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# Benedetti, Robert, Oral History Interview

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FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS  
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



**Robert Benedetti (1989-2013)**  
**Dean, College of the Pacific**  
**Executive Director, Jacoby Center**

March 26, 2014  
By Jon Schamber

Transcription by Shameela Maskeen, University of the Pacific,  
Department of Special Collections, Library

Subjects: Budget challenges 1990s, General Education reform, evolution of citizen leader concept, Atchley and DeRosa administrations, Midtown Magnolia Project, Stockton Speaks, More Votes that Count research project.

SCHAMBER: Okay, we are here today interviewing Bob Benedetti who was the Dean of the College of the Pacific and the Executive Director of the Jacoby Center. The interviewer is John Schamber. It's March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014. We will just start with biographical information on Bob, and then will go to a list of topic areas that we want him to talk about. When did you first start working at Pacific? What the heck interested you in working here?

ROBERT BENEDETTI: I began my time at Pacific in August of 1989. I was coming from Florida from New College, which was affiliated with the University of South Florida. I had decided to search for a new job, even though I loved what I was doing in Florida, because my father had died and my family was from California, from the Bay Area, I felt that it would be good if I could be closer to them, given they were without our father. So, I started to look and after I did my search, there were five schools I applied to on the West Coast that had openings for someone with my experience in academic leadership. I received two offers and decided Pacific was by far the better of the two. It interested me because I'd been teaching at what is often euphemistically referred to as an "elite school," and I wanted to teach in a school with a wider range of students to see if the same kinds of approaches, that I had worked at an 'elite school', would work at another institution. The second reason that I think that Pacific would treat me well was a friend of mine was applying for the Academic Vice President position. We really looked forward to working together. I had known Joe Subbiondo from work at AAC&U in Washington; we were on the executive board of an organization called ACAD, a dean's organization there. We enjoyed each other and we thought this assignment would be fun.

SCHAMBER: If my memory serves me correct, you were either the longest serving Dean of the College or one of the longest?

BENEDETTI: I matched the record.

SCHAMBER: The record was?

BENEDETTI: The record was 13 years and I had 13. Now, you have to remember that the College was not a longstanding institution. It was created in 1961 when the clusters opened, so that, the liberal arts departments and others that didn't have a home and were not part of professional school or clusters could be in the College. So the College as it is today did not stretch back into the nineteenth century, but, yes, Dean Whiteker and I were served the same length of time there, 13 years.

SCHAMBER: After you stepped down as dean, the next position that you took was then at the Jacoby Center, correct?

BENEDETTI: Right, as part of my negotiating at the time of my leaving, the Deanship was to ask if the higher administration would be interested in a new center in the honor of Jake Jacoby who had been the first Dean of the College, and that center would be focused on public service and citizenship. The provost and president were interested and we settled on a 2/5 time assignment where I would work to create a center. Instead of going back to political science full time, and I would teach three courses spend the rest of my time developing programs that would to involve students and faculty in community research and service.

SCHAMBER: How long were you at the Jacoby Center?

BENEDETTI: I served Pacific total, twenty-four years, and I would have been at the Jacoby Center for eleven.

SCHAMBER: Gotchya.

BENEDETTI: Yep.

SCHAMBER: Okay. Alright, with that background in mind we are going to a list of topic areas that relate to both your work as dean of college and subsequently when you went to Jacoby Center. I hate to start with a doom and gloom topic, but may as well. The budgetary challenges of the 1990s, I think this was under the Atchley administration?

BENEDETTI: Yes.

SCHAMBER: Why don't you tell us about those days?

BENEDETTI: Well, I was used to budget crises in Florida because the legislature there caused some and economic downturns caused others. I served as provost at New College; it was in the state system, and we were very sensitive to what was happening in the economy; however, when I began my service, within two or three months, there was a budget crisis. Within the first year or so I had to take 8% out of the College of the Pacific budget and subsequently, I think it was around '93 or '94 we again had to take 7%. The first year of the DeRosa administration there was yet another 7-8% cut. By the time I had finished thirteen years I'd taken at least 20% out of the budget of the College of the Pacific. I'm not proud of that. However it turned out to be one of my major assignments - how to reduce the fiscal blueprint of the College.

SCHAMBER: What were some of the major things that you were faced with, if you could give a couple specific examples that you might remember about that?

BENEDETTI: Well, I think I was anxious to keep my eye on what I thought was the mission of the college, which was to provide a quality liberal arts education, and so I didn't want to endanger any of the departments which were core to that mission. We were in a situation where some of the departments that people might say were not a core to a liberal arts education were also the departments that brought in most of the students. One had to be careful, not to cut off one's nose to spite one's face. But, what it meant was that while we reduced in faculty, I wasn't going to lop off any major humanities, social science, or natural science department because I thought there would be a better day. We needed to be prepared to be competitive as a liberal arts unit. All of the reductions in faculty came from retirements or from people who left. There were large numbers of retirements and we did not fill those positions right away. Often I would ask a department to wait a year to do it. However, there were some allied programs that didn't survive – we had a contract and an arrangement with a theater in Columbia that we terminated, for example.

SCHAMBER: Oh, Fallon House.

BENEDETTI: Fallon House.

SCHAMBER: Right.

BENEDETTI: The drama department at that time didn't have anyone who was willing to step up and take charge of it. None of the other departments were interested. So, we ultimately closed it, and I was very sorry to do that. It was a blow but there was neither financial support nor a person who was still on staff to take charge.

A second example was the College's internship office where the staff people would arrange community postings for students. I was concerned that the office designed and managed internships, at some remove from the faculty. It was very bureaucratic, so the students had to go through a lot of hoops. I thought internships could be better handled by a faculty directed effort.

Third, there was an office of interdisciplinary studies for a number of programs that had been orphaned by the cluster colleges, or had no obvious department. Gender Studies was one of those, for example. I created a free-standing Gender Studies program, but I farmed out the others. There was an Arts and Music Management that the Conservatory took. It seemed to me that there was no easy way for an administrator or faculty member to bring together all these programs, and we could save the salaries there and reassign people. We didn't fire anybody, but we did reassign and were able to make a savings.

During this time I was anxious to get a handle on the budget and there was no business officer for the college. I asked the associate deans, all three who served with me, to take on that assignment. The first one, luckily, was a math whiz and created a wonderful program but one that became difficult for the rest of us to interpret after he left. Still his program helped me because thereafter I knew when I was talking to a chair exactly the resources they had and how they had spent them. It helped me in my attempt to establish equity across departments. All those times taught me the importance of managing through a budget.

SCHAMBER: I would add to that: we hoped that people would go on disability because that would open up a few dollars as I recall. [laughs]

BENEDETTI: Well, we had a number who allowed use to save in this way. We also were able often to negotiate with departments to replace people who were on leave with part time people for a short period, and we kept the staff of the office very thin. In those days our office not only managed the College of the Pacific, but we also the General Education program. So, running very lean with staff, downsizing some departments or offices plus the encouraging retirements allowed us to make our goals.

SCHAMBER: I would add with respect to staff, you're quite correct. It was very lean, and you'd be interested to know that recently I received an email from a faculty member who was here when you were dean and is still teaching and she said, "actually the office ran more efficiently and they got responses quicker than they get them today," so I would say running 'lean and mean'.

BENEDETTI: Well, I knew what was going on, and even when I wasn't always getting what I wanted from some staff because we had some staff that were green and some staff who weren't as on top of things sometimes as they should've been, we produced a great deal of work. I have to compliment all three associate deans as well as the assistant deans; they were all watching.

SCHAMBER: Also going on during part of this budgetary crisis either midway or towards the end of it, there was quite a bit of work done on general education reform and would you talk a little bit about the reform in general education that really you spear headed during this period in time?

BENEDETTI: Well, general education was a bit of a challenge for me. New College never had a general education program. It was the New College way to have faculty negotiate in a series of contracts with students. These contracts allowed any curriculum the faculty member and the student agreed upon. If faculty members insisted on breadth, students got breadth. If the faculty didn't or the student wouldn't then you got narrowly trained people. I didn't like that particularly, but that was the way we did business, it was more of an Oxford model.

As part of the interview process I was told that the College of the Pacific and the University of the Pacific needed to revisit general education because the [WASC] review was coming and the current one had been a real bone of contention among faculty with everybody fighting to knock someone else out of the program and bring their own course in. So, before I came I actually sat down and thought, "Well, what would I do if I was able to do this?" I had been lucky because I had brought New College into AAC&U at a key time when someone who previously had my job and went on to be a college president was a leader there. I talked to him and he said, "You do this and you go to this." At the time AAC&U was at the center of ferment about general ed. When I came here I was convinced that we should have a reform that both kept some distribution requirements, but also was firmly anchored in three seminars that everyone took. The latter would unite the school and also gives people a living catalogue of what's offered if you do it right. Originally, I thought that we would have those seminars each reflect different philosophies of general education. The Mentor, now PACS Seminar I. was something like a 'great books' class, only more open in its canon than any 'great books' program. Mentor I was to have great essays from anytime and anyplace on a variety of topics in the arts and sciences. It was to be more theoretical and more traditionally liberal arts than the other core seminars. Mentor II was to be an opportunity for us to develop citizenship skills for the students. They were to study the way community decisions were made and the role of citizens in those. They would be asked to come up with some presentations and papers that would mirror citizens getting active in politics including testimony appropriate for a public board. At the same time it was to be an opportunity for faculty to experiment with various types of pedagogy. It was the place in the curriculum where we tried things out and people might later take back to their classes.

The third Mentor Seminar was something that I really owe to a fellow dean, who was then at Rawlings College, Dan Nicola was his name, and he had begun a senior seminar in ethics as a Capstone seminar for his students. I liked that idea, and I talked to Dan a little bit. He went on to Gettysburg College, and I still talk to him at meetings. So when I introduced it here as a concept, I was prepared to overcome some early disagreements among departments, and I had some idea how to implement the program.

In sum, I came to Pacific with ideas concerning the three Mentor Seminars in the back of my mind, but it was the interaction with the faculty here that crafted in the way they finally turned out.

SCHAMBER: In that later point, I would really like to emphasize, because it's my recollection that you did a lot of foot work to make sure that there was a lot of collaboration with faculty throughout this process, and I think that whole process was critical for getting the program off the board. You got "buy in" from faculty through the process.

BENEDETTI: Zelda Gamson, who was a dean in New England, wrote a book on five attempts to put in G.E at major institutions, and they all failed. I knew changing GE at Pacific was going to be a challenge because there is a tendency to do a rather paper reform to satisfy an accrediting (WASC) agency and let it be. I knew that most schools failed with their G.E., so I tried to design something from my political science background where we would get that buy-in. The project was particularly challenging because not only the college, but all of our professional programs had to agree. We created a two-tier committee, and John, you were on the inner sanctum. We had a steering committee of about six or seven folks, and we had a larger committee, maybe as large as 20 members, which had good representation from across campus. There was also diversity among members on the steering committee; we had people from the School of Ed, for example. The steering committee would work out what it thought might go, and it would take it to the larger committee. When the larger committee would gasp, the steering committee would take the proposal back and reformulate it, and so it wasn't just the dean or the dean's staff forcing something. A faculty committee refined all ideas, and I didn't get to everything I hoped for; for example, the groups never got the Wellness, and only the college implemented a language requirement. Still overtime this back and forth worked. When it looked like it was going. I went and saw all the deans and made sure they weren't ready to oppose the plan. I also met with all the faculties of all the different schools in faculty meetings to talk about it. Thereafter getting the program through the formal faculty committees was easy.

We introduced the first seminars half way through a year just to see how it would work. The first year class that year only had Mentor I. They didn't have II or III. Still, they were very upset; they argued, "We didn't choose this, we didn't come here for this and we don't like it." It turned out that the night my wife went into the hospital for a major operation students had a mass meeting. Reluctantly, I had to be there. I had to convince some very articulate students that this was going to be good for them. Luckily the faculty was with me on it, and a philosopher, Herb Reinelt, and a professor from the English Department, John Williams, were very impassioned and helped me get through the evening. .

SCHAMBER: One thing I want to add before we do go to our next topic is really I think a mark of your legacy is the fact that this program still continues today, and it's under a different name as PACS Seminars, but really the evolution of that program came out of the Mentor Seminar Program, and so you should feel very gratified by the fact that it continues.

BENEDETTI: You know – Jefferson said, “We should have a revolution every ten years.” I would not be surprised if it was time to do it again. I also had some ulterior motives in the G.E. I wanted to bring the faculty together. I wanted to bring the College together. I wanted students to be discussing deep thoughts. I felt when I came to Pacific that the students were not always talking among themselves, seriously. I had both gone to a college and taught at a college where that had happened. I felt that something was missing here, and so this General Education was organized the way it was in order to get people concerned about important issues outside of class.

SCHAMBER: Also to add, I think amongst the faculty this program was launched during the “dark ages” when we were going through the budget cuts, and we had Mentor on a shoe-string budget as it was. The point was it gave the faculty something to focus on – collectively – rather than the anguish of how stingy all of our budgets were at the time.

BENEDETTI: The earlier General Education program was a Chinese menu approach where there was a committee that decided whether your class was on the menu or not. I think as everyone knows there’s a lot of sociology to General Ed. It’s the way certain departments live since the students wouldn’t otherwise take their offerings because they’re tough. For example you can require Calculus and require a language. Those departments would be barren and often are if you don’t require their classes because the students don’t instantly see their use and they’re hard. Creating the menu resulted in fights among faculty – everybody had a story about when they took their course up to get in General Ed, and they were turned down by some colleagues and other departments that simply didn’t understand the value of their offering. The Mentor Program got us off of that and changed the discourse toward, “Okay, let’s talk about working in a class together and put all things that we do think are valuable in it.” It was a very tough time financially at the school, but I think people felt they were doing something good.

SCHAMBER: Right. I agree. Now, I want to go to our third topic, and it’s somewhat related to some of the reform in general education, but of course, Gen Ed not just for the College, but for the entire University. So, our topic is the evolution of the concept of the “citizen leader.”

BENEDETTI: Well, when I first got here I thought the College of the Pacific was an undergraduate liberal arts unit, and then I found out how it was formed. Basically, the College was whatever was left over after the clusters and professional programs were organized. There was really no coherence of the programs collected, no philosophy for the College. So, I felt what had to happen was that the College had to come together around something of substance. It couldn’t just be Arts and Sciences as these were a bunch of departments that didn’t belong anywhere else. I tried to find a concept that fit with who the faculty were at the time and also the kind of alums we had. I realized Pacific alums are nice people who are able to do a number of things in their lives – they are jugglers. They are not necessarily geniuses, but those who raise good families, are members of a lot of organizations and do a good job. Typically, they are teachers and ministers. Partly from my political science reading and partly from some of the concerns that had been expressed nationally about the ‘nature’ of society. I offer the idea that we focus on what made a ‘good citizen’ and leader, Faculty felt students were not very good at listening to them, and so this was a way to challenge students. You are here to become a leader, and so you have to push yourself because we think you can do it.



I began it as an admissions' ploy because I felt it was unfortunate that the Admission's Office did not properly market the College. I had done a lot of admissions work at New College. When I became provost, there was a declining number of students going to New College and a lot of people said students didn't want that kind of education anymore. They argued that it was the 60s education. I said, "No, they just have never heard about it" and we turned enrollments around. I wanted to do the same thing at Pacific. First thing I did with the help of a number of the faculty was to create our own "view book" which some people called the "COP Bible". We tried to express who we were, and in that I used some of the citizen leader rhetoric.

However, I wanted citizen leader to be something that was the core of a strategic plan. The College never had a strategic plan. I started the strategic planning process, argued that we ought to position the school to create the citizen leaders. That took a lot of departmental discussion. We also had a large retreat where about half the faculty came up to a hotel the University owned in the Sierras.

So, it was a difficult sell, but we created the College's only strategic plan. We have now accomplished a number of things that were in that plan. It helped the faculty see the unit as a unit. I wanted the plan to express what we were and what we could become! Once we figured the citizen leader was the direction we wanted, there had to be a set of principles against which we assessed ourselves based on citizen leader. We created that set of principles and how we would measure whether we were moving in that direction. They weren't only competencies we expected students to learn; they included experiences we hoped they would have. There were eight principles as I recall. We were poised to pursue them rigorously, and then University went in a different direction regarding assessment. I was leaving the Dean's office, and there was no easy way to bridge the two different ways to organize assessment (the College's and the University's). The one the College developed was based on the College's unique conception of the citizen leader while the University was responding to national norms being developed for all institutions of higher education.

SCHAMBER: My memory may be incorrect or fuzzy, but I also believe or think that the concept of the citizen leader was picked up when the University had to articulate its mission. It didn't say "citizen leader," but it said, "Leaders in your careers and communities."

BENEDETTI: Yes. I was still dean when Dr. DeRosa began the search for concepts that could rally the whole university. He did something that a lot of universities do – he hired a consultant. The consultant's name was William Weary – Bill Weary. Bill worked for Association of Governing Boards that is a board development organization in Washington. He came out and held a seminar with a large number of the faculty to talk about how we should define Pacific. When he was finished, the President asked him to participate in crafting the new mission statement, and I was part of that small group that met with Bill. As it turned out, Bill Weary and I had been classmates at Amherst.

When they were sorting out the mission and what they kind of graduate Pacific should produce, I already knew how I wanted to define the college's graduate as a citizen leader, In our discussions, it seemed that my general conceptualization was the only one fully formed. It was the only show in town and with minor changes, was adopted. Bill otherwise couldn't divine what was special about Pacific Had

I been asked, I would have argued that the concept of citizen leaders implies that all students should have at least a minor in the Liberal Arts, including all professional majors. However, I never had the opportunity to elaborate. As a consequence, the mission statement implies that every pacific graduate should be a citizen leader, but does not elaborate how this result could best be obtained.

SCHAMBER: Right. In your conversation you mentioned the advent, if you will, of the DeRosa administration and along with Provost Gilbertson.

BENEDETTI: Yes.

SCHAMBER: Our next topic is: we would like you to do a little compare and contrast, it's probably mainly contrast, between the two administrations, the Atchley administration and the DeRosa administration.

BENEDETTI: The main contrast is that the Atchley administration was not always consensual. There was a lot of tension within it. When Bill Atchley came he hired Joseph Subbiondo. However, he and Joe didn't always see eye to eye. Joe had much more experience in places like Pacific. He had been at Santa Clara, and he had gone to a Catholic school about the size and complexity of Pacific in New York City. Bill Atchley was an engineer who had run a major state university in the South (Clemson).

Given these different bases of experience, it is not surprising that there were tensions there, and they often overflowed into the deans, who were very concerned to protect their own turf. They were worried that they were going to lose out. Atchley had not appointed most of the deans, and the ones he had appointed, like me, were often after long searches. The dean of the School of Business was very aggressive for his school. The dean of Education had ingratiated herself with Atchley and his wife to try to get advantage.

In search of special favors, department chairs in the College were going to the President to try to get special attention. To Bill Atchley's credit, he was open to external ideas, but maybe too open. He wasn't always a good judge of applicants for positions. He did not hire well in finance, for example.

When I say open, when we had the first budget crisis he called a meeting of every major administrator and said, "What should we do?" If you raised your hand, he'd listen to you. In fact the 8% cut idea that I didn't like, I suggested because I said, "We gotta get out of this! Right now! Still you don't have detailed information, across the board cuts are the best way to go." He was open to the idea and we acted. In the same way, he was open to GE reform, understanding we had to do it or risk WASC 's wrath.

Donald DeRosa was a very different kind of person. He was "risk adverse" – he wanted order. His office is a very good example. It was very neat. He wanted a group of people, vice presidents, to whom he could delegate and with whom he would argue but he didn't really discuss in depth with anybody else. He wanted things to come to him – from them.

Faculty and other administrators couldn't go the "backdoor" to him, which was a good thing. On the other hand, if you really needed to see him, it wasn't easy. He came with state university experience. He was a department chair at Lake Forest, and a Provost at one of the campuses of the North Carolina

system. In such institutions, presidents expected issues to be filtered on the way up. Don liked this way of doing business.

One "system" that helped with the filtering process was the Institutional Priorities Committee, which was to suggest initial budget allocations for the university. Pacific did not have anything like that with Atchley; such decisions were initiated behind closed doors with whomever President Atchley invited. Still in the IPC, force of personality made a great deal of difference. The vice presidents who came, who were strong, often got what they wanted. There was an unfortunate structural impediment for the Academic units. Provost Gilbertson was asked to chair the IPC, and he was not free to advocate for the academic units because he was running the meeting. It was particularly unfortunate because the IPC often set the agenda for what was subsequently brought to the President's attention

SCHAMBER: Right. It is my recollection, though, that once we got into the DeRosa – Gilbertson administration, at least the institution recovered financially.

BENEDETTI: Well let me say a couple things about that....

SCHAMBER: Or were on the road to that -

BENEDETTI: Let me say a couple things. Machiavelli says someplace that "all success is good fortune and virtue," and I think both were available to the DeRosa administration. The 'good fortune' was that up until 1994, there was a declining momentum in high school graduations in California, and so the population available for admissions had dwindled; also, Pacific was seen as very expensive. But, two things happened at once. One – graduation rates started to come up in '94, so even though there was a drop in admits during the first year that DeRosa was here. As long as you were aggressive as we were thereafter, there were plenty of students to be had. We became a more "Californian" institution because we could get recruits easily in state but didn't set up outposts other places as a hedge against the future. So when California turns, as it's doing now, we have not been prepared easily to move into other markets. However, another demographic that has helped us has been the growing Hispanic population of the Central Valley. Hispanic families like to send their kids close to home, and we were in the valley near their homes.

Finally, we were prepared to capitalize on these growing demographics because the rise in CALGRANT funding and the implementation of the four-year guarantee. Together they allowed Pacific to cut tuitions for many applicants beginning in the mid-1990s. In sum, we were lucky with demographics, CALGRANT funding, and the implementation of a policy from the Atchley years so as to be able to get more tuition dollars.

On the 'virtue' side of the early DeRosa administration was the hiring of Pat Cavanaugh. Cavanaugh was a world-class manager. He had a good liberal arts education himself, and he had worked for the State of Iowa. He knew how to watch money carefully. It was not only that we were getting more money from the tuition side, but also he was clever with investments. He was watchful on spending and he did the spreadsheets himself. He knew exactly what was going on.

SCHAMBER: CALGRANTS are a matching program?

BENEDETTI: Absolutely right. CAL Grants had been at about \$9,000 and upward and have made it possible for Pacific to survive while taking students from low to middle income families. This program is, of course, created by the legislature and could be terminated or reduced at any time. Jerry Brown doesn't believe in the program particularly. He doesn't believe that private schools should get the kind of support that CAL Grants represent. This is the reason I think CALGRANTS are more luck than virtue on Pacific's part.

SCHAMBER: Yep! Okay, I don't have a real clean segue here, so we will go to topic number five on the list : talk about the creation of the Jacoby center.

BENEDETTI: When Dr. DeRosa came, he was clear that he hoped to appoint his own deans. He started working his way through deanery, hiring new administrators with the help of Provost Gilbertson. The Dean of the Business School, Mark Plovnick, and I were the last two to go. President DeRosa came in 1996 and I was finished in 2002, so there was six years that we worked together. Throughout I held a different view of "leadership" than Dr. DeRosa and Dr. Gilbertson. I thought a lot could be accomplished through cooperative ventures with faculty and students. I like to build consensus. I was interested in the long run health of a unit. I wanted a GE to last as long as this one has lasted. It became increasingly difficult for Dr. DeRosa and Dr. Gilbertson to feel that they were getting as much across the board cooperation from me as they would have liked.

Their discomfort became most clear when the University did periodic evaluations of the deans. Lydia Fox was selected to undertake my evaluation; she was particularly thorough. However in the conclusions the report pictured me as something of a hero for representing faculty interest as well as adapting University policies to fit the College. Drs. DeRosa and Gilbertson feared that the report might be a piece of puffery and that the team had not dug deeply enough to find complaints . On the other hand, if the report was accurate, they believed I was not doing my job because too few were feeling pain.

In any case, thereafter, they became very aggressive in terms of evaluating me annually. After the first year, against the principles they had set up, I did arguably well. However, they decided that their discomfort was not something easily resolved my performance against objective measures. They had lost confidence in my judgment and thought, after 13 years, it was simply good practice to change an administrator.

They decided to leave me in place for a year, in any case, while they conducted a search. So, I had time. During my tenure at Pacific, I had regularly looked at other jobs, and had a number of search firms looking for me. Within a few months of the announcement of my termination, I was offered what was in many ways a perfect job. I was asked to be a founding provost of a new CSU campus at Channel Islands. The location was beautiful, along the Southern California coast, and the president was experienced and a well respected fellow. However, I considered my age and the future of my family, and I decided that what I really wanted to do was go back to the classroom. So I turned the CSU down and began my final year at Pacific.

Instead of leaving, I decided to make a pitch for something Roy Childs and I had been talking about with Jake Jacoby before he died: a Jacoby Center. Roy Childs and I had three times applied for a HUD \$400,000 grant, and the third time we got it. We thought we might use the grant to "found" the Jacoby Center. We believed such a center would be good for the University because it fit perfectly with the goal of promoting citizen leadership.

SCHAMBER: And that's Roy Childs, Sociology?

BENEDETTI: Yes. He and I crafted the Center. With Jake's death we hoped that the University could raise funds for the Center, but it turned out development could not immediately identify donors willing to give in his name. Still, the administration agreed to open the Center and support it with a small budget. John Evey, director of institutional advancement, then found a donor who had been one of Jake Jacoby's students and pledged on his death \$250,000 for the Center's endowment. He also said that he was going to give the University property that the president use or sell at his discretion. However, the donor hoped the proceeds of the property would help the College. So, in my letter of appointment to the Jacoby Center, Provost Gilbertson and President DeRosa said they would support fundraising to get an endowment up to \$3 million. This sounded good to me. I anticipated a center that which would be lean to begin, but grow. Initially, I would be funded for two fifths time in the Center and continue in Political Science three fifths. The initial budget anticipated that I would travel to learn of other programs. However, I choose to start campus programs immediately to build on the momentum of the HUD grant. I took the \$21,000 expense budget and used \$7,000 to hire a part time faculty member to start an internship program in state government, the Sacramento Experience.. I also hired a half time administrative assistant to keep track of our programs and help with the administration of grants. .

As it turned out, we did not get the endowment build much beyond the initial \$250,000. The administration redirected the funds from the property of the initial donor to support lagging fundraising for the biology building and for the student center. Though disappointed, I realized I was already committed to make the Center work even without the expected endowment.

SCHAMBER: Just mention briefly then with the Jacoby Center as the umbrella – the different departments it kind of played into, the work that was going on in the center.

BENEDETTI: Just before retiring, I did a number of versions of a program review for the Center that I hope will come to the archive someday. One of the things I found was that we partnered with almost every department and unit in the University at one point or the other for some program. But Jacoby originally focused on the Midtown Magnolia Neighborhood of Stockton, and it worked in partnership with the city. I co-directed with Gary Giovanetti a task force on Midtown Magnolia which was supposed to help the neighborhood pull itself up at the same time CSU campus was to start on the former mental health hospital grounds. The taskforce lasted as long as Gary was in office. When he left Susan Eggman didn't want that structure, and shut it down.

We used some of the HUD money to do studies and surveys in the Midtown Magnolia. When the HUD money started to run out, we picked up a second project to respond to the almost complete lack of organization in the neighborhood. . There was no neighborhood association, no business association, and no church association. We tried to create such structures, but without success. . We even hired an organizer. Thereafter, we decided that the only way into that neighborhood was through the schools. So, we started working with the schools in the after school programs, and we got very good at presenting these programs.

Our approach to after school programming emphasized an understanding of the underlying sociology of the area.. We helped undergraduate interns learn to manage educational programming in poverty areas, and did assessment studies on how well these tutoring and after school programs were doing. We built that outreach to 10 or more schools. We branched beyond the Midtown Magnolia, but that neighborhood was always the center for that program.

About the same time we moved into the schools the Center began Public Humanities programming where we attempted to bring art, history and literature to the mass public . For example, we worked with the Stockton library on the 'One Book, One San Joaquin' program. We applied for and was awarded one of the larger grants that California Council for the Humanities has ever given (\$85,000), to do 'Stockton Speaks,' a project to collect coming of age stories from 9 ethnic groups. As part of the project, we had community people trained as interviewers. We discovered a young man who has become something of a celebrity around town, Sophoan Sorn. He is now the creative center of the local film festival. However, he began his public career as the project photographer for 'Stockton Speaks.' We summed up the project on a CD and a website which is still available.

One strange result of the project was inquiries by a court in Sacramento for our tapes because one of the people we interviewed was involved in a sting operation with an ex-CIA agent. He was talking to Laotian refugees and encouraging a coupe. The court thought our interviewee had been involved somehow, but the inquiry blew over quickly and we did not produce the tape.

Otherwise, we got a very positive response from the ethnic communities concerning the project. However, there were some ethnic communities, in particular the Sikhs, that we didn't involve, because we had no money to expand the project to include them. We challenged them to fund such an expansion, but they never responded to our offer.

Search for a promising new initiative, we uncovered research grants from the PEW Foundation to study voting in local constituencies. We failed in our first application, but its preparation led us to contact the San Joaquin County Register of Voters. When we did not get funding, he offered to help us secure support from state Help America Voter funds. The funding was for research that could improve local voting procedures. Specifically the Registrar wanted to find out about why people spoiled ballots, why poll workers made mistakes despite training, and finally how to improve the use of ballots by mail? With his help the Jacoby Center applied for and was given a \$250,000 contract. We assembled a team of eight faculty as well as several graduate students and a few undergraduates. This was the 'More Votes that Count' initiative or "Vote Smart". We negotiated with the Registrar to produce a final report that

was in a publishable format. He agreed and we approached the Berkeley Policy Press at UC Berkeley that published the book for us at a very reasonable sales price.

The result was a book with different disciplinary perspectives on the voting, which brought the Center some press attention. At least two of the faculty on the project, Dari Sylvester and Keith Smith, have continued research on local voting.

Such projects stimulated relationships with a large number of ethnic and civic organizations. Members of the Jacoby Center have offered an assortment of lectures in the community. For example, the Center created a lecture series, Local Government 101 in conjunction with a local government committee headed by a former Deputy City Manager, This is a ten week seminar on local government, primarily focused to people who might want to run or sit on an appointed board,. I integrated the series into my teaching of Urban Government for two years. My last year of teaching we taped it to create an archival copy. I have continued to help organize the series in retirement because I think it provides an important community service.

We have done quite a bit with the Stockton San Joaquin County library, the Haggin Museum, and the organization of executive directors of non-profits here in town. The one project we started, which we were not able to bring to fruition, was a certificate program in civic leadership. We got seed money from the University to start it. I think the quality of the program that we put forward for the certificate was excellent. We did get several people through the six classes to receive the certificate. The program ran for two years, but we could not recruit enough people in the community to enroll. Since continuation was dependent on the tuition money from such community people, we were forced to close down. We had good undergraduate student interest but they took the classes as part of their tuition. They did not pay extra and so did not generate the funds needed to support the effort.

We had done extensive focus groups before we launched the certificate program and found that the people who head non-profit agencies very badly wanted their employees to have the courses we were offering, but they did not have any money to pay for them. The people they hire are at such low wages that they themselves can't pay for course work. Thus there was interest and need, but there's no tuition money. We tried to get foundations interested in paying for San Joaquin County to have a program like ours but were unable to do so.

SCHAMBER: There is one program I want to go back and pick up, and I believe this program was with the Eibeck Administration – that's **Beyond Our Gates**. Can you talk a little bit about that?

BENEDETTI: Okay, the last major initiative that the Center did while I was director was **Beyond Our Gates**. It began with a memorandum from Ted Leland to the new president about how she should get connected to the community. Ted had done an earlier investigation of the penetration of Pacific into the community and had held a well-attended conference on campus with community leaders. I went to Ted and shared the experience that one of the Center faculty, Dave Fredrickson, had had in Washington with the Potomac Foundation that does regional planning there. They had generated a strong community involvement base for their work. Ted was interested in how the universities might get engaged in the community and so we sculled about what he could tell the president. We came up with

an idea for a series of forums, with steering committees to collect possible university-community joint initiatives following the forums from which the University could select. In addition, the University would continue to monitor how all the suggested initiatives were maturing if selected. Leland invited Dave and me to a round table with several others who had different ideas on how the President should engage the community. We offered ours and she accepted it. Subsequently, under the leadership of Dave Frederickson, the Center organized five forums and helped with a sixth on diversity – We did them in different venues; we did one in education, we did one in the arts, we did one on the environment and energy, we did one on economic development, we did one on education.

SCHAMBER: Like?

BENEDETTI: We got prominent leaders from outside Stockton to comment on what they thought the state of these topics was in local communities nationally and what this university might do to help Stockton move to the cutting edge. Then we helped Ted Leland and the President empanel a series of steering committees related to each topic. The committees were supposed to collect initiatives that they thought might improve the community. Each steering committee had both community and University members.

There was a day after the six forums were over, when the steering committees were to report to the University of what they found, and they did. Then over the summer, Ted Leland assembled a group mostly university administrators and recommended to the president which initiatives to support. The result was that the President picked literacy as her topic. There was some talk of the President challenging the campus to get involved in some of the other initiatives that had come up. In addition she might host a celebration every year to reward faculty and students who contributed to such initiatives. However, she decided instead to focus on literacy and to persuade a group of community leaders to discuss that issue alone.

The Center has hoped that the President would at least expand her interest to include other aspects of educational reform beyond literacy. We had suggested a series we called Dialogues of Distinction where we would bring in major education leaders. We piloted the series with the Director of the American Graduate initiative created by General Colin Powell, but the idea subsequently died. -

SCHAMBER: Is his program a volunteer program?

BENEDETTI: No it's a national center for amassing money to help improve the graduation rates. To head the effort General Powell hired an educator from Maryland. Our idea was that we would focus on her suggestions – at that time her program was focused on high school. Subsequently, we supported bringing a leader from the Annie E. Casey Foundation that focuses on K-3. Our next step would have been to bring the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Sandra Day O'Connor, who has taken on civic learning and preparing for citizenship in high school. She is making a big, national push we thought the President should encourage three foci: high school graduation rates, a K-3 literacy focus, and a civic learning focus. I think the multiple foci idea was seen as too rich, and so the administration decided that Pacific was going to limit its community advocacy to attacking K-3 the literacy.



SCHAMBER: Right.

BENEDETTI: So, that's what happened.

SCHAMBER: There are some other important aspects of the Jacoby Center that I would like you talk a little bit about – things like the Sacramento Experience, some of our students who did the Washington semester - those types of opportunities.

BENEDETTI: One of the other things that we wanted to do more of was internships. With the research projects that we created, the voting and the schools projects, we had opportunities for students to do undergraduate research, but we didn't have too many internship opportunities. We wanted students to witness major decisions being made so they would get an idea of how people come to these decisions. We decided that, particularly for students who were interested in public policy, we ought to have a program in Sacramento. We sought first to have the students stay up there, but the apartments were expensive and students we sampled were not interested in living off campus in Sacramento. Subsequently, we created a program where, on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the second semester, students would work in Sacramento, having been driven up in the morning from Stockton. We focused primarily on lobbying groups because lobbyists not only work in the legislature, they work the executive branch and are interested in getting people elected and in court cases. In their offices students would see the whole array of state policy tools.

To develop connections in Sacramento and to help with the teaching of the program, I hired part-time PhD who had been an administrator in the CSU system, George Condon. Once a week we would have a seminar for all the participants. Our serious challenge in this program followed the death on the highway of one of our students. Up until that time we had let them drive their own cars and then gave them gas mileage funding because it was a way to save some money

SCHAMBER: Plus we don't have a carpool.

BENEDETTI: We don't have a carpool. So, when this accident happened I said, "we took funding out of the Jacoby expense budget (it cost about \$7000 the year I left), and we hired a limousine service. We have the limo pick students up here at 7 or whatever in the morning and drop them at their places in Sacramento, and then pick them up at 5:30 – 6 to come back.

SCHAMBER: Right.

BENEDETTI: It has worked very well. A lot of the students who have participated in the program have gone on into politics, and the program has gotten Pacific's name around Sacramento. Right now we are the only out of town undergraduate school that has an internship program on a regular basis. The only other program regularly placing interns is Sacramento State. Much of what we do is patterned after what Sac State does, but we give less credit for the experience, and I think the students get as much benefit.

SCHAMBER: Could you also comment on the Washington Semester?

BENEDETTI: Washington is a little different because Pacific has long had a Washington program. When I came to Pacific, we had some students going off to one of two Washington programs, but we didn't have very many. We also did not have any real understanding of what students were getting. George Condon and I did a study the major programs in DC. One was called the Washington Center and the other one the American University Program. We decided that American University had a better program. We also talked to people who had the interns. Dave Frederickson and Gene Bigler, alums who were The Department of Energy and the Department of State had interns from both programs. They both said the American program was, by far, the better. So we developed a close relationship with American where their staff visit campus and help recruit students.

We have increased dramatically the number of students who are going to Washington. There's one or two every year and some years up to five or six— maybe more because some go in the summer. Students have liked that program, and we liked it because students are living on campus there. They can take almost any extra courses if they want to. If they need a GE, they can pick up at American.

American University has been very generous with us – you pay your tuition here, and you don't pay any more to go there. The only difference in cost is their dorms may be slightly higher and the ticket to D.C. It has been a real good program, and we are well-respected by them. George Condon was appointed the year before I retired as American's faculty liaison person. They have maybe twenty or thirty schools that send students regularly. It is significant that our coordinator was selected to head this group.

The Center has been very pleased with the response to both of its internship programs. The next step will be to see if it can recruit the students to internships with the City of Stockton. The City wants interns, but we haven't been able to find students for them nor to have the staffing for oversight.

SCHAMBER: Perhaps Mayor Silva could hire them for his private police force.

BENEDETTI: Yes, they'd get a badge! [Schamber laughs]

SCHAMBER: A couple more topics that we got down here – I would like you talk a little bit about renewable faculty and Phi Beta Kappa.

BENEDETTI: Okay, let me take them in reverse order. Phi Beta Kappa was a glint in the eye of Roy Whiteker, the former dean, and he wanted badly to get it here. He headed up two applications, both of which were turned down.

SCHAMBER: Right.

BENEDETTI: They were turned down for a variety of reasons: the library wasn't good enough, the faculty weren't getting paid enough, there wasn't enough Phi Beta Kappa faculty on staff and a concern that Phi Kappa Phi which is open to professional school students too, should be Pacific's sole honorary. But, Phi Beta Kappa is an honor to have and it shows that you're really serious in the arts and sciences. I agreed with Whiteker that obtaining PBK would be a way for the College to put our heads up as a place of distinction. It also might serve the function of an accrediting agency; they would come and look at you. If

you didn't quite measure up they'd tell you and you would try to do something about it. Just as I was leaving the deanship – Greg Camfield -

SCHAMBER: Right, in English. Right.

BENEDETTI: Who was an active Phi Beta Kappa member from Brown, wanted to get an application going again. He and Roy instituted the campaign that was successful, and I was very pleased that it was. I was no longer dean, but they were kind enough to induct me into Phi Beta Kappa. They can do that at the beginning of a chapter for a select number of faculty. I was honored to be inducted.

One of the reasons we did obtain PBK was that we were able to hire very strong faculty in the late 90s and the early 2000's. At that time the faculty in the College was gaining confidence, thinking that some things were going right for them. Not money, salaries were still low, but the place seemed to be improving. Faculty could see themselves convincing others to come here.

I will say this, our Dean's office, you and the others and me, were very active in those hirings. I interviewed every candidate for a position at the College, and I wanted them to leave the interview salivating, I wanted them to think that this was a job they wanted, but whether we wanted them was up to the department. The department should decide whom, but all of us should make sure that the person leaving campus was thinking that this is the greatest place. I once studied a document from Amherst College analyzing why they lost their very strong Gen Ed program. The scholar who had done the research on why it collapsed said that one of the key changes was that the dean stopped interviewing for candidates specifically about their participation in the Gen Ed program. I was determined not to let that happen at Pacific. I raised Mentor seminar participation with every candidate.

SCHAMBER: Hmm.

BENEDETTI: I wanted to insure new faculty would be involved in GEN ED, but I also realized that for many faculty, if they feel they have made a connection with the dean and they think that person is on their side, they will think better of the place, and this may be worth a couple thousand bucks they are not going to get. In any case, we assembled new faculty, many of whom had Phi Bet keys, who were aggressive and new and fresh. They made it possible for students to have Phi Beta Kappa chapter.

Bill Atchley was not the kind of leader who could rally the faculty. There continued to be some ambiguity among the faculty about the DeRosa and Gilbertson's administration, but many felt they had a better understanding of Pacific's leadership than had been true during earlier administrations. I think things were clearly better at the turn of the century, and that was reflected in the hirings, which is reflected in the Phi Beta Kappa chapter.

SCHAMBER: Also, too, I think the University was getting over its hurdle as I recall our status with our earnings, our students, the SAT scores were going up a few points.

BENEDETTI: Right, everything was improving. We were also getting more students, which has to do in part with our luck and part to do with our virtue. Yes, those things were happening, and people were

feeling better about things, so much so that they communicated positive vibes to colleagues that might come here.

SCHAMBER: Right.

BENEDETTI: Yep.

SCHAMBER: Right. Alright, given your illustrious career at Pacific, we are going to go to our last topic which we have entitled, “dreams for the future of Stockton and Pacific.”

BENEDETTI: Well, there are some things that I didn’t accomplish, and one was I didn’t have very much time to punch my ticket as a researcher. I wrote a few articles on higher education, changing higher education, but I want to do political science again. The fact that I taught while a Dean allowed me to get back into my discipline quickly. So what I’m hopeful to be doing now and in the future is to write something that will record what Stockton has endured. I hope to craft a cautionary tale and communicate some good things that Stockton has done. So, I am writing a book on bankruptcy.

The structure is a comparison of four cities, two cities that went bankrupt and two that didn’t. Why did two do it and why did two not do it? Modesto and Stockton, and Riverside and San Bernardino. I’m presenting a preliminary analysis soon, focusing almost entirely on Stockton because I’ve haven’t got to the others yet. For the future, I have to do more research.

I do have other dreams – I am a social scientist, and I want to do the research and do it as a social scientist, but I’m also a humanist, and so I still enjoy any work that I do for the National Endowment for the Humanities Council. Right now I’m reading grants again for the state council and really enjoy that work.

I’m very happy to have been part of the Pacific community, and I wish it well in whatever directions it now takes – it did give me the opportunity I wanted when I wanted it. I met very good faculty; I will say this, I went to Amherst College, and I took my Master’s and Doctorate at Penn and taught at New College, and this is the best faculty I have ever worked with. They really are good; they’re devoted to teaching, they do good research, they’re here because they like to work with students. It’s just fun to work with such faculty and that is what I will miss.

I’m currently associated with Sac State and I’m enjoying the connections I have there. The experience is not quite the same because I’m not working shoulder to shoulder with the people in the program. It’s more like a think tank relationship.

SCHAMBER: Okay, I really want to thank you, Bob, for your time this afternoon, and again I just want to reinforce the point that you were a very instrumental figure at Pacific and certainly with the College, and for me to say personally, it was always a pleasure to work with you, and I know that many of the faculty within the College feel the same way, so thank you very much.

BENEDETTI: Thank you.

