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An Act of Love: Serving Undocumented Students at UC Santa Cruz--An Oral History with EOP Director Pablo Reguerin

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An Act of Love – Serving Undocumented Students

at UC Santa Cruz:

*An Oral History with Pablo Reguerín,
Executive Director for Retention Services and Educational Opportunity
Programs*

Interviewed by Samantha Williams

Edited by Irene Reti

Santa Cruz

University of California, Santa Cruz

University Library

2016

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Interview History

Pablo Guillermo Reguerín currently serves as the Executive Director for Retention Services and Educational Opportunity Programs at UC Santa Cruz, providing leadership and oversight to a cluster of student services offices charged with retaining and graduating students with a focus on educational equity.

Since September 2009, Mr. Reguerín has led efforts to integrate student services to develop student care teams, increased case-management of vulnerable student populations and data-driven intervention programs. These efforts have resulted in Individual Success Plans for cohorts of EOP students, intensive advising services for immigrant and undocumented / AB540 students, a newly launched Textbook Lending Library for students facing financial hardship and a Laptop pilot program for students that arrive to campus without a laptop or computer. In collaboration with faculty partners and the Office of Institutional Research, Pablo has launched an evidence-based evaluation process of the retention services units through the use of logic models to further deepen the utilization of research based practices and continuous improvement.

Mr. Reguerín has worked at UCSC for over fifteen years, previously serving as the Deputy Director of the Educational Partnership Center and as a Senior Admissions Counselor with the Office of Admissions. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from UC Santa Cruz in Latino and Latin American Studies and his Master of Arts degree from Teachers College, Columbia University in Educational Leadership and Administration.

UCSC now serves one of the largest populations of undocumented students at any college in the United States. This commitment dates back at least ten years, to the activist efforts of a group of undocumented students calling themselves

Students Informing Now, who through their activism first made their challenges known to the campus community and beyond.¹

EOP's continued services are key to the retention and success of this community of students. This oral history goes to press shortly after the election of the Trump administration. It is important to note that UCSC's dedication to serving undocumented / AB 540 students remains steadfast. Reguerín wrote the following statement which appeared on EOP's website in November 2016:

The EOP community stands with undocumented students and marginalized communities that have been targeted and dehumanized in the political rhetoric of this election, the republican candidate and his supporters. The election outcome does not reduce our commitment or responsibility to serve undocumented students, in fact, we recommit ourselves to educational equity and social justice for all of our students and community members.

The Undocumented Student Services team and initiatives have been developed with love, compassion, expertise in student success research and student initiated projects. The outcome of the election does not impact our funding, current services, and our creativity in partnering with students to overcome the injustices they face in pursuing higher education.

Opportunity and equity programs like EOP are born out of the struggle for social change--we stand on the shoulders of all those that struggled in the civil rights movement. We embrace our roots as we continue our service and support to the undocumented student community. Please join us in supporting our students and standing in solidarity with undocumented students.

¹ For more on Students Informing Now (SIN) see <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1598/JAAL.52.5.8/pdf> and <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ821605.pdf>

This oral history was conducted in July 2016 by Samantha Williams, graduate student in history, under the direction of the Regional History Project at the UCSC Library. The Regional History Project is supported administratively by Elisabeth Remak-Honnef, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian Elizabeth Cowell.

—Irene Reti

Director, Regional History Project, UCSC Library

December 12, 2016

Early Life

Williams: This is Samantha Williams, interviewing Pablo Reguerín on July 15, 2016, at the EOP [Educational Opportunity Program] office at UC Santa Cruz. So, where were you born?

Reguerín: I was born in La Paz, Bolivia.

Williams: And where did you grow up?

Reguerín: I grew up in California. We came when I was two. So I grew up in the San Jose area, Bay Area.

Williams: And when you attended UCSC, did you want to work here when you graduated? Did you have an idea of what you wanted to do?

Reguerín: Not really. I began, needing a work-study job, and my first job was with Olga Nájera-Ramírez in anthropology.² I did transcribing for her interviews.

² See Susy Zepeda, Interviewer and Editor, *Crossing Borders, Crossing Worlds: An Oral History with UC Santa Cruz Professor Olga Nájera-Ramírez* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2014). <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3bz3s3t5>

And then I got a job at EOP as a work-study student, doing outreach. I didn't know at the time that people did this type of work, of supporting other people and facilitating them meeting their educational goals and overcoming barriers. And so that was my first introduction to this type of work, and then over time I got more interested in educational equity, and in trying to break down barriers, institutional barriers, and wanting to make sure communities were served, particularly those that we'd historically underserved. That became a passion of mine.

Williams: And do you have personal connections with undocumented friends, family members, colleagues who maybe inspired you in that regard, or in the work you do now?

Reguerín: Definitely family and relatives and friends. I was a teenager when there was the immigration reform from Ronald Reagan, in the 1984-1986 timeframe.³ In high school, I was involved with an immigrant rights nonprofit

³ The Immigration Reform and Control Act (ICRA) of 1986 was a comprehensive reform effort signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. It legalized aliens who had resided in the United States since January 1, 1982 and had resided there continuously with the penalty of a fine, back taxes due, and admission of guilt; candidates were required to prove that they were not guilty of

that was helping people learn English, as one of the requirements. My mom was a teacher, an English teacher. She taught at community college, and then she started teaching at a church as a volunteer, and then later developed a school for newcomer immigrants to get them adjusted, supported. At the time, forty hours of English was required in order to file for getting your status regularized through that immigration reform. And then you had to take an exam, get interviewed, and all kinds of other things. But in that process, I got to see people who would work by day and come to school at night. And I helped in the office. I did some of the accounting and got to see lives change. It was not just enough to learn English. People wanted to continue their education, and get a high school diploma, and go on to college.

So I was well aware of seeing people live in the shadows and secrecy. And then also seeing people have the ability to work and kind of come out of the shadows, that transformation and that transition. That's always been a very big inspiration.

crimes and that they possessed minimal knowledge about U.S. history, government, and the English language.

History of Undocumented Immigrant College Students at the University of California

Williams: How would you say those experiences impact how you approach your job now?

Reguerín: Oh, tremendously, in a sense of justice for immigrants, and then, in my role as EOP director working in the area of student success, focusing on educational equity. Our program is a direct descendent of the civil rights movement. EOP programs didn't exist prior to the civil rights movement. I like to remind our team members, and staff and students that we stand on the shoulders of the struggle of the civil rights movement and all those who fought for broadening the access to higher education. I feel I have a direct role in building equity, making UC Santa Cruz a more equitable institution, and that directly comes from my earlier experiences.

Williams: And would you say that the university programs, maybe before AB 540—did they acknowledge those struggles, or the experiences that you’ve talked about, in any way?

Reguerín: Well, the issues have become politicized. So if you go back, historically, in the nineties, there’s this time period that’s the Leticia A case lawsuits.⁴ [So at that time] undocumented students could come to UC and pay in-state tuition. And [that didn’t change] until the Bradford case, where an anti-immigrant group filed a lawsuit against the UCLA Registrar, wanting [undocumented students] to be charged out-of-state tuition.

⁴ Until 1991, undocumented immigrant students could attend California's colleges and universities as state residents if they could prove that they had lived in the state for a year and a day prior to application and planned to make California their home. See: *Leticia A. v. Board of Regents*, No. 588982-4 (Superior Court, County of Alameda, May 7, 1985). California Education Code § 68062(h) states: An alien, including an unmarried minor alien, may establish his or her residence, unless precluded by the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101, et seq.) from establishing domicile in the United States. In 1991, David Paul Bradford, a University of California employee in the Registrar’s Office sued UC, claiming that he had been forced to quit because he would not follow the Leticia A. order. He won an injunction against UC, which UC began implementing in fall 1991, allowing continuing undocumented students as of June 1991 to keep their resident classification but requiring newly enrolled undocumented students to be classified as non-residents. The California Community College System and the California State University followed suit and by 1995, all three branches of public higher education in California were charging non-resident tuition to undocumented students, effectively closing off access to this group of Californians.

In the nineties, when I was a student, we did have undocumented students here at UCSC. There was no need for an AB 540 law because they paid in-state tuition. And they didn't get work-study, or federal loans, but they got other forms of aid. I probably knew during my time [as a student at UCSC] half a dozen undocumented students. It wasn't something that people spoke about a lot. Those were just people who were friends of mine who shared that experience. And many of our students that I went to school with had undocumented family members, or had just naturalized, or regularized their status through the reform of the 1984-1986 reform. So this was an issue people were aware of, and the students, not in large numbers, were here.

And then after the Leticia A lawsuit, [the decision was] to charge students out-of-state fees. And that's where people began to organize because it was leaving students out. Having to pay out-of-state tuition without being given financial aid is tantamount to the doors being closed on you, if you are low income.

So that's where networks began to develop. There was the Leticia A Network. Administrators, staff, and faculty who were organizing against this decision were working to figure out how to address the barriers of the law and what could be done. I was just finishing my time at Admissions. After I graduated [from UC Santa Cruz] in '94, I worked from '94 to '97 in the Office of Admissions. My job was to go out to high schools and give presentations in community colleges. So I was aware of the laws changing, and the Leticia A Network, and of that work beginning to form and develop.

Williams: Well, from that period after the lawsuit and up through the passage of AB 540, were there any resources that were available for undocumented students?

Reguerín: No. Very few, other than the Leticia Network. There were people who would make themselves available to talk to students. It was a little bit of an underground network. If you were plugged into the right person they could—there was a Leticia A network with contacts for the different campuses—so if I knew somebody going to Cal State Long Beach, I would connect them with the person on that list for Long Beach. Each campus had different protocols and procedures, so there were different ways of helping to address that. But it was very challenging and there was not a lot that could be offered to students.

Williams: Could you tell me more about the Leticia A Network, how it worked?

Reguerín: Yes, it was essentially just a directory and some trainings that were conducted. So like Alfred Herrera at UCLA, he was really involved. Elena Macias from Cal State Long Beach, who is retired now. She has the website AB540.com

[now].⁵ But it was basically people stepping up to say, "I'll be the point of contact, and I know my residents deputy and what the procedures are, and how to fill out the applications to try to have the best outcome of getting in-state tuition."

It was a group of activists who were organizing. They'd get to know their institutions, to be in a position to advise undocumented students, and were working to insure people had access to good information, and knew how to navigate that process. But it was still very underground and it wasn't widely publicized. We didn't use the web that much back then.

Williams: So this might seem like an obvious question, but how did that impact undocumented students who were attempting to come here?

Reguerín: Well, there were very few options, if any. Yeah, basically the doors were shut for a while, until the AB 540 law. That lawsuit, the Leticia A lawsuit, in my opinion it resulted in pushing people back into the shadows, and sending a message and a signal to the students that they were not welcome and they didn't

⁵<http://ab540.com/>

deserve—regardless of how much they put toward our state’s economy and contributed, they could not have access to a public college education. It was very damaging. It was very demoralizing. And basically made it unattainable until the Marco Firebaugh bill, which was Assembly Bill 540 for in-state tuition.

Williams: So in terms of attempting to work with these students, you mentioned that it was sort of an underground movement. I think Rosie Cabrera mentioned in an oral history interview that you couldn’t mention undocumented students in official correspondence, or address it at all.⁶ Did you have that experience?

Reguerín: Mm, hmm. By the time that began to develop, I had already left for graduate school in 1997. I was in New York during some of this time. But I knew of the network. I was a contact for the network. But at that point I was already kind of out of that scene and working in the K-12 sector.

⁶ See Susy Zepeda, Interviewer and Editor, *With Conocimiento, Love, Spirit, and Community: Rosie Cabrera’s Leadership at UC Santa Cruz, 1984-2013* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2015) Available in full text at <https://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/cabrera>

The Impact of AB 540 and AB 130 and AB 131 on Undocumented Students at UC Santa Cruz

And then when I came back, the AB 540 law was already in place. It was signed into law in 2001.

Williams: So it sounds like things changed dramatically with the passage of AB 540.

Reguerín: Mm, hmm.

Williams: So how did things change? How did the university’s approach towards undocumented students change?

Reguerín: Well, by it being passed and signed into state law, if you read the legislation, CSU and community colleges are legislated directly from Sacramento. And then UC, because of our semi-autonomous position in the state we—I think it’s called the Donahoe Higher Education Act—we basically—it’s almost as if they recommend and we comply with what they’re recommending. It’s written right into the legislation.

So soon after the passage, there was a feeling of accomplishment, acknowledging the presence of the students, acknowledging their human rights, acknowledging their rights to an education. And also an acknowledgement that we knew there were many, many, many bright and talented students that were not being admitted, or were being denied the opportunity. I recall reading an article about

the valedictorians in Los Angeles County and the high proportion that were undocumented, that didn't have an option to go on, prior to the AB 540 law.

So it was initially just celebration and recognition. And then moving towards compliance: What does this mean? What did it mean? How was it going to be implemented? At the time it only gave in-state tuition, but still did not grant financial aid. So the only way you could come to college was if you had a private, outside scholarship that got paid to you directly, not through the university. That made it very difficult for students to attend. So there were a lot of interrupted studies. They would start for two quarters and then take a quarter off, then come back. It was a very challenging struggle. Many students were not able to finish, or had to stop and start, stop and start. Raise money, work on weekends, nights, just to pull their tuition together.

Williams: And how has that changed? Or has it changed?

Reguerín: It has changed. It's definitely improved with the passage of AB 130 and AB 131. Assembly Bills 130 and 131 granted the ability to provide California-based aid and institutional aid, funding from the university that's basically non-federal sources, which was a big game changer. That made the gap much narrower, between what the cost to attend was— It slowly has gotten better. What we call the unmet need, for a student whose family cannot contribute because they are what's called a Zero EFC [Expected Family Contribution] student, expected family contribution of zero. That's a very low-income student. After AB 130 and AB 131, their gap was essentially brought down to about ten

thousand dollars, from thirty thousand dollars. So the idea of living on campus—as long as you had some outside money, it became much more do-able. A lot of the students would enroll, would have to live off campus and really keep their costs as low as possible, and still make payments on a monthly basis to cover their tuition, so they could stay enrolled. That’s the way it was prior to AB 130 and AB 131.

I remember giving the workshop with Financial Aid to about twenty-five undocumented students at UCSC. After the law had passed—it passed in the summer, around July—we had a workshop that fall quarter. The law began on January 1, 2013. So to that fall entering group, we were trying to explain how it was going to work. Students had a hard time understanding the idea that they were actually going to get institutional aid. Because when you do the math, for the ones that lived off campus, they would be getting some money back to help with their housing costs. To go from constantly being on a payment plan, trying to make ends meet, the guilt of asking your family for money when they’re already under-resourced, working two, three jobs to make meet, to then having your tuition covered, was a huge shift. I remember one of the students said, “Pablo, I don’t believe you.”

And after the workshop—and this is my learning process as well—we did the math on the board. Liz [Martin-Garcia] from Financial Aid was co-presenting with me—and we explained. I think I underestimated the psychological shift from having to pay in, and having to be on the margins, and having to look for money everywhere, trying to make something out of nothing, and that pressure.

In addition to being a university student, in addition to being first generation, low income, and not having a high sense of belonging. So they already felt like an imposter to some extent here. They had to deal with this financial crisis gap.

After we explained, when you get money back each quarter—and it's not enough—but it was the idea not having to pay in. Someone said, "Okay, Pablo. I don't believe this. Are you telling me that I'm going to get \$1100 back and that I can use that for rent and food? And my tuition is covered?" I said, yes. I kept seeing these heads—they were listening; they were attentive; but they didn't believe me even after I put the math on the board. So I asked, "How many of you don't believe what I'm saying is true?" And about three hands went up. And one of the students said, "Okay, Pablo. I trust you because you've been working on this and you always come through. So I trust you. But if I have to pay in after next quarter, if I have a balance, do you promise you'll pay it?" I said, "Yes, I will pay it." Because there was no reason not to.

So it was a big shift psychologically. Still, also, we didn't want students to feel that they were going to have enough money that they'd be okay, because there still was a ten-thousand dollar gap. That's \$3300 per quarter. So it still meant having to live off campus. It still meant being on the margins and struggling, but much less. It was more like you had to raise money for your own rent, and for food, and for textbooks, and less about having to pay in [for tuition] and then not having money for those things. So it helped a lot. But it still became much more difficult. Ten thousand dollars is an insurmountable amount for somebody who is low income. If you had a two or three-thousand-dollar scholarship, you were

in a better position. But many students were competing for very few scholarship dollars in those days.

Williams: So did the university or EOP engage in other sorts of fundraising efforts to try to bridge that gap?

Reguerín: Mm, hmm. Absolutely. I think one of the things that was vital was the injustice was so severe for the talented young people that were here, that got to this point. And we have to remember that for every undocumented UCSC student who enrolled here, there were thousands who wanted to come to college, but could not. [They were] carrying that burden. And part of (sighs) part of the idea of trying to get mainstream and Middle America to understand this cause, what ended up happening was students became glorified. So it was like “The Undocumented Student,” the One Deserving One. I saw that that was an effective means politically to get more centrist Democrats and Republican-minded people, people who were not affected by this issue, or believed they were not affected—so that we can get the student who is a valedictorian, who wants to be an engineer and contribute to our economy— But at the same time, I think that did not recognize and dismissed what their parents did. Many were laborers, farmworkers, or worked in construction. They almost were saying, “Well, now you matter because you can contribute to the economy.” I think deep down inside the students— I saw this effect. Many of the supporters, well-intentioned supporters, pushed that kind of messaging and agenda. There were documentaries put out on this issue. The high tech area has been pushing this issue a lot. Very well intentioned, but it isolated students from their world. First

of all, immigration policies have for a long time dehumanized people by stratifying them, so that [there are] the good immigrants, the clean immigrants. [Then there are] the ones that don't have a criminal history, or the ones that don't have good credit, or have good work and pay their taxes. The whole immigration system is premised on a point system. So it was, again, the good immigrants versus the bad immigrants. And for a student who might have been coming from a mixed-status family—meaning their younger sibling was born here but they are undocumented—that produces a lot of stress and puts on responsibility— So there's all this other psychological stuff going on as well.

Learning from Undocumented Students

It was difficult, but it was a learning process for all of us. One thing I can say has been really illuminating has been learning from undocumented students. They have probably been my best teachers, in terms of how to work with students, in terms of listening. I remember a young man who couldn't pay tuition anymore. He was not really welcome at his home anymore, back home. And that was partially rooted in his sexual orientation, how he identified. And so, he got to a point where he had run out of money. He had had scholarships that had run out. He needed a few more quarters to graduate, maybe three at most. And he just didn't leave. So he was no longer on the books. He was couch surfing, and he made friends, and he kept going to class. And a quarter into it, a second quarter, he was still going to class. I said, “Why are you doing this? Do you realize you're not going to get credit?” I remember him telling me, he said, “What are my options? I can go back home, be homeless, maybe live in a warehouse, or seek

some shelter. Being a student here, at least I'm learning. It's easier to be homeless here as a student."

I've seen so many undocumented students and families who had had basically their education and hope. And that's it. They counted on people finding an exception, getting them their textbooks, piece-by-piece stitching together their survival, and their ability to study, and just be a student here. That's been inspiring.

I had a mother who drove up her daughter. These students got together to find off-campus housing, first-year students, mostly Latinas that were in this house. They hadn't seen the square footage and it was a small place. They had more people living there than were going to be on the lease. They brought up a bed and brought up their furniture in a truck from Southern California. She was the last one to arrive. I think it was a house for three on the lease, but six or seven were living there. And she was the last one to get there. When she got there, there was no more space, no more physical space for her belongings. I mean, there was no more floor space for the bed, for her belongings. And they realized, this isn't going to work. She can't live here.

They showed up on our door with her stuff here, at the [EOP] office, and were able to work with Alma Sifuentes's office [Dean of Student Affairs], and the vice chancellor office, and we got them a hotel stay for a couple of nights while we started looking for housing, and looking for housing.

They came the second day and the mom was here. She came into my office and I asked how they were doing. And she said, “Well, my daughter is crying every night that we’re here. And we’ve got to find her a place to live. We need your help. That’s why we’re here.” We ended up helping them locate a place to live.

But I remember her mom saying to me, “We’re here, and as hard as this is—we’re going to drop off my daughter and she can come home when she has a degree. But she can’t come home before that. So you have to find her a place to live because she’s got to live somewhere.” I thought to myself, as someone who works in retention, and student persistence, and graduating students, and student success, I thought, wow, this woman had not gone to college. So I’ve seen these moments and testimonies of persistence that go far beyond what I think I could ever endure. All the sacrifice. And it’s a lot of pressure for the students. She didn’t even have the opportunity to grieve the situation. She came and she went and she graduated this last spring. But those types of stories—and those are just two from hundreds. Just amazing.

You learn from those things. You asked me earlier about, “What shaped how I approached this work?” Clearly, there’s an element of counseling, and advising, and being strategic in how we work with students around institutional barriers. That is definitely an important part. But the other part has been more emotional. This has been, in the words of Pablo Freire, “an act of love.” This work has been about courage. It’s been about fighting injustice. And it’s been about figuring out, okay, what does this student need now. Not about—okay, their family said they were going to get five hundred dollars a month and now they’re only giving two

hundred. It's not about blaming people for their circumstances, but saying, okay, if my job is around retention and student success, I have to find a way for a student to succeed, whether that be having problems with a chemistry exam, math, writing. Or financial, social, immigration—whatever. Whatever comes in front of you.

[There is so much] strength and persistence and humanity demonstrated by these students in the face of such unjust and inhumane treatment. [They are] still coming to say, "I want to be here. I want to study. I want to contribute to society." It leaves me no place other than to be empowered to figure out solutions, to use my influence, everything that I can on every student case.

And you can't do—some people say, "Well, I can't help this student because I can't do this for everybody." (laughs) And I always say, "Well, not everybody needs that level of support." And so they've taught me to be creative, to be resourceful, and to not accept any lack of success. That's been inspiring. I've learned so much. Yes, some of my earlier experiences certainly have shaped my approach. But nothing has been as inspiring, as powerful, as the lessons that I've learned from students, from their stories and their families.

And I've made mistakes. I've made mistakes. One of the biggest mistakes I try to remind others of is not to assume that because people share immigration status that they're going to all have the same common interests or goals. I remember trying to help some students who were both transitioning to college, to set them up with off-campus housing. We were trying to pair people up and connect with

landlords who would rent to them. I housed in the same room, more of an Orange County, Republican-leaning undocumented student, and probably your ultra-left wing student organizer. It was a mismatch. Of course it didn't work out after one or two quarters. And I thought about that. As I was dealing with some of the issues, I thought, now, why would anyone have thought this was a good idea? Part of it was there were so many students we were trying to help. But you learn. Aside from everything else, they're college students. So there have been a lot of lessons.

So really listening to the individual stories, getting to know the students, and respecting their differences. And acknowledging that immigration status is really the only thing they share is important to keep in mind. But also know that there are many lessons from one story that, as you solve, you can apply them to another case. It's a continual learning process.

Williams: I'm curious, in terms of figuring out how to help students with housing and with raising money for books, etc., do you still rely on the same type of network, like the Leticia A type of network?

Reguerín: No, actually. There have been some networks that have developed. In the very early days, with the SIN [Students Informing Now] founders—and they had wrapped up some of their work just as I came on—so some of the initial students—I think the thing with SIN was they were raising awareness. They were bringing this issue to the table.

Serving Undocumented Students: A Divisional Imperative

And at that time our Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Felicia McGinty, wanted to do something. She didn't necessarily know exactly how, and she didn't want to get wrapped up in the political stuff. This was still when being undocumented and talking about was—it was unclear what we could even do [fundraising]. This was pre-AB 130 and AB 131—we knew at Berkeley there had been someone who wanted to donate a million dollars to help students with their tuition and fees—but couldn't because we couldn't accept money to support undocumented students prior to AB 130, which was the law that allowed that. So this is all pre that time.

And I thought what she did was really strategic, and aligned well with our principles, and gave us what we needed to advocate for these students. And that was called the Student Success Initiative. Basically she said, “We're going to help every student, and we're going to focus on those that have the most severe challenges that lie in front of them before graduating. Whatever it is—income, family, mental health, immigration status—we don't care. We're here and we have an obligation to help you overcome those barriers. We're not going to just say, ‘Everyone gets across the board the same amount of support. We're going to put concentrated support with those who face adversity.’”

I thought that was politically safe. It made sense. Many of the students did have multiple, intersecting identities. And she made it a divisional imperative. This was going to be all of our work, not just the EOP office. Certain things she gave,

like we were kind of the anchor for certain support services, for the textbook lending library, for different things. But she made sure everybody understood: this is all of our jobs. Chancellor Blumenthal was also very supportive. I don't know if someone has told you the story about the meeting at the chancellor's house early on in the process?

Williams: Not yet.

Reguerín: So one of the first things SIN did is they requested a meeting with the chancellor. They held it at the chancellor's house for a very specific reason, part of it being the fact that it's a private residence. I was not there but I've heard from many people this story. The students shared testimonies, their struggles, what they went through. They brought together donors; they brought together staff, faculty, at the chancellor's house. And they heard the stories and they were talking about what could they do as a campus. And the late Sophia Garcia-Robles was there. Rosie Cabrera was there. And Sophia said, "Okay, enough of this talking. I'm taking a hundred dollars out of my wallet and I'm going to buy somebody's textbooks. And I want to know where you all stand on this issue. Enough talking here." And so people pulled out their money. I think they got it deposited in a gift account and that's what started the EOP textbook lending library.

EOP Textbook Lending Library

I came on. My first year here there were about fifteen books on a shelf, and a checkout form, from the first year. So my job was to help fundraise. We had more

students in need. We got some interns involved that were undocumented students and they got the word out. They organized. I think today we have over 4500 books in our library. We're evaluating whether or not to move it to the McHenry Library. Liz [Martin Garcia] has been very willing to see if it's something that we might do. Sarah Troy [at the UCSC Library] and others have been very supportive. So it's gone now to a whole other level. And it's all been done through student interns, predominantly. We've raised a lot of money for it. Textbooks can be like a hidden tax on top of everything you have to pay. So it has been instrumental for many students, a very popular program.

The other thing is we use a textbook connection as a way to get to know our office. You might need a textbook, but you may not realize that you need advising, or you need to talk with an EOP counselor. So we give you the books. If you want to renew it, you have to have a meeting with an EOP counselor. So that's where stuff comes out and where we begin to problem-solve. So it's been a great program.

But I admire that Sophia had the vision because that's what the students really were asking for. They wanted acknowledgement, recognition of an issue. And they wanted some action. They wanted an equal opportunity to succeed and wanted the institution to respond. I'm in great gratitude to the founding SIN members for calling that attention, for raising I, to Vice Chancellor McGinty for responding to that call, putting us all on notice. I shortly after that came into this role at EOP. I was working at the Educational Partnership Center at the time. And that was one of McGinty's charges to me. She said, "I need you to focus on

students who are facing the most hardship, and I need you to solve student problems.” And that’s what we began to do. And as you address one issue and you solve something, then more students come and it requires more resources. And so we’re just mobilizing.

Creating Spaces for Undocumented Students

Part of the issue that I’ve seen in the undocumented student community, and with immigrants in general, is that it’s important to make sure when to stand up and when to stand down, as an ally. So making sure that an undocumented student’s voice is heard, that there’s space for that—given my position at the university, I can help create spaces where that happens, or I can dismiss that voice. So one of the things early on that we began to do, as we would do with any student group—whether it was student veterans, or transfer students, or students with dependents, whatever—was to listen to what the needs were and then respond. So all of our programming, the AB 540 Caucus, the internship program that we have, the professional career development program, the textbook lending library—all of the things that I think have made our campus more undocumented student-friendly and supportive—if you trace them back they practically all have as an origin a student saying, “What if we did this because we know students need X.” So our philosophy has been to keep students engaged in the process, and to work with them and support them. And a big part of that is listening. So oftentimes the biggest thing I’ve done is gotten out of the way. We’ve had many interns over the years but Nikki [Victoria] Dominguez was one that was a little bit more of a leader, and very actively involved. The best

thing I could do when working with Nicki was to make sure she had the resources and then to get out of the way. Rocio Preciado, Ana Navarrete—the list goes on and on. These were students who came from a background in organizing. So it was just really a function of getting out of their way, and of course working with them collaboratively.

I think we’re pretty successful as a campus graduating undocumented students. In terms of the development of services, that’s been a key area and a key guiding principle that we need to keep. Because students will tell you, if you earn their trust and you work in partnership, they will tell you. They will let you know when you’re doing good and when there’s a hole.

The AB 540 Caucus was a group that some people didn’t quite understand at the time. Allies want to be in support. And at one point the students said, “Well, we need a space for us. We need a caucus, a support group. We need the undocumented students to come together to share and have a sense of mutuality and support each other, without having to explain the experience.” I said, “Look, we’ll get you the room. We’ll order some pizza. Do it. The only thing I ask is if you see a pattern of issues, let’s say with a department or—then if you’re willing, without sharing any individual’s story, to escalate those issues to me so that I can think about what I can do. Because now they are systemic issues, institutional-level issues. Because there’s learning from that.”

And they said, “Fine. If you get the room with the pizza, we’ll give you a little summary of the patterns that we see.” That was good for the students. It kept

me—without knowing the details, but understanding—okay, here’s a part where I can get some work done, where I can do something.

This was a hard lesson for many people: the idea of providing spaces just for undocumented students. The best way I would describe it to people—I used the analogy of gender. We need gender allies and gender equity allies. And as men we have a role in gender equality. But who am I to say that women shouldn’t have a support group to talk about what that experience is? I mean, I can read about it in a book and I can listen to people. But that’s not my story. There’s a need for that. And it can be complementary to working with allies. It wasn’t as big of a deal but some people always felt troubled by that. And we received some criticism. But to me it didn’t matter because it was important to have that space, and I had to hold true to listening to what was being asked for. They weren’t ideas that I came up with. They were things that students said we need and I thought, okay, what can we do to support that? So that student-initiated and staff-supported model has been really critical.

Williams: So you mentioned the Slug Caucus. There’s also an Undocumented Student Services mentor program?

Reguerín: Yes, there’s an Undocumented Student Services Center now, at this stage, where we have a physical space, an intern team. And then we have a counselor who is an EOP counselor, but whose area of focus is undocumented student services coordinator. They’re the point person. But we made a decision early on not to have a single undocumented student counselor, because if you

walk into our office at EOP you whatever counselor you’re assigned to or you work with should be knowledgeable and culturally competent to serve undocumented students. So that person’s job is to keep everybody trained, abreast of the policies. They’re our in-house, resident expert. They go to conferences; they do the trainings; they supervise the student staff. But we wanted to keep to the shared notion of being effective and an ally for undocumented students. And we’ve been fortunate to have strong people in that role.

Williams: Was that a student-inspired idea as well?

Reguerín: We got some funding from the Office of the President for these services, initially. And we sat down with some student leaders to basically co-create a plan. That was one of the things. I’m sure I mentioned it as an issue at the time. We started with a counselor who had other responsibilities, so it was like an add-on, and it was hard for him to be able to do his responsibilities and do this.

Everyone did this work from their heart. But there’re only so many hours in a day. So I think the students saw a need, and we had the funding, so why wouldn’t we do it? That’s where we came up with this kind of hybrid model, where they’re a counselor but they’re a coordinator, and the resident expert. The EOP office has always served as—I say we’ve incubated the Undocumented Student Services—and we’ve made it part of our office. Part of that was just strictly strategic, in the sense that trying to get a physical space on the campus is

difficult. Trying to figure out infrastructure staffing costs we thought, okay, we can put more money towards direct services if we have less overhead costs. So it's a kind of balancing that. And it hasn't been perfect. There're times when I've felt that person has a lot on their plate, but we've been trying to evaluate that. They mainly see undocumented students. But I think it's been a successful model overall.

There's been an increase in what are called Dream Centers at different colleges and universities. Some of them are just physical spaces with a part-time counselor, or part-time person, or an intern. But I think our students were very clear that they wanted to focus on the outcomes: what are we doing to support the students? Physical space was important but they wanted more of a comprehensive plan as to what we were going to do. A physical space by itself wouldn't do a whole lot to retain or support students.

Williams: In terms of the funding for those types of projects, do you have to go outside of the university as well to fund those things?

Reguerín: We do—most of our emergency grant funding and our textbook lending library funding—portions of that come from outside. And we did a partnership for the last couple of years with the UCSC Dreamweavers. This was a community-based organization. It had some retirees and some community members, and some donors, and many of them were donors as well, who got together to do fundraising and community organizing around the local area, and with donors and community members. They also had a mentoring program for a

couple of years. It was inspired by the Smith Society, the Smith Renaissance Society program, which is a program we have here on campus run by a Friends group for former foster youth. Some of the members there got involved [as well].

It’s largely become a dormant group now. Right now the two key organizers, after two or three years of doing it needed—it was a lot. They wanted to do other things. Plus, we got more funding.

So we did get funding from the Office of the President for two years. And this July 1 we’re starting a new round of three-year funding for Student Services and Financial Aid. We have some funding from the campus, some funding from the Office of the President, which is part of Janet Napolitano President’s Strategic Initiatives on Undocumented Students. There are a few and this is one of them.

Williams: And that helps students bridge that ten thousand dollar—

Reguerín: Some. Mostly it helps fund support services such as the textbook lending library, that type of thing. But we’ve used some of that money for

· See <http://smithsociety.ucsc.edu/>

emergency grants. Most of the emergency grant funding, direct giving to students for scholarships, has been [funded from] outside fundraising, as well.

Williams: Is there a difference in the way that EOP works with undergraduate students, versus graduate students? Are there specific challenges?

Reguerín: We don't actually have a direct role in supporting graduate students, in terms of advising services. With graduate students, we're able to hire them and we give them employment. Like we have a Pathways to Research Project. We use them also for graduate student researchers on some project, leverage their methodologies and data skills in evaluating some of our programs. But we don't provide direct services. It's more indirect for graduate students.

Williams: Are undocumented graduate students able to take teaching assistantship positions?

Reguerín: It depends on their status. It depends on their situation. If they have Deferred Action [DACA], yes. But you have to look at the person's situation independently. If they've been in the state, they can, depending on what their exact situation is, they're eligible for different types of support. If they have Deferred Action and work authorization, then can do that.

Williams: Okay, would you like to take a break? We've been going—

Reguerín: No, I'm good.

Williams: You're good. Keep going? Okay.

Undocumented Students and the Admissions Process

So at what point in the application process do undocumented students address their status with the university? Is that something they can do immediately? Or is that upon admission?

Reguerín: It’s been evolving. There’s no question that asks you if you are undocumented on the UC admissions application. But there are instructions that are given out ahead of time on what you can answer and what you don’t answer, by the Admissions Office. In admissions they are treated as what are called bona fide California residents. So for admissions purposes they follow the admissions California residents guidelines.

For tuition purposes, they get evaluated by the Registrar’s Office based off of a questionnaire called the Statement of Legal Residence form. Once they fill that out, they will get categorized as out-of-state, and then out-of-state tuition will be applied. Then they fill out a form that’s called the AB 540 Affidavit. They fill out the form and agree to apply for and establish residency as soon as they are eligible for it. So they are making an affidavit and commitment to do that. They are confirming or swearing that they graduated from a high school, or got a high school exit exam equivalency, and did at least three years of schooling prior to that graduation.

So if you think of a student’s account—they’ll be treated as in state initially. Then they’ll get an out-of-state charge. And then they’ll get the affidavit waiver, which then comes in and credits that and backs out an additional seven or eight grand a

quarter. So it's done at the front end. Once they get classified as an AB 540 student that will—they just have to do it one time. When a student is admitted—they say they are coming by May 1, is the deadline for frosh and June 1 for transfers. Usually by summer they're filling out the residency form and the affidavit, so that they can get in-state tuition.

We have interns that work with students. So once we know they're admitted, we send out a mailing through Financial Aid to everybody who filled out the California Dream application. And they send them out information about our services. So we're able to make direct contact. Our interns work here over the summer. So if you're an undocumented student and you're coming to UCSC, someone will help you figure out housing, and figure out your budget, and do a cash flow analysis, and be a connector, where you get to speak to a human being about where do you go? Do you need to pick classes? Okay, let's get you to your college advisor. If you're a transfer student, go to your department. If you need financial aid, you need to talk to a specialist. A lot talk to Liz Martin-Garcia. So there's a lot of navigating that they do through that connector role.

Williams: And Maria had mentioned when we were talking before the interview that there is also a different Orientation.⁸

Reguerín: Yes, it’s called the 540 percent Slug Extended Orientation. It’s a six-day, five-night orientation program. So most students come to UCSC for a one-day or two-day orientation. What we do is they come for that day, but before it and after it we kind of bookend programming. So they have five days on campus. One of those days will be their traditional orientation program, and the four other days are programs that we have like budgeting, and talking about what does it mean to be an undocumented student at UCSC, and support so that students don’t feel alone. They have some mental health stuff. They talk about intersecting identities, being undocumented and queer, what’s referred to as “undocuqueer.” It’s a chance to bond and get to know people. You get support with your budgeting, your financial aid, looking for a job, getting to know the Career Center, getting to know the Slug Support Team, so that if an emergency comes up—

⁸ Williams is referring to Maria Garcia, Pablo Reguerin’s assistant—Editor.

So you leave in July knowing the landscape and knowing exactly what you have to pay in the fall. It's a much more robust experience. Plus, you are doing it in a community of undocumented students. Each year we have from forty to sixty students who participate in this program. They get to know the mentors. They get to know the EOP advisors, and get to know faculty who come out for this. They develop a sense of connection with community.

Williams: Do former graduates come back and meet with new students?

Reguerín: We just did a [walks over to wall and removes flyer] but this was a program where we had three undocumented alumni come back to talk to students about what they are doing since they were at UCSC. The alumni are very active. Some of them are donors. They know this story firsthand and they are always willing to come back. We just have to ask them and they're willing to be involved.

Working Across Campus on Behalf of Undocumented Students

Williams: Great. So it sounds like EOP works a lot across campus—

Reguerín: Mm, hmm.

Williams: —with the different centers to make sure that the students. They work with El Centro [Chicano Latino Resource Center], with—

Reguerín: Mm, hm. All the resource centers.

Williams: All the resource centers, okay. And how does that collaboration work? You talked about the Registrar. How do you make sure that those connections are made?

Reguerín: A couple of things. We have an undocumented student clearinghouse group that we do. We do it about two times a year. And it's called the—we're changing our language from "AB 540" to "undocumented," because we now have undocumented students who are not AB 540, which is a fairly new thing. We try to use words that are as inclusive as can be and that will signal students for support services. [The language] is not static, it evolves, as this area is very dynamic.

So we have an undocumented student services roundtable meeting. And that's basically just to update each other, see where things are out on a campus level, new initiatives, like the Dream Loan was just announced, and how that's going to be implemented. So it's a clearinghouse of information. And we also have the UC Legal Services. So it's more of a coordinating, information-sharing group.

And then we have meetings individually with different offices. So yesterday there was a training with financial aid advisors, and our interns, and our counselors. And then we've had some periodic meetings, like some of our staff will be present at a resource center function around undocumented students. So it's mainly through just touch-base meetings. We have the campuswide thing that we do a couple of times a year. And then just staying in touch with colleagues.

But we start with a philosophy that although we may have an important role in this as a campus with a EOP office, we do not see this as our work alone. And it's important that we build UCSC as an undocumented-friendly campus, so whether they are in the physics department, or whether they're in humanities, or whether they're in admissions, or in the registrar's, or at EOP—there will be a welcoming, caring environment, a supportive environment, to make sure students get across the finish line and graduate. And not just graduate, but are successful and have a transformative experience here.

So we work a lot with Oakes College, the college that has the highest number of undocumented students. Our Dreamer stats are put out each quarter by the Financial Aid office. You can see the rise in numbers by college, by race and ethnicity, frosh, transfers, average GPA—some of the demographic and academic indicators.

Let's see, what else? We do a lot of collaboration. I wish we could do some more, actually. Probably our biggest—we do a lot of work with the Career Center around undocumented students. So when we have trainings we'll invite them or we'll send a speaker to meet with the Career Center, as well as with our office. So it's mainly been through these collaboration meetings and information-sharing sessions that we have.

Changes in Terminology

Williams: You mentioned shifting the language from "AB 540" to "undocumented." Is that going to impact—there's an AB 540 advisor position. Is that going to change at all?

Reguerín: No, not in any way. No, we changed the position. Currently it's Ana Navarrete, and she is wrapping up her tenure with us. She'll be moving to the Bay Area. Her job title was AB 540/EOP Counselor. And this [new position] is [titled] Undocumented Student Services Coordinator and EOP Counselor. We use the language to signal people that we're here.

AB 540—I mean there's different theories. I've had students say, "I'm not a piece of legislation." I've heard about the general identity issues that can come up. We used "AB 540" because that was the terminology—it was a little bit more widely accepted. Some people use the word "Dreamer." And the term "Dreamer" has a—I think it's a little safer politically. But we don't use "Dreamer" that much, mainly because the students have been the ones that have given us the feedback that it's kind of glorifying. It kind of feeds into this idea that there are the chosen few, or the select few. If someone is in a mixed-status family and they're the Dreamer, well, what does that make the other people in the family? But I know, with staff and faculty, people are more comfortable with that term. For me, the terminology—of course we want to talk to students and get their feedback. "Dreamer" has been largely negative, for the most part. We've gotten the most negative feedback around that term. And I've heard concerns around "AB 540"

too. “Undocumented” now has become kind of an umbrella term. It’s a little bit more inclusive. It’s safer to use that term, so we’ve kind of moved in that direction. And if there’s something better a month from now and the students give us feedback, then we’ll do that. But it’s a functional term for our purposes.

Undocumented Student Services Coordinator Position at EOP

Williams: And how has that position evolved over time?

Reguerín: It’s grown. For now, each UC campus has at least one coordinator. Some have a coordinator and a support staff. In this last iteration of the job description, I know that Ana advised me that we needed to reduce the EOP advisor role and increase the coordination of services role. Because there’s a lot: there’s interns; we have ally trainings; we have legal clinics. It’s a lot of programming. So she said, “We need to increase this part.” And the students too. And at one point we even considered, should we separate that function?

But one of the things that the students value the most is the guidance, the advising element. So we wanted to try to have students not have multiple—go see Ana and then go see an advisor, but try to put that together. It also gives Ana, or the person in that role, access to college advisors and academic standing. So if we need to advocate for a student, she has legitimacy as an advisor, and is in the places where it matters the most as to whether a student stays or not. The advising community is somewhat closed at times; they are not always the most open. So by having that advisor identity, it gives her a lot of access and influence in places. So ultimately, you just need a good person. A lot of the work is done

through relationships and being a resident expert. She’s served exceptionally in those areas. So I think those things are probably more key than what we call it.

Williams: So that position also extends into helping students create their academic programs.

Reguerín: Yes, mostly it’s helping them navigate. So we’re not going to do a quarter-by-quarter course plan with a student. We’ll say, “Okay, if you are majoring in literature we’ll get the information and show you where it is on the web, and then refer you.” That person will do more like a to-do list, “Okay, I want you to go get a department planner, go to literature and come back.” So it’s more coaching. But they can get into academic policies if need be. Mostly, they’re going to refer to other departments for that.

Student Activism

Williams: Now, when undocumented students engage in activism, like members of SIN did—

Reguerín: Yes.

Williams: —are there concerns from EOP about them becoming potential targets? How do you work together?

Reguerín: Early on in the process, maybe somewhat. But the students aren’t coming to ask for permission, nor do they need it. There’s a big difference pre-Deferred Action, post-Deferred Action. So once the government is saying we’re

going to defer deportation proceedings against you for this period of time, and you have work authorization, you are in a position temporarily, *albeit temporarily*, you have access to things in society that normally you have not had. One, you have protection from deportation, so even if you do get stopped by ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement], you won't be deported, because the government is using prosecutorial discretion, to say: you can't become a resident, but temporarily we're going to put you on the side and we're not going to worry about you. So this idea that students might be threatened—I think if students want to tell their story, they tell their story. And if they want to get actively involved—I think this is a good place for allies. And I know I've taken—there's an email I wrote, and I got a lot of criticism by some students. Actually, one of the SIN members was very critical, but I don't think he was representative of SIN as a group. He was vocal, but not generally supported in the group.

So there was a protest. It was a campus shutdown, one of the marches a few years ago. We have generally worked with the police chief's office to let us know if someone gets picked up who's undocumented, and that Alma [Sifuentes], who is the dean of students, or myself, could intervene or support that student. And generally that hasn't been an issue. The students have done workshops on safety with police officers. We've brought the chief of police to meetings with students. But I wrote a note. There was an internal Facebook group that students used to communicate—so I wrote a note [that I asked students to post] saying, “Look, everyone has to make their own decisions about protesting and whether you go to class, and you need to do that. But I'm going to give you some advice. You can

choose to follow it or not. But this is my advice and my best thinking. One, if you're going to protest at the West Entrance or the Main Entrance, please be at the Main Entrance, not at the West, because that road and entrance is governed by the California Highway Patrol. The main entrance is by the UCSC police and we've made arrangements if someone gets picked up; we have more of an ability to support you. If you are going to go to class, come the night before. If you don't live on campus, stay with somebody on campus and go to class. Don't put yourself in a situation where you have to cross the line. Try to avoid that. And if you're going to be protesting at the main entrance, try to be farther back. Don't be right in the front lines."

A lot of students were like, "Okay, good to know. Thanks." One person at a meeting said that I was attempting to de-politicize undocumented students. That's his opinion and that's fine. But my point was at a certain point you have to make decisions about, okay, what would I do if this were my child? What does my heart tell me to do? And that's what my heart told me to do, and I think most of the students appreciated it. So I don't regret doing it at all.

But you do have to be cautious around the part around student voice. And that's why my closing line was something like, "Whatever you decide, even if you don't take my advice, know that my support is not contingent on following my advice. I'm going to be here no matter what. And whether you agree or disagree, you can call me. Here's my cell phone number." It was not meant to manipulate anybody, but more to think about how a student could exercise their voice, while also not putting themselves in danger.

I do recall too, I had complaints from students who were at protests because people would co-opt the issue. The issue might have been tuition hikes, but then they wanted to add into the list of things they were upset about, undocumented students. I had students who told me, "Pablo, I was outed at this thing. This person knew me but I didn't say I would give my story." They were pressured into sharing their stories, outed in ways they were not comfortable with. There're been those things amongst the students. Knowing those things, I was very cautious and vigilant with students and in the language we used.

More on Listening to Undocumented Students

And I also made some mistakes. I remember when we created the professional career development program. It's now called PCDP. It's at the Career Center. It was modeled after a program that's considered best practices at UCLA, which is called the Dream Summer Internship. This was all happening pretty quick and we didn't have a lot of time to plan. So I said, "Let's call it the UCSC Dream Internship Program." And one student said, "Well, I don't like the name because it's going to out me on my resume. It's going to be what I use. I want to reserve the right to disclose that when I need to. And if we call it that—"

Two options. I could say, "No, I still want to go with this name," or, "Yes, makes sense. Let's change it." I mean, it was that simple. So we changed it. We couldn't come up with another good name. Now it's called PCDP, Professional Career Development Program, because it's descriptive of what you're doing. It's a very safe name. And that can go on a resume with no problem.

But that was one of the times when—the answers are there. The students will teach you. You either have to listen, or you can not. There was nothing to be gained from not listening to the students. I mean, it’s much, much easier and less of a headache. But I remember thinking, okay, I didn’t think about that because I don’t have to think about that in my situation. But I am going to listen and I think that is a big part of it, listening to students, and then making sure that you’re open to learning from them.

Thoughts about the Future

Williams: So in terms of future EOP programs, or changes at the state level or federal level—what kinds of things would you like to see happen?

Reguerín: (pause) I think one of the things that is going to be challenging for us as a campus, but also for the EOP office, is when should our services be what I’d call stand-alone, self-contained with an undocumented student identity, and when should they be infused, integrated into an overall approach to working with students.

Right now we have it pretty much self-contained. It’s integrated in other parts of our office, but it’s kind of a stand-alone piece. And I think as demand grows, and as the student population grows, and as undocumented students grow, something we’ll have to look about and think about is where our we as a campus? It might not be a yes or no situation. It might be, in these instances it should be, and— So I think we have to evolve and grow. That’s a question I always have and I think about.

The other element that I'd like to see is one of continued growth as faculty and staff with a sense of love and fighting injustice. Because ultimately I think we will, in time, in the future look back at this time [as a time of] complete disgrace and [with] a sadness for how we dehumanized people and students and put them in the situation that we do, as a society. I'm hoping that my colleagues and I have the foresight to know that, and to question, and to be critical in our thinking, and not simply come from 100 percent compliance.

Of course, you have to comply with policies. But we also can influence and change policies, and there's a lot of latitude in how we interpret, and what systems we put into place. Oftentimes people come from a place of fear around these issues. It's not the best platform to work from. A sense of compassion and love and student success are the pillars that I would use. Our job is to graduate these students. So I think that's really, really important, whether it be in a piece of legislation—

There are times we can look at this issue and apologize to some extent that we are dealing with this, or be quiet about it. But I have learned to follow the courage of our students, to speak about our services unapologetically. And it is rooted in our work. We are a division of student success. Making sure that we are continuing a tradition of equity, honoring people's civil rights, coming from a place of our legacy, our history, and from compassion, I think is really critical. When we come from a place of fear—the political rhetoric that is currently happening is very dangerous. We've seen that history before and we see where things can go. So I am very concerned, and want to us see come from a place of

optimism and love, and not fear. There’s an authoritative and compliance-oriented approach; I think you can have a healthy approach to that. But fear is not a good path for us to follow.

Williams: In terms of compliance, do you mean the university system and services available to undocumented students?

Reguerín: Yes, and finding ways to broaden how we provide services to students, and making things as accessible as possible.

Williams: Are there are any aspects of EOP’s work with undocumented students that I *haven’t* asked you about, that you think I should have, that I should know about.

Reguerín: I think the foundation is our work to develop a relationship and have a holistic approach to working with students. That allows us to engage on issues of immigration, on issues of family. The barriers that students come up against, whether they are institutional or personal, are not organized in ways that fit boxes in an organizational structure. So we have to be willing to not be bounded by those boxes, and we have to cross those boundaries, and engage with people across the campus. The core of this is looking at the students in a holistic manner, and acknowledging the traditional and nontraditional elements they’re dealing with on their student journey, and then finding ways to serve them so they’re successful. So I think that is the root, the foundation of our office that makes this work such as important aspect and such an important connection.

Williams: All right. One last question.

Reguerín: Sure.

Williams: What would you say are the most rewarding and most challenging aspects of your life here?

Reguerín: The most rewarding is the growth and development that I see in the students, and the times that I’ve been able to play a small role in problem-solving and finding a solution for a student, and then they go onto the next level. Seeing that movement, that trajectory, is very affirming and I leave thinking, okay, I did something today. I mattered today. That makes this not feel like work. It’s a sense of conviction. It’s a sense of mission, being mission-driven. It’s very gratifying and gives me a really strong sense of peace.

In terms of the most challenging— (pause) I spend a lot of time trying to explain and reeducate people on the difference between treating people the same and being equity-minded, and trying to be equitable with students and understanding they’re not all starting from the same place. We oftentimes can conflate the idea that students need support with reducing our standards because they can’t handle it, or because they’re too dependent. That’s very frustrating and it really presumes that the students need to fit into our mold, and that the students are lucky to be here, versus us being lucky to have them.

So this idea that we’re unwilling to change or evolve in our practices, in a way, dismisses that students of today look different. There is a changed demographic.

Demographics in the state, more so than even in the country, have shifted. Students bring in new gifts, new challenges. So really trying to think about how do we evolve our work? What does it mean for us today? Reflecting upon that and being willing to act, to problem-solve, versus just pushing it on to another office, or an unwillingness to do it. Or for that to be seen as a favor to a student, or as I mentioned earlier, "If I can't do it for everybody, I'm not going to do it for anybody." Students all have different needs. So I think differentiating and particularly building opportunities for those that have not had it, gets us to a place of equity. But I find a lot of resistance from people around those issues.

Williams: At the university?

Reguerín: Mm, hmm. So I'd like to see us expand and be more open in our thinking.

Williams: Okay. Anything else you'd like to add.

Reguerín: No, we're just really pleased that [this history] will be part of the campus.

Williams: Thank you so much for your time.