



Susan Castillo Oral History Interview, June 17, 2014

Title

“Breaking Ground in the Senate and in Education”

Date

June 17, 2014

Location

Castillo residence, Eugene, Oregon.

Summary

In the interview, Castillo discusses her family background, her educational path, and her OSU experience, including her association with KOAC radio and television, and her memories of campus life as a non-traditional student. From there she recounts an influential internship at the *Northwest Illustrated* television program, her years in television journalism at KVAL-TV, and the beginnings of her interest in politics.

The bulk of the session focuses on Castillo's political career as a state Senator, as Superintendent of Public Instruction, and as an executive with Project Lead the Way. In this she notes several points of pride looking back on her career, reflects on her role as a leader in the Hispanic community, and speaks to her strong advocacy of STEM education. The interview concludes with Castillo's thoughts on the current direction of the university and the advice that she would lend to today's students.

Interviewee

Susan Castillo

Interviewer

Janice Dilg

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/castillo/>

Transcript

Janice Dilg: So today is June 17th, 2014. My name is Janice Dilg. I'm with the Oregon State University Oral History Project, and I'm here this morning with Susan Castillo at her home in Eugene, Oregon. Good Morning.

Susan Castillo: Good morning.

JD: So, I think it's always nice to start with just having a little bit of background—where you came from, kind of a little about your family and how you ended up in Eugene.

SC: Sure, you bet. Well, I was born in East Lost Angeles and grew up in the Southern California area, and made my way to Oregon in the mid-seventies. But my family history is all of my grandparents came here—were born in Mexico, and had migrated here to the United States looking for a better life. They settled in the Southern California area and then my parents met there, and so all family, huge extended Latino family down in the Southern California area. And then I was one of the few to leave the Southern California area and venture off to a distant land known as Oregon [laughs], to experience life very differently than life is in Southern California.

And I just fell in love with the Pacific Northwest, and decided to move here. I had dropped out of college. I had gone to a community college for just a little bit; really didn't know what I wanted to do, and so did a little bit of traveling. Discovered Oregon, absolutely fell in love with it, and ended up working at Oregon State doing some secretarial work, some clerical work there. And I worked for the woman who was the Affirmative Action Director for Oregon State University. Pearl Spears Gray was her name—fabulous, amazing, strong woman. I just thought she was awesome! [Laughs] And Pearl was very, very kind and supportive to me, and really encouraged me to go back to school, to get into college and to get my degree, and to pursue a career. And she was so supportive that she started encouraging me to take a class, just to build up my courage that I could do it.

And so I did. I started taking a couple of classes, and saw that I could be successful going back to college, and then I ended up enrolling full-time. But I remember when I was going to make that transition from leaving—doing the work that I was doing with her and going back to school, and she encouraged me to really do something that I had a passion for. Because she said, "So what do you want to do?" And I said, "Well, I'm not sure." And then I started talking a little bit about maybe—I don't know, maybe being an English major. I always enjoyed writing. And she said, "Well, you don't sound real excited about that, but if that's what you want to do." She said, "But really challenge yourself, and do something that really captures your passion."

And so I remembered that, and when I started going back full time I took a speech class, because I thought, "Well, I'm going to challenge myself." I was shy. Speaking in front of a group of people was the last thing I—it was just, you know, scary to me. But I thought, "I'm going to challenge myself." And I did, and the woman who was teaching the class, the professor teaching it, was very encouraging, and encouraged me to start taking—to come over and visit the broadcast communications program at the university at the time. And I immediately just started getting involved, and I was involved in the student-run radio station and student-run television station, and started taking classes there from Dr. Dick Weinman, who was fantastic! And just absolutely loved the challenge of communicating through the media, and taking complex issues and reducing them down to a minute and a half story, or a forty-second radio story. How do you capture the essence of complicated issues, and tell people about what's going on in the world or in their community, in a way that interests them? And so I just really enjoyed that challenge, and the media itself.

And so I ended up getting a part-time job at KOAC radio there. It was OPB's AM station on campus there. And so I worked on the weekends. I would sign the station on on the weekends, on Saturday mornings—Saturday and Sunday mornings, I think, or was it just Saturday morning? I can't remember now. And then I would produce—put together a little fifteen minute newscast and make—I would do the station IDs. I would be on the air at the breaks in between programs, maybe give a little update on the weather. But I loved working there. It was really just great! [0:05:00]

And during that time there were still some programs that were on the air that were on reel-to-reel tapes, so it was the good old days [laughs] in radio. And the people there were just a lot of fun, and it was great. And I learned a lot working there. And it was just wonderful, because I was learning in school, and then here I was getting a real life experience, you know, on the job experience with it, so it was fabulous. And that's the kind of learner I am, and I think maybe that's why I so

enjoyed communications and broadcast media, was because it's very hands-on. You're doing. It's very—I don't know, it just really captured me. I just have really enjoyed it, and had a great deal of respect for the profession as well.

Anyway, so I ended up getting a job in television after I worked part-time at KOAC, and then I ended up with my position at KVAL-TV in Eugene as a television reporter, and did that for a long time, for something like fourteen years, and just loved it and did all kinds of reporting!

JD: So just to back up a little, can you remember, and tell us a bit about what the student TV and radio stations were about, and kind of what you did there?

SC: Oh, yeah! Yes. It was so fun! So really, we were in charge of putting together programs, producing programs, getting them on the air, finding a person to direct it, unless you were going to direct it yourself, finding people to be the talent for your programs if you were the producer. You know, writing news stories. Anyway, you got to do all aspects. You could do as much as you really wanted to do. It was [laughs] volunteer. It was all voluntary, but you got credit for, of course, doing projects and taking these courses. But many of us who just really, really loved it, we would just spend hours and hours working on these projects. We loved it. And so it was really fun. And you learned so much!

So that when I left school—it was so practical! So when I left school I knew—when I walked into a television newsroom, I knew all the different aspects of what it took to put a newscast together. And maybe you needed to learn their system, but you knew what was all involved, all the different roles, and the challenges. And so it was really a wonderful education. Gave me great, great preparation for pursuing a career in broadcast news.

JD: So would the students be producing stories about what was going on on campus?

SC: We did.

JD: Or what was going on in the state, or the world, or—?

SC: We would do the whole gamut. We do some little short summaries, getting our hands on AP news, Associated Press news, and we would do some summaries of national things. But we really did try to go in the community and put together some local stories, as well—what was going on, whether it was on campus, or in the Corvallis community, and sometimes some state news in there. So yeah, we did gather news, and wrote and edited, and went out and shot video, and edited that video that would run during our newscasts. And yeah, we did the whole thing.

JD: Well, you mentioned reel-to-reel. I'm guessing that equipment was a little bit more cumbersome, or quite different than what students today might experience.

SC: Oh, yeah! No, they were clunky. Everything was much bigger and clunkier, and yeah. It was not as amazing as all of the equipment that we have today to do television news, absolutely.

JD: And when you were doing the kind of weekend fill-in at KOAC, and you said you would do like station IDs or—?

SC: I did a little newscast.

JD: And what would you say as a station ID? I mean, I'm just not quite sure what that—

SC: Let's see. I think we would—I can't even remember now. It would be, "KOAC-AM Corvallis, KOPB, Portland." And you would have several things that you would say as part of it, the number of the station, you know, the dial. And then maybe you'd give a weather report, an update report on the weather, or talk about some program that was going to be coming up, you know, in the next hour or whenever. And so you would run the board, and bring in programs that were live feeds from NPR, or play some kind of a recording. You have promos that you would put in at that time. I think we had carts—these things called carts that you would put into machines and run promos. And then we had reel-to-reel tapes that you would start running, and air those, on the air. [0:10:02] And so there was a variety of different inputs that you would bring in through the board that you were running to keep things going on the air. And it was really fun. It was great!

JD: [Laughs] So it sounds like you had to be fairly technically savvy as well as know the news.

SC: A little. Yeah, you did. You had to get all that coordinated, and be on top of that, absolutely.

JD: No dead airspace. [Laughs]

SC: No, you didn't want dead air! [Laughs] But you know, the people who worked there were so great, because they loved mentoring. They were such great mentors, and boy, anytime you needed help or just guidance on anything, they were so helpful. So I really had—it was a really great experience there.

JD: Mm-hm. And so were there other courses that you took outside of kind of the broadcast, or professors that you recall as being somewhat memorable?

SC: Yeah, I do. You know, I'm sorry to say I can't—I don't remember his name, but I had this one professor who taught—it was a Political Science course and it focused a lot on South America and just sort of the western politics. And it was such a great course! And I just loved how he was so thought-provoking. He loved helping all of us think really deeply about the issues of the day, and calling on us to just share our thoughts about that. He wasn't so much about the one-way lecture. He was about helping us really just have access to this great information, but then really probing us to really give it deep thought, and to share—and to share. We'd have wonderful exchanges in our class. I loved that course.

But you know, when I went back to school to be a full-time college student I was a little bit older, so I was in my late twenties. And at that time I was just like a sponge. I loved every single class I had! I just soaked everything up, I mean, from my Geology course, to whether it was Political Science, or Math, even. I mean, whatever it was, I just loved school. And when I graduated, I needed to go on and get a job, but I was sorry to leave the campus, because it was such a wonderful great place that really changed the course of my life! I mean, I didn't know what I was going to do, and it really helped me figure that out. And when you have that kind of experience somewhere, it's so profound. And every time I go back to Corvallis I have the—it's just still with me, that profound experience that I had there. You know, it just stays with you forever.

JD: Mm-hm. And although you were a slightly older student what do you recall about just kind of campus life, and where you lived, and the relationship between the school and the city of Corvallis?

SC: Well, it was a wonderful small town to live in. I mean, to this day I think it's still a very special place. And I had moved from Southern California to the Corvallis area [laughs], and so what a drastic change that was! But I so appreciated the quality of life there, and it was, I don't know—it just felt very safe. It was just a very positive experience there. And the campus life—I loved the campus. It was so beautiful in all seasons, so pretty. And living in a place where you have all seasons like that was a first for me, too, to get to experience that, so that was very, very special.

And let's see. So I lived—because I was older I wasn't part of the whole sorority/fraternity thing, which a lot of the students that were in the Broadcast Media/Speech Communications program were. They were very much involved, many of them. And so I at times felt a bit as an outsider, compared to the rest of the students that were in the program. But everybody was great, and we all together were challenged all the time by the work that we did. And we had to work together to get these things done, so it really did call for collaboration. It brought everybody together, so you got to know everyone, which is good. But yeah, I had my off campus—I was married and wasn't in the sorority; was a little bit older. And so often times I would really hit it off with the people who were teaching the courses, rather than my fellow students. [Laughs] And made some really nice friendships with some of the faculty.

JD: Nice. [0:15:00] And then, maybe you were just so busy with life and marriage and work, but were there other kind of activities or groups that you were a part of or participated in when you were at OSU?

SC: Not really. Not that I can remember. No, it was really school, and no, not really.

JD: Well, it sounds like the program that you were in was fairly all-consuming.

SC: It was! It really was. On the weekends I had my job, and then during the week had school, so.

JD: Sure.

SC: Yeah.

JD: Full life. And when we spoke before, you talked about an internship that you did, I believe near the end of your time at OSU. Talk about that a little if you would.

SC: Yeah. That was a wonderful opportunity. So, you would get a full quarter credit for a full-time internship at a television station. And so I got to be the first intern that a program called *Northwest Illustrated* had. It was a program that KOIN-TV aired. And it was a half-hour news magazine program that aired, I believe, just prior to *60 Minutes*. And it dealt with local, Portland-area, Oregon issues. And it was great! It was the kind of reporting I really loved. And so I got to get involved, and learn from—they were just amazing people. The reporters and the photographers there were so talented and amazing! And so I loved it. I got to learn so much from everyone. And then they allowed me, once I sort of proved myself a bit, to be able to produce a couple of the segments for the program, and that was very exciting to get a chance to do that. So I had that on my resume when I left school, that I had been able to produce a couple of segments there, which was wonderful. So that was a really nice opportunity that I had.

JD: And so you had some radio experience, and some TV experience.

SC: Yes.

JD: Did you have a preference when you graduated?

SC: I really wanted to do radio. I really wanted to work for OPB. [Laughs] I wanted to get a full time job doing radio, public radio. But there wasn't any opportunity available at the time. And so heard about this opening in television news in Eugene, and so, needed to get a job. So, you know, I did that and was, I feel, very fortunate that I got that position and was given an opportunity. And I had to try out. I had to work—on a Saturday I went in, and I had to try out. How would I perform as a reporter for them? I went out and did, I think, one or two stories that day with a photographer, which was pretty nerve wracking! [Laughs] This is my tryout, and I guess it went okay because I ended up getting hired, which was really great.

And had just so many great opportunities working in news—just loved it! You're out there learning every day, meeting new people. From one day to the next you never know where you're going to be on assignment. And I loved that. I loved that, the unpredictability of it. And every day you were learning, and you were challenged on how you tell these stories to the community. The things that were going on in the community—how do I tell this story, you know? And I loved that challenge every day. I really did.

And I loved—I eventually ended up becoming the reporter who covered the legislature for our station. And at that time, most of the stations would devote full-time crews to covering the legislature, back in the day. And so I loved that assignment, and I would cover the legislature for our station when the legislature was in session, and then covered politics, and just state government. A lot of education issues, and so, yeah. I really enjoyed being a reporter. It was great.

JD: So and did you say fourteen years that—?

SC: Yeah, fourteen years. I was in my fourteenth year when I decided to leave the news to pursue a position in politics, to try to go after a state senate seat that was open. And actually the idea of running for public office never occurred to me. It was never in my plan. But one day when I was out covering a political event, some people came, approached me afterwards, and said, "Have you ever thought about running for public office?" And at the time said, "Me? [Laughs] Who? No." Because I never had.

But somehow that conversation just sort of planted that idea in me, and as I would cover the legislature I would see—I would kind of look at it with that kind of a—with that in mind: could I do that? [0:20:01] And then an opening for the state senate seat came open in the district that I live in, and boy, it just—for some reason it just really called to me, even though I knew that if I pursued it I'd have to give up my position as a reporter. But somehow just everything just said, "Go. Go pursue this." And so I did. It was an appointment, that the local commissioners had to appoint someone. And I did end up getting appointed, and then I ran and won that election. So I was a state senator for six years. Absolutely

loved being able to serve in the senate, and it was just a huge honor to get to do that work. And then I ran for state superintendent, and ran for that three times, and left that, so I was in that position for nine and a half years.

JD: And when you were in the legislature, was there a particular focus to kind of your efforts there, or what were the issues that you—

SC: Yeah.

JD: — really enjoyed working on or had the ability to work on?

SC: Yeah. Well, education was a top priority for me. [Laughs] Still is. And so that was very, very important to me. And then environmental issues were important to me. Helping our state with our state budget and the economy; trying to figure out—forever we've been struggling with our state, and how we pay for things or don't pay for things in our state, and how we need to reform how it is we do the state budget. And so that was also an issue that concerned me.

What surprised me was when I became—the day that I was being sworn into the Senate, I learned that I was the first Hispanic woman to serve in the Oregon legislature. And, wow! I was just very surprised and honored by that. And I had invited my parents to come and be with me for my swearing-in, and to be with me when I became a state senator. I just felt this—it was such a huge honor for me, having come from a family where my grandparents had come here looking for a better life. My mother had dropped out of school when she was in the eighth grade and didn't get her education, and had struggled throughout her life on opportunities that she felt weren't available to her, because she didn't have her education. And to this day, she still regrets about how she dropped out of school, and what that has meant for her. And I could just see that connection as I was growing up between education and opportunity so clearly, you know?

And I wanted them with me when I was going to become a state senator. And so it was very short notice; this whole process happened very quickly. They flew up, and so did one of my brothers, to be with me. And then we learned that day that I was the first woman, first Hispanic woman, to serve in the legislature. And boy, it was just like this—it was this incredible day! [Laughs] And all these Latinos, Hispanic leaders from around the state, came to be there that day when I was getting sworn in. And we had a nice little party there, and it was very, very special. It was really amazing, yeah.

And prior to that, when I was going after the position to be a state senator—I'll share a story with you. I don't know if I told you this over the phone when we talked earlier, but when I was getting ready to go after the appointment, I was upstairs and I was working on my comments that I was going to—my speech that was going to deliver to the local Democrats to put my name forward for the—to get the appointment. It was my first political speech, and so I'm writing, you know, about the issues. And then I was writing a little bit about myself and my background, and when I went back to read it, and I was reading about my mother had dropped out of school, my grandparents had come here, all of a sudden—I was sitting at my computer, and all of a sudden I got so emotional, and I just was crying and crying! And I was sitting in front of my computer reading this, and I was thinking, what is this? You know, I'm excited about this. Why am I crying? And I got up and walked around the house, and sat back down and finished my work.

And afterwards I told a good friend of mine about it, and he said, "You know, Susan, I think what happened to you at that very moment was that you realized in a very real and personal, profound way that this really is the land of opportunity, and that you were living it." And that's really what it was, and it was so—it was amazing! So anyway, there were just moments of, you know, having the honor of getting to have these opportunities come into my life that I'll just never forget. [0:25:04] Pretty amazing, and it all started at Oregon State! [Laughs]

JD: And so it's interesting when you bring up that you were the first Hispanic woman elected to the state legislature, and then later when you were elected the superintendent of public instruction, you were the first Hispanic woman to be elected to a statewide office, as well. And you mentioned that a lot of Hispanic leaders had come to your swearing-in at the legislature. Kind of talk a little about, sort of—you talked a little about the emotional side of that, but I'm assuming there's sort of a level of responsibility, or some other aspects to that that perhaps you could address.

SC: Absolutely. You know, I would have people come when I was in the senate. I would have people, Latinos from around the state, come, who were at the legislature visiting their legislator, or being there for an issue, or visiting the state capital. And they would come by and visit me, and say things like, "We finally have a voice at the table." And they

would thank me for being there, and oh, I tell you! It was—it was quite a sense of responsibility, and an honor, you know? And then it was interesting, because my very first session, there were some controversial bills about involving the farm workers of Oregon.

So since I was the only Hispanic or Latino person in the legislature, people would come to me for this issues. And I felt very proud and honored to get to be helpful on those issues, and so made many friends who are involved in that work, and continue to be—enjoy those friendships. And worked with our Governor and other legislators on those issues, and learned a lot. Yeah, so it was a huge sense of responsibility, and a huge honor. And then also, sort of trying to reach that balance of: I'm a state senator for all of Oregon. I mean, I have my district that I represent, and that's number one, but this is about all of Oregon, and helping our state, and working with everybody else to help everyone.

And so I would struggle with that balance, of how much am I a voice for—so try to reach the balance of how much I can speak up as a Hispanic woman, speaking—you can't speak for everyone, but trying to represent that voice, that segment of the population, the issues that are important, whether it's education, healthcare, living conditions—those kinds of things—job opportunities. Those are all issues that everybody cares about, and so trying to find my way on: how am I an effective communicator and advocate on those issues, is something that I really struggled with, learned a lot, and really felt like I made some progress in knowing how to be helpful.

JD: Mm-hm. And so then after six years in the state senate, you did become the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

SC: I did.

JD: Which is another major player in the role of education for students of the state.

SC: Yes.

JD: Talk a little about what that position was like, and your experience.

SC: Well, it was wonderful. I loved being the state superintendent. A huge, challenging job, because everyone—everyone cares about education, and everyone has an opinion about education, which is great, because everyone feels so passionately about it! But always, it's, "We should be going this direction, or that direction." And really trying to help work with people and bring people together around a common direction that we could go, so we could make some progress with our schools. So for me it was very much about just highlighting great work, too. You tried to advocate for changes that were needed, and leading that effort, but also shining the light on where great progress was happening—where people were doing amazing things with their students, in spite of this, or this, or this, or that, and learning about that.

And then helping to shine the light on that, and spread those best practices—trying to help spread those best practices across the state. And so created an event where we would bring—I would go out and raise money from the private sector to create awards, and to put on a huge event in Portland [0:30:01], where we would highlight schools that were overcoming challenges, and creating incredible success for their kids, and closing the achievement gap, and overcoming poverty, and whatever else was going on in their community and their school, and still seeing huge gains for their kids, and learning from that. And those schools so appreciated that we acknowledged their great work, and that we had lots to learn from it, you know?

And so that was one of the efforts that I really—I really tried to shine a light on best practices, which is what I love about what I do now because, well, even when I was a senator, I was always interested in where is great success happening, and why aren't we doing more of that? And that's what I get to do now, you know, the Project Lead The Way, and the STEM education that I do now, and the curriculum that I do now, is incredibly effective! And so I'm very passionate about trying to help more kids get access to it. And so that's—that's my current job.

JD: [Laughs] And how does Project Lead The Way kind of work? I know you're part of the western region, I think?

SC: Yes. So I'm now vice-president of the western region, which is the twelve western states. So I work on the twelve western states, but I also still work nationally with our organization, and still keep my national ties that I had in my other work as state superintendent to help me. And so we create outstanding, very rigorous curriculum in engineering, science

—well it's science, technology, engineering, and math education. And so what's really powerful about what we do is that it's project based. It's hands-on. Kids are doing, and learning, and innovating, and applying math and science in real world, relevant ways, so they connect with it very positively. And they love it! And so kids who are struggling learners for the first time will say, "Wow, this makes sense to me." English language learners really benefit from this kind of learning because it's very visual and hands-on. It's for all kids.

And so we have story after story all over this country, where kids are in our classrooms, and they're excelling. And they'll say things like, "For the first time, I get why I need to know math and science." Or, "This is my favorite class. Why can't all of our classes be like this?" And I hear that all the time when I go into our classrooms. And so we know it works. It's making a huge difference for kids all over the place. And so my goal is to just try to help as many kids as possible have access to our curriculum, and work with schools on helping them understand what we do, and then helping them be able to implement our programs.

We have incredible professional development as well, so we help teachers be able to deliver our curriculum, and to make that transformation of knowing how to be STEM instructor, a STEM educator. And it's really more about coaching and facilitating learning with students. And teachers love our professional development, and tell us that it's the best professional development they've ever had. So also, you know, working with teachers in schools on helping more teachers have access to our professional development. And we work with industry a lot—lots of industry partners, post-secondary partners, to make all of it possible.

JD: Mm-hm. And is there a reason that STEM is the focus?

SC: Well, in particular, yes. Well in our country the STEM jobs are going to be the—the very fast growing jobs are in the STEM areas. That is where we're going to see huge growth in our economy. And we have so many industries, like Intel, and so many industries that tell us all the time they have to go outside of our country to get people with the skills they need for today's jobs. So we know that we're not doing a good enough job in helping our kids with those skills, gain those skills. And so that's what we're about. It's about helping—an approach to education that helps kids acquire the skills that they need for today and tomorrow's jobs. And that's what we do.

JD: Mm-hm. And so when you think about the career you're had so far, or perhaps careers, plural—

SC: Yes.

JD: —is there a thread that you see that kind of goes from the skills you used in broadcasting, through politics, and through education?

SC: Oh, absolutely! I feel like everything I've done to now helps to prepare me for what I do now. [0:35:00] Communications, certainly—being able to grasp complicated situations or issues quickly, and be able to try to condense them down into a way of being able to transfer that information, is helpful. The policy issues around education, certainly, and understanding them—understanding today, what's happening in education today, from all different aspects, whether it's the challenges we with today's schools, with today's standards, or testing, or the challenges that teachers have in our classrooms, our funding issues, policy issues. All of those things you have a deep understanding and knowledge of, given all the work that I've done. And all of that really helps me be able to be more effective in the work that I do.

And also the people that I know—I've gained a lot of relationships with people all over the country, and using those relationships, building on those relationships to help me do what I do as well, because so many people across this country have a real passion for helping our kids gain the skills that they need, and they know that we have absolutely got to change what we've been doing in schools, or we're not going to get there. And that's what we do. We're all about innovation, and change, and helping our students be able to get those skills. And so I try to collaborate with as many people as possible in being able to achieve that.

JD: And is your work fairly well spread out throughout the western states, or do you—

SC: It is.

JD: —tend to do a lot in Oregon?

SC: It is. It's all over the western states. I mean, next week I might be in Utah. We have some work that's going on in Utah. Oh, I've been to all of them. I've been to Hawaii. In this past year, all over the place: Hawaii, Alaska, Montana, Arizona, well certainly California, New Mexico, Wyoming [laughs], Washington. Yeah, all over. Nevada—yeah, so just all over the western—those states. And then also on the national level—going to Washington, DC, for national conferences. Going back to Indianapolis, where our main office is for the organization. And so yeah, just traveling all over the place to really work with people who are like—who are really trying to take our country in the same direction, which is helping to skill up our people, and helping them to be more successful.

JD: Mm-hm. You've touched on, a bit, about the role that OSU played and your education played in the life that you've led, and the career that you've had, and the work that you've done. Can you expand a little more on that, about just kind of what role you think OSU has played in your life?

SC: Mm-hm. Well, first of all, I think the fact that—that it helped me see that I could be—that I could accomplish things, and accomplish things at a high level, I think, is—gives you confidence to then go forward and to take chances. Going back to school full time, and taking that chance of plunging in [laughs] at that point in my life—it was a risk. And I took it, and people believed in me, and I had people encouraging me, and I did it, and I was successful. And it has helped me then have the courage to take other risks, when other opportunities came along. And so I think there's that aspect of it.

And I think also that the whole aspect of education and learning, and how learning helps you be prepared for when opportunities do come along, you know? And then you're able to take advantage of those opportunities, or to go after that opportunity, because you have been prepared. You have been preparing. And each experience that you have in your life, and each risk that you take, really helps you get to another place so that you're ready for that next opportunity, you know? And so all along the way.

When I got this position with Project Lead The Way, the CEO and another high level person in the organization came to me to talk to me about the position, and it was because of what I had done prior to that. [0:40:00] What I had done as a state senator, and what I was doing as a state superintendent, and my reporting background, and all of those things, helped me be at that place where I could end up doing what I do now. And I think that people—we can't forget that, that all of this builds. Throughout our lifetime, our learning and those experiences that we have really help prepare us for the next thing, you know? And not to discount that and forget that, because I think that is really, really important. We don't tend to think about that.

JD: Mm-hm. And you mentioned that when you're back in Corvallis, you just kind of always feel like—

SC: I do.

JD: —a certain part of you is always there. Are you familiar with kind of what OSU is doing these days, and have any thoughts about sort of the direction that the university's going?

SC: Well, I try to keep up. I get newsletters, so I am—I do try to keep up. And I think that I do like the direction the university's going. I'm a big fan of the president [laughs], and believe that his leadership has just been fabulous! And I love that he has really brought that inclusive aspect to the campus, and that he's all about everyone having opportunity, and that the role of the university is about really going after that. And, what role does the university play in helping all people have opportunity? And I love that. I love that approach to the role of the university. And I see that very much in OSU today. And I think it's absolutely critical with today's population. But yeah, I'm very, very supportive. I root for the Beavs. [Laughs] It's so funny. I live in Eugene and I do support the Ducks, but except for when they're playing the Beavers. And so, oh, yeah. I do try to keep up. I'm probably not as up on everything as I should be, but I do try to keep up.

JD: And if you were to offer any thoughts or advice to current students, now that you're kind of down the road from when your education happened—

SC: Yeah.

JD: —what might you suggest to them?

SC: Boy, I guess what I would suggest is embrace learning; embrace how special your life is right now in school, and all the opportunity that's right there at Oregon State, for you. You just have to search for it, and it's there. And if you ever need help, you know, don't hesitate. If you're struggling on campus or ever need support, there are always people there to help support you. And so reach out; make sure that you're letting people know that, "Hey, I'm struggling with this. I need some support here." Because people want to see you be successful on that campus. And I certainly felt that.

But I think it's really about when we're going—sometimes when we're in that moment, and you are a student, and you're just busy doing your stuff, it's hard to really get that perspective of what an incredibly special time that is in your life, and you will never forget it. It'll always be a special time in your life. Throughout your life you'll look back on those days, and say, "Wow, I remember when." And so just embrace it, and have—have confidence in yourself, and know that you have so many people that want you to be successful, and are just rooting you on.

When we get to see graduates graduating from the university, that is such an inspiring, amazing time, when you see that success walking down with their caps and gowns. And to me, when I see that, it's just look at all of that success! And that's the future, and that success is moving forward. And that whole thing about knowledge, and how it is so important to all of us to help us get what we want out of life. It really is. So just embrace it, and learn as much as you can.

JD: That's great. If you have any last thoughts, please offer them. I won't ask you any more questions.

SC: [Laughs] Okay.

JD: It's been wonderful to hear your recollections.

SC: Well, thank you. I can't think of anything else, I don't think—no.

JD: Well, great.

SC: Yeah, thank you. I hope I didn't ramble too much. [0:44:59]