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

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Transcribed by:

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

Urioste: Happy New Year to you.

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

Urioste: Yes, you do.

Benmayor: Okay. Could you state your name?

Urioste: My name is Donaldo Urioste.

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

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

Benmayor: On Patch. Or Simpson?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Benmayor: So it did say Spanish Professor?
Urioste: Yes, yes. It did say Spanish. But I was going to be the language coordinator.

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

Urioste: [Laughs] No, I’m pretty sure it was Spanish. Or World Languages and Cultures. Because unbeknownst to me they had established already the idea that CSUMB was going to have a language requirement. That was fine. I mean that was great, in fact. But the level that they were talking about was 2+, which is, 2+ is equivalent to a superior in the ACTFL [American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages] book. Two plus is what they can do with students at the DLI [Defense Language Institute] in two years. But that’s intensive instruction, seven hours a day, seven days a week, whatever it is now. There 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 that.” But it was quite pleasant. I remember in that interview process, because I had to interview with the committee, and I interviewed with Steve Arvizu and I think Armando Arias, because Armando was also an administrator at the time, and I particularly remember the interview with Peter Smith because he was down in Building 80 and he had one of those little offices in the back. I was interviewing with him he was sitting very, very, very relaxed and with his legs extended on top of his desk, you know? I was just sitting there, “Oh, my goodness, you know, and this is the President!” And I remember what he says. He says, “Well, Donaldo, if we do hire you, you have to know that you will never work so hard in your life because to build a university is going to be very, very, very difficult.” And I said, “Okay, well I’m ready, willing and able.” And eventually I got the offer. So here we are. 20 years later. [Chuckles]

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

[14:44] Urioste: I remember first of all just meeting all of our group. You know, our cohorts. You and Tomás Kalmar I remember because you guys came from the same part of the country and Tomás was a good friend of yours. I remember Tomás dearly. And then of course meeting those from the first cohort, the
planning faculty. We were not Planning Faculty. We were Founding but not Planning. I think the meetings that we had initially, I remember one particular meeting. It was all of us. We created a big circle. I met Chris Hasegawa for the first time, I think, and we had to create community amongst us. That was enlightening. That was something that was very enchanting to me because the idea of creating community and being part of community was something that I’ve always tried to abide by, live by. And here we were creating a community. That was one. I don't know if you remember that meeting? It was in what is now the University Center.

Benmayor: I do remember that meeting. [Chuckles]

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

Benmayor: [Laughs]

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

Benmayor: Just for the record what is ACTFL?

Urioste: ACTFL is the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages. It’s not a governing body but it certainly has helped language instruction across the country with guidelines for proficiency
based instruction. So having those meetings were really neat, too. I remember those who were in the planning faculty, Josina [Makau] and Judy Baca at the time and others who were in our area, because we were in the Humanities, the other artist, I don't remember her name, she was only here for a year.

**Benmayor:** Suzanne Lacy?

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

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

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

**Benmayor:** I think so.

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

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

**Urioste:** I remember only that one particular meeting where we were in the University Center. I don't remember the exercise – but I was working with Chris Hasegawa. I don't remember the exercise but we had to reveal and tell about ourselves to the others – introduce ourselves and vice versa. And then introduce the other individual to the community.
Benmayor: Right, right.

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

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

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

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

Urioste: At least through ‘96/’97 probably.

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

Urioste: Really?

Benmayor: I think so. I might be wrong. Anyway. Correct me if I’m wrong, but I think that your position was more clearly defined than other people’s, because we had these sort of strange formations of who went where. Do you remember any of that in terms of the Centers and Institutes and all of that?
Urioste: Yeah, when I came, because we had at the time Center 1, Center 2 ... three or four centers. I was in the Center for Global Business Learning. The Center Dean was a woman by the name of Barbara Robinson, I think.

Benmayor: Brenda Robinson.

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

Urioste: And you know, she always advocated for faculty, and that’s why I think she was not too liked by administration. Always. She never took the side of administration. She was our leader.
Benmayor: So, earlier you spoke about the Vision and how it was a calling card to all of us, I think to you and to most of us, because it was so unusual. How was it for you to begin to enact the Vision. And was the Vision commonly shared by everybody?

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

Benmayor: Is that what he said?

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

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

Urioste: Yes, we do.

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

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

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

Urioste: I think those of us who are in the Humanities do. Maybe, maybe parts of Education. They have a Dean there now who is Latino. But I can’t say that Business and the Sciences have done that. Yeah.
And despite Business and Sciences, they had a very good dean that just retired, Marsha [Moroh]. But I think sometimes the dean can’t control what the faculty is going to do in the department.

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

Urioste: That’s true, yeah.

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

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

But some of those other contentious meetings, yeah. I don't know if you want to go into this area yet, but I remember back in our very second semester when we had a meeting because our then President, Peter Smith, decided that he was going to relieve Steven Arvizu of his responsibilities as AVP. Vice
President for Academic Affairs. Which is the Provost. And he did that when Steve was gone to a
conference at the national association for anthropologists, the AAA [American Anthropological
Association]. From what I understand, Steve Arvizu got the news that he was being relieved of his duties
via email. And he was sort of devastated, because he was in Washington, D.C. at the time. The next
week we rallied around Steve to try to save his position. I think Christie, Christine Sleeter from
Education, called the meeting and we got a petition going. There were 37 of us who were faculty, and I
think we got 36 signatures to send that petition down to the Chancellor’s Office. The Chancellor then was
Barry Munitiz, as you mentioned earlier. Well, there was very little that we could do but we tried to salvage
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,
if not as a group of Latino faculty, we knew that at one point Peter was going to be coming after others.
Rumor had it that it was because Steve had a lot of support from faculty that Peter didn’t have. True or not,
I don't know. But certainly, for whatever reason, there seemed to be some type of envy there. It had
happened earlier, we had seen already before Steve. I don't know if you remember the person who was a
head of the …EEO, was it called? What was his name?

**Benmayor:** Ron Cisneros?

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

**Benmayor:** In Building One?
Urioste: In Building 80, excuse me. It was shocking. It was not till later we put things together but the fact that he was left behind without any support told him something. That to me was one of the most revealing things about Peter Smith. That one way or another, he would isolate you. Change your position somehow, isolate you and then wait for you to just leave or disappear or go on your own. Or if not, he’d fire you. So when that happened to Ron Cisneros it was very revealing – it was revealing, I think, to most 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 Steve, at his release, we tried to organize around him, we sent that petition, as I mentioned earlier, to the Chancellor’s office. But it didn’t have much weight for the Chancellor.

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

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

Benmayor: Who was Romelia?

Urioste: Romelia Morales was a faculty member in the School of Education. Liberal Studies, I think. She was hired, this was probably our third year. Maybe our second year or third year. She was hired in Education and she was struggling. I think the idea of the ULRs [University Learning Requirements], but nevertheless she did get a vote of confidence for retention from the committees that decide those things.
Well, Peter decided that she shouldn’t have. And he turned that around. Probably within his authority. But Romelia came and she asked for support. She came, I think, because she had signed on as a union member. From my recollection this was when we decided we would have to create an organization, a loose knit organization or association that would support faculty. It was the beginning of CLFSA, Chicano Latino Faculty and Staff Association. We did try to do things for Romelia but it just didn’t pan out. There was no way he was going to change his mind. So in effect she had to leave at the end of that year. However, we did create the Association. Peter being who he was, he was not going to stop with Romelia. He was not going to stop. But with CLFSA we had a little more clout. We could as a group oppose his decisions openly. So I think the next time that we had a situation was when he fired Cecilia Burciaga, if you recall, this was 1999.

**Benmayor:** What did he do?

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

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

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

**Benmayor:** Bert who?

**Urioste:** Bert Rivas. Bert Rivas was the Associate VP for Academic Affairs. They [Rivas and Burciaga] had been, as far as I know, strong supporters of Peter. Even in the time when there was conflict between Peter and Steve I know Bert was avidly, avidly against Steve. Cecilia was working with Peter. She was Peter’s Chief of Staff. We had a conversation. Because I remember that meeting that we had with
Christine Sleeter, when Steve was released of his Provost position. I said, “What’s going on here?” I spoke with Cecilia about that. She said, “Well, there’s nothing we can do.” I said, “What do you mean there’s nothing we can do? There’s got to be something we can do.” She said, “There’s nothing we can do.” And I said, “Well, why didn’t you let us know?” She couldn’t. Of course she was … if she had any knowledge of it. But Bert – I don't know. Anyway, then Bert. At that point, as CLFSA, we had to do something. So if you remember, we went in and we asked for Peter’s resignation along with the Provost’s after having a very, very lengthy meeting of CLFSA. I remember there being a lot of people in our building, in Building 49. It was our biggest classroom. It was overly crowded. We had community people and the like. It came out at that moment that Peter was a different animal as far as administrators are concerned. We also had a Provost who I happened to like as an individual, but it came out in that meeting that she also had written a document back in 1974 that was very, very anti-Latino. This was Dell Felder. As a result of our conversations in that CLFSA meeting– I don't know if it was the next day or that week or something – we went and asked for Peter’s and Dell’s resignation.

Benmayor: And how did we do that?

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

Benmayor: It was a whole slew of us.

Urioste: Right.

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

Benmayor: Wow.

Urioste: And that was because of CLFSA.

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

Urioste: I think the way it related is, given Peter’s actions we would send out newsletters to the entire campus community. We are all tenured faculty and tenure still meant something. The only one that wasn’t tenured was Ray, by the way, Ray González. But Ray was an old politician. So, we would write
newsletters to send out to the entire campus. Because Peter, at the time had also started sending out letters on his own. And we would try to keep him honest. So I think in that way there was some type of relationship. I think the faculty took their own vote of No Confidence. I remember the vote of No Confidence but I don't remember CLFSA taking the lead. But of course Amalia, yourself, other people were in the faculty who were members of CLFSA who were having a voice also. So it may have been because of CLFSA but I don't know that it necessarily was CLFSA. CLFSA members for sure.

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

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

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

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

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

Urioste: Well, we will continue offering what we do offer until we get more students, you know.

We’re now in our 21st year. Zielina is in her last year or FERPing [early retirement]. Some of the courses
she offers, wonderful courses, but sometimes they don’t attract students. So we have to find ways of attracting more students to some of these classes. I’d love to have taken a class in Afro Latin Literature when I was an undergraduate, you know. But sometimes the class makes and sometimes it doesn’t. Hispanic Women’s Literature, the same. Sometimes it makes, sometimes it doesn’t. La Narrativa Hispanoameric 

igual. So we do offer some very good courses but sometimes they just don’t make, because students speak with their registration. If you recall, in the early days we were able to hold classes with 12 or 15 students. That’s pretty impossible anymore. Got to have 30.

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

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

Benmayor: [laughs]

Urioste: And to read out of a thousand students? We’re reading Latino names. That’s important, you know. So our Vision is alive. So those things are very, very, very gratifying. I had colleagues from
three different institutions before I came here and that’s some good people, good people. But none like I’ve met here.

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

Urioste: Well, we did a lot more together. We were, we *are* a community. I remember when I first met Amalia, before we even started CLFSA. She was here to visit Richard. We were in Building 86 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 your lights on.” “Oh, thank you!” [In a high voice:] You know, how Amalia is. I didn’t know who she was but that’s how I met her. Then maybe later that day Richard introduced me, I think. But not knowing her and we’ve become such wonderful friends. I mean a *comadre*, that’s how we talk to each other now. Ray González, the guy was in my program and I couldn’t have had a better colleague. In very different ways. I mean Ray, because of his wisdom, his knowledge of politics. I’ve always had, I think, that desire to want to make a difference. But I think having had Ray in my program, it helped me along. We talked about Josina [1:09:06] already. There were so many wonderful colleagues. When I left California Lutheran University after 13 years, I’ve never gone back. I’ve never gone back. I mean I had good colleagues there. But they were colleagues. The ones I remember in my department, they were *conocidos* [acquaintances], you know. They never became the gel like the colleagues we had here. And I think it’s because of all of the things that we did together. From the very first days. You talk about those early meetings. Those early ‘get to know each other’ meetings. And then of course the activities that we went through. It brought a lot of gray hairs.

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

[1:10:06] Urioste: No. I’m teaching half-time now. I just did my first year of FERP. Faculty Early Retirement Plan. So I started that this year. I still want to be engaged. Laura, my wife, she’d like me to pull away as much as possible and I will eventually. But I think right now in my program we are going through difficult times. I still want to be engaged. I think because of the nature of our difficulties, I’ve got to be engaged. Otherwise, my particular program, the Spanish program, will fall apart. I don't want that to
happen. So I want to fade out slowly. I have five years to do it. But rather than doing the FERP program as
perhaps yourself or others did it, instead of doing it just one semester on, one semester off, I’m doing it
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
campus. Just to try to get some type of continuity and calmness to the program because we’re having
problems now.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Urioste: I think as I mentioned earlier, the 21 years have been, it’s not always been a bed or roses but certainly it’s been very rewarding. I have no, no qualms or regrets of ever having come here. I mentioned earlier that I was teaching in a small private university before I came here. It was a nice little 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 was going to be teaching Latino students, Chicano students in my areas of Latin American and Chicano literatures. It’s the area that I have a passion for. I’ve not always been able to teach that here because not all students want to take Chicano Literature. But I have been able to teach some classes and Literatura Mexicana which is also a language and other Latin American Literature and the like. And just being around Chicano and Latino students, I have been for the longest time an advisor to the MEChA [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Atzlán] group here, and it’s something that I have done since I started. As a young
student myself, I was part of a similar group, the United Mexican American Students at the University of Colorado at Denver. I remember back then how we needed guidance from faculty, to guide us into what to do, what type of functions to have. We became very, very successful at that small urban university. When I went to Colorado College I was also the advisor to MEChA there. I think it was MEChA at Colorado College. And when I went to Cal Lutheran I was the advisor to the students there. So to me it was second nature to come here and be advisor to Chicano/Latino students. We’ve had very successful student groups here. We not only have MEChA but we also had the Mujeres en Maíz and others. And they have their ups and downs. But one of the things that I am very, very proud of our student Mechistas, every year they put on this event for commencement, they put it on under CLAGA, the Chicano Latino Graduate Association. But they’re all the old MEChA students. And every year it’s getting bigger and it’s getting better. And it’s wonderful. But there were a couple of occasions where they used to provide a dinner for campus workers.

And I went to [1:18:47] those and I documented those on film, on camera. And those are the moments I think that as a faculty member at CSUMB that have made me most proud because it was students doing things for others. I remember –Dianne Harrison was the President at the time --, I made sure that she knew about those. I made sure she got the pictures because I wanted her to understand these were our students doing things for the workers of campus. You know. They haven’t done it the last couple of years but they’ve certainly done a lot of that. And those are things that I think really make the life of a professor at a university memorable and great.

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

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

Benmayor: Or student achievements that you’re ...
Urioste: I’m trying to think. Without thinking in the last year or two, you know, I’ve got to go way back. We’ve had some good students. We’ve had some bad students.

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

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

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

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

Benmayor: *Well, anything else you want to add?*

Urioste: At this moment I can’t think of anything else.
Benmayor: Okay. Well, it’s certainly been a rich conversation.

Urioste: It’s been a great conversation.

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

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

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

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

Benmayor: CPEC [California Postsecondary Education Commission]

Urioste: CPEC document. I remember, and I was going crazy! I think I was at the point perhaps of a nervous breakdown. There was so much pressure. And Armando, at the time, was the Dean. “How’s that document coming? Urioste, do you have the document?” So I said, “Armando, look, I cannot get you a 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 remind me, please.” “Oh, okay can you get it in next week?” “Yeah, why don’t you just ask, then?”

Benmayor: [Laughs]

Urioste: I mean I wasn’t sleeping. And oh, man! There was a little flexibility there. But that was a hard time. And it wasn’t a bed of roses all the time. But I think those hard times were very, very worth the
effort because I think we created something that will be here forever. We can say at one point we were part
of that.

Benmayor: Well, that’s the purpose of this Oral History Project.

Urioste: Exactly. Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

Urioste: Really!

Benmayor: Yes.

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

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

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

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

Benmayor: Well, he’s now a big administrator at CSU Dominguez Hills.

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

Benmayor: Oh. Yeah.

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

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

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

Benmayor: Maybe. You’re right. I have been on it once. Anyway.

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

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

Urioste: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Benmayor: I mean the fight to have tenure?

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

Benmayor: Oh, God!

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

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

That’s what I don’t understand, you know. I think, well, Steve because … administration. There is no alternative to tenure, you know? The Alternatives to Tenure is putting your life in the hands of that
individual. So I think if I have the opportunity to interview Steve I’m going to ask him, “Why were you supporting Alternatives to Tenure?” Because that was something that – of course he was the administrator.

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

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

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

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

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

*Urioste:* Not that first year, no. But had I not gotten tenure I would have gone back just because I 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 future, right? I do have my first letter and it’s lacking three signatures.

*Benmayor:* It’s lacking three signatures?

*Urioste:* Yes.

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

*Urioste:* Right.

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

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

*Benmayor:* It was the full faculty.

*Urioste:* Full faculty, yeah.

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

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

*Benmayor:* I think yours said that you could come up after the first semester.
Urioste: Oh, I don’t remember.

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

Urioste: That’s right, yeah.

Benmayor: I remember him telling me, “Don’t worry, you will get tenure.” I didn’t say this to 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 have any particular reason not to trust it, but just being untrusting.

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

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

Urioste: Yeah. I’m going to ask Steve. If I get to interview him I’m going to ask him why were you supporting Alternatives to Tenure. He’ll explain it.
Benmayor: In my mind that was the one thing that both Peter and Steve agreed on. [Laughs] I was like, “No!”

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

Benmayor: I think he liked the idea.

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

Benmayor: When was this vote? I don’t remember this.

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

Benmayor: And the rest is history.

Urioste: I was not about to give that up.

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

Urioste: Security.

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

Urioste: Imagine had we voted for that. And then the years that were to come with Peter, we’d all be gone. We would all be gone! We could never have gone up against Peter and Dell and any of the administration as we did, and survived. So no, there was no way. That’s why I think, if you recall, Charlie Reed. Rumor had it when he brought in Dianne Harrison, that she was going to be following in that because he was certainly opposed to tenure. When we had those [candidate] interviews [for President], I wasn’t on the interview committee but I went to all the hearings to listen to the candidates speak and I
asked that question, “What is your position on tenure?” Dianne spoke positively of tenure. But I think she had to because of who was in the audience. I don't know if she had other ideas or thoughts or not.

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

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

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

Urioste: Yeah. But we’ve only had three presidents. Peter Dianne. And Eduardo.

Benmayor: Diane Cordero –

Urioste: She was interim so she doesn’t count.

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

Urioste: That’s right. Yeah. Let’s see, we had Steve.

Benmayor: Bert.

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

Benmayor: Marsha [Moroh], interim.

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

Benmayor: Who?

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

Benmayor: And then Julio

Urioste: Ah, Julio, right. And he was interim.
Benmayor: And then Bonnie. That’s eight. It’s kind of hard. Yeah. And then with all the budget, you know. I remember – I’m breaking all the rules of oral history here because I’m talking about my own memories as well! [Chuckles] But I remember being asked to make a budget.

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

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

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

Benmayor: That’s right. That’s right. That’s absolutely right.

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

Benmayor: Oh, God. I wasn’t chair. Renee was the chair.

Urioste: Yeah, that’s right. Renee was chair. Yeah.
Benmayor:: I wasn’t the chair and I’ll go on record saying, and I probably shouldn’t do this, but I warned Renée when she was on the hiring committee. I said, “Do not bring anybody to campus that you cannot live with.” Because Mossberg had applied for Franny’s position in HCOM.

Urioste: Oh, in HCOM.

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

Urioste: Oh, okay. Yeah.

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

Urioste: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Benmayor: And I thought, “Oh, my God, what is wrong with this woman?”

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

Benmayor: This is on tape, mind you.

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

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

Urioste: So how long were you chair?

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

Urioste: Second semester.
Benmayor: And then I stepped down in 2001, I think. So about five years.

Urioste: About five years, yeah.

Benmayor: But it was a big department and had a lot of faculty who could step up. I mean my concept of Chairs was that you rotate, you know, and that it should be that way.

Urioste: Yeah. And that’s true.

Benmayor: But when you have a small department it’s a lot harder to do that.

Urioste: Anyway, like I say, we’ve run into problems as of late but I think we’ll survive those.

Benmayor: Good. Well, Donaldo, I want to thank you very, very much for this really wonderful opportunity.

Urioste: It was a good conversation.

Benmayor: Yes, it’s been really lovely because it’s allowed me also to reminisce through you. So I want to thank you very much.

Urioste: No problem. I’m glad we did it.

Benmayor: Maybe we’ll be able to do follow-ups.

Urioste: I want to because I’ve got to think about those students. I’ve been so student oriented and I know that we have those students but who are they right now? It slipped my mind.

Benmayor: All right. I’m going to turn this off now and hope that [it recorded!].

(END OF RECORDING)

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