

University of Houston-Clear Lake Oral History Project

Interviewee: Lou Rodriguez
Interviewer: Shelly Kelly
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Kelly: My name is Shelly Kelly. I'm the university archivist, and today is Monday, May 2nd, 2005. I'm sitting in the president's conference room with Dr. Louis Rodriguez, who was a charter faculty, the Dean of Professional Studies, and the second Vice Chancellor and Provost at the University of Houston-Clear Lake City.

Thank you for being with us.

Rodriguez: Thank you for inviting me over.

Kelly: It's a wonderful opportunity that we can speak with you today. Would you tell me a little bit about your background, from your childhood up through your education?

Rodriguez: I'm not sure you want to hear it all, but at any rate I'm a native of New Jersey. I spent six of my first eight years in Spain. We got caught in a civil war as a result of a trip. I grew up in Springfield, New Jersey, went on to Rutgers [University] in

Newark [New Jersey], where I have a degree in business economics. Then I went to Louisiana State for my master's, and a Ph.D. in economics, international trade.

Educationally, I did some postdoc work at the University of Texas in macroeconomics. Educationally, I kind of did it all along the way. I was the head of the business department at Nicholls University, a fairly new school at the time, in South Louisiana, then became the first dean of the College of Business, and went to UT-San Antonio as the first dean of the College of Business. Then when Dr. June Hyer, who came over here, left, I succeeded her as the general vice president. Then in 1973 Dr. [Alfred R.] Neumann invited me to come over here, so we joined UH-Clear Lake, and I think I was the sixth or seventh person employed.

Kelly: How did you first hear about University of Houston-Clear Lake City?

Rodriguez: Well, Dr. Hyer was our Academic V.P. at San Antonio when we were starting that school from a zero base, and she, of course, was very closely tied to U.H., and that's where that came from. When she came over here she talked to Dr. Neumann about-- at that time at San Antonio, our president was being sent out to El Paso, so there was a lot of turmoil and so forth. The timing was right.

I went to see Dr. Peter Plum [phonetic], you may know at the University of Texas. He came in as our president, and he was not in the office. I came here on a Friday afternoon. If he had been in the office I would have been in San Antonio, as it turned out. But I came over here, and I met Dr. Neumann and Dr. [Philip G.] Hoffman in Dr. Hoffman's office, and I was completely just overwhelmed by these two gentlemen, who to me were the epitome of college scholars and gentlemen and educators.

So then from here I went as president of Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, where I served at that institution for twenty years, and retired five years ago, and here we are.

Kelly: That's great. What attracted you to come to UH-CLC? You mentioned that Dr. Hyer had left and you had filled her position there.

Rodriguez: I think two things. At UT-San Antonio there was a lot of turmoil—now, I don't mean that negatively or positively. Turmoil—again, it was a new major campus for UT, the big city not that far away from the main institution. Then when Dr. Templeton left, that kind of unsettled things for me, because he's the one that had brought me to Texas, and I knew Dr. Hyer.

As I said, I was really, really extremely, extremely impressed with Dr. Hoffman and Dr. Neumann, and those two assessments were not in error. Over the years I learned to realize that I was right in assessing these two gentlemen as these very tremendous educators. And then the possibility of starting something new again, with an upper-level, totally interdisciplinary, which kind of blew everybody's minds. Some people shake their heads and walk away. Not me, I'm not going to do that. But others like the sound to it, the opportunity to do something new, being next to NASA. It was a growing area, so put it all together, it's time to try one more.

Kelly: I noticed in some paperwork in the archives that you had quite a number of job opportunities in '73, '74, '75, and you turned most of them down, at UT-El Paso, Middle Tennessee State, president of Sul Ross State University.

Rodriguez: I actually accepted that one. [unclear] barely to this day. I accepted it and got cold feet, if you will.

Kelly: So that's why I wondered what it was about—

Rodriguez: This was new, and it's a great area. When you think of the educational level of the Clear Lake area, working with NASA was an experience. My degree is from LSU. She was a very fine school, but it's not an Ivy League school, so you go

over to NASA, like when I was dean of the school freshman studies, and the guy that was working with us would say, “Lou, where’d you get your degrees from?”

I’d say, “Well, Rutgers and Louisiana State University.”

“Oh.” Because they were all from MIT, Caltech. But once you did it, it was fine. It was electrifying. We did a lot of work with them, and interesting enough a lot of the work we did was in business, because we couldn’t match their science background. That’s not what they needed from us. A lot of Ph.D.’s in engineering and sciences, they’re working on their M.B.A.’s over here. It made life really challenging for our faculty. It was a time that you didn’t put too many young, inexperienced faculty members in front of these people, because they had a way of just the sword going to the heart of things. But it was another opportunity, and just I never have regretted it.

Kelly: Tell me a little bit more about the interdisciplinary.

Rodriguez: That was something that sometimes gets missed in all this, but it was really critical in these early stages. I think this was really Dr. Hyer’s brainchild. I’ve never been completely, but I think it was her. But the whole notion when the university was built was, do something different. How many times do you have

an opportunity to start from scratch and create something that's not like what you've seen before somewhere else?

So the notion was that one of the deficiencies in higher education was that students would learn something here and something over there or something over there, and they couldn't really tie it together. Sometimes people thought, well, you have them take different classes, and so that'll bring it together. But it doesn't. You have to kind of match it. So the notion was this is going to be truly, truly an interdisciplinary university.

The suites in this building, we would have a music professor next to an accountant, next to a chemistry professor. The notion was to keep it going, keep it going, and that was the notion of the bank, too, the faculty bank, as opposed to faculty by institutions. Our faculty we created very carefully. I don't know if he's still here or not—Dr. Jim Bowman, for example, over in education, had an undergraduate degree in business, a master's in sociology, and a Ph.D. in the foundations of education. Well, that was an interdisciplinary erson, and we had others like him. As long as we could employ people like that it worked out well, but it became more and more difficult to obtain people, and I think educationally, from an educational philosophy it makes eminent sense.

I was very traditional. When I came here, sometimes I didn't know why Hyer and Neumann brought me here, because I was really very traditional, straitlaced-type person. But gradually I began to really see the value of having students be able to integrate what they learned, so they don't, what we call today the little box as opposed to learning. But gradually what happened was, birds of a feather do flock together, and when hiring new people, before I would know it, or I'd kind of look the other way sometimes, we found that the education people wanted to be housed next to education faculty, and the accountants wanted to be next to accountants. So gradually you looked around and began to see that coming together.

Then the accrediting bodies in business administration and education really hit that, because they couldn't understand the organizational arrangement. The provost's power was immense. Dr. Hyer was really at the hub of the whole thing, because the faculty literally reported to her, not to the deans who, we were supposed to be programmatic deans, whatever that meant, but we didn't have really a lot of decision making in a sense, because if you don't have the faculty working right under you, reporting to you, that takes away a lot of the situation.

But discipline worked reasonably well, but gradually you could see changing. Commissioner Ashworth was here for that conference that we had that brought in

all the upper levels. There were not that many worldwide, maybe ten or eleven of them if that. And from a room down the hall he said, “Your concept here?”

And I said, “Yeah, what about it? I inherited the concept, I’m trying to make it work.”

He said he wanted me to write him a letter, what this place is going to look like in three years. “It won’t look like you all are thinking it’s going to look like.” Well, it did more than we thought, or than he thought, but not to the extent that it would have been like. But it was an effort to address an educational problem, which I think still exists.

I think there’s still, with the old timers here, if you will, they still are kind of a beat to a different drummer, because that initial faculty, they were different. They were good, good—the notion was, number one, this whole approach was geared to the student, and teaching is going to be number one, the research is going to be number two, and service is going to be number three. But teaching, if you can’t teach—so when the evaluations came, we put great emphasis on the teaching, where most institutions would be on the research.

I think later on, reading the book, there was some problem because the faculty was doing what the whole thrust was intended to be done, and they did some good

research, too, but that was not their main assignment. The notion was that we would have students that would be so different. I taught. I taught every semester that I was here as Academic VP.

I remember the first class we had, a sophomore economics course. I had students in there, about thirty-five that could have been at Harvard. I had average students. I had kids that really shouldn't have been there at all. It was a difficult, difficult teaching assignment the first few years particularly. We'd have a forty-five-year-old person. We'd have somebody out of one of the junior colleges who maybe was twenty or so forth, and it made for a difficult—you had to have good, good teachers.

So the interdisciplinary studies approach was unique, and I think well-reasoned. Perhaps it was too much tradition against it.

Kelly: It was interesting to me to hear you say that you felt it was June Hyer's concept, because I think credit has almost always been given to Dr. Neumann.

Rodriguez: Well, he was with it. He was with it, too.

Kelly: So maybe it was a collaborative—

Rodriguez: Yes, and pulling it off was another story. But the faculty that came here, there are still some here, they were the type that weren't afraid to speak up, and they took great pride in being at the hub of something different. They would take on anybody, whether it was the provost or the vice chancellor provost, or the chancellor, what have you, and so it was an interesting time. There were some really talented people.

Kelly: I think most of them that are here are still like that.

Rodriguez: I'm sure there's some change. And they were kind of selected for that. By and large we had some good relations, no doubt, but we also had some good head-to-heads.

Kelly: Well, you were very involved in recruiting the charter faculty.

Rodriguez: Yes, yes.

Kelly: Tell me a little bit about that.

Rodriguez: Well, particularly after Dr. Hyer left in '75, there weren't that many people here still at the time on the academic side. So when we'd bring somebody in, he would see Dr. Neumann. I would kind of take responsibility for him. Dr. [Walt] Wicker

was here in the library, and Hugh Avery over in personnel, and then anybody we could find on the way. So my wife and I would start—we took them out to eat on the weekend at first. The only weekend night we had off was Saturday. Somehow it worked out we would start Sunday afternoon and work every night of the week. There was Jimmy Walker's over in Kemah, it was a real nice restaurant, and another one over in Seabrook, and between those two places I gained sixteen pounds in that year. I really did. I couldn't help myself.

But they'd come in and look at you. We had a model somewhere. You'd look out in the woods and they said, "You look out and you stop and think, is there really going to be a university here?"

I said, "Yes, it's going to happen." And some of them began to really buy into that. But it's interesting you ask about it interdisciplinary, because that was the hallmark of this place initially, and the concept of the upper-level concept has its problems. The notion was to support the junior colleges, but, for example, take the sciences. It doesn't fit the sciences, because most science students have heavy freshman and sophomore science courses, and if they don't start with you on those courses, quite often they don't continue, so there were some drawbacks.

Also, there was a lot of differences along the way between the more traditional professional schools, education, business, etc., and the humanities or liberal arts.

One, you don't have freshmen and sophomores. A lot of your humanities and liberal arts, you know, your English, your history, your math, basic science, etc., they're gone, and that's what a lot of schools you have. And with the older students that were coming here, a lot of them were more interested in short-term, preparing for job kind of situations, so that was the kind of—but it was handled well, and I think Dr. Neumann had a good balance on that. He himself was very strong on the art side. In fact, he and Mrs. Neumann, at first there were a lot of frustration, but they never gave up, and they really had an impact on the art situation in this area of the city. But it was a unique thing all the way.

And then the building, the whole thing was reasoned through. The building with the suites, and one building was to facilitate interdisciplinary studies. I remember I read in one of the books that Dr. Neumann was a hands-on type. He really was, but the building made it look that way. I used to joke that I made academic policy in the restroom, because you couldn't get away from anybody. You were just underfoot all the time. It wasn't a building here and a building there, it was all in the one place. They were great times.

The Coordinating Board had to hire the first—I was the first dean. I know when we took the first set of programs that Dr. Neumann, Dr. Hyer, and myself went to Devon Tyree [phonetic], who was a commissioner, and in about two hours he kind of blessed them all. We had to go back with more details later on, but the

Coordinating Board later on couldn't understand the titles. You know, "Studies of the Future, what is that?"

Dr. Hyer had a great mind, and she kept a lot of things up here, and she was not one to keep a lot of records. I don't know what you've found, but she really didn't, in some ways. So I said, "Well, we did that background, and Dr. Hyer did that."

They said, "Well, show me the records." Well, we went to her garage one time to see if she had files, because I know she had done it. But it was kind of a neat time, it really was.

Kelly: The files that we have from her office are not that she authored. They're the files that came in from the deans.

Rodriguez: There you are. There you are. Then I go to San Antonio and Dr. Templeton was the same type. He said, "That's why I have open door."

So Dr. [Bruce] Palmer would say, "Ya'll need to do this."

I said, "Well, Dr. Palmer, it's done."

“Show me the records.”

Kelly: Tell me some more about Dr. Neumann. You must have had a very close working relationship with him.

Rodriguez: Really did, really did. Dr. Neumann was, to me, was just an ideal person to work—I would say work for; he would tell me work with. He was a true gentleman, he was a scholar. I remember that he always pounded in our heads, which I’ve done in Midwestern as a result, he said, “Quality, quality, quality in everything you do. Whether it’s buildings, academic programs, faculty, whatever, never settle for second if you can avoid it.”

I don’t think in the years I worked with him there was ever a cross word. He gave me a lot of running room, and I don’t think I abused it, but he kept up with things. Mrs. [Marguerite] Claghorn was an able assistant to him. Sometimes when Dr. Neumann would come in on Saturday mornings, I’d be working in the office down the hall and see the car come up, and he’d carry his briefcase in and work. Well, sometimes when he’d go on trips, Mrs. Claghorn would clean out the office. She’d come in and say “Lou, come over here, let me show you this.”

But he was a good person for this, because I think in the constant trying to define what kind of university this was going to be, in terms of professional school

versus more liberal arts, he came down the middle very well. We had to do both. It was not easy, because of not having the freshmen and sophomores for the humanities, but a very able humanities group was put together, and we all appreciated that, and they did remarkably well with new, innovative programs.

My undergraduate degree was college-level arts, and I think that [Dr.] Cal Cannon was always a very creative type, very articulate. He was always going [snaps fingers]. Sometimes you'd have to kind of hold the reins a little bit, but he was always thinking on things to make it different and make it viable. But they were a good, good group.

Kelly: Tell me about June Hyer.

Rodriguez: Good, good close friend of mine. We were like night and day about things, really, in our approach to management or administration if you will. But June was a tremendous mind, just a brilliant mind, a great sense of the number and detail, overpoweringly, physically and in her attitude. She was probably six-foot-one, two hundred pounds, and she was a presence physically and otherwise.

She spent a lot of time on all this. She was single and had time. She had a way sometimes of crossing swords with people along the way about—we did it sometimes. But I think she kind of enjoyed that. In San Antonio I finally learned

that the thing to do with her was not to say, “Yes, June, that’s right.” It was to say, “No, June, that’s wrong.” Sometimes I think that worked better; she really wanted some—but she was always thinking, always working.

As I say, sometimes her people-to-people approaches would get a little bit at cross purposes, and she and Dr. Neumann were very different, again like night and day. June was more hands on. She was more of a hands on than anybody that we had. She knew the central campus and she was very helpful there, and she knew Austin because of working with Hobby and so forth, so she was helpful there; knew the Coordinating Board, and that helped there with program approvals and so forth.

As I say, I worked at close quarters with her in San Antonio and here, and we knew each other well, always including Dr. Neumann and others, because there were so few of us. So our paths crossed constantly in particular here under one roof. It looks like the same room they had here before, but this is now; a lot of meetings and so forth.

Kelly: Now, everyone has a June Hyer story.

Rodriguez: I don’t know if I have one or not. Well, her famous word that I learned from her was “discombobulated”. “That approach is a discombobulated approach.”

“What does that mean, June?”

“It means it’s shot to pieces. It’s not worth anything.” Well, she was—you just have to look at the good features, which were a lot of native ability, and the other side was, just don’t let her run over you like a Mack truck. But I was realizing she was trying to do it.

Kelly: What do you know about her departure from UH-CLC?

Rodriguez: Well, I know a lot. Well, I don’t know. I think what happened—as I said, June and Dr. Neumann were—Dr. Neumann was a gentlemanly, kindly man, but he also was a person with a lot of propriety. You know, he expected things to be done by the book, and I think he gave you a lot of running room when I think he felt like you weren’t trying to work to get more running room, and so forth. They were good friends, and they had their differences on some things. Dr. Neumann was going to be the chief, and I think he just needed to be. So one thing led to another, and she decided to—and the same thing had happened in San Antonio.

Kelly: With regard to here, was there any particular one thing? You said one thing led to another?

Rodriguez: I forgot exactly what the issue was, but it was something where Dr. Neumann had taken a position on something, and Dr. Hyer took an opposite one contrary to that. I know when I was academic dean I did not always with Dr. Neumann, but it was my role to be his right hand, and I agreed with him most of the time. But they had a little running of the personality differences. But they were good friends. They were both very able people, very different people.

Kelly: When you first came down to UH-CLC there was no campus here, so your offices were at the main campus?

Rodriguez: No, that was the Arbor Building was there. It was modified, and we were over there.

Kelly: So they had already assumed some academic—

Rodriguez: They had a center here. They were teaching some classes from the central campus, and that was the building that was initially used to teach some classes and so forth, and some offices were put into it. That's the building that snakes enjoyed scaring students away. Oh, boy. Every time we had a storm coming in off the south from here, you just could figure the rattlers were going to be around the parking lots and so forth.

Kelly: Did anyone ever keep track of how many different varieties of snakes?

Rodriguez: I don't think so. But the lady who was our registrar was in a wheelchair, Pat, I'm forgetting her last name. But she was out in the parking lot one night, and they would come in and get under the cars because it was warm, and one of them actually struck at her—I think I mentioned it the other day—and missed her but hit the wheelchair. And there were alligator sightings. I don't know if there were alligators or not, but there were rumors that they were out there.

And Mrs. Claghorn would always be very protective about the environment. She was really one of the very early environmentalists. She wanted the trees protected. They wanted to see the buildings, so they didn't do it. So she would walk around and make sure if there were alligators that they didn't hurt the alligators and so forth. It was an interesting group, interesting group.

Kelly: From what I've read, the UH main campus owned the Clear Lake Graduate Center, which is the building we now know as the Arbor Building, and Dr. Neumann requested and was given some administrative office space in that building. But it appears to me from the documents that are in the archives that the campus as we know it was supposed to be on the other side of Horsepen Bayou, in what is now the Bayou Building. Can you tell me anything about the Arbor Building and the struggle to get the Arbor Building for—

Rodriguez: Well, the only thing that I know is that some of the central-campus people didn't want to turn it loose. I think some of them were concerned about the rise of another university so close to the central campus, and so close to NASA and so forth.

One of the things we have not talked about is the junior colleges, which were critical in all this. It was important to get a different thrust to the junior college. U. of H. and schools in general were not doing a lot with junior colleges. We did. I would have a monthly meeting with my counterparts from the junior colleges. We'd visit their campuses. Our faculty, they came from some of the best schools in the country, but they were down to earth and worked with them.

One time I was at a retreat, faculty retreat with the lead college faculty in North Houston, and at around one o'clock in the morning I'll never forget, one of their administrators got up and said, "Lou, one thing about the faculty at Clear Lake, they don't look down their noses at us." And that said a lot because, no, they didn't. People like Bruce Palmer would on Saturdays run classes on history for the junior college history faculty, in terms of working with them. Our people would go to their campuses, and it was kind of a situation.

So we began to put inroads, and it was visible, and I think the central campus, some of them were, oh, I don't know what you'd call it, were a little bit unduly concerned about another rival coming up, an off-spring, which it really was not going to be a major threat to them anyway. But I think that's what it was, some folks. I mean, and we had a lot of friendly family squabbles.

The Center for Economic Education that I chaired for a while for the state, and then we tried to bring it down here, and it ultimately came down here around the time I left or right after, but they didn't want to do it on the central campus, but they didn't want us to have it down here. And the Houston business community said to Dr. Hoffman, "You know, we need one. We should have one. If they want it at Clear Lake, why don't you give it to Clear Lake?"

We had a meeting one time, I remember one of their vice presidents pointed his finger at me, he said, "When are you people at Clear Lake going to join the family?"

And my point was, "When the family treats us like family." So there were those kind of things, but overall it worked well. But it was kind of close. You know, twenty miles or so is not that far.

But I'm trying to think. Dr. Neumann had offices in the central campus as I recall in the early times. We'd go there a lot, and then come down here two or three days a week initially while the building was going on, so most of us were over there already in the other one.

Kelly: Did you ever have offices in the Vanguard Building, or was that where the faculty was located?

Rodriguez: I didn't. Some of the faculty worked there, but we were over there in that other one.

Kelly: Because I understand for the first year of teaching there were classes in the Arbor Building, but the faculty was in the Vanguard Building, and the library had some of its books in one of the wings in the Arbor Building, but the rest of the books were in a warehouse in Pasadena.

Rodriguez: It was the Parsons College collection that we bought, that was packed away.

Kelly: Did you have anything to do with the purchase of the library?

Rodriguez: Well, Wicker reported to me, so he went up there, I didn't go up there. But obviously I was involved with the process, but he's the one that did the legwork

on it. The library is another story, too. One of the things that caused some friction with some of the central campus people on the part of our people was that when the library, the first library that was built, it finally was decided that we needed to add onto it and change it somewhat. It was about eight million dollars as I recall. So we had a meeting with Dr. Neumann and so forth, and the decision was, he told me, he said, "You can tell the faculty and so forth that we're going to push this library thing"

That was the time when the U. of H. had a terrible thing with the Fannie Maes, where this young kid, well, young kid in his thirties was buying government securities with 10 percent down and the whole thing cratered, so they lost it. That was the only money of ours they had. They lost our eight million or so dollars, and we couldn't build the library, and that didn't sit very well at the time, to say the least.

But other than that, the Systems Office was trying to evolve, and you had people like Roger Singleton, who was a very fair and impartial kind of executive V.P., and Dr. Hoffman was a good person to have in all this, too, because it all goes back to a question about some people didn't want to turn this loose. But Hoffman had made his commitment, and he was always very fair. To me, he and Alfred were just super people, always very gracious and super scholars.

Kelly: What was your approach as a dean on developing the programs within the School of Professional Studies?

Rodriguez: Well, we had so few people, few faculty. We involved faculty a lot in the deans. I think the key here was to look for something new, and yet stay well within the realm of reality, something that's doable, something that's not going to go "flop". So a lot of experimentation came in and where it was needed was in humanities. In business the accrediting body does more and more just dictated what was going to be done. In education, not to that degree but to some degree the same thing was happening with the Texas Education Agency at the time.

But we involved people. We talked to the community. I remember one time in the Studies of the Future Program, having lunch with three business people in the community here to get their reaction, and they said, "Well, our reaction is not good."

And I said, "Why not?"

They said, "Well, you all are talking about policy. We don't need policy for the future. We need people that can do forecasting, planning, and so forth." So we came back, for example, and we put forecasting and planning into the program.

So it was really democratic, it really was. But even then we had a lot of free, tough-minded days, which was good. It was good.

Kelly: Tell me about the Juanita Bridges Pre-Primary School. Was that during your tenure?

Rodriguez: No. That came after. I came in '73 and left at the end of December of '80.

Kelly: I thought there was a little bit of overlap there. I'm sorry. What about the TDC [Texas Department of Corrections]?

Rodriguez: The TDC was a hedge. Not knowing what kind of enrollment we might expect, Dr. Hyer thought it would be good to have some students that we could count on getting underway, so that's where that started. It worked out, I thought, well for a long time. The faculty did a marvelous job with driving to Rosenberg, I think is the name of the place, maximum security.

It was a tremendous eye opener for us. I remember talking to thirty inmates in a room by myself, and one guy says, "Don't worry about your safety or any of the faculty members, because nothing's going to happen to them. We want this program." We discovered they had their internal within-the-prison enforcers, and

nothing ever happened to a Clear Lake person as far as I know, certainly not while I was here.

We had some excellent students. One of them came out and actually was permitted to adopt some children, and became a V.P. in a company here. The first 4.0 student from Clear Lake was a prisoner. Cross was his name. He had been at U.T. Austin and lost his presence, and tried to do an abortion on a young lady, and she didn't make it. But he was a brilliant mind. I think ultimately I just read in the last six months that I think he's been paroled finally. But intellect was not his problem.

And the programs, well, the graduations were always a mixed-emotion thing. You know, we would go down. Dr. Neumann would go, I would go, etc. Usually the appropriate dean or somebody would go, and it was great to see these people come in, and we had a ceremony etc. with their families. The thing that was so sad was, when the thing was over and the punch was served and all that, they went past these halcyon doors and clank, you know, they were closed.

But it worked well. It gradually became more of a burden to go out there, and I think ultimately, I don't think they're doing it anymore. But it was a good start anyway. The reason the students were so good is that the junior colleges were teaching out there, and they had large enrollments. In order to qualify for our

program, they had to have certain behavioral achievements, so they were on their very good behavior to be able to get into the program. They wanted the program, and some of them transferred here. A lot of them when they were paroled, they came here, and that helped them to get their parole.

Kelly: So the prison program was actually something the junior colleges were involved in that UH-CL stepped in and filled in the gap for the upper level?

Rodriguez: Upper level, yes. And their program was much bigger than ours, much bigger, because it was as you expect freshmen and sophomores. But it was a dynamic place.

Kelly: Any particular programs that were more popular among the prisoner population?

Rodriguez: Well, some of the humanities programs, some of the psychology and sociology programs, as I recall, seemed to get their attention. A lot of them were searching for internal whatever they were searching for, and some of that gave them some thinking opportunity and self-examination opportunities. The faculty, the humanities faculty really did—they all did—but they particularly did an incredible job of teaching. They had to, because they were the group working with a short time, so to speak, not having those freshmen and sophomores.

Kelly: I think Dr. [John] Gorman enjoys telling people that he's tallied it all up, and that he spent approximately three months behind bars teaching prisoners.

Rodriguez: He's a character. He's a good guy.

Kelly: Tell me about the building of this campus, the Bayou Building.

Rodriguez: Well, everybody that was here was pretty much involved. Dr. Neumann, one thing he always got involved with was the architects. He kind of led the way, and Hyer was good at that sort of thing also. So the notion was to build a building that supported the interdisciplinary studies. They would be so under one roof and so cohesive that it would facilitate the whole process of interchange, so we wouldn't have those little isolated pockets of academia, like in India, surviving on their own in the middle of a bigger group.

So the library, I thought, we made one mistake. The notion was that we were going to have glass on the outside of the library, because people would see books, and like they'd go to a store and shop, would go in and shop. Trying to say, "It's not going to work. When they go to a library they want to have peace and quiet." But overall I think it turned out to be a very attractive building. Neumann again stuck by his guns on doing a quality facility.

A lot of us traditionalists would have just as soon had three or four buildings, looking more like a traditional campus, but that was not—remember, the whole pitch was interdisciplinary, including the building and the faculty, and everything we did was geared to that, which gradually, just as we were talking, didn't work out quite the way it was planned, but I think the students got a good education as a result of it.

Kelly: I understand that during the groundbreaking it rained and poured.

Rodriguez: Oh, my goodness. The groundbreaking, a torrential downpour came. It looked to me like we were in the middle of a jungle in Africa somewhere. Tents were put up, and I saw where Cannon's white suit got full of mud. But Dr. Neumann, I'll never forget this, he got up there, Dr. Neumann could be very ceremonial, and he got up there to say something, and he raised his hand up to make the point, and this loud thunderclap and lightning came down. But we all always tease him that he was communicating with the almighty; the almighty was voicing his approval of what Alfred was doing. But it was a mess, it was a mess. Some of the folks said, "We're going to have a university here?" It was just still a swamp.

Kelly: But you were able to show them all at the dedication how nice the building came out. Tell me about the dedication ceremony.

Rodriguez: The dedication ceremony for me was kind of a real—Dr. Neumann was getting along in years, and this was really, in my mind, his culmination of everything he had done. So he was going to plan, as he could do very well, a dedication ceremony that would be just perfect and so forth. He always shared things with us. I just felt like there was never anything [unclear]. On this project, he and Mrs. Claghorn were basically doing it, and he wasn't involving a lot of the rest of us in doing it. So lo and behold, when unfortunately he had his heart attack, there we were. I think we were a week or two away, and the only contact we had with the world, I had a little bit of it and Marguerite Claghorn had a lot. So we asked Dr. Neumann, we said, "Look. We really want to wait till you get well, so you can come and handle this. This is your thing. You did this; you're the one who needs to be out there."

And he said, "No, we can't delay it. I don't want to delay it because of me." Try as hard as we tried, he wouldn't budge. He was in the hospital. So I took over being the master of ceremonies, etc., and worked with Mrs. Claghorn. We had some problems, potential problems. The night before—and we had to piece it together. Mrs. Claghorn was invaluable, knowing what Neumann wanted, because this is what we wanted to do.

There was a visit at the office, and the visit was not a very good one. The visit was that there was a gay community out here, and they were going to picket the

governor when the governor came down to speak. They had a sign in somebody's garage fifteen-feet long saying, "Governor Briscoe is unfair to the gay community." Well, remember, this is back some years compared to today.

So we said, "Well, this is not going to do, and I guess if somebody wants to do something we can't force these out, but we'll alert the police for sure, and if they violate something it's going to be a problem." But I told the person that had conveyed the message to me to tell them that, really this is not in their best interest or certainly the school's best interest, and that I hoped they would consider both, themselves and the school. So when a thousand people gathered in the atrium, when it came time for the governor to speak, I and about two or three others just didn't know what was going to happen. Fortunately, nothing happened.

But something about that thing that said something about human nature, that, one, Dr. Neumann, he should have waited, but he was the kind of man he didn't want to wait. The other thing is he wanted his own, and he's the one that should have been there. Two, Mr. Farfel, who was the chairman of the Board of Regents, a very kindly man, a business person from Houston, he wouldn't come to the ceremony. He was at the hospital bed with Alfred, and we piped in the television, hooked up his room to television so he could see the whole process.

Hoffman came down and he was a good supporting cast for me, because I was the whole thing. But I always remember the three of them, Neumann certainly, and Aaron Farfel, a small man, just a real jewel of a person, and Dr. Hoffman, who I always thought if you sketched out what a college president should look like it would be Phil Hoffman, you know, the voice, the presence, the silver hair, the whole thing. So it went over well as it turned out, but I always felt badly that Alfred—but it was his choice, it was his call. He just didn't want things, as I said, but it was a really difficult week and a half, two weeks, because we didn't know where we really were. But the weather was good, and things turned out, and there was no mud or rain. It was just a nice building to sit in, and a big step forward, big step forward.

Kelly: Can you tell me a little bit about reorganizing the School of Professional Studies? Right before you left, I believe, they broke it up into two different schools, the School of Education and the Business and Public Administration.

Rodriguez: Well, at the School of Professional Studies what was happening was it was beginning to dominate the whole academic endeavor. Now, my memory after thirty-some years is a little vague, but I remember, for example, when I left that I was Academic Vice Chancellor and Provost. But we had something like 900 M.B.A.'s, as I recall, part-timers to be sure, but so forth.

Education you had a heavy graduate involvement in education. I think about two-thirds of all the graduates—now, I may be off a little bit in my numbers—but of all the graduate students were in that school, so it was so top heavy. Also it became more and more evident that the business faculty and the accountant had certainly a different thought process or interest in different things than an elementary-education person. So it became obvious to get some balance, and it began to be a big assignment for one dean, even with an associate dean to serve, and the feeling was that as accrediting bodies began to get more and more ornery in both business and education, the thing to do was really to break them up and become more traditional, and get them a little away from the interdisciplinary studies that we've been talking about.

The key to this place, I think, has been faculty. We've had some real good faculty types there really, and I was always amazed because we didn't give them a lot of slack. The game plan was the game plan, and we modified it here and there, but they still did quite a bit of research in spite of the heavy, heavy teaching load that they had, while they worked with the students. But it developed well, and other upper levels, even U.T. Dallas has never really, which they could have, they never did. I've visited there once or twice, and they inherited some Ph.D. programs and some centers they had, so they never really related to the junior college. They do now.

I had one time one of the junior-college presidents tell me, he said, “The best thing that happened to us is you all, not necessarily because we can send our kids there, but because other people pay more attention to us now, since we have the option of going there.” And that’s probably true. But our people just, we felt like the whole notion was that we were to work with junior colleges, and we did, as institutions. Some people did more reluctantly than others. Others were very for it, others did it because it was something we were supposed to do, but they did.

Kelly: Any particular programs that were cancelled for a lack of interest that disappointed you?

Rodriguez: Well, I can’t think of any at the time, because really I wasn’t here that long. By the time that I left, some of those heavy reviews would have been coming in. I think later on they discontinued, was it the theater? Well, the theater, yes. Nick De Vries and Sandria [Hu] always did a good job of keeping the art thing going. But they were the programs that presented more challenges in getting folks in.

When Dr. [Glenn] Goerke came, too, there was one or so that they had some problems with, was this. The enrollment wasn’t that heavy all along, but gradually it began some more traditional lines, which in a school like this you expect would be heavy in the professional schools.

Kelly: I was thinking even of some of the non-traditional programs that y'all were creating, like—

Rodriguez: Oh yes, I've lost track, but yes, that was a problem.

Kelly: —environmental studies, but technology. I've got them upstairs in the archives.

Rodriguez: Well, the tech just evolved into the computer, computer science. When I left, we had tried several times to get that engineering and computer science degree which they have now, and we didn't succeed.

I think another thing that's happened is, remember when in the last four or five years there's been deregulation of higher education in Texas, and that's given the universities more leeway to do things, where back then when this school was started, and then a little bit after that even it was even worse. Everything you did was, you know, "How many square feet per student? No, you're overbuilt. No, you're [unclear] build Clear Lake, what are you going to do in the mornings? You have empty space, and we just can't justify having more buildings, because when you average it out you have plenty of space."

But now it's more leeway, and if you can fund it then you have more latitude, which is good. On the other hand, they push the decision making of the tuition to

the university, which got it off the legislators' backs, so to speak, so as we were talking earlier, tuition fees are really skyrocketing in most places in Texas. In other places, it's not just Texas, it's in general in education.

But my mind's a little bit on some of the programs. We did have some that caused problems because the Coordinating Board, they couldn't relate to it. They had their index where they'd point the programs. Ours they didn't know where to put them. Studies of the Future, for example, with Dr. Foreman, Norma Foreman was head of the higher education area, not the commissioner. She went on to be commissioner I think in West Virginia or Kentucky or one of the others. But one day we were there and she just, nice lady, but we just couldn't, you know, we had to really go program by program to explain what it was, because it didn't fit their criteria. But that was the beauty of it.

Kelly: Studies of the Future was one of the new programs that y'all created that did quite well for a number of years.

Rodriguez: Well, at one time we had twenty-six faculty members participating in Studies of the Future. When it started I would have thought, this is not going to fly too well, but it did.

Kelly: I just have a few more questions. Can you tell me what kind of Shared Governance UH-CLC had in the days that you were provost?

Rodriguez: Well, I think it goes back a little bit. Dr. Hyer was kind of a strong-willed person. I'm not being critical, we're just talking reality, and when she was here we would talk. Sometimes that gave the appearance that she was being more overly controlling than she really was. She had a way of trying to impress people sometimes that was a flare and a sharp jab, and somebody would go cowering out of the office, and sometimes she did it just for effect, I think. But the faculty, there was pretty much no major upheavals in business administration or education.

There was always a constant ups and downs over in the humanities area, and they stood up, and I think the university is better for it. Everything that was done, they didn't mind writing memos to the chancellor or whoever on this. I thought we did well, but I think what made it more difficult was having the upper-level structure, of having the interdisciplinary structure organizationally. I think it made for a more difficult time.

But I personally didn't feel I had a lot of problems. I probably had some differences with them at times, and when Dr. Cannon left, those were some difficult days there. The newspapers up the road got involved, and on and on and

on. Dr. Neumann got involved in that. So the question was, what was the decision process on making that decision? Well, the chancellor said I made a decision.

I tried to tell him, “Well, you make it.”

He said, “No,” they were such good friends he said I’m going to make that decision. So you had that, but overall, I thought that they—but remember, when you’re in a faculty situation and you’re experimenting, experimenting, experimenting, this is experiment all the way, you’re bound to have differences of opinion. You’re bound to have strong feelings. There were traditionalists, non-traditionalists. We tried to stay away from the traditionalists as much as we could, but most people go through institutions that are that way, and they bring that back to them.

I know I was reading Dr. Zophy’s book, how later on there began to be some criticisms of the faculty, what they were doing. Well, the point was, back then the criteria was different. The evaluation process was different. The goals were different, and with time institutions evolve like this one has. So with more and more time, I think there was more traditional governance, and I think you see different chancellors had different philosophies on this.

Goerke had his philosophy under him fairly well, and I think Dr. Stauffer had a little bit different approach, and sometimes it works well, sometimes it doesn't. But I felt that the faculty always had an opportunity to speak up. I honestly don't think I ever saw anybody being penalized in any way, shape, or form for speaking up. Now, did we have some differences? Yes.

One of the hardest things I ever did was go to the humanities faculty, all of them. Every one of them was in the room, and they wanted to talk about Dr. Cannon's reassignment. That was a tough, tough session. But you know, they're out there and we're still good friends. And there's people like Gorman, [unclear] that kind of group, some of them are gone, but [Dr. Howard] Eisner is still here, I was chatting with him the other day, and so forth.

Kelly: Since you've brought up Dean Cannon's reassignment, can you tell me some more details about that?

Rodriguez: Well, not a lot. Dr. Cannon was a very intelligent, very articulate, very creative person, and I think he was a good person to have in the development situation. But what at times was a problem was that the State of Texas had so many regulations in control. There was never any intended difficulty, but sometimes Cal could get kind tangled up in the red tape if you will, which then the agents in Austin and so forth would hold us accountable for, so I think that came to be a

little bit of a problem. But he and Dr. Neumann were close associates in the central campus, and Cal was just one of the more articulate people I've ever run across.

Kelly: His reassignment coincided with Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* on campus, and I saw that face, so tell me about that particular exhibit.

Rodriguez: Well, you know, Cal was the one who initiated it, Cal Cannon [unclear]. So we were divided. I happened to be one of the ones that was against it, and I was wrong, I think, as it turned out. Cal was for it, and he finally convinced Dr. Neumann that most of the university I think was not for it, but we needed something new, and Neumann thought, yes, I can see now that very clearly.

I was trying to think about that the other day. I think Dr. Neumann was out of town, was sick or something that night, and Dr. Bishop had just been appointed head of the System, he and Mrs. Bishop, and they came down. I remember my wife and I were given the assignment to shepherd the Bishops around. Well, all kinds of dire things were predicted because it was really risqué for that era, it really was. I mean, it was way out.

But the interesting thing is, people came in and they were different. You know, their hair might have been green or red. It was a different crowd. But the thing

that happened was, everybody finally felt positive. It was a tremendous turnout, and I think later on when the thing kept going, I think something like 36,000 eventually went through, or something like this, and I think it did a lot of good for the university, although initially some of us who were more traditional would have probably not done that.

And we were kind of surprised in a way that Dr. Neumann went with it, but I think what he saw, and I think he was right, was the opportunity to expose a new university and let people know that it was here, even though maybe there may have been some other ways, but that was what presented itself and the thing worked out well. Cal was right.

But Cal was a very emotional person, too. I'm not criticizing him. He had a quick mind and just always building on things and so forth. But that was a difficult time, the question you asked. It was a difficult time, because of some traditionals.

There were not many people in the central campus here. There was Dr. Neumann, Cal Cannon , and David Gates, Bob McClintock, Mrs. Claghorn, and probably I'm leaving somebody else out somewhere, but there were not that many, and the notion was build something different, don't build something like we already have, so the notion was to do it with people that were not used to that

kind of approach. Not that it was bad or good, it was just something different.

But I think something happened. Cal made some unintentional error on some financial matter, nothing wrong in intent, but it was, and Dr. Neumann was very sensitive to some of those things.

Kelly: So what I hear you saying, though, is that *The Dinner Party* really wasn't part of Dean Cannon's reassignment.

Rodriguez: I don't think so.

Kelly: It was just a coincidence in timing.

Rodriguez: I think so. I forgot what it was. It was the way something was handled, some account was handled, but it was nothing, you know, there's no indication of anything wrong other than just given the state laws it was—you know, one of the biggest problems that administrators I guess still have in Texas is, you may have money, but you can't spend it for this, you cannot spend it for that, but yes, you can for that, and that takes more time. You can bring a brilliant accountant to be a university president, and he's always going to have trouble until he finds that out, and that's more law than it is accounting or finance. And we had a lot of that, a lot of those problems.

When I came over from Louisiana it took me in San Antonio some time to pick that up. I have a degree in economics and finance, but it still took a lot of time to pick that up.

Kelly: Tell me about the relationship that you had with NASA, with JSC at the time.

Rodriguez: I thought we had a very good one. I'm blanking out on the guy who was head of the NASA operation, but Phil Whitbeck was in charge of their educational area, and we worked very closely. We brought those people here. We taught over there, and our faculty again handled some of those very high-powered students very well. I remember one of them one time telling me that he went to class, a graduate course in business the first night, and somebody asked, "Dr. So-and-so, where did you get your degrees from? How many articles and books have you published? How much teaching experience do you have?" I mean, they grilled the poor professor before they ever got going.

But it was good, and we discovered, as we said earlier, that they really needed our management program more than probably anything else. I think in more recent times probably it's been more science, etc., but initially we were hard pressed without freshmen and sophomores, to bring the kind of science faculty that could really rap with that bunch over there. On the other hand, the business crowd and

the humanities crowd when necessary could do that. But we had good relationships with them.

It helped recruit the faculty, too. It was always a good area to recruit to; people liked what they saw. Also, the school district was a big plus. It was a very good school district, and I'm sure it still is, and that to a lot of the faculty made a big difference. But the biggest thing was getting them to concede that there was a university out on that no-man's land out there. It's going to be.

Kelly: So why did you choose to leave?

Rodriguez: I had evolved where I never skipped an assignment. I had been department head, dean, M.B.A. director, accounting V.P., so on and so forth. So I thought—I never wanted to get into administration in the first place. I was going to work the classroom, and administrators, you know, they're okay, but—I thought I was getting to an age, I was forty-seven and I thought, well, if I'm going to do this, let's do this this way. We had even bought a house or so down here, and a second house and so forth, and we fully intended to stay here, because we just liked it here. But the opportunity to finally do the last one, I thought I'd do it five years and then just go back to teaching, so there it went. But why, how the stuff falls, I don't know. I think that's hard to explain.

Another thing with me, I was ready to go to a more traditional setting, because I liked this and so forth, but like I told my wife one day, “I want to go to a setting where I have to worry about the football and basketball teams.” Well, we didn’t have a football team. I put one in. I know it sounds crazy from an old academician, but it’s probably one of the best things I did up there, for there, not for here, for there. But there were days when the athletics up there, I wish I hadn’t said that.

But it was different and it worked well. Also, I had so much autonomy, not that we didn’t have it here, but we really had autonomy there. I had my own board, and really kind of did things. In Wichita Falls, it had kind of become one of the hubs for the 110,000 people. The university really assumed a lot and did the whole chairman thing from, you know, United Way to the Rotary and so forth, and we just kind of stayed there and stayed there, and got more grounded to where we were.

Kelly: When you decided you were—

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Kelly: All I was going to ask you, when you made the decision in your mind to look for something else, did you go looking for a presidency specifically?

Rodriguez: Yes. Yes, I did.

Kelly: And did you seek out Midwestern, or did a headhunter or someone seek you out?

Rodriguez: No, I sought out Midwestern. I had decided that I really was not that super interested in—for some people the administration is the beginning and the end. It was never for me, but there I spent most of my life doing that. But, in fact, we were going to go on a trip, my wife and I, and I just applied at the last minute as—I don't know why I did it. I don't know. Didn't hear from them, didn't hear from them, and finally I forgot about it, and that's when we bought some additional property here, saying, "We're just going to stay here."

I got a call from one of the regents, one of the ladies there, and the bottom line was that there were 215 applicants. There were three interviews, first with ten of us. Then there were five, then there were three. The last interview was in a conference room with the TV cameras rolling, asking all kinds of questions, religious questions and so forth and so forth, and I walked out of the room and I told Ramona [phonetic], I said, "This is it. [unclear], but if we don't make it on this one, which we may not, we just call it a day."

And out of that came this incredible—it took them almost a year. They had some squabbles among themselves, and I think another one of the competitors was Bob Maxson, who's at the University of Long Beach now, a real good man. He ran the Systems office for a while here at UH at Victoria. I knew Bob well. So it was just kind of one of those crazy things.

Since I've been there, too, I could have gone back to some large schools, but nothing that fit me. I'm probably more—we talk about Neumann being hands on. I'm the one who's really more of the hands-on type than almost anybody else, even though maybe it didn't appear so. And over there with that student body size and so many things that needed to be done, it was a lot of fun.

Kelly: I saw the memo you sent out to the faculty about your leaving, and it reminded me that it coincided almost within the month of Dr. Hyer's passing.

Rodriguez: Well, that was rather quick. What happened was, I was trying to think about that. I believe I was appointed an interim for a short period, and then Dr. Neumann called a meeting of all the faculty, because they were going to go and get a search going. So we went there to the meeting. I'm sitting there and they asked me to leave. They said, "Step outside," so I stepped outside. They called me back in in thirty minutes and they said, "Do you want to be the Vice Chancellor and Provost [unclear] today?"

I said, “What?” So I agreed. Apparently it was a thirty-seven-to-one vote. You know, I never knew, I never heard what went on, or who the no vote was, but that’s the way that it happened. I think the reason they moved that way was not necessarily that I was that great, but that it was not a good time, given the [unclear] of the people, to start having that kind of—and the change, too. Particularly since we were so different as an institution, it would be very difficult to find somebody who had this commitment, this different kind of approach for the thing. So that’s the way I became the vice chancellor and provost. So we’re stuck with me.

Kelly: I think they liked you.

Rodriguez: Well, I don’t know about that. I just really, really did enjoy my time here. So many bright people, so some of what you had to do is really keep the wheels on the ground, because they had so many ideas, some of them so good.

Kelly: Any other challenges that you think I might have left out, that stand out in your mind?

Rodriguez: Well, I think the challenges that this school faced was staying with the initial thrust, that interdisciplinary thing, which gradually became like it was really not

in a practical sense completely workable. Another challenge was making an upper level viable. We had a good situation here, but remember today most of the upper levels are gone, and they're taking in freshmen and sophomores. So the concept sounded very good back in those days, but it really isn't all that great.

Also, developing an identity that was separate from the central campus, not because we didn't like the central campus, but because the identity factor was important. You have to have that. That's one thing that athletics can give you, for example. It can give you a lot of headaches, but it can give that, which you have one less experiment with—by the way, we have a soccer coach at Midwestern today. He's one of our graduates, like Elba [phonetic], the one you had here for a short period of time.

But I think those are the—it sounds like it's not important. It sounds like it's quicksand, but it's those philosophical things, that somebody's got to keep the ship going in the direction, and I think that's the role of the Neumanns of this world, and some of us in some degree play. We kind of keep our vision, and make changes when the changes became apparent. That's another thing.

Dr. Hyer got furious with me one day after she'd left, because she said I was trying to destroy the interdisciplinary approach. I thought, what have I done like that? But she was committed life and soul, and the notion that some of the

accrediting bodies wanted a few changes in order to get accreditation that our students needed, and we needed to attract faculty, she was more rigid. And there's nothing wrong, you've got to hold your ground, but that thrust and knowing when to adjust, Neumann was good at that, I really think.

I think Dr. Neumann was—I was very fond of Alfred. He treated me—I can't think of any time that that man didn't treat me the right way.

Kelly: Now, you've kept in touch with the university, being still in the system so to speak, in Texas. What do you think about our growth?

Rodriguez: I think it's good. It's not what was expected earlier, but when you don't have freshmen and sophomores fulltime, that was one of the things we learned, that the freshman-sophomore base just does so much for you. Other than that, I think the university has a good reputation. I think people in Austin have a lot of respect for UH-CLC. I think the future is still very bright here, and I think so many new programs and the closeness to NASA still—we tried to do some things that didn't fly.

We tried to get funding a couple of times, to have an operation jointly with NASA to sort of work a center there, with an information-gathering center for science. It

would involve our faculty and their people. So we never could get the funding to do it, but there's still so many things that probably can be done.

As I say, what do you measure it against? You measure it against those upper levels. No question in my mind. I'm not being prejudiced here, I'm just telling you the way it is. There's no other upper level that's even close to this one in terms of success, and the people that were here are responsible, but also the location. We've got some pretty good junior colleges.

Kelly: Now, something you just mentioned there, that there aren't very many upper levels in existence anymore, and that we're fairly high up in terms of that. To what do you credit that, that we've survived where others have failed?

Rodriguez: Well, I think it survived because of the location, and the fact that people came in and tried to pull off what the goal and intent, the mission of this institution was going to be. There wasn't fun and games involved. We had a few differences of opinion, but those folks were told, "Hey, we have a commitment here. The legislature's expecting us to do it. Dr. Hoffman expects to do it. Dr. Neumann has been given a charge to see that it's done, and that's what we need to do."

So when you think of the location of all the junior colleges, and then NASA, I think NASA just gives the place some exposure we're talking about that

otherwise wouldn't be there, plus great students and adjuncts. Adjuncts are important. I was reading that last night. I mean, at one time I think McDonnell Douglas had a hundred Ph.D.'s within a mile and a half of this campus, working in their labs. Incredible. So it was the combination of things, and success.

But the reason that there hasn't been more growth is that freshman-sophomore, not being here. When you take those people out, it just really cuts into you tremendously, because, well, you'd retain so many of them. Look at the humanities and arts area, and science area, that so many other classes... I know at Midwestern so much of our teaching in the School of Human Sciences is freshman-sophomores. If you didn't have that—but here it's the combination. But I think the foundation was put in place by some good people, you know, the Neumanns and Hyers of this world.

Kelly: It occurs to me that you must have been pretty instrumental in hiring Dr. [Bill] Staples. He came into the business—

Rodriguez: He came in 1979, yes. That was the last group that we had, because we left there to spend Christmas in 1980 in Wichita Falls, and I started January first of '81, so yes, he's a good person, a good person. As it turned out, our paths with Glenn Goerke crossed a lot in Austin. We were on committees and things like that, and I thought a lot of him, I really did, and Bill, too, is a really good person.

But I think one of the things to do, again, the question you asked is an excellent one. Another thing is this place has managed to have a very good balance between, as we said, the professional school, and we have not neglected the arts and sciences, if you will, even though it's harder to get those because of the lack of the first two years.

Kelly: Well, I really appreciate that you came back for the thirtieth birthday, and that you've extended your visit and had time to come in and talk to us today.

Rodriguez: It's been fun.

Kelly: It's been a real pleasure.

Rodriguez: When I walk through the atrium, a lot of memories, mostly good, almost entirely good, a few that—but it was a great time here, and great growth. You know, when you can go to Austin and get \$40 million, and June Hyer helped a lot on that at one time, when you go to the Coordinating Board and the commissioner, [unclear] meet at the time, about two and a half hours, just blesses your package of programs—times have changed, and not necessarily for the best.

Kelly: Does the campus look very different, I mean the inside of the Bayou Building to you?

Rodriguez: No, inside of the building it's not. But the campus overall looks different. It's a great location, great place.

Kelly: Well, thank you very much.

Rodriguez: Thank you. Thank you for inviting me.

[End of interview]

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