** I know there are some. I go back to one from my previous university. But here? Damn.

596 **Benmayor:** *What about the relationship with the Study Abroad?*

597 **Urioste:** We support Study Abroad and we recommend Study Abroad, especially for students who
598 are majors in the languages. Or students who want to complete the language requirement. But that is a
599 whole different program that's controlled by International Programs. I think it's called International
600 Programs. I think they do a good job. There are good programs in Spain, Chile. There are two or three
601 programs in Spain. Chile's got a good program. Mexico's got a good program for instructors, for teachers.
602 There's two programs in Mexico. One is for teachers. We don't get a whole lot of attention there because
603 these are the CSU International Programs. And then there's one program in Queretaro that is through the
604 **[1:21:59]** University of Monterrey. And it's a very, very good program. But it's not an area that a lot of our
605 Spanish majors want to go in. But yes, and we are very supportive of international programs for our
606 students. And in fact, we recommend it very, very highly. The problem is, however, like in Japanese, to get
607 a lot of resources and they are able to send the students abroad because of the financial aid that's there for
608 students from the hosting universities. The private universities. The CSU-IP doesn't have that. And we
609 don't have the connections to have that type of association with private institutions. But we have a lot of
610 students who are going, not as a program, but as a university I think a lot of students who go to study
611 abroad in Spain. And Chile. Some to Mexico. And there are some other small programs that are not CSU-
612 IP that they go on. Fortunately we have people like Juan Gutiérrez and Rafael Gómez who have been
613 directors of CSU IP that continue. They know the ins and outs of the particular program.

614 **[1:23:20] Benmayor:** *Well, anything else you want to add?*

615 **Urioste:** At this moment I can't think of anything else.

616 **Benmayor:** *Okay. Well, it's certainly been a rich conversation.*

617 **Urioste:** It's been a great conversation.

618 **Benmayor:** *Yes, and I've learned a lot of things, especially remembering some of the events and*
619 *where they are placed and dates and things like that.*

620 **Urioste:** Yeah, well you and I came in together so we know these things. I mean 21 years is 21
621 years. There are some things I couldn't remember. And I know if I were to look at these catalogs I'd say
622 oh, I forgot this, I forgot that. You know.

623 **Benmayor:** *What stands out for me sometimes is how we managed to build a university with that*
624 *excruciating work load and yet we come out of it at the end with, as you said, this feeling of camaraderie*
625 *and of relationship and community that I think will be for the rest of our lives.*

626 **Urioste:** Exactly. And one of the things, also, is that I mentioned earlier when I interviewed with
627 Peter Smith he said, "If you get this job you will work the hardest you've ever worked." And he was right,
628 absolutely right. I remember one moment when –you will appreciate this because you were also a Chair at
629 the same I was – that first document we had to create for our majors, the document that used to go to the
630 Chancellor's office. I can't remember what it was called.

631 **Benmayor:** *CPEC [California Postsecondary Education Commission]*

632 **Urioste:** CPEC document. I remember, and I was going crazy! I think I was at the point perhaps of
633 a nervous breakdown. There was so much pressure. And Armando, at the time, was the Dean. "How's that
634 document coming? Urioste, do you have the document?" So I said, "Armando, look, I cannot get you a
635 document by Friday. It's not going to be this Friday. I can tell you it's not going to be this Friday, so don't
636 remind me, please." "Oh, okay can you get it in next week?" "Yeah, why don't you just ask, then?"

637 **Benmayor:** *[Laughs]*

638 **Urioste:** I mean I wasn't sleeping. And oh, man! There was a little flexibility there. But that was a
639 hard time. And it wasn't a bed of roses all the time. But I think those hard times were very, very worth the

640 effort because I think we created something that will be here forever. We can say at one point we were part
641 of that.

642 **Benmayor:** *Well, that's the purpose of this Oral History Project.*

643 **Urioste:** Exactly. Yeah.

644 **Benmayor:** *It's before everybody disappears to kind of leave our legacy and make it known.*

645 **Urioste:** Yeah. Part of the people that are no longer here. You talk about a legacy. These
646 individuals, they were part of that first group. I don't know if you remember the young man, Franklin.

647 **[1:26:23] Benmayor:** *Oh! You know where he is?*

648 **Urioste:** I don't know where he is at.

649 **Benmayor:** *He is now the Vice President for Academic Affairs or for Student Affairs, one of the*
650 *two, at Dominguez Hills.*

651 **Urioste:** Really!

652 **Benmayor:** *Yes.*

653 **Urioste:** Oh, wow. So he went ... because he left us to go to the University of Pennsylvania, I think
654 if I remember, way back when.

655 **Benmayor:** *I don't know where he went but he has been at Dominguez for a long time. And the*
656 *reason I know is because I have an old friend from high school who is in Teacher Ed and she does Service*
657 *Learning at Dominguez. And so she keeps me informed! [Laughs] Because that's where one of our ex-*
658 *administrators for Student Affairs went. What was her name? You know. She had a Latino last name but*
659 *she wasn't Latino.*

660 **Urioste:** Yeah, yeah, I know who you are talking about.

661 **Benmayor:** *Anyway, so she went there and when she left, which was not too long ago, a couple of*
662 *years, maybe even last year, my friend asked me, "Oh, do you know somebody named William Franklin?" I*
663 *said, "Yeah." [Laughs]*

664 **Urioste:** [Laughs] William Franklin.

665 **Benmayor:** *Well, he's now a big administrator at CSU Dominguez Hills.*

666 **Urioste:** Yeah, because he was only here the first year. I remember that time. Do you remember
667 Jim White? He was a mathematician who decided he didn't want to partake in the process for tenure and he
668 didn't submit any documentation. Do you remember him?

669 **Benmayor:** *Oh. Yeah.*

670 **Urioste:** Well, you were on the committee. I'm sure he just didn't submit his paperwork.

671 **Benmayor:** *I wasn't on the committee. I've never been on the university-wide tenure committee.*

672 **Urioste:** But we were all on it, I think, the first year or the second year. It would have been the
673 second year. Or the third year.

674 **Benmayor:** *Maybe. You're right. I have been on it once. Anyway.*

675 **Urioste:** And yeah, you know, he didn't submit anything so what could we do, you know?

676 **[1:28:17] Benmayor:** *But do you remember the fight for tenure?*

677 **Urioste:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

678 **Benmayor:** *I mean the fight to have tenure?*

679 **Urioste:** Oh, yeah! Exactly. Alternatives to Tenure.

680 **Benmayor:** *Oh, God!*

681 **Urioste:** That was what made me sign on to the dotted line for CFA [California Faculty
682 Association – the union]. Alternatives to Tenure. What I don't understand and I have to have this
683 conversation with him sometime. . .

684 **Benmayor:** *And Steve Arvizu was an advocate of that, too. [Chuckles]*

685 That's what I don't understand, you know. I think, well, Steve because ... administration. There is no
686 alternative to tenure, you know? The Alternatives to Tenure is putting your life in the hands of that

687 individual. So I think if I have the opportunity to interview Steve I'm going to ask him, "Why were you
688 supporting Alternatives to Tenure?" Because that was something that – of course he was the administrator.

689 **Benmayor:** *I also think it was maybe the times. That there were sort of rumblings about tenure*
690 *nationally. But that was the one thing that scared me. And that's why-*

691 **Urioste:** Because we were all here on a one-year leave of absence.

692 **Benmayor:** *Were you on a leave of absence?*

693 **Urioste:** Oh, yeah, yeah. If I didn't get tenure I was gone.

694 **Benmayor:** *Okay. So, all right. So even with all the upheavals you never thought about going back*
695 *to ...?*

696 **Urioste:** Not that first year, no. But had I not gotten tenure I would have gone back just because I
697 was not willing to give it up. As it was, I didn't know all the people who were going to be in charge of my
698 future, right? I do have my first letter and it's lacking three signatures.

699 **Benmayor:** *It's lacking three signatures?*

700 **Urioste:** Yes.

701 **Benmayor:** *First letter of what? Giving you tenure?*

702 **Urioste:** Right.

703 **Benmayor:** *Oh. I wonder if mine is lacking the same three signatures! [Laughs]*

704 **Urioste:** I don't know. But these are the people who were charged with our tenure.

705 **Benmayor:** *It was the full faculty.*

706 **Urioste:** Full faculty, yeah.

707 **Benmayor:** *It was the planning faculty. Because I remember that when I came in all of our letters,*
708 *the first group – the second group, they all said different things in terms of tenure.*

709 **Urioste:** Oh, I don't know what they –

710 **Benmayor:** *I think yours said that you could come up after the first semester.*

711 **Urioste:** Oh, I don't remember.

712 **Benmayor:** *And mine said I could come up at the end of the first year. And Betty McEady's said*
713 *something else. And I remember Ken Nishita said, "Uh-uh. You guys all go up together." [Chuckles] And*
714 *that was a very good piece of advice because I would have come up for tenure and Steve Arvizu would have*
715 *been gone.*

716 **Urioste:** That's right, yeah.

717 **Benmayor:** *I remember him telling me, "Don't worry, you will get tenure." I didn't say this to*
718 *him, but "I really like you, Steve, but I don't trust that that is going to be the case." And I think I didn't*
719 *have any particular reason not to trust it, but just being untrusting.*

720 **Urioste:** Well, we didn't know. Yeah, exactly. We didn't know what was going to happen. But
721 yeah, I was prepared to return. See, Laura didn't come up until once the first year was over and I got tenure.
722 Then she came up. So the first year I was over here on Simpson Court by myself. I'd go down there every
723 weekend to visit her. But that was our arrangement. If I don't get tenure, I'll go back. And that was my
724 arrangement with my university down at Cal Lutheran too. I had a wonderful Provost down there. Her
725 **[1:32:12]** name was Pamela Jolicoeur. She was the one who, when I got this job she said well, "CSU's are
726 good." Her former husband was a CSU faculty member down in Northridge, apparently. She said, "If you
727 like it then it would be a good place to be but don't give up your position here until you know for sure."
728 And I took her advice. But she was a good friend also. God rest her soul. She died of a massive hemorrhage
729 just a few years ago.

730 **Benmayor:** *That was the first thing that really scared me, was this Alternatives to Tenure. I said,*
731 *"No! Sorry!" [Laughs]*

732 **Urioste:** Yeah. I'm going to ask Steve. If I get to interview him I'm going to ask him why were
733 you supporting Alternatives to Tenure. He'll explain it.

734 **Benmayor:** *In my mind that was the one thing that both Peter and Steve agreed on. [Laughs] I was*
735 *like, “No!”*

736 **Urioste:** Yeah, but I am wondering if Steve agreed on that because it was coming from Peter and
737 he didn’t want to contradict Peter. But I think that’s also. . . .

738 **Benmayor:** *I think he liked the idea.*

739 **Urioste:** Because I remember the discussions. I know that when we had a vote I think it was 36 to
740 one, somebody voted for Alternatives to Tenure.

741 **Benmayor:** *When was this vote? I don't remember this.*

742 **Urioste:** I think we took a vote as a faculty. That we didn’t want to give up tenure. I think we took
743 that vote that first summer before or that first year sometime. I can remember a vote. But one person voted
744 for it. I said, “Who could that have been?” Because it was a secret vote. But we’re all here.

745 **Benmayor:** *And the rest is history.*

746 **Urioste:** I was not about to give that up.

747 **Benmayor:** *Yeah, no, especially with a university as creative as this and as different as this you*
748 *wanted to have tenure. I mean there are lots of reasons to have tenure but one of them is... you know.*

749 **Urioste:** Security.

750 **Benmayor:** *Security and because we all believed in the Vision so much, to make sure that that*
751 *happened.*

752 **Urioste:** Imagine had we voted for that. And then the years that were to come with Peter, we’d all
753 be gone. We would all be gone! We could never have gone up against Peter and Dell and any of the
754 administration as we did, and survived. So no, there was no way. That’s why I think, if you recall, Charlie
755 Reed. Rumor had it when he brought in Dianne Harrison, that she was going to be following in that
756 because he was certainly opposed to tenure. When we had those [candidate] interviews [for President], I
757 wasn’t on the interview committee but I went to all the hearings to listen to the candidates speak and I

758 asked that question, “What is your position on tenure?” Dianne spoke positively of tenure. But I think she
759 had to because of who was in the audience. I don't know if she had other ideas or thoughts or not.

760 **[1:35:56] Benmayor:** *Yeah. We've had a lot of turnover administratively at this campus. We haven't*
761 *mentioned it in the interview but the fact that we didn't have five years of planning time before we opened.*

762 **Urioste:** *Yeah. We had three months of planning time. Well, the planning faculty had from January*
763 *to June and then we had from June through August, that was the planning time. But I guess that's the nature*
764 *of new universities, I don't know. And the fact that Peter hung around for 11 years, that's a long time for a*
765 *President to be at a university. I think.*

766 **Benmayor:** *Especially bucking the odds and the opposition. [Chuckles]*

767 **Urioste:** *Yeah. But we've only had three presidents. Peter Dianne. And Eduardo.*

768 **Benmayor:** *Diane Cordero –*

769 **Urioste:** *She was interim so she doesn't count.*

770 **Benmayor:** *Oh, I see. Yeah. And just as many Provosts, too.*

771 **Urioste:** *That's right. Yeah. Let's see, we had Steve.*

772 **Benmayor:** *Bert.*

773 **Urioste:** *No, Bert was – was he a Provost? Yeah. VP for Academic Affairs. We had more Provosts*
774 *then. So, Dell, Diane Cordero.*

775 **Benmayor:** *Marsha [Moroh], interim.*

776 **Urioste:** *Marsha, interim. And then *la que se fue*, wasn't she one?*

777 **Benmayor:** *Who?*

778 **Urioste:** *The one that just left ... Cathy [Cruz Uribe].*

779 **Benmayor:** *And then Julio*

780 **Urioste:** *Ah, Julio, right. And he was interim.*

781 **Benmayor:** *And then Bonnie. That's eight. It's kind of hard. Yeah. And then with all the budget,*
782 *you know. I remember – I'm breaking all the rules of oral history here because I'm talking about my own*
783 *memories as well! [Chuckles] But I remember being asked to make a budget.*

784 **Urioste:** Oh, yeah! “Budget! What’s that?” I had never ... yeah, what ...?

785 **Benmayor:** *I cried!. That was my breaking point. Josina said, “Make a planning budget,” a*
786 *baseline budget and I had no idea what to do. Some secretary or assistant, I don't know who she was, I*
787 *don't remember her name, handed me an Office Depot catalog. She says, “Here.” I said, “What do you*
788 *want me to do? Count pencils?!”*

789 **Urioste:** Oh, yeah. Jesus. I had forgotten about that part of it, yeah. I was at Cal Lutheran for 13
790 years. And after about the fourth or fifth year they asked me, “Do you want to be Chair?” I never wanted
791 to be Chair. It was a very small department. We had three in Spanish, one in German, one in French. It
792 would have been, after what we went through here, a piece of cake to manage. But I never wanted to take
793 on those responsibilities. So when I came here I sort of kicked myself in the butt because it would have
794 **[1:39:00]** helped just to know some of those basic ideas and concepts. But ooh, yeah. Jesus. I’m glad that
795 Josina was the Dean because I think she helped all of us, you know?

796 **Benmayor:** *That's right. That's right. That's absolutely right.*

797 **Urioste:** We’ve been very fortunate in our deans. Josina. Joe. Ilene now and Renee before her.
798 Those are I think our four deans. I’ve gotten along with all of them very, very well and I’ve been very, very
799 fortunate. I think there were moments when I’d get really pissed off at Renee because Renee, she was one
800 of us and then she became Dean. I was the biggest supporter for her being Dean but then she would think
801 top down. She was thinking too much - “Renee, don’t think administration. Be like Josina. Be protective of
802 us.” Were you still chair when we were fighting with Barbara [Mossberg] ? Do you remember Barbara?

803 **Benmayor:** *Oh, God. I wasn't chair. Renee was the chair.*

804 **Urioste:** Yeah, that’s right. Renee was chair. Yeah.

805 **Benmayor:** *I wasn't the chair and I'll go on record saying, and I probably shouldn't do this, but I*
806 *warned Renée when she was on the hiring committee. I said, "Do not bring anybody to campus that you*
807 *cannot live with." Because Mossberg had applied for Franny's position in HCOM.*

808 **Urioste:** Oh, in HCOM.

809 **Benmayor:** *In Creative Writing. And we said no, this is not ... [Chuckles]. And we hired Franny*
810 *instead. But she kept applying for things.*

811 **Urioste:** Oh, okay. Yeah.

812 **Benmayor:** *And I don't know if you remember, when she was hired as the Dean. God! and she had*
813 *us singing "You are my Sunshine."*

814 **Urioste:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah.

815 **Benmayor:** *And I thought, "Oh, my God, what is wrong with this woman?"*

816 **Urioste:** Oh, man. Yeah. Well, I remember she wanted -

817 **Benmayor:** *This is on tape, mind you.*

818 **Urioste:** Oh. "You are the smallest department so we're going to cut your budget." I said, "Wait a
819 minute, but we provide this program with a lot of FTES, Barbara. Go to that. You can't just cut our budget.
820 We have 13 part-time faculty members who we have to deal with." And she didn't know anything about
821 that. She was worse than us in handling the budget. She didn't know. She didn't know what it was about.
822 Yeah. I had forgotten about Barbara Mossberg. Yeah.

823 **Benmayor:** *Well, I think maybe we should not go down that road. So yeah, it was a very long and*
824 *difficult process. A lot of work. A lot of work. But I think...*

825 **Urioste:** So how long were you chair?

826 **Benmayor:** *I got the nod when Josina was bumped up to to Interim Dean. And that was the second*
827 *semester of the first year.*

828 **Urioste:** Second semester.

