

An Interview with William Sullivan

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

The UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
University of Nevada Las Vegas
2007

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University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

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Recorded interviews and transcripts composing the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project have been made possible through the generosity of CSUN (grant initiated, presented, and shepherded through the CSUN political process by Andres Moses) and the Libraries Advisory Board. Lied Library provided a wide variety of administrative services and the Special Collections Department, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided advice and archival expertise. The Oral History Research Center enabled students and staff to work together with campus community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives.

The transcripts received minimal editing. These measures include the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director
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Preface

Dr. William W. Sullivan was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. He completed his doctorate over a 12 year period at University of Utah. He helped open the Minority Center there, and was eventually recruited to teach in Missoula, Montana, where he stayed for three years.

Dr. Sullivan was president of the Utah association of the National Council for Black Studies programs, and spent some time designing ways to recruit minorities for universities. He shares stories of prejudice against Native Americans in Montana and mean-spirited harassment himself and roommates in Utah.

In 1978, Bill was recruited by Robert Glennon to come to UNLV. He was hired as director of student support services and has been here ever since. He compares the amount of grants written, the number of students, and the size of his staff in 1978 to what he works with today, giving an excellent picture of the changes over thirty years. He also comments on changes in the appearance of the Las Vegas Strip and the UNLV campus.

Dr. Sullivan oversees many programs which are designed among other things to enrich students' studies, teach them how to study, help their parents with problems, aid adults who wish to return to school, provide in-class high school tutoring, and even help them earn full scholarships to graduate school. His department will help UNLV become a Research One institute by continuing its outreach and hiring highly qualified staff.

-- Dr. Sullivan, who's going to give me his full name in a second. It is June 27th, 2007. And we are in his offices over off Tamarus and Tropicana. How did you get over here? [Editor's note: interviewer is Claytee White.]

Well, we kept growing and growing and we ran out of room on campus. And the more grants we wrote, the larger we got. So we started renting with one building over here, and now we're in five buildings. This building we're in is just one of five.

Oh, wonderful. And, Dr. Sullivan, give me your full name.

William W. Sullivan.

Tell me where you're from and tell me a little about your childhood.

My childhood, huh?

Yes.

I'm originally from Chicago, Illinois. That's where I was born and raised, in Chicago. I got my doctorate at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Yeah, I know. How do you make that huge leap from Chicago to Utah? Well, that was a young -- well, I guess he was young then -- man that -- when I finished high school in Chicago, I was looking for a college to go to. And they had a program that helped kids go to college called a Talent Search program in Chicago. So I went to him. And he said, well, with these grades you've got, you'd be lucky to get in anywhere. So he recommended I go to community college because I was a football player and all I ever really cared about was playing football. I didn't care about classes and grades. So I think I had a 1.0 out of high school and I was wondering why I couldn't get into colleges.

So I went to community college in Chicago. I was on the dean's list every year. I could have done it anytime I wanted to. It's just that playing football was all I cared about, you know. Then when I got my feelings hurt and couldn't get admitted to any college, I said, well, time to get serious about these grades. So I played football for the junior college. We won the championship twice in a row. Also, I made excellent grades as well.

So that's how the big leap to Utah. He said -- I went back to him two years later -- where you want to go to school now? I said I want to go to a party school, somewhere where they party. He goes I got just the school for you. He sent me to Utah. What party? There's no party here.

In Utah, there's drinking, no caffeine.

That's right. That's right. Mormon state, you know. But he told me, he said, you know, you've got the grades, the ability, why do you want to go there and party and drop out? Because I was young, you know, I didn't know any better. I didn't have any counselors to tell me what college was about. I just figured it was what I saw on TV. It was one big party. So when he asked me where you want to go, I said anywhere where there's a party.

Now, I'm surprised you didn't want to be Omega Psi Phi or something.

Well, most athletes have their own fraternity called GDI. The G is for god -- independent. And most athletes know that. What fraternity are you in? I'm in the GDI. And so we didn't pledge any fraternities or anything. Athletes mostly stuck together to themselves unlike the young kids of today. A lot of athletes do get in Omega and get branded and all the other things that they do. But back in my days, back in those days -- that's in the 60s, in the middle 60s -- we weren't doing that. We were into saving our people and doing other things at those times.

So when were you born?

1949.

So you were in college 1966 through '68?

I finally got my doctorate in '78. So it was a good stretch.

So tell me where you went after Utah. And which Utah campus?

University of Utah. "The" University of Utah. No. I went to the University of Utah and loved it. I had a great time. I thoroughly enjoyed that school. I grew up there. I cut my teeth there. I went from being a wild teenager to a nice young adult because I was able to see the other side.

What was it like in the 60s when we're in the civil rights movement? What was it like in Utah?

I'll tell you. I helped bring the civil rights movement to Utah because, see, going to junior college in Chicago, we all had a goal to go out and save the world and open up centers, African-American centers called Black Study Centers then. And that was one of my missions. We did open up one at the University of Utah and called it a Minority Center. And it's still there today. In fact, my doctoral dissertation is on the Design and Implementations of Black Studies Departments. So if you look up the title of my dissertation, that's exactly what it is.

So did you do all of your schooling there in Utah?

Yes, I did. I stayed and went straight through Utah, did all my schooling there.

Good. So what did your parents think about this (indiscernible)?

Well, since I'm the first one in my family, anywhere in my family, to graduate from college, they were just happy that I graduated from college. They were very happy, just extremely happy. I think to this day they don't fully understand how I could be Dr. Sullivan and not a medical doctor. But that's okay. That's okay they said. They say they understand, but I know they really don't. But they loved it anyway.

Oh, I can imagine. So what brought you, then, to Las Vegas? Where did you go after your Ph.D.?

I stayed in Utah for a while. Worked there. And then I went-- believe it or not -- to Missoula, Montana. They made me an offer I couldn't refuse. They said we're going to double whatever you make in Utah to come to Montana. And at that time I thought money was everything. Going to Montana I found out money really isn't everything. You know, there had to be a reason why they said we will double your salary.

Did you have anyplace to spend it?

Not really. Not that didn't have sawdust on the floor. That was an experience. I tried to make the best of it. But between that and the grizzly bears and stuff I said, nah, this city boy from Chicago, this is a little bit too much.

So how long did you stay?

Three years. That was '75 to '78. I stayed there. And that's when I learned about being a young African-American with a Ph.D. at a school that's losing enrollment. I learned the definition of financial exigency. They were losing money, losing students. Last hired, first fired. I said but I'm black; you can't fire me. You all recruited me. There was a whole bunch of all the young professors. All of us went together. And I said they can go, but not me. They said last hired, first fired. I thought it was so unfair, so cruel. Three years y'all going to do this.

But it was Montana.

Montana. I said how could you get rid of me? You need me. They said we'd be in a world of trouble if we didn't follow the pecking order, you know. And back in those days you just thought you could pretty much do what you want.

So I went back to Chicago for a quick minute. And then the vice president here at that time, Robert Glennon, recruited me, heard about me and what I had done.

And tell me some of the things that you had done.

Oh, god, besides creating the Minority Center at the University of Utah, I had a lot of firsts going on because being African-American and intelligent, a lot of people recruited you. I worked with mayors, with governors on their committees. And my name had gotten out there pretty much. Back in those days, during the civil rights times, everybody was looking to build something to assist African-Americans. And I had done a lot of work in that area. I was president of our state association. So my name was getting out there pretty much.

What kind of state association?

For National Council for Black Studies programs. That's what it was. Our national president was in Ohio at that time. And so we would go to our national meetings at "the" Ohio State University. They were one of the leaders in the country in African-American studies. Because of that and the work -- and I was a major recruiter for both the University of Utah and for the University of Montana as well. I had been heavily into recruiting qualified students to go there. The recruitment attempts they made in the beginning are horrible. I don't care what color you are. If you're ill-equipped for college, you're ill-equipped. And they flood you in and say, look, we tried and they all flunked out. I said you're recruiting the wrong ones. And so --

What were some of the strategies that you would use?

I did things -- it seems like nothing today. But back in those days I would actually bring a map that was topographical -- can't get the word out; tongue twister -- that was correct. It would show the mountains and the bumps and where we're located. And it was a map that you can touch, not just a two-dimensional, but a three-dimensional map. And they would say, wow, mountains. And the kids would look at it. And I would bring brochures and fliers with me and show them actual pictures of other African-American students who were there, which was different from what they were seeing. So when they saw others there like them, they were glad to come. Plus, we told them we had a program to work with them and assist them. Those are the basic things it took to recruit the correct students back then rather than just going through the ghetto and swooping up a handful of them and saying, come on, guys, with what your credentials are we're going to bring

you out, but made a concentration effort to recruit the correct ones.

And I would tell them college isn't for everybody. College is hard. College is tough. You can't just walk in there, oh, I'll attend one class this week and skip the rest of them and think you're going to pass. So I made sure the ones we recruited understood you were coming to work hard, you know, that it was a lot of hard work. It wasn't easy as people think it is. We had a good backup system for them and the university contributed to it. Both the University of Montana and the University of Utah contributed to it and that's why it was successful.

I think we had something like 27 African-Americans at the University of Utah when I first got there. By the time I left it was over 300 and something. So it was quite a big leap.

Now, how were African-American students treated in Utah in the 70s?

In the 70s, great. In spite of the religion that was there, it was terrific. It really was. They treated us with respect. We were our own worst enemies, really. But we didn't have a leader. We didn't have a counselor. We didn't have a mentor. We didn't have that. And I was just barely two or three years older than they were. So one of the things we did convince the university to do was to bring in an African-American counselor, someone who could talk and work with us and we could explain our problems to.

We had our share of hate mail. Now, don't get me wrong. But it wasn't on a religious scale. It was a group of kids who thought it was fun to send us notes from the Ku Klux Klan saying we're going to get you at eight o'clock on June 26, you know.

Well, we believed it. And we barricaded ourselves in the dorm. We built up to that day. We kept cans of beans and stuff and put them in our little room. And we made little tapes to our parents. If we die for the cause tonight, you know, this is what happened, mom, this is what happened, dad. And so the university was going crazy. They didn't know what to do. So they called Silas Parnell in Chicago. He was my mentor who sent thousands of kids off to college everywhere. They called him. So here we are staying in the room. And they know we were armed. And that was a time during the Jackson State Two and the Kent State Four, during all those times. And we really thought the Ku Klux Klan was coming after us to get us.

Here comes Silas Parnell knocking on the door about -- oh, it had to be about ten in the morning -- open this door. We said we're not. Who are you? Silas Parnell. We didn't believe it.

He said, boy, if you don't open this door, I'm going to come in there and choke you to death. I said, yeah, that's him. That's him. Open the door. What are y'all doing up here? And we showed him the note that we had gotten that the Ku Klux Klan was coming to get us and kill us and we had to protect ourselves. So all us little kids jammed in one little room, sleeping on the floor. He said this is ridiculous.

So he explained what happened to the university because they didn't understand what was going on. And we weren't talking to anybody. We just were going to protect ourselves. They thought we had gone nuts.

So who armed you? How were you armed?

Oh, guns -- that was Utah. Anybody could buy a gun. People drive around in trucks with guns. And all we had was little .22s. That was nothing. They could have blown the whole roof all the room if they wanted to. We looked back at it as we got older and laughed.

So are you still in touch with some of those people from that room?

Yes, I am. I still am. To this day I talk to a few of them and remind them how silly we were at 19 years old thinking we're going to save ourselves.

That's when the university was convinced that these students had to have a mentor, a leader or a counselor because we had no one to talk to. And so helped start get the Minority Center started. They brought in a professional who became our adviser and worked with us.

Now, what about a Black Studies program or something like that? Was that ever done at Utah?

Yes, it was. Actually, what we started was the Minority Center, which is different than the Black Studies or African-American Studies academic department. See, I was only 19, remember. I hadn't progressed that far. I knew we could get a center where the Native Americans, the Hispanics and the black students could all go to. And all three of us shared that little center, and that center was in the student union. We all went in for advising and counseling. It's still there today. To this day it's still there. Now, I do understand that they do have an African-American Studies department, but that was after my time. But during those days we were happy to have a center.

But you laid the groundwork. So now, at Montana did you also have to go in and lay

groundwork again?

That's the reason they hired me was to come in and do that. And so, yes, we did. But, see, unlike Utah, Montana didn't have a lot of African-Americans. And the people in Montana -- you know, everywhere nationwide the black man was looked down as being the lowest. Not in Montana. They actually hated someone worse than they hated us. And it was the Native Americans. I did not believe that stuff about cowboys and Indians until I went to Montana. Oh, was it serious. Oh, it was really serious. And so, yeah, they actually hated Native Americans. On the bottom pole was Native Americans, next was dogs, and then African-Americans. It was unbelievable. So we tried to make some changes there. But it's a different culture. Native Americans have a different culture than we did. But we did manage to get a few changes made while we were there.

But, again, we had a center that was there. Then I started teaching African-American history. I taught U.S. history, American history and African-American history. I was into teaching at that time. So then I got into wanting to help students navigate the system of graduating, because it takes a whole lot more for African-American students to graduate from college than just being academic -- there's a lot of unwritten rules, a lot of things that they don't know, mistakes they make.

So give me an example.

Oh, a good example would be talking back to a teacher in a classroom. Yeah. You know, our kids are quick to talk back to you. And you say, girl, you better shut up.

But our generation -- well, my generation didn't do that.

The generation now days do.

Now, yes, definitely.

Yes. That's what I'm talking about. Yeah, the generation now days, they've got to understand that that is the highest disrespect. You know, you don't do that. Yeah, back in the early days, our generation, we didn't do that and last very long. You know, everybody says the breakdown of the nuclear family, well, I don't believe it's all that. It's just that when the neighbors can chastise you and correct you -- that doesn't happen these days anymore. It's not whether you have a mom and a dad. There are a lot of kids who had single-parent households and grew up fine. And this has been repeated over and over. It takes a village. It really does.

And we had that village.

Yes, we did. We had that village. The lady next door, the lady across the street, I mean if she would see me out of line, you better get back in line. That doesn't happen anymore. And so that's what these kids lack. So it does take a lot of support systems other than being academics. That's what I mean by the unwritten rules, you know. There's a whole lot more of them.

For example, the kids and their prioritizing. You've got to study first. You've got to get your sleep first before that. These kids think they can operate with no sleep. You're brain-dead. They have no idea they're brain-dead. You make them get some sleep. You tell them, okay, let's do your weekly schedule. I want you to track yourself for a week. And you hand them a chart, a 24-hour timetable. Just write one or two words down what you're doing, sleeping, eating, studying, having fun. And then you go back over with them, with their own chart that they wrote, and say, look, how much time do you spend sleeping, studying, going to school, or whatever else you're doing? You've got to do things to make them realize that they are not on the right track. Just lecturing does very good little. And there are always the kids who need it the least that will show up to all these things, self-help type of events. You've got to get your hands around the kids who think I don't need that.

So tell me how you got recruited to UNLV.

Bob Glennon. They had a vacancy here. And Robert Glennon, who was the vice president back in '78, flew to Salt Lake City. I was in Utah. I had left Montana and gone to Chicago and said I'm going back to Utah and work, you know, where I started. Well, he met me in Utah and said I have a position here at UNLV if you're interested. And I thought about it and thought about it and called him back and said sure. Why not? I'm adventurous. You know, I just left Utah and Montana. Why not Las Vegas? I forget -- there was nothing here. I had been here and visited. But I didn't realize people actually lived in Las Vegas. So I said I'll try it for one year. I didn't tell him that, of course. I just told him yes, I'll take the job. But to myself I said I'll try it for one year. I came here for one year and I've started my 30th year. I came here in '78. So 29th year, yeah.

Oh, that's amazing. So what was the recruitment process like? He just met you and --

He had heard about me through others because they had asked for people to nominate people. And my name popped up a few times. Some of my friends told me to give them my resume,

which I did. I gave them my resume. I had no idea I was going to come here. I mean that was so far away from my train of thought at that time. So he had me do the paperwork and stuff. And he sent me a flier as to what the job was about. And he said put your application in. I said sure.

So what was that first position?

It was director of student support services. It was a trio program. Actually, back then it was called director of special services. It later changed its name to student support services federally. And that was in 1978. I had a secretary and two counselors. We had a very small office. It was just a few of us working with about 60 or 70 students I think it was back then.

So were those the minority students --

No. The government funded us based upon low income and first generation. But it still was minority students. But they do not fund based upon race. It was based upon low income. You had to be from a family of low-income people or the first in your family to graduate from college, first generation. That's what that meant. And I think they were supposed to work with about 200 and I think they had 60. So we built the program back up to 200 university students that we were working with. We did everything from counseling, helping them choose the right class, applying for financial aid and going on to graduate school.

So in 1980, I wrote two additional grants to the special services grant. I wrote the Educational Talent Search Grant and I wrote the Upward Bound Grant. We got funded for all three in 1980, all three being the special services grant. Those grants were due back then every two years. And now they're due every four years. But back then every two years you had to write, write, write, write.

So how much money are we talking about for those kinds of grants?

Oh, my god. Back then it wasn't that much. The total grants that I'm operating on right now -- I know what that answer is -- it's close to \$30 million right now, the grants I'm operating right now. But back then I think the three of them put together didn't even equal \$1 million.

So \$30 million today. So you bring a lot of money into the university campus.

Yes, we do. And we do a lot of good for these students at this campus as well. Oh, yeah.

So now, what has that program that you started with evolved into today?

Okay. From a staff -- I had two counselors, a secretary and myself. From a staff of four to over a

staff of 500 today. From working with approximately -- let's see. We had 60 in student support services to over -- we've got close to 24,000 students right now that we work with. That's both high school, college and adults. We have programs for everybody.

We have the adult education center -- well, Upward Bound by far is our most popular program right now. In the early days Upward Bound was real small as I mentioned. And now we have Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science Center. And whether you're in regular Upward Bound or Upward Bound Math-Science Center, we treat them both the same. We do heavy concentration on math and science for all the high school kids. You have to be in high school, ninth grade through 12th grade. And those are the kids that actually get to come and live on campus in the summer, which they're doing right now. So I'm up late at night with the kids and up early in the morning.

And they live in the dormitories?

They live in the dormitories.

Are they all local?

Yes, they're all local.

So this must be a real adventure for them.

Oh, they get a head start on college life. Even though it's only six weeks, they find out what it's like to have roommates for the first time or someone they don't know. They learn good habits, good study habits. As I mentioned earlier, getting plenty of rest. They're in the bed by 10:30 every night. They're up at six o'clock every morning. This is the second week. So we're going to introduce newspapers to them this week, reading the newspapers and learning about current events. We teach them about good study habits.

A typical schedule: Up at six; breakfast at seven; class at eight; noon is lunch; one o'clock back in class; dinner at five; study hall, six to eight; free time, eight to nine; and then nine o'clock, group meeting, snacks and off to bed. So we've got their schedule pretty well worked out. Then on the weekends we'd let them have a little bit of fun. We'll take them bowling on something like that, to the movies, show them things you can do on a college campus without going home. We used to keep them every weekend, but now we try to keep them out of the six weeks no more than three weekends because that's the best. At their age, you know, just keep them for a two-week

period. We need some sanity, too. We need a break.

So now, at this point with the kind of staff you have, what does this summer school mean for you individually? What do you have to do?

Out of the 500 employees, close to 160 are full-time permanent. The rest are part-time, whether they're instructors teaching for us, whether they're mentors, tutors. We've got hundreds and hundreds of tutors. I mean we've got tutors that go out to the school district. We've got tutors that tutor here on campus. The bulk of them are made up of tutors, though.

But what does summer mean to us?

To you especially.

A lot of hard work. We're involved with the NASA program. See, our summer is divided into a lot of different functions. We're working with Dr. Fernard here on campus and the NASA program that he's operating. We're working with the STEM program here on campus for this summer. We have teachers who are from the Clark County School District who are actually teaching for us this summer. We have professors from the university, especially with the laboratories -- computer lab, chemistry lab, biology lab -- we have them teaching for us. So our kids really get exposed. And all this is for no credit. This is all for self-enrichment. And then we have a group of kids who must go to summer school with the Clark County School District. So we transport them back and forth to summer school every day. Pulling all that together is a monstrous task in itself.

So now, those kids who have to go to summer school, what you're offering is not enough?

No. They need the credit. Those who have to go to summer school need the high school credit. Our program is self-enrichment. And I think this year is the first time in a long time we were told by the school district that they will allow our kids to get an elective credit for going. They stopped that. They used to in the old days. In the early days we used to do that. And the school district stopped it. And so now I think this year -- our staff works with the school district, former assistant superintendents such as Eva Simmons and others, who worked for us. And they got that instituted, put back in for our kids.

The kids we have staying in the residence hall have a lot of advantages. I mean just look at last year and the new kids coming this year. And you hear the kids, the ones who were here

saying they didn't bring a pillow. They forgot to bring a clock. They didn't know this and that. I said that was you last year. You didn't know what to bring. Even though we send notes home with them telling them what to bring, they still forget their stuff. But it is so interesting to hear the former students talk about the "newbies," you know. The "newbies" didn't do this. They didn't know that.

Explain Upward Bound to me.

Upward Bound is designed to take kids -- you enroll them in Upward Bound in ninth, tenth and 11th grade. They come to school every weekend, up to the university on the weekends. Every Saturday we have something going on except for holiday weekends, of course. We bring them up here. The idea is to help them in their current classes. So we enroll them in classes where they're having difficulty, whether it's calculus, trigonometry or biology, whatever it is. Or you can get ahead. Like right now this summer many of our kids are taking courses with us that they're going to have in regular school next year, especially if it's a difficult class. Math and science are the two areas, and physics, that are extremely difficult. So we prepare them. When they start out in the fall, they're going to hit the floor running. They're going to be up to snuff.

So the Upward Bound program is probably our best-known, most intrusive program we operate. We invite the parents up. So after attending every Saturday in the summertime, those kids who want to and parents who will let them actually move in the residence halls over here on campus. Every parent will not (indiscernible) stay here. So we have a commuter program for them where they bring them up every day, pick them up every afternoon. We feed them breakfast, lunch and dinner. And they go to class.

(End Side A.)

We do not force all the kids to stay in the dorms. And some of our seniors as I was saying, they have jobs. So we allow them to work and go to school because we're trying to give them the exact type of setting they may face when they go to college because remember all these are either poor kids or the first-generation kids. So chances are they will have to learn to work and go to college at the same time.

We have what's called the Bridge program in Upward Bound. That's where the kids have graduated like right now from high school and are about to start college. Well, that's a bridge

between high school and college. We have enrolled them in actual UNLV classes. And so they're taking courses right now and coming back and telling the other kids this is serious, you know. College is a lot different. So then when they go off to college, there are courses that they're taking that will transfer with them if they go off or if they stay here. So that's the courses that they're in.

Oh, I love this. I love it. Now, tell me about the NASA program.

Ah, the NASA program. Ooh, that's for our little geniuses. They actually have people who have worked in NASA here running a weeklong program for high school kids. So we enroll our kids in it. Dr. Fernard has worked with my staff. And they have set it up where these kids get an intensive one-week training on everything that can lead toward being an astronaut, everything it takes to run the Jet Propulsion Lab, physics and math and chemistry, all that stuff. They do one week for high school and one week for middle school. One of my other programs has middle school kids in it. Our middle school kids are starting this week in it. Last week it was my high school kids. It's a terrific program.

Oh, I love it. How many kids do you have in the NASA program this summer?

I think we have about 15 of our kids in the NASA program.

Wonderful. Now, what is STEM?

STEM is science, technology, engineering and math. And the STEM program, we're involving our kids, again, with the scientists here at the university -- the math department, the science department, the engineering department. And they're running their separate program with our high school kids as well. These kids are getting some intensive, intensive training.

I am impressed. I am just so impressed. And I thank Dr. Troutman for telling me to come over here to interview you.

Oh, is that who told you? I was wondering how you located me because I'm a well-kept secret, ain't I?

No.

Because we're limited in our funding. As I was mentioning earlier we're only funded to serve so many students. So we seldom advertise. We allow word-of-mouth like Dr. Troutman, for example, to send people to us. But if we were to advertise, we would be flooded. We would be flooded with kids. And we're busting at the seams right now. So we're always asking for more

money. We're always trying to raise funds. We're always looking for donors all the time as a result.

But Upward Bound as I mentioned is our best-known program because we have those babies from ninth grade through high school graduation. Then we send them off to college. Most of them end up going here to UNLV because this is where they spent four summers.

Well, this is great. I hate to talk about other things of the university because I just love what you're doing so much.

So do you have grant writers that work with you or do you still do all the grant writing?

My staff and I do the grant writing. We do all the grants. We do not have any grant writers. I did it at first by myself for the first 20 years or so. And then finally I said I need some help because we started getting more and more grants. We have about 16 grants now. Back when we had one or two, it was easy. But with 16 -- help. But, no, we have no grant writers.

And it doesn't sound like you need any with the way you're doing it.

No, we do not.

So now, getting away from this for just a little bit, what were your impressions of Las Vegas after living in Utah and then Montana?

Las Vegas when I first got here -- in 1978, the Strip wasn't as big. You could drive through the middle of campus, halfway at least to the middle at that time because I think they had blocked it off a little bit. It didn't have nearly as many buildings. Every one of us knew each of the other professors just about. We all would go out together, especially us young ones, you know. Now, I'm one of the older ones now. It's so strange. When I started here I was one of the young ones 29 years ago.

To me the university has always been a friendly place. People willing to grow, willing to learn, willing to change. I tell everybody that here at the University of Utah -- listen to me, University of Utah, wow. You've got me talking about Utah so much. At UNLV we don't reinvent the wheel, but we change the wheel. We see the wheels on other places and we want to do ours slightly different. By being a young institution -- with this being our 50th anniversary, we're very young -- we don't have to reinvent the wheel, but we can certainly change the wheels,

how we want to look, how we want to feel, you know. That's what I tell everybody that we do. And we've been doing that for the good I have to say. I really believe we've been doing that for the good.

I agree.

Year by year things gradually change. People who haven't been here and just started last year, they may think it's awful or change isn't quick enough. I've been here a long time and a lot of things have improved for the better. And it's constantly improving.

Give me some of the major improvements that you've seen since 1978 on this campus. You don't have to mention people's names if you don't want to.

Oh, I wouldn't do that anyway. One of the major improvements is caring more about the students. Back when I first started it was more like a commuter college. Students would come and go. And people would care less if you ever saw a student other than the classroom. Providing services to students, changing hours, becoming more flexible for students, understanding that a lot of nontraditional students attend this university, that we need to be open almost 24 hours. A lot of things need to change. We need to offer courses -- the one thing that's always bothered me -- you have the school system with teachers who really want to take classes and really want to go, but, yet, our summer schedule does not match the class schedule of the teachers in the school district. So then they end up going to University of Phoenix and going everywhere but here. I want UNLV to be number one. So they should all be going here. And all we've got to do is just adjust our summer schedule to match theirs. Not only would the teachers love it, everyone would love it because parents who have kids who are in college and still in high school -- for example, I told you about our Bridge program. Our 12th graders have to start one week early going to college because during the summer program the dorms don't open up until one week later. So the schedules don't match with the high school kids. But we get them in and we get special permission. So they start a week early. But if UNLV and the school district would set their schedules to match, it would be better all around.

But I've seen other improvements. I mean we have improved drastically for students. We've shifted our schedules from Monday, Wednesday and Friday classes, Tuesday and Thursday, to two days now. We've made Friday an option day where classes run long. We're offering

classes on weekends now. We're becoming more sensitive to the needs of the population that the university serves. And that's a major, major change.

There have been a lot of other changes including in physical plans. For example, the university opened up more opportunities for kids to live on campus. For a long time they only had one residence hall. And when those 250 beds were filled, the other thousand have to go someplace else. No choice. And I understand there are major plans in the future for creating more student housing around campus because as recently as yesterday a parent called the university I'll say -- I won't say what department -- and asked where should we live close around campus? They were told nowhere close around campus. It's too dangerous, drug ridden and you're liable to get mugged. You're better off moving way out somewhere. Well, that's a terrible thing to tell a new person.

I would have slept at another school.

Right. So I understand that we're in the process of buying up the property surrounding the university so those types of comments don't have to be made whether they're true or not. Because I mean if anybody else hears that, well, I'm not coming there. But then I happen to know you look around USC, around Spelman, and they've got hurricane fences up because the neighborhood -- that part is caught up with the nice schools. So I understand that. But, you know, you're a new parent. What? My kid's not going there.

And it sounds like then you're buying into the Midtown concept?

Yes. Midtown UNLV I think it is or whatever new name they've come up with. Well, anyway, I am going to buy into that concept because I think it's terrific if we do have a nice little college town all around this university where people can walk in safety and it's well lit and everybody knows you when you walk by or whatever. That's a nice collegiate feeling to have. Yes, I'm definitely buying into that.

We want our own Westwood.

Yes. That's exactly right. Exactly. That's exactly right. Yeah.

What would you say with the kind of department that you created here -- first, do you work under a dean?

No. I work under the vice president, Dr. Rebecca Mills, for student life. And I'm the --

So now, with the kind of center --

I'm sorry. I'm the associate vice president under Dr. Mills.

Oh, I didn't realize that.

I know. You asked me earlier to say my name, but I never did say my title. I know that. I'm the associate vice president. And I have three deputy executive directors who work under me. And under them are the directors of those major programs.

And then I didn't get a chance to tell you about my other programs. Upward Bound wasn't the only one. See, you stopped at Upward Bound. But we have an adult educational services program where we help adults return and go back to school or get different training for people who have been laid off for jobs. We have a complete adult program to help them get GEDs. So we have a complete adult program. We have a program called Educational Talent Search. It's not an Upward Bound, but it's a program where if you dropped out of school or you need to get into school, it helps people to learn about what college to go to, how to get financial aid. And I'm a product of a Talent Search program. That office I went to in Chicago where Silas Parnell worked was an Educational Talent Search program. And they help thousands of kids go to college. Where Upward Bound is intense, you're there every weekend, you're taking classes, Talent Search is information dissemination.

We have the Gear Up program. Gear Up is more intense, more intrusive than even Upward Bound. Our Gear Up program -- we're in about 28 different high schools and middle schools. And for the school to qualify to be a Gear Up school, they have to have at least 51 percent of their students in the free lunch program. So it's the poorer schools. And we have faculty who are actually housed at each one of those schools. We run after-school programs. We enroll all the school students into the Boys and Girls Club for after school. We have during the day in-classroom tutoring going on where we actually help the students in their classes during the daytime. Because after school if they're not playing football, basketball or running off doing something else, then they want to -- we find out it was better to help them during the school period. To go out and get the teachers to like that -- but now they enjoy having a second tutor or second person or two tutors in the classroom helping the kids. It's a terrific program. Gear Up is one of our bright spots as well.

We have student support services, which I told you before was special services. That's where we work with UNLV students. We help over 300 UNLV students, advising, counseling, what courses to take.

Then we have the McNair program. We have about 30 students in that. We take our brightest and best students. We get them early mentorship from UNLV professors where they actually doing research. They do early research. Every one of those McNair students when they finish has a full scholarship to many universities around the country for their doctorate degree because they're already doing the research for a doctorate, doing major studies already. Two or three years they've done research, so each one of them that graduates from McNair program has a full ride to grad school.

Now, is McNair the astronaut?

Yes. It's named after Ronald E. McNair, who died in the space shuttle explosion. Yes, it was named after him.

I am just so in awe and amazed. I don't even know which question to ask now because I just -- I guess I'm overwhelmed with information. Number one, I didn't know we even had this here on campus.

That's why I said it was a well-kept secret because -- we do advertise and we do let people know. And like I said, there are 15 different programs. You know, I don't have paper in front of me. But just trying to memorize all these programs --

Yes. You've already told me about seven or eight.

And then some are in multiples. Like Upward Bound has five -- see, you can't get more students unless you write more grants. So rather than writing one Upward Bound Grant, we wrote three Upward Bound Grants. Rather than writing one Upward Bound Math-Science Grant, we wrote three Upward Bound Math-Science. So that's how you get more and more. They looked at individual funding from the federal government. But all of them are under CAEO, the Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach. That's what my center is. And I will give you brochures and things on that.

Now, what I didn't mention -- I've already mentioned the Gear Up program, the adult educational services, the Ronnie McNair scholars program, the student support services program,

the Educational Talent Search program and the Upward Bound program and the Upward Bound Math-Science. We also have a mentoring and volunteering program where we help young people who are enrolled -- like I said we have 28,000 students. So we provide them with mentors and volunteers.

We operate something called the Early Studies program. That's where high school kids can take college courses and get high school and college credit for at the same time. And that's called Early Studies.

We have family support services. Dr. Langston runs that program for us. That's where we get intensive counseling or kids who need to be referred to family services or parents need help with welfare or navigating the system. That's where our professional social work people come in. And that's what family support services program is about.

We have a parents program for parents where we help them overcome any barriers that they may have with the program because if the parents are having problems, then the kids are having problems. Well, if you can help the parents solve their problems, then the kids do a whole lot better. There's not a lot of stress in their life.

Our tutoring program provides tutoring for everyone at UNLV as well as the kids in our program. So we have a very intensive tutoring program.

This is simply amazing. Do you regret not being in a classroom?

That was a good question. That was a great question. That was a terrific question. I seldom get asked that. Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I used to love teaching. Oh, I loved teaching. Regret may not be the correct word. But I couldn't affect enough kids. It drove me crazy. More kids needed help when I was teaching high school, but you'd get a different group every hour. It really was no constant taking place. But you could spot the ones in your classroom who really needed your attention. And you're working hours after work. When I was teaching middle school, back then they didn't change classes that much. So you had them for a longer period of time. When I was teaching college it was great because you had freedom to be innovative, creative, and teach a different way. But I still was not reaching enough people. Then I became a counselor and started counseling with kids. And even then I wasn't reaching enough. So all my stepping has been to help more and more and more to where we're helping thousands now and I'm happy now. But,

yes, I do miss the classroom sometimes.

But when I look around and see all these teachers, doctors, lawyers -- like I said this is my 29th year, starting my 30th year -- there are a lot of them out there, you know, those who were in their twenties 30 years ago. I think about going back and teaching every now and then. But I tell you there are not enough hours in a day right now. And they keep me hopping, jumping and running. There's something going on all the time.

When I had to cancel with you last time, I had a death. One of my students, her eight-year-old daughter found her dead and called 9-1-1. And the police looked in the young lady's phone book and saw my name in there and called me and said what do we do with the daughter? And so I'm trying to get the sister, the father or somebody. It was a bit of an emergency. But that's just an example of different things that occur that you can't expect. It's called the unexpected. Even today, with two kids in a terrible car wreck last night. Half the family got out; half didn't. One kid was thrown out the car. So, you know, you show your support and it means a lot to these kids. Even though this interview means a lot, too, I had to get to those babies.

Oh, you did the right thing.

I had to get to those babies.

What do you see as the role your program might play in UNLV becoming a Research One institution?

The role in my center is to assist low-income and first-generation students. To become a Research One institution -- we do have a research division. We have a director for research and compliance. We do studies. We won't let anyone do research on the kids, but we do studies on how can we duplicate what you all are doing at UNLV. How can we duplicate your program? So we do provide that. But to become a research institution, they also extend a hand to the community. And that's what we do. We're really good at extending a hand to the community to help. We help everyone help each other to get here.

The first speech I give to the kids when they first come is you've got to want it. We don't have a magic wand where we can make you want to attain your educational goals. You've got to set those goals and go for it and be willing to do the work, be willing to do what it takes to reach

those goals. Every now and then you get some people, well, I'm forced to be here. And I tell the parent it's not going to work as long as the kid is forced to be here and refuses to work. Some have been forced to come and fell in love with the program and got in line. Some do not. You know, it's just a fact of life.

But we intend to help UNLV become a Research One institution by hiring qualified staff, the best faculty we can get, by extending that hand to the community, by being there for the low-income and first-generation students.

So what do you see -- and this is one of my last questions -- what do you see as the next step that you want to take, the next level that you want to reach for your program?

We want to start getting some state funding and some university funding because we're always in a funding crisis. No matter how much we've got, we take every penny and spend it on the kids. Costs are always going up. The federal funding does not keep up with the cost of living, with the COLAs. You don't always get an increase in funding. So every time we get flat-funded or a cut in funding, it hurts in the services that we can provide for these students. If we can start looking for state funding, start looking for more university funding, that's a step in the right direction to helping out. Otherwise, next we've got to start cutting back on some of the services that we provide for these kids who need it so desperately.

What about Bill and Melinda Gates? They do a lot for education. Wouldn't they be a source?

That's a source is that we could try to tap into. There are lots of sources out there. But then, you know, they're looking back at you. Well, how much funding do you get from the university? How much funding do you get from the state? Yeah, they give theirs away as well and we try to tie our kids into their scholarships as well.

Well, this has just been absolutely wonderful. I really appreciate this so much.

Thank you. Thank you.