

# UC Santa Cruz

## Institutional History of UCSC

### Title

Leo F. Laporte: Professor of Earth Sciences, Recollections of UCSC, 1971-1996

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0881z51h>

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### Publication Date

1998-03-12

### Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0881z51h#supplemental>

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### Coming to UC Santa Cruz

**Jarrell:** This is Randall Jarrell and it's August 15, 1994 and I'm in Leo [F.] Laporte's office at Crown College and this is our interview on the VERIP series. You're VERIPing?

**Laporte:** Correct.

**Jarrell:** I don't have your dossier, or vitae, which I'd like to have at some point, just to copy it. But just to start with, what year did you come to Santa Cruz?

**Laporte:** I came here in 1971.

**Jarrell:** And why did you come here? How did you end up coming here?

**Laporte:** I spent twelve years at Brown University and I was a full professor, in my middle thirties. And I started there as an instructor. And after twelve years I was bored, frankly. And in fact my wife had talked to somebody at a party who asked if we had our plots yet. And we said, our plots? And they meant cemetery plots. And that was really frightening. That was kind of a New England tradition, I guess, to have your plots sooner than later. (Laughter) So I wrote around to a bunch, well not a bunch but half a dozen faculty I knew around the country asking if they had anything interesting, because I was kind of . . . I didn't want to move laterally. Brown was a good position. And I was a full professor, and so on.

But I just wanted to do something different. So I wrote around and I heard about the position at Santa Cruz. And I knew the fellow Bob [Robert E.] Garrison who was an associate professor then in the department. And they were looking for a

person in my field. So I came out in 1969 for an interview. And Aaron [C.] Waters was the chairman then. And what they were looking for was a youngish full professor. Because Waters was going to retire in a couple of years and they wanted the person who came on to take over as chairman for a couple of years. Because at that time they were beginning to build in the department. What in fact happened was my ad hoc committee didn't approve my appointment. (laughter) It took them forever . . .

**Jarrell:** That was a board?

**Laporte:** No, it was the ad hoc. It went above the board and above the division and it went to some, one of these secret ad hoc committees that make a recommendation finally to the appointment committee. And I got turned down. And I'm not quite sure why. I had the publications. I had a good position at Brown. I had a good, a reasonable reputation as a teacher. And I think what happened was they brought in an outsider who was a paleontologist from possibly Berkeley or UC . . . probably Berkeley. And the kind of paleontology I was doing was not being done on the West Coast. And they just . . . what is this all about?

**Jarrell:** They didn't know about it.

**Laporte:** Well they didn't know about it. I mean, or . . . the kind of paleontology . . . It was not as specialized, the kind of paleontology they were doing out here. And now they do the kind of paleontology . . . I mean, not because of me but just because in this particular case Berkeley was a little behind the times. So they re ad hoced the committee. And I said to them, "I won't call you. You call me."

(laughter) Because I felt a little bit burned about it. And then in the summer of '71 while on vacation Garrison called me and said, "Well, we want to make you an offer. It's gone all over." I mean they went all the way to McHenry by that time and said here's the offer. So I didn't have to deal with it. So I came out in '71. And then I became chairman in '72, '73, '74. And then they were looking for a dean of natural sciences. So I became dean of natural sciences for a year.

### **Chancellor Mark Christensen**

**Laporte:** And that's when [Mark N.] Christensen was a chancellor. And he was a geologist. And I felt some loyalty to him kind of on general principles. Also I was on the search committee that brought him here. And I thought he would be great because he was young and everything. And also I was . . . but I was a little bit. I became a little cynical because apparently the Berkeley people knew that this guy really couldn't do the job and [Charles J.] Hitch, who was chairman, head of the university at that time, promoted him. And I got very cynical about it . . .

**Jarrell:** You've jumped right into . . . a topic.

**Laporte:** I was cynical . . . I mean not terribly cynical. But I thought, how could they do that? How could they recommend somebody to the Santa Cruz campus who they felt really couldn't do the job? And the other thing I learned was that I should have gone through back channels, as they say, to inquire because I talked to a couple of geologists up there, who I later realized . . . while they were very good geologists were very friendly with Chris. And I should have talked to other people who could have said this guy would be a disaster as an

administrator. But I didn't take that initiative. And so anyway, when he was chancellor here, I liked him and he was . . . it wasn't obvious to me that he was so bad. I mean, I didn't, you know, to me . . . I didn't have that much contact with chancellors in general, although I had some contact with McHenry. But you know that in a kind of informal sort of way, not in a hard head-to-head administrative combat. And I thought he was okay. So I felt a certain loyalty to him.

And then . . . I resisted dumping him until it was clear that he was going to be dumped no matter what. And the best thing to do was, okay, this guy's lost all influence, all authority, and the university cannot work that way. And whether it's right or not, you can't stand on the principle at that point. His position was so undermined, so eroded, that I went along with the other 23 people who wrote a letter . . . and in fact I was the guy elected to go in with a committee of two others and tell him as he sat in his office late at night, I think it was . . . I don't remember the exact chronology, to tell him you're through. You got to quit. And then we went up to [David S.] Saxon's house on Thanksgiving eve, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Angus [E.] Taylor was very judicious. I know his son, who is a very good historian of science at ? He's talked to me about that a little bit. And Angus had actually been kind of kicked upstairs in the position he had at the time. And he was glad to come down here as chancellor because he felt he had a little bit more to do. He wasn't really challenged by the position he had at Berkeley. And Saxon came and reorganized things. And Angus Taylor went from a more honorific position, a less day-to-day operational position,

according to his son, Ken Taylor. Anyway, then that kind of really turned me off on administration.

**Jarrell:** It was very traumatizing.

**Laporte:** Yeah, it was ugly. The other thing about it was that we were at a time when all the resources stopped and the only thing I could do as dean was to tell people I don't have any money. I don't have any . . . you know, we don't have anything. And the other thing I discovered was the only things that came to deans were things that could not be adjudicated at lower levels. And there was some real childish behavior going on between two departments and that was chemistry and biology. Where we should put the low-level radioactive lab. And nobody would give up any space. And it came to me. Or whether we should promote marine sciences or George [S.] Hammond's program in photochemistry. And although Hammond was a very distinguished scientist, the campus had made a huge commitment to a marine sciences and it grew at a crucial time where we had to put the funds in there. So I went with marine sciences and George Hammond came into my office in tears, really he had tears coming down his cheek, "How could you not support this program? How could you give that support to marine sciences?" So it wasn't a pleasant time. And then it also, I was . . .

**Jarrell:** Sounds as if you'd just barely gotten here and you were just in the thick of everything immediately.

**Laporte:** Yeah, and I was also still very much doing research and in fact I was switching research. And then when I came to you a year or two after and

decided to do this biographical study. Which has been successful. I didn't write a biography. What I did is I generated about twelve articles, kind of chapters of a biography and now I've got three articles in press. I'm doing one more this summer. And in the next several years I will actually generate a kind of biography based on all that previous work. Anyway, so . . . what's the next question?

**Jarrell:** So, when you came out here. You said you'd written around from Brown and you'd written . . .

**Laporte:** It looked exciting.

**Jarrell:** It looked exciting and you had some idea of what was going on here. It was a rather experimental . . .

**Laporte:** Yeah, it was experimental.

**Jarrell:** . . . place.

**Laporte:** I was at Kresge. It was California, I mean . . . this is . . .

**Jarrell:** Where did you grow up?

**Laporte:** In the east coast, outside New York City. I mean this Woodstock thing is very . . . I take that whole thing with KQED and watch it again. I mean there were a lot of stupid things going on at the time. But the late sixties also a lot of things were being liberated. And certain things were more permissible. Like experimental teaching. I did a lot of teaching at Brown. So it looked like an



opportunity. Which it turned out to be. There was just short term. But you'd expect that when you make a major change. And the funny thing was that after a couple of years I realized that the student body at a public university in California was very much like the student body at a private eastern school at Brown. Mainly middle class, white, fairly affluent kids. And only now in the last several years has it really changed in character. And it's looking more like the state of California.

**Jarrell:** Really.

**Laporte:** Which is exciting. I think we're in an exciting period now. So then, well we did make some good appointments. I mean the thing is we did make some good appointments in the geological sciences, earth sciences. And this was a kind of steadying while I was chairman and then Bob. And where we are today in earth sciences reflects being able to hold on during those middle Seventies years, and having a plan, and keeping to that plan, more or less.

**Jarrell:** What sort of a plan?

**Laporte:** Well, where we wanted to go. The fields we wanted to develop. In hydrology and geophysics, get good young people. Being willing to alter the job description if somebody turned up who was really good. Which is harder now because of affirmative action. Because jobs are very tightly defined and you can't move outside that position.

**Jarrell:** How so? When you say it's very tightly defined.

**Laporte:** Well job descriptions.

**Jarrell:** You're doing a search?

**Laporte:** Yeah, you're doing a search for somebody and Randall Jarrell shows up and it's not quite the position we had in mind and it's not quite the level we were going to appoint, but you know, we really ought to have you here. We didn't know you were available. You're very good. Those kinds of opportunities are a little harder.

**Jarrell:** You can't jump on them anymore.

**Laporte:** No. Well, you can if the fact that you were a woman . . . maybe I could jump on it, or if you were in one of the so-called underrepresented groups. But if you were a white male . . . And see, in the earth sciences, at least at that time we didn't have that kind of diversity. So if you, so you moved for somebody to get somebody who was quite capable. For example, Mary [E.] Silver. We recruited her. Her then husband Eli [A.] Silver was with the Survey. And I believe we manipulated that position.

**Jarrell:** The U.S. Geological Survey?

**Laporte:** In Menlo Park. And we manipulated that position, not in a bad sense, but we shifted the focus of what we wanted to recruit to get Eli, when we knew that he would be available, and since Mary was on the faculty he might want . . . they might want to live in town, he was commuting over the hill and so on. So that kind of flexibility I don't think we really have now. Unless you know ahead of time who is available then you create the position, the job description around that person. But in the long run, I think it's probably better the way the way it is because this way really makes more diverse a faculty.

The other thing about it was my research then was physically located in the Appalachians, and in much older . . . well, in rocks of a certain age. And coming out to California there were much younger rocks, different kinds of rocks and also . . . ironically my research with a graduate student was in much older rocks that we didn't . . . well we had in the Appalachians but these were much older rocks in south central Nevada. And on my interest and his initiative we got a program going there. So I generated several Ph.D.'s that way. But I would say I'm glad I made the move, both personally and culturally. When I go back to the East Coast I find it very restrictive. Much more provincial . . . it's incredible how provincial people are, in New York, say, and Boston. And in fact things struck me out here that your average Iowa farmer is more cosmopolitan than your average person who lives East of the Alleghenies. That's then. Well even now they are tremendously provincial and self absorbed.

**Jarrell:** Are you talking just in terms of . . .

**Laporte:** General culture.

**Jarrell:** Not just academic.

**Laporte:** General culture. But I think also academically. Julia Armstrong was saying this a year or so ago. I was chairing a search committee and she was talking about affirmative action and so on. And she went to some national meeting, I think it was Julia. And said California is four, five, ten years ahead. And these are the kind of issues that we're dealing with. These schools wonder what we're talking about. They don't have a large Hispanic population coming into the school in waves. Or Asian Americans wanting access to the university.

They may have some Vietnamese or may have some Puerto Ricans . . . The University of Wisconsin, say or Princeton, say does not face . . .

**Jarrell:** They don't feel that . . .

**Laporte:** What's coming in. And that's why it's exciting to be here. If the University of California is going to remain a premier public institution of higher education, not only nationally but internationally, how would we respond to the student body, the complexion of the student body who are going to be educated. And that's a terrific challenge in that society. That's one reason why I was willing to be recalled . . . as provost at Crown.

**Jarrell:** Oh I didn't realize that. So even though you're veriping out—

**Laporte:** I'm veriping out.

**Jarrell:** You're out.

**Laporte:** Out. And I'm recalled as provost of Crown and as academic, as associate academic vice chancellor for undergraduate education.

**Jarrell:** How can they do that if you're retired? Because you're working under a certain number of hours per . . .

**Laporte:** Right. Yes, I'm technically 49%. But that's never my style. I mean this weekend we took all the wallpaper off and repainted the rooms and tore out the rugs. We did it in a weekend. I mean that's what we do. When I do something . . . you know. But that to me is not work.

**Jarrell:** Right. But you wanted to be here. You wanted to continue and . . .

**Laporte:** Yes. And it was also for financial reasons. Because I'm getting like 75% of my salary, but I would take a 25% hit. And until I'm 65, I'm 61 now, so when I'm 65 my Brown retirement will kick in, my twelve years there, my TIA CREF, and then Social Security. So I won't take any salary cut and . . . so I am motivated by money (laughter).

**Jarrell:** Well there's nothing wrong with that.

**Laporte:** Well the thing is I remarried nine years ago. I have an almost four-year-old son. We have a somewhat more expensive house.

**Jarrell:** So you started a second family in mid-life.

**Laporte:** And a second house. Because I gave my equity of my house in Santa Cruz to my ex-wife. So I had to leverage my way up like anybody else.

**Jarrell:** But the university gets you on the cheap, sort of. If you want to look at it that way.

**Laporte:** Yes. Well, yes. But . . . I mean, yeah.

### **The Challenges of Faculty and Student Diversity at UC**

**Jarrell:** But you're committed to this. I find it very interesting, because . . . of your colleagues all over the campus . . . there are many attitudes towards this challenge of diversity, towards having the University of California as a premier public institution reflect the population in some way, of the state. It's an enormous challenge.

**Laporte:** It's great.

**Jarrell:** And you don't seem to be resentful or bitter or worrying about your discipline. You're saying, this is fine. We're going to do it.

**Laporte:** Well, yes.

**Jarrell:** You're doing it in earth sciences, gradually?

**Laporte:** I think we are. Yes, we certainly did with respect to women. It's harder in earth sciences because the pool of available people is smaller. But campus-wide, well I guess you could have two attitudes. You can say well we can't do it, or we can do it. The thing is if you say you can't do you're not going to get there in any case. (laughter) So, yeah I think it's going to be . . . And that's the other thing. It's going to be . . . the next four years are really the kind of the bottleneck that we're going through.

**Jarrell:** In what way?

**Laporte:** Well, we've had the financial shock of not being on the department of defense, aerospace goal. Since 1940 when they started gearing up for World War II California has gotten more federal dollars than any other state, with respect to defense. And then later aerospace. And now we're being weaned off that. So that's a tremendous economic shock. Plus the recession. But we see that the recession . . . although we're coming back from the recession the jobs are still going down. Which means there's a whole restructuring of the U.S. economy. So that's another shock. And then the third thing is that the student, potential student base is changing, from dominantly middle class white Anglos to many more Hispanics, certainly Asian Americans. Now I realize Asian Americans in itself is a composite group. And for whatever people can say about Clinton, I

always liked what Clinton said about having the U.S. government look like the rest of the U.S. population. And he's trying to do that. And I think that the University of California has to look like the rest of the state. And it's going to take time, obviously. But you got to start. You have to get kids in the pipeline in the schools, all kinds of things.

**Developing the Earth Sciences BoardJarrell:** Right. I'd like to move back a little bit. We've been talking about your board in terms of the demographics and changing the face of the board. But I'd just be interested if we could kind of go back and look at the board of studies in earth sciences since you came here. And that's interesting you were the department chair, or the board chair a year after you got here. And who were people that you worked closely with to kind of think through what kind of department you wanted to create, what specialties that you wanted to excel in and concentrate in?

**Laporte:** Right. Well when I came here from Brown, when I came to Brown I didn't have my Ph.D. I wrote my dissertation the first year I was there. We were starting a new department. And the young departmental chairman had the view that this is a collegiate enterprise. We're all in this together. And I remember he impressed me by saying people will pay attention to the quality and character of what you say, not what your status is. And he used to run the department that way. So here I was. The first year I was without a Ph.D. The second year just having a Ph.D. He listened to me as much as he listened to . . . everybody else was about equally young. But he listened to everybody. And we saw this as a joint venture. And so we kind of put our egos aside and we all worked together. And we built a fairly strong department of geological sciences at Brown.

**Laporte:** And so when I came here the first thing I did as chairman was to break down the departmental responsibilities. And so somebody worried about undergraduate advising, somebody graduate advising. I did that both altruistically and self-centeredly. I didn't think a board chair should be responsible for everything. It's just too much work. And I didn't have enough ideas. And I didn't want to do all that work. But I also realized that you have to spread the work around so people learn how the university operates so that they can come as board chair after you do it for two or three years. And I like the idea of having rotating board chairs. People came in after two or three years and they knew the different parts of the job. So we in the beginning doled out the responsibility. And so we wrote our five year program, or you know for departmental review, and we all participated in that. So that included certain people like Bob Garrison, very steady guy. He was chairman I guess the second year I was here. The first year it was Waters. The second year it was Garrison. I guess the third and fourth year I was chairman. But Garrison, Rob [Robert S.] Coe, Othmar [T.] Tobisch, oh Gary [B.] Griggs was here.

Then we recruited. I don't remember exactly whether it was during my time or not, some of these things were stretched out. But Jim Gill, was very good. Eli Silver, very good. I don't have the roster of people in front of me, but I do here . . . Ken Cameron. Yeah, I remember I was one of the people who recruited Ken. And Mary Ellen Cameron. And then . . . and so then we made our plans. Oh [J.] Casey Moore was already here, a young assistant professor. And we thought of the areas we wanted to go into. And then we wanted to build up the geophysics area, remember. And so we recruited Karen McNally and then Gary Griggs



argued the importance of hydrology and that we needed somebody else here. So we got Shirley [J.] Dreiss. And at the same time, this was national, this wasn't just our doing. A lot more women started coming into the department. And I think about a third or so of our undergraduate majors were women, and about a third or so of our Ph.D.'s are women. And I was just noticing lately that most of my Ph.D.'s, recent Ph.D.'s have all been women. And it wasn't because I went out heavily and recruited. They showed up and they were good. In fact I did a third edition of a book with one of my Ph.D. students, Cathy Wooten, who is a professor at Syracuse, later became associate dean, now is department head out there. She's very good teacher, scholar, administrator. I'm very proud of her. So . . . although it's ironic. Those kinds of students are the ones you had the least to do with. (laughter)

**Jarrell:** In what way?

**Laporte:** Well you like to take credit for them, but the truth is, the better they are, the more independent they are, and my style was to keep them on a long leash. And if they had problems . . . be a kind of devil's advocate . . . say, okay if you want to see me I'm here. But I didn't work hard on them. My worst students were the ones I had to pay attention to all the time. It was a real struggle. And they get through but you're not particularly proud of them. So this is this wonderful irony that your best students are the ones . . .

**Jarrell:** Who had the most autonomy but they can always go to you if they . . .

**Laporte:** Right. And this was true also at Columbia University where I got my Ph.D. that . . . and I actually liked the style of my two thesis advisors. They left

me on a long leash. And I really liked that. So I thought that was important to do that with my own students. Anyway, so we built up the program. But there is one thing I've noticed, and I've been warned about that. That after you get about 12-14 people things start to fractionate, just inevitability. You lose that, just inevitably.

**Jarrell:** Right, that cohesiveness.

**Laporte:** You can't all fit around the same table. The group ideals you have and goals somehow get fragmented and lost, and I think as we started to expand the program, and this is all confidential, right?

**Jarrell:** This is all confidential.

**Laporte:** When we started to develop the program in geophysics and seismology it turned out Karen McNally was very much, much less of a team player than the other people. The other people would step aside of their own immediate interest because they knew that wanted to build a really good group. And that if we had a really good group individually we would all succeed. That really is true. And as we got bigger and bigger people started to say, well we need more in this field, or we need more in my field. And there was a little bit more competition. And of course as soon as one person does that then the whole thing breaks down because everybody says, well geez, if she's going to do that, I'd better watch what . . . look over my shoulder. So we've had a little bit more of that. And . . . but this maybe inevitably happens. And maybe it happens anyway. Maybe it's just the dynamics of institution building. A bunch of people come together and they are self-selected, they already have these group ideals.

And they build the thing up. But you can't maintain that intensity. You can't maintain that drive and that verve. And I know this is true in research groups. You can look around the country. Lamont Geological Observatory started this way. They had some . . .

**Jarrell:** Where's that?

**Laporte:** At Columbia. It was part of the . . . it was geochemistry and geophysics. It was developing in the fifties and early sixties. They had some dynamic people. They had group goals. They built up. They got really going. But you can't maintain that intensity. It's inevitably . . . the people get very good. They're drawn off to other places.

In fact that's the thing that's amazed me. We've had some very, very good faculty here. And some people have had offers. Casey Moore had an offer from Stanford. I don't know whether he had a formal offer, but they were interested in him. Bob Garrison was offered a chair at a midwestern university. And their loyalty and they stayed here because they felt we really had something going good. And it would just be a lateral move and it wouldn't improve my own situation or, I wouldn't really be able to do anything more than I'm doing here. So we've been able to hold our people. And only recently, I guess with Thorne Lay, he had a big offer from the University of Texas and Cal Tech and he leveraged that up . . . sort of way . . . and that was . . . problematic for the department. And he's here now. And I'm . . . it would be interesting to see what the future of the department will be. Now you could expect somebody who'd retired from the department to be a hand wringer and say . . . oh God, you know . . . I'm not sure. We've got some really good young people. Bob [Robert

S.] Anderson, Elise Knittle, Justin [S.] Revenaugh, Quentin [C.] Williams . . . in fact that was one of my concerns maybe, I don't know how many years ago, you tend to telescope everything . . . maybe it was seven or eight years ago. I could see retirements coming up. Not Verip coming up, just normal aging of the faculty. We were all approaching late fifties, early sixties. And I didn't see the youthful energy and the broad vision in the department there. Well, Gill had it of course, and Coe had it, but you just wondered. So we recruited Bob Anderson, Elise Knittle, Quentin Williams, Jim [James C.] Zachos . . . some really good people who are a whole new generation. And they are certainly better trained than I was . . . they're more . . . they're just different. But it's like you expect that at 25. It would be frightening . . . (laughter).

**Jarrell:** It would be discouraging.**Laporte:** And now I know . . . since I veriped I told them you can send me stuff but I'm not going to reply on what the direction was going. The future belongs to the people who are there now. They're going to have to live with. I'm not. And so I don't want to have to have anything except maybe some courtesy invitation to a talk. But I'm not going to meddle at all. Because it's not appropriate. What's appropriate is those young people.

**Jarrell:** That they start defining.

**Laporte:** And that's the other thing. Everybody's saying with the verip all the work is going down to these middle level professors. Well that's where it should be. That's how . . . Brown University got a terrific geological science department because they had instructors without Ph.D.'s and young assistant professors building a program. And that's how we built a program here. I was a young full

professor. We had good associate professors and assistant professors. We built a good program. That's where the energy and the vision comes from.

**Jarrell:** So you don't see it as a negative that . . . how many people are veriping in earth sciences?

**Laporte:** Well we got hit badly because . . . well Shirley died.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Laporte:** There are three verips. Garrison went to the National Science Foundation. Othmar Tobisch and myself. So that's three.

**Jarrell:** That's three senior . . .

**Laporte:** And then Jim Gill is full time director of research now and Gary Griggs is director of the Marine Lab. And so although the numbers of FTE may not reflect that, the operation functionally is restricted to a smaller group, which is mainly younger. That's terrific! I don't think that's bad at all. I think if you can have renewal you've got to do that. And so I'm . . . So I guess my general expectation is that earth science will be at least as good as its always been, probably better, because I think some of the people we've recruited are actually better. But I just worry a little bit that personalities, that empire building doesn't get started. Because when you are very good and you can attract money and you can get outside offers you can sometimes lose the long-term vision. When I was first at Brown I felt sometimes we weren't always recruiting the best people. Some of the young faculty were making decisions. I talked with Norman Newell who was my advisor at Columbia, and a leader in the field of paleontology.

American Museum of Natural History. He said, "Leo, you'll see that. You see that sometimes people are afraid to recruit new people who are at least as good as they." He said, "That hasn't been my style. My style has always been to recruit better!" I'm always uplifted by that.

**Jarrell:** Absolutely.

**Laporte:** And that is true.

**Jarrell:** Right. You get people smarter than you so that you're stimulated and inspired.

**Laporte:** That's right. And then what happens is that you spiral upward. But if you do it the other way you spiral downward. And you can't get . . . it's a whirlpool and you can't get out. And so you just have mediocrity all the way around. And so we have good people and I'm enthusiastic and hopeful for earth sciences, certainly.

**Jarrell:** In terms of . . . maybe this is kind of simplistic. But if you were going to kind of evaluate this board of studies, its coming of age, what are its strengths and what are its weaknesses? And now in terms of the whole systemwide in which people are saying oh we should just have . . . we shouldn't have duplication at all the campuses and everything. How does UC Santa Cruz's earth sciences compare with or . . .

**Laporte:** I know what you're asking and somebody listening to this tape years from now will say well of course what he said is quite self serving and so on. But I do really believe it to be true that our earth sciences department is as good as

any in the UC system. Both absolutely and both relatively in terms of size. It's as good as. There may be one or two stars somewhere else that might be better but I'm not even sure of that. So we're very strong.

The second thing is . . . what are its strengths. Its strengths are both in teaching and research. We have all the faculty . . . maybe it's because we selected this way, they are concerned about students, interested in students, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. They are good teachers. And some are very, very good teachers but they are also very, very good researchers. We had no dead wood. I mean, we have no . . . every department expects at some point well there will be some dead wood, people stop publishing. But everybody in our program published. Everybody was getting outside grants up until this past year or so. The only person who wasn't was myself, and that's because I wasn't applying for them because what I was doing was history of science and it was very nickel and dime and in fact one year I was working with NSF's program history of science, to get a grant and the thing was I had to add a lot of stuff to make it interesting to them, as it were. And it was ridiculous. And so I found that I could just either live on out of pocket expenses or get small grants from faculty research money. But everybody in the department was getting extramural funding. And that's a measure of something.

**Jarrell:** What are some of the sources?

**Laporte:** The National Science Foundation, mainly that. There may have been others. I think Gary [Griggs] was getting a lot of state, some kind of state money. I'm not sure about this, but things like the coastal research and

environmental stuff. Shirley was getting . . . Shirley Dreiss was getting EPA money.

**Jarrell:** Environmental Protection . . .

**Laporte:** Environmental Protection Agency, yes.

**Jarrell:** It would be interesting if you could tell me how qualitatively and quantitatively over the years research funding sources in earth sciences in terms of our department here . . . Has that changed? Has it decreased?

**Laporte:** No, it's increased. However the faculty have probably had to work a whole lot harder to get that money.

**Jarrell:** I've heard that in biology too.

**Laporte:** Yes. But they are really bringing in the bucks. And I think that you can . . . contracts and grants would have those numbers. Now some of that may be because we added people and so new people are bringing in new money. But we had to dig . . . mass spectrometry lab funded several years ago when Ken Collerson was here, and we still have that lab. He was attracted away. Well that's probably . . . he's Australian, his wife is Australian. They really wanted to go back to Australia. At least she did, certainly. And so he got a very good offer from the University of Queensland. So he was attracted away. But I consider that kind of anomalous. It wasn't too typical.

**Jarrell:** In earth sciences, as in other, you know, physics or biology, you need support for graduate students and that is really subsidized by these outside funding sources.



**Laporte:** Yes. It's always tight but we've done pretty well. Oh let me explain why this is. You know, with the end of . . . and this may be oversimplified, with the end of the Cold War, physics went downhill. With the interest in environmental issues and global systems, the natural science for that are the earth sciences because we worry about the interaction of the atmosphere, the hydrosphere . . .

**Jarrell:** Is that kind of research being funded adequately?

**Laporte:** Well I think it is, yes. Because we're getting Jim Zachos and Lisa [C.] Sloan is a researcher in marine studies. She's doing climate modeling. Jim Zachos is doing work on paleoclimates. Garrison is doing that kind of work. So people have been able to . . . it's funny, they've always been doing the same kind of research. But now outsiders are aware that that sort of research is important. So they give it new titles, new rubrics. So people who have been doing research say fine, we're going to use those titles. I mean, in a sense I was doing paleoclimates . . . I published a book called *Ancient Environments*. It went through three editions, the third with this former graduate student Cathryn Newton. Well, in a lot of ways ancient environments is a kind of paleoclimate because we are interested in the environment in the past. Now, admittedly we weren't addressing issues like global warming, but still, the techniques, the methodologies . . .

**Jarrell:** Are what you need.

**Laporte:** The point of view, yes. So now if I were to apply for money in paleoecology I would just use the labels . . .

**Jarrell:** The new labels. The terminology.

**Laporte:** Right. And that's not unusual in extramural funding. Yes, so I think if we . . . Oh, in hydrology, because of ground water contamination . . . where for years if you were doing hydrology it was always considered a kind of esoteric kind of field, the movement of groundwater using all kinds of computer models and the water resources division was a big division in the geological survey. But now people are realizing we're running out of groundwater. We're contaminating groundwater. And so the whole program that Shirley Dreiss was developing was very crucial, very critical. And for that reason the administration approved our recruiting somebody not exactly at her level, but recruiting somebody in that area. And leading up a higher level than we would normally do. Instead of bringing in a young assistant professor. Maybe we would have to get somebody at a middle level. And they approved that almost immediately to keep our program going.

And that's the other thing is. We, because we were a diversified department, when the oil glut . . . there was a crisis and then there was a glut and the oil companies all started downsizing and a lot of jobs for geologists came from oil companies. Well, schools like the University of Oklahoma, say, or Texas Tech, they took a bag because wages immediately started crashing down. But because we had hydrology, a lot of the students' interests had moved from oil exploration to groundwater management. And the irony of this is that . . . this doesn't have so much to do with Santa Cruz, but allow me . . . the irony is that we will probably have as many geologists, more geologists, cleaning up after the oil industry as who were in the oil industry. Because most of the contaminants are organic chemicals of one sort or another. A lot of them are generated by the

petroleum industry. So we were able to make that shift. So our numbers did go down somewhat, but not nearly as drastically. So we have a good, strong viable program both at the undergraduate and the graduate level.

**Jarrell:** And it seems also that seismology . . .

**Laporte:** Yes, and earthquakes, and natural hazards . . .

**Jarrell:** . . . yes, and all of that, that we've really been very high profile.

**Laporte:** That's right. And Gary Griggs . . . I mean it's not surprising that he's director of the Marine Lab now and the Marine Lab is concerned with the Monterey Bay Sanctuary, and he worked for years on things in Monterey Bay and the sediments of coastal pollution, and so on. In fact, when I was dean of natural sciences that's when we got the marine science program finally approved by the postsecondary education commission. And their concern was do we need another marine laboratory when we have Scripps and when we have Bodega Bay? And I used to use the phrase, well they'll doing blue water oceanography. We're going to do green and yellow water . . . we're going to do coastal . . . we're in the coastal environment.

**Jarrell:** Blue water means out there.

**Laporte:** Deep sea. Send the ships out there. And we realized to get this approved we had to put a spin on it, as they say, that this was . . . but it was true. We're doing coastal stuff. We're not going to have ships that are cruising around . . . although some of our people do that on other people's ships, but what Long Marine Lab is really concerned with is the coastal environments. And now with

Monterey Bay Sanctuary. So it's completely natural that Griggs would become director of that. You know, this is the old story. If you plan properly, what looks like really glorious opportunities that suddenly appear from nowhere . . . well, it's just because you were prepared for them. You know if you're thinking long term, and have some kind of vision, then you diversify. So our department was always diversified. We always insisted that our graduate students diversify their education.

**Jarrell:** In what way?

### **Working with Graduate Students**

**Laporte:** That they not be narrow specialists in one field or another. I saw this . . . I don't know if this is true, but my sense is that it's true that Berkeley paleontologists really couldn't get good jobs. Well that's because they were narrowly trained. They had a department of paleontology. They weren't trained in geology. I had . . . my best example of this is Steve Roller got his Ph.D. here from me. I encouraged him to do a lot of other things. So while a graduate student he wrote a laboratory manual in structural geology. Which is very successful. Because he loved also structural geology. He could teach field courses. I encouraged him to study Russian because he was doing work in an area that required knowledge of the Russian language. The result is that when he was offered a job at the University of Nevada, at Las Vegas he got the job because they needed somebody who could also teach a summer field course. Who could also . . . it was a small department. If they got somebody who could teach structural geology when the structural geologists went on leave. "Yeah, I can.

I'm a paleontologist. But I wrote this manual." And so I always use that example with my undergraduate students. . . be as diversified as possible.

**Jarrell:** And not just this narrow specialization.

**Laporte:** Yes, because those specialties come and go. Either they mine out the possibilities or they are not fashionable any more, and so we've been successful that way.

**Jarrell:** Tell me, how closely have you worked . . . you said with undergraduate students you've all . . . you've recruited people who are really committed, really committed to teaching undergraduates, which is one of the goals of this institution. How closely have you worked with graduate students, and . . . just tell me something about your graduate program, how it's . . .

**Laporte:** My own personal one or . . .

**Jarrell:** How you've worked with graduate students.

**Laporte:** My style with graduate students was to get . . . when I looked in a graduate student's folder, I was interested not in their graduate record scores. I felt that those were fairly neutral. I looked at their letters of recommendation. And I looked at things like persistence, commitment, had some kind of passion. Because that's what carries the day. I always wondered as a graduate student at Columbia, we had a lot of good people, why some of them took forever to get their degrees, or why they never got their degrees. What was the difference? Everybody was intelligent. Everybody was smart enough to do the work. So there was some personality factor there, that's not operating at a high level. And

it has to do with what Woody Allen says, “Ninety percent of success in life is showing up.” And there’s a certain truth to that although it was offered facetiously. Persistence, commitment, passion . . . and I look for that in graduate students. And for example, I’ve had two Peace Corps graduates who were worried when they came back because they had been off for a while. I said, “No, no the Peace Corps is perfect because you know how to work on your own. You know how to work in situations where it’s unpredictable.”

**Jarrell:** Independently.

**Laporte:** Things don’t work out so you make do. Those are both . . . what do you call it . . . there’s a work around. You come to a stopping point so you figure out the work around. And so . . . I look for those kinds of qualities. And for awhile I used to think of myself as a . . . who’s the guy . . . the Oakland Raiders used to take these football players who were kind of down and out or couldn’t do very well . . . Al something or other, anyway I used to think of myself as that kind of person, who could take people.

**Jarrell:** Al Davis.

**Laporte:** Yes. That they are already motivated. Just funnel their energy and give them a little bit of direction. And that has generally, not always worked out, but generally worked out. My best counterexample is a student who had something like a 4.0 GPA in anthropology at Berkeley, overall like 3.9 at Berkeley, had good recommendations, but there was no particular evidence of research. She came here and she used to get upset because I wouldn’t tell her what she should do . . . we decided she should do a master’s thesis because she didn’t have an

undergraduate degree in geology. Master's thesis before a Ph.D. But my style is not to give people, tell them what to do. I suggest possible areas. She would actually break down in my office because I wouldn't tell her what to do. So finally I had some money to have students work in the Galapagos. So she went out as a field assistant to the Galapagos, of all places, panicked every which way . . . she couldn't find a research project there. And I had two Ph. D. students working there . . . what that showed me . . . and this woman, by the way, is very successful now. She works . . . well I haven't kept in touch with her lately but for awhile she was working at the Museum of Northern Arizona and was very successful as kind of an administrator. She has a lot of personality, a lot of other skills. But she just doesn't have research skills. So generally it works out.

So then I keep them on a long leash. Very often a student will come in and know exactly what they want to do. I say, "Fine, but don't do that the first year. What I want you to do is I want you to take courses around." This one woman came, she was very good, Cathy Newton, she wanted to work on some Devonian rocks. Because I had worked on Devonian rocks, aged rocks in the Appalachians. She wanted to do that. She had done a master's thesis at Duke, came here. I said, "Fine. You can do that at the end of the first year. The first year I want you to take courses in marine sciences. You don't have any marine science background. I want you to sample around." It turns out she did a completely different thesis and was delighted that I didn't allow her to get started on a project too soon. I wanted her to look around. Because her perspective was too narrow. Which inevitably will happen.

And so the students come, they shop around. And then I help them define . . . I want them to come up with an idea, but then I help them refine it or define it. So it's a kind of a light hand. And I have to admit, part of it I don't want to spend that much time babying and leading somebody step by step. It's too exhausting. I'm more interested in ideas. I like to have ideas and give them away. Now get out of here. (Laughter) Here's my idea. Think about it. Play with it. Come back. And so I'm kind of a devil's advocate. Somebody to pass their ideas on. And that has worked because I had, unlike some of our other faculty, and not that many, but some, I haven't had any students who have left here, and haven't completed their degree. They've left here, maybe and finished their degree somewhere else because they had a job. But they always . . .

**Jarrell:** Completed . . .

**Laporte:** They've all completed their degree. There have been one or two students who . . . we've usually decided a Ph.D. wasn't for them. They should take a master's degree. But they kind of came in wondering whether they should do a Ph.D. I've said, "Leave it open. Do a master's thesis. And see how you'll feel about that."

**Jarrell:** That's a rather unconventional approach.

**Laporte:** Yes. Well, I don't know if it is or not. But see what I recognized . . . well it wasn't at Columbia. Two Ph.D. advisors I had were just that way. And what I've come to realize is you have to wake up in the morning with energy to do what you want to do. Not just when you're 25 and it's a novelty, but when



you're thirty-five, forty-five, fifty-five. There has to be this . . . And you know, Joseph Campbell talks about finding place . . .

**Jarrell:** You have to be in love with something.

**Laporte:** Yes. And I guess I got that from . . . maybe my Catholic grammar school, high school background, when they called about vocation, or calling. Although I don't particularly believe most of that stuff now. I do believe in something about looking around, finding what it is you want. And I tell that to undergraduates. And the way we were brought up . . . I mean my parents weren't thinking paleontology, geology . . . they had a completely different background. And my children aren't academics. And I look at other kids of academics and they're not academics. They're doing completely different things. So we can't . . . we as parents, we as thesis advisors, we as faculty mentors, undergraduate advisors, can't imagine . . .

**Jarrell:** What direction . . .

**Laporte:** What a direction. So you have to . . . I like the word long leash. There has to be some . . . you know, if you're blind, you have to find the walls. You have to find the configuration of the room. Or you have to have a leash to kind of pull them back so they don't get hurt and fall off the cliff. But at the same time you have to let them experiment. And you have to let them make them mistakes. But don't see them as mistakes, per say, as just, oh that's not right. That's not . . . you learn from experience.

**Jarrell:** Right. You learn from that.

**Laporte:** Right. You learn from that experience. It's experiential. Existential. That goes back to the year I spent in Paris as a junior, reading a lot of existential . . . I'm mainly an existentialist as opposed to . . .

**Jarrell:** Where were you in school?

**Laporte:** Well I went to a Catholic college.

**Jarrell:** Fordham.

**Laporte:** I wasn't too crazy about it. They had an honors program and I went to Paris for a year. And I didn't do anything I was supposed to do, but I spent a year reading the American library. The American embassy had a great library and they had a lot of the French literature in translation because my French wasn't yet good enough. So I read a lot of Sartre, and stuff. But and then also because of my upbringing . . . everything was kind of platonic idealism, essence before existence. And existentialism was existence before essence. You find out by experience.

**Jarrell:** Experiencing.

**Laporte:** And you can't have some kind of ideal laid down on you. I mean, you experience . . . the truth is too abstract. Or love is too abstract. You have to experience those things to know what they are. And students have to experience learning and scholarship and what really interests them. So when students are sitting, when you're sitting, I say, "Don't tell them me what your mom and dad want you to do, or what your roommate wants to do, or your lover wants you to do. You have to get off by yourself, push that stuff out. And see what do you

like. What are you good at? What turns you on? And then don't be hypercritical." You know, maybe it's religious studies and you never thought of yourself as that way, philosophically oriented. You've just got to see. The other thing is students get interested in . . . this can be graduate students too, while we're still on that subject. They can be interested in something but not to do as your life work. I was tremendously interested in art history and that was one of my last majors. That and . . . I had about four others before that. And I realized, I remember having this . . . I was sitting on the subway of New York City and I said do I want to wake up at forty and open with trembling hands the latest journal of art history. And I thought, I don't think I want to do that. But I love art history. I still love art history. And so because you take a course and you like it doesn't mean you have to major in it.

**Jarrell:** For your life.

**Laporte:** For your life. Take a few more courses. So you have to distinguish between things that interest you . . . and I'm interested in many, many things. But I don't want to spend my life doing them all. And to get back to the Verip, maybe. I'm not that interested in teaching anymore. I'm not that interested in doing . . . although I'm doing some research I'm not interested in being fully consumed by that. I'm more interested in what I'm doing right now.

### **Provost of Crown College**

**Jarrell:** Which is?

**Laporte:** Administration.

**Jarrell:** Right and college . . .

**Laporte:** And playing with the notion of the next four years. Although I'm not going to be making decisions about where the University of California at Santa Cruz will be going in the next four years, I'm going to be close to the centers of decision and discussion so that at least I can hear . . . even if I don't contribute to the discussion, I can hear it. And of course, truthfully, I will be able to contribute. But again, only to the degree to which I make some sense and I have some good ideas. And that's just because of my titles.

**Jarrell:** And you're going to be acting provost?

**Laporte:** No, I'm provost. I'm provost.

**Jarrell:** You're provost . . . but even.

**Laporte:** Of Crown College. And it will be the provost's job. And not having to teach makes a big difference. I'll tell you something about that in a minute. And then as associate vice chancellor for undergraduate education, I've known [R.] Michael Tanner for some time, and we've had conversations about doing administration before. I turned it down. So this time we worked out a deal and he was . . . in fact he volunteered. He said, "You don't have any law and authority. You don't have any budgets to worry about and have people reporting to you. I want you to worry about things that I executive vice chancellor of the campus . . ."

**Jarrell:** Want to think about.

**Laporte:** “And you should worry about . . .” In terms of undergraduate education. Think about and do about and do. And I said, “Great.” And I think I can do that because I can work with Michael. And I admire [Karl S.] Pister very much. I wouldn’t work for Pister or Tanner if I didn’t respect them both as people and as educators. I think they have some convictions that are in line with . . . I mean intuitively I feel that. And there are a few examples. It’s not like they wrote out a book of particulars and I wrote out a book of particulars and we matched them up. I couldn’t say that for some other chancellors and vice chancellors.

**TeachingLaporte:** Let me tell you something, since this is Verip too, let me tell you an experience about teaching. When I do . . . this is my 35th year of teaching, 12 at Brown, 23 here. I’ve had some success at teaching. I got a distinguished teaching award. I’ve been voted favorite professor a couple of times. I’ve had good teaching evaluations. And I’ve enjoyed it. I mean it was always a high for me to teach. But when I knew in February or March of this year, I was teaching one class, that I didn’t have to teach anymore, I felt this huge weight lifted off me. And I didn’t expect that. I thought I should be depressed. I should be sad. This is my last quarter of teaching. And then I was a little bit more introspective. And I realized, that it was a real feeling so I had to acknowledge that and figure out what that was. So what I’ve come to realize is we put a tremendous amount of effort and energy into teaching that you forget in the beginning when you start teaching. And then you do that all the time and it’s sort of just part of it.

**Jarrell:** It’s so matter of fact you don’t even realize . . .

**Laporte:** You don't even look at it. And then when suddenly that's no longer there . . . and it manifests itself in two small, but I think typical ways. There was a national meeting in April and I was going through the exhibit hall and I'd already decided to verify and I was looking at new books in my field. And I said, Oh this is terrific for my paleo class. I've been looking for the perfect book! You never can have the perfect book, you know. This is the perfect book. I was all set to buy it. I thought, wait a minute. I don't have to have this book." And I sort, of you know, smiled to myself and put the book down. And I may buy it just for myself. In a similar way, I read *Science* magazine every week and I always tear things out and I put them in a big, thick . . .

**Jarrell:** For your class?

**Laporte:** . . . loose-leaf book by subject. So I have it here for my lectures or for students and want to know more about what I mentioned today. I say, "Well here, I've got these . . . by subject."

**Jarrell:** You've been doing it for years.

**Laporte:** Yeah, so now I just take it . . . when I'm through with it I throw it away. (Laughter) So it's little things like that that all add up in the aggregate to be very time consuming and . . .

**Jarrell:** And you're doing all the time . . .

**Laporte:** It's really psychic energy. Psychic energy drain. So now I don't have to worry about that. I am responsible for the fall core course. But we've got that handled and I'm giving one lecture. And also my classes tend to be very large so

you really are on stage. You've got to come in there and if your nose is runny or if you have a headache . . .

**Jarrell:** Too bad.

**Laporte:** You got to get in there. You got to show some energy, some enthusiasm and do a good job. And if there are fifty, sixty, a hundred people out there, sometimes more . . . so I like to do that. And then I've thought of people like . . . well, like John Dizikes not taking VERIP who is my age, and I wonder why. And he loves teaching. But I suspect he . . . and I might like doing this. You read two or three books. You go into a relatively small room and sit around a table with ten or twelve students. I'm guessing, maybe I'm projecting, and this isn't true. That might be a different kind of teaching. I might enjoy that.

**Jarrell:** John teaches great big . . .

**Laporte:** He does?

**Jarrell:** I think he still teaches the basic American history. I think he still teaches the basic American history. I used to be his TA.

**Laporte:** Oh. Okay.

**Jarrell:** In Classroom Unit I.

**Laporte:** So okay, he's . . .

**Jarrell:** Now I don't know if he's been doing that lately. I haven't kept track. I mean, sure he does littler things. I mean he's quite the performer. When he has 150 to 200 people.

**Laporte:** Well, I guess just thinking of myself. I guess I have found that as an effort, which has surprised me. And I don't know what it's going to be like a year or two ahead so when I'm not teaching anymore I may miss it. I haven't missed it yet. And then if that happens I may offer a small seminar. But I really don't want to do big class teaching. I want to . . . the other thing about big classes is usually it's an introductory subject where you are responsible for the whole waterfront and you're really are only comfortable with a small part of it. So if there's something . . . you know I might do one on the history of evolution . . . I thought of something like that. But . . . to tell you the truth even as I say it, I'm tired. (laughter) I don't want to do that. And I'm more enjoying this other stuff.

Also I think there's something about the gracefulness of letting go. It's just some notion I have that . . . it's like even . . . obviously I've thought a lot about dying having a child when I was 57. And that . . . was a big decision to have a child. Because I thought well, I'm not going to be around when he graduates from . . . let alone college, high school or grammar school . . . you know . . . So I dealt with that for both the year before he was born and mostly the year after he was born. It's not really . . . so you are aware of that. But I've always felt, I've always seen that frankly as a kind of recy— I mean I don't believe in an afterlife. I mean it's just a natural . . . I mean here is a universe that's 15 billion years old and you're not here, then you're here, then you're not here. It's okay. (Laughter) I mean I'm grateful that I was here for some part of that universe and to be conscious of it. And I think it's really important to be able to let go and not be so tight and greedy. And I think you have to manifest that in all sorts of ways. Including letting go at retirement. Because I've watched people retire. And I refuse to die at



my best doing what I'm always doing . . . And also you notice that people aren't as sharp. The fact of the matter is you're not as sharp. They think they are. But they don't have quite the energy. They don't have quite the insight. And they lose their edge. That's a fact. And I know I don't have the edge of interest in my research in general in paleontology. I love history. I love biography. I like the guy I'm working on. But I'm willing to let that go. I mean I've got a few more things to do and that's done. And then I have the feeling of satisfaction. It's done. It's complete. Then let go. So this new activity I look forward to. If I had . . . if I were financially . . . the real financial change and I'd veriped I don't know what I would do. I would probably . . . I like to write so I would probably write memoirs or something. I would probably write an autobiography for my kids and my grandchildren. Something like that. But I don't know what I would do. So this is a nice . . . I mean this is clearly a term deal here provosting and associate vice chancellor.

**Jarrell:** It sounds like it's sort of a transition.

**Laporte:** It is.

**Jarrell:** I mean you've retired from teaching and research. And now you're . . .

**Laporte:** Phasing out.

**Jarrell:** You're phasing out but you're still . . . it sounds pretty vital because you're thinking about something that's really important for this place.

**Laporte:** Yeah. And it's different and I hadn't thought about it. So I can bring new energy, new interests. And then when I'm 65 I will buy that boat I've been

putting off. And my son will be old enough to sail. He's too young to sail now. I gave up sailing when he was born because I felt I didn't want to spend time away from him and my wife. But sailing together . . . having a kid . . . (inaudible)

**Jarrell:** That's right.

**Laporte:** But in four years he'll be eight, just right.

**Jarrell:** That's right. And you have other kids?

**Laporte:** I have two grown children.

**Jarrell:** Two grown children.

**Laporte:** And they're doing fine. And my son and his wife are about to present me with my second grandchild. And that's nice.

### UC Santa Cruz: A Hybrid University

**Jarrell:** Yes. I want to ask you . . . What do you think of this place, this UC Santa Cruz? It's 30 years old, almost.

**Laporte:** I think it's great. I think it's terrific!

**Jarrell:** You think it's . . .

**Laporte:** I think considering . . . what they were trying . . . they were trying to build a terrific . . . they were trying to build it seems to me . . . well, they were trying to do several things . . . One thing they were trying to do was have a kind of Oberlin or Amherst or Williams or Reed College, within the University of

California. That's very hard to do. And I think they've done it about as well as you can do it.

**Jarrell:** In a public . . .

**Laporte:** In a public institution where the monies are given out in a certain way, you know you can't have . . . because those schools have a . . . they have a, well we used to have a twenty to one faculty-student ratio. What do we have now? Twenty-seven to one, I think is our budgeting one. Those schools have faculty ratios of nine, ten, eleven.

**Jarrell:** I know, my son went to Reed and it was just incredible.

**Laporte:** Yes. So we don't have that kind of budgeting. So you can't really deliver that kind of education. But we've done it pretty well. However, we are a hybrid institution and this is something I've been trying to tell people now that I have an opportunity. I don't think people are aware of it. Some people see this as a research . . . as one of the seven or eight research campuses of the University of California. And so their model is at Cal Tech, at Berkeley and MIT. Well that's okay for some faculty. But we're a hybrid institution. We're also Williams, Amherst, Reed, Oberlin. And those . . . that's important too. But those things can run at cross purposes. What McHenry tried to do, and I've seen him use this image. He takes one hand and puts it this way, he puts the other hand like this . . .

**Jarrell:** One hand on top of the other.

**Laporte:** Yes. On the other and so you have Oberlin on top of Cal Tech. That's not going to work. And it didn't work.

**Jarrell:** What you're also talking about implicitly is the research mission and how are you going to relate that to . . .

**Laporte:** And the Mr. Chips mission.

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Laporte:** And how are you going to do that?

**Jarrell:** Yes. The transmission of individual teaching . . .

**Laporte:** So I have argued in my department, in fact I wrote a little piece about this a couple of years ago, which the faculty seemed to like, was that we had this broad ideal but no one person can do all that and so we should acknowledge that this person is terrific running the ORU, terrific getting grants, terrific doing research. And either has no interest or talent for work with undergraduates. That's okay. As long as that person is doing what that person should do over in that area. This person likes advising, likes to work in undergraduate teaching. And maybe doesn't want to manage big research projects. Still has to do research, still has to be scholarly, but smaller scale. So there should be room for all. Because they still do research at Williams. They still do research at Oberlin. And Reed. It's just smaller scale and it's not so out front or high profile. And I think we can have the hybrid university here if we're willing to acknowledge that not everybody is going to do that. Or in some people . . . and this is the other thing is . . . longitudinally during their life history some people may be more

into research or teaching. Allow them to move into those areas. Don't be surprised if someone suddenly says I want to cut back on my research and spend more time over there. Fine. Encourage that. So we have to see that we're a hybrid institution, I think unlike any other. That may not be quite true because I think San Diego . . . I don't know. But I have the sense that we're a little bit more offbeat than . . .

**Jarrell:** Than UC San Diego or . . .

**Laporte:** Yes, or any of the other UC campuses. And acknowledge that and allow for that. And I've always liked the idea of somehow negotiating one on one with what it is you want to do the next four or five years and say okay, fine. That sounds great, that sounds within the large context of this campus what somebody ought to be doing. Go for it. Instead of everybody being kind of the same. So I think as long as we recognize that I think this is the perfect place to be. And we had a candidate for director of admissions. And I talked to this person about this. He himself is Hispanic, Chicano . . . brought up in El Paso. I said do you think it's realistic for Santa Cruz to be drawing African Americans from East LA or gang members, Hispanic gang members. He said, "It is." He says, "That's what they need. They need to get out of those places. They need to get out of here and come to Santa Cruz and not be around their peers where there are a lot of guns and drugs and this and that." He said, "It's totally realistic." He said, "That's what I would advise." He said, "Anyway," he said, "You've not talking to students. You're talking to parents. That's what the parents want." And so we shouldn't be embarrassed that we have beautiful redwoods, we have beautiful vistas of the ocean.

**Jarrell:** And to apologize for that.

**Laporte:** Yes, to apologize for it. I first felt apologetic. My friends came from Chicago. I had friends at the University of Chicago.

**Jarrell:** (laughter)

**Laporte:** Or from Brown or wherever. And they said, “God this is not the real world!” And at first I was a little touchy about that, defensive. And then I thought, wait a minute. Maybe the real world should be like this. Where it’s kind of . . . where the colleges are small communities, trying to develop a sense of community, why can’t it be beautiful? Why does everything have to be tragedy and garbaged up? And so maybe this is an ideal . . . maybe it is a city on a hill, but I’m not so . . . Also, you know, historically students when they went to the university were brought away from the town. That’s why . . . the town-gown battle goes back to the middle ages.

**Jarrell:** That’s right.

**Laporte:** And in fact the middle age universities got started because they were trying to break or control either of the monarchs or the popes. And they were these little enclaves that were isolated.

**Jarrell:** Or autonomous eventually.

**Laporte:** And that might be important, especially in these years 18-22. I’ve talked to some of the preceptors here and we always remark how young they look when they come in as freshmen.

**Jarrell:** As we're getting older. (Laughter)

**Laporte:** That's true too. But they *are* young. But then when you go to commencement they're mature young men and women. And that four year interval is crucial in the development of personality. And of youth. And so . . . and we know how important it is because people who don't do it . . . you know this woman Gail Sheehy who wrote *Passages*, she talks about this, and other work . . she apparently (laughter) plagiarized. That if you don't go through certain developmental stages, this is true throughout your whole life, somehow they back up, like your toilet backs up (laughter).

**Jarrell:** Well you have to go back and you have to . .

**Laporte:** Appropriately. And so the whole middle age crisis is people who . . .

**Jarrell:** Who have skipped a couple of critical phases developmentally.

**Laporte:** That's right And so when . . . we see . . . and I've worked with some reentry women. And they 're coming back after raising . . . and they've got the enthusiasm and the excitement that an eighteen year old has for school. Because they were interrupted . . . who knows, in high school or college they got married . . . and interrupted. So it is important that that four years be devoted. It's selfish. It's self-centered. It's indulgent. It's appropriate. At that age. Let students find out who they are, what they want, find out . . . what we were talking about before—find out their passion, what do they want to do. What do they want to do when they grow up? And they should be allowed to do whatever they find is there for them to do. So I have spoken. What else have you got there?

**Jarrell:** Oh I've got all kinds of questions about boards of studies and colleges and divisions, but I think . . . I think that those are trivial details because what you're talking about in the last question you addressed is the larger vision of what has been created here and what informs that.

**Laporte:** Right. And you know what informs that also are the kind of chancellors we have. And it's not surprising that we've done well under people like McHenry and Taylor and now Pister. Because they have a broader vision. I don't think we did well under Sinsheimer.

**Jarrell:** Why?

**Laporte:** Because he's Cal Tech. He's Cal Tech. He didn't understand. He doesn't understand . . . I . . .

**Jarrell:** What didn't he understand?

**Laporte:** He doesn't understand what it is to be in college. He didn't understand people finding themselves. He didn't understand . . . he brings kind of a national academy mentality. And we had . . . I think maybe one or two of our people in earth sciences now who might be that way. And I see that as dangerous. And I might misjudge them. But Sinsheimer . . . oh, I know what I was going to say. I've also noticed this among faculty. If I want to know, if I want to get a sense of faculty who are going to be sympathetic to the college ideal I go to the catalog. I see where did they go to college. One of the best people in our department, Bob Anderson, went to Williams College. He got . . . he wrote an undergraduate thesis in the history of science on letters, on some science letters. He was a geology major. Then he got a Ph.D. in Washington. Then he did a postdoc at Cal



Tech. So he . . . and this guy . . . he's won a presidential investigator award, top notch researcher. And he understands what college is about. So I don't want to mention . . . I mean I would stay away. . .

**Jarrell:** Sinsheimer went to MIT. And then he ended up at Cal Tech, so . . .

**Laporte:** Yes. So I would . . . I mean, I don't want to be unfair, but I'd be a little bit careful about putting people . . . Tanner went to Stanford. Tanner did education abroad. Michael Tanner went to Stanford. Good research university but still has a college . . . my wife works at Stanford, is staff there. And I know, we get the Stanford papers. And I don't think I'm telling tales out of school, it's public knowledge, that he did one of these experiment in living where you live abroad. He's lived abroad. You know . . . and someone, and other people who maybe have gone to a state university. I don't want to mention names because I'm not sure that those places are like that . . . well, I can. State University New York at Buffalo. I'm not sure that it's got quite the . . . I may be very unfair but . . .

**Jarrell:** It's different. It's a totally different kind of institution than if you're talking about Swarthmore or Oberlin or Reed.

**Laporte:** Or Rutgers University or . . .

**Jarrell:** Not because . . . exactly because they are private but because of the kind of environment that they have created, I think.

**Laporte:** Right. Or Rutgers University at Newark, say.

**Jarrell:** Right. Urban . . .

**Laporte:** Urban . . . yeah. Right.

**Jarrell:** Yes, it's a different approach, I think. You think that the chancellor here, whoever is chancellor has an influence on the kind of institution this is?

**Laporte:** Yes. In subtle ways. In myriad subtle way. Pister has created these undergraduate awards for students who've been out and are coming back. What is that saying? That's saying . . . you know, that's interesting. He's really into pushing diversity. I know lots of programs where he's getting money together. Paying more attention to teaching, rewarding teaching. I know Tanner, one reason why Tanner wanted me to take this position, instead of August 1 when the verrips are, April 1, so I was teaching and doing provosting. There's initiative with the American Association for Higher Education in Washington, twelve universities including Santa Cruz, Syracuse, Michigan, Nebraska . . . peer evaluation of teaching. How can we evaluate teaching, not by the educational psychologists, people outside the discipline, but inside the discipline. How do sociologists say that's a good sociology course? How do historians of American universities say . . . you know.

**Jarrell:** This is a fabulous course. Or this is . . .

**Laporte:** Yeah, and it has to come from within the discipline and so they are trying to get a way of documenting by peers within the discipline of good teaching so that good teaching is documented more. This doesn't mean we would emphasize teaching more than research. We'll still emphasize research. But they'll just . . . instead of having, this material for my research and this material for my teaching and making a pile of student evaluations, we'll have an

equivalent high-caliber, high-quality documentation. What is Leo doing in the classroom? Why do you teach this Darwin course the way you teach it? And so it's what they call a self-reflective statement or analysis. What am I doing in the classroom? Why am I doing it and what are the results? And I think we could find that ninety percent of our faculty could do that. And it would give more public display, more public acknowledgment of good teaching. It does go on here. So I'm not saying that good teaching is not going on here. It's just how can we get it better into the personnel process? And Pister is very much for that.

**Jarrell:** Right. Because I think that's honored in the breach. It's like the real points for tenure seem to be based on research. Because this is the UC system.

**Laporte:** Well, but also, Randall, because it's documented.

**Jarrell:** Documented, yes, okay.

**Laporte:** I had my reprints. You know what I've done? I've got letters from people at Berkeley and . . .

**Jarrell:** But do they really . . .

**Laporte:** Those letters count. They're outside letters.

**Jarrell:** Right. But when you get outside letters . . .

**Laporte:** You never get outside letters on teaching.

**Jarrell:** What about when you get a distinguished teaching award.

**Laporte:** Oh. That helps.

**Jarrell:** That helps.

**Laporte:** And I've been rewarded . . . I think I've been . . . I veriped at professor eight. The top of the ladder except for . . . there's some that are off scale, or above scale. And how did I get there. Well I wouldn't say that it was a hundred percent research. I would say I was given a lot of credit by people in my department making a case for me that I was a good teacher. And so I got it. But other people should get it too who are good teachers. And for one reason or another aren't getting acknowledgment. Anyway, you can only have one Distinguished Teacher Award a year. And that's not fair. In fact, I was embarrassed when I got it . . . I thought of all of these people, by the way, some of whom did get . . . like John Pearse or John Dizikes. I was embarrassed. These people are at least as good as I and that I should take it.

**Jarrell:** Well I think I've asked you everything I wanted to ask you. Thank you so much, Leo

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