

University of Washington Tacoma Oral History: Founding Stories

Narrator: Belinda Louie
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Interviewed by: Joan Hua
Place: Tacoma, Washington

Joan Hua 0:00

This is Joan Hua with the UW Tacoma Oral History Project. And today I'm interviewing Belinda Louie from the School of Education. It's December 20th, 2019, and we're in the Snoqualmie building. So Belinda, can you first state your name and your role at UW Tacoma?

Belinda Louie 0:20

This is Belinda Louie. Professor, School of Education.

Joan Hua 0:25

Great, and can you introduce yourself a bit more and talk about your background before you came to UW Tacoma?

Belinda Louie 0:35

I had my training, all my training—my bachelor degrees and up to my PhD—in UW Seattle. So, after I graduated in 1991, I was very fortunate to have a job. They hired me at Seattle Pacific University. So Seattle, so when I was at SPU my professor recruited me to apply for the UW Tacoma campus position. So I applied. I got the job. So, here I am since 1992.

Joan Hua 1:14

Great. And did you grow up in Seattle?

Belinda Louie 1:18

No, I was born in Macau, and then I went to school in Hong Kong. I came here to go to UW.

Joan Hua 1:28

Okay.

Belinda Louie 1:28

As a foreign student.

Joan Hua 1:30

And you stayed.

Belinda Louie 1:32

Because I got married.

Joan Hua 1:35

Great. So, can you tell me about when you first heard about the position at UW Tacoma and about the new campus? You said your professor was the one who approached you and recruited you.

Belinda Louie 1:51

Well, actually my professor, Dr. Kasuners [phonetic], he gave me the application form and he was just like, "Complete the form. Submit the form." That's about that. I didn't know anything. I said, "Oh well." He said, "Try! They may not hire you, so just completed the form." So I sent it in, I think he, Dr. Kasuners [phonetic], was part of the team putting the campus together, so that he wanted me to apply. I applied. So life is as simple as that.

Joan Hua 2:31

Well, were there questions in your mind that you—were you curious about the campus or UW Tacoma's life?

Belinda Louie 2:38

I always loved UW. I have been with UW for so long. And, but I really, I applied to the branch campuses. I applied to Bothell and Tacoma. So I know that it is just Bothell and Tacoma. I applied and it seems that I can do the job according to the job description ... in, you know, as a faculty, as a founding faculty. So I applied.

Joan Hua 3:17

And what about before you decided to become a professor in education? You were a school teacher?

Belinda Louie 3:25

I was a school teacher at Seattle School District, and I was a school teacher at L.A. Unified School District. And then, when I was a school teacher, and then somehow my managers and the district administration always thought that I did a good job, you know. Just like as a first year teacher, I was invited to give a district in service professional development, you know, it was like, "Wow." I was inexperienced, young, and nobody. And then my friend said, "Well, maybe you should present at the state [level]." So I submitted, and they took it. And then my husband said, "Why don't you just submit it to the national organization?" I did. And they took it. So I said, "Maybe, if I'm really good at teaching, instead of not just teaching at public schools, maybe I should train teachers." I always enjoy teaching, but I have not thought about working at the university. Even after, you know, I always enjoy working in public schools. I really like it. And then, but, kind of things ... you know, when I got my PhD, my mentor, Dr. Sam Sebesta, really, really thought that I should think about becoming a faculty. So it's not that I would like to teach at the university at the beginning. No. I enjoy teaching. I just want to be a teacher. Very simple.

Joan Hua 5:09

But why did you decide to pursue a PhD degree?

Belinda Louie 5:13

Because I had nothing to do. My husband actually said that I spent too much time doing nothing at home. And he said that, "You should apply to get a PhD. You will be happier if you get a PhD." And I argued. And people always said, "Try! They may not admit you." I applied. They accepted me. So I will start taking classes.

Joan Hua 5:48

And you said that about your job at UW Tacoma.

Belinda Louie 5:51

It's always like that, too. Yes, I was like, I enjoy teaching, and then I don't have a lot of ... I just want to be a teacher, I don't have big dreams. I didn't have big dreams at that time. I just enjoyed life at that time.

Joan Hua 5:55

Can you tell me more about—what was the thing you said you submitted to the state and national?

Belinda Louie 6:16

Well, because that is a national organization, just like, we have a lot of professional organizations, academic organizations, and all those proposals are competitive, right? I was kind of naive, you know. People said, "Submit it. They may take you." And I submitted. They took me. And then, so if it was good enough to the state, maybe I should try to the national because I got nothing to lose. What was there for me to lose? Nothing. So I submitted. At that time, I didn't know how difficult or how easy it was for them to accept a presentation. They accepted my proposal. So I went to present at the national conference.

Joan Hua 6:59

What was the presentation about?

Belinda Louie 7:01

The presentation. Actually, I was still teaching the material at this time. It's that when I first went to the classroom, we always need to teach vocabulary to children. And I just think about the vocabulary instruction. It's the first instructional unit of any reading lesson. But the textbooks and vocabulary instruction guidelines are just, to me, it's not very effective. Children do not learn. They did not learn, and they are bored. So I said, "I would like to develop another instructional sequence to make it systematic, engaging, and then I will stay with that sequence." The routine has to be stable so that children will learn, but it's new vocabulary items every single time, every single week. So I designed a series and the sequence, and it was very successful. I'm still teaching my teachers now, using the material I prepared at that time—the same pictures to give

it, you know, some kind of a historical context. So when I developed that as a first-year teacher, and it was my first problem when I taught my first reading lesson.

Joan Hua 8:19

And was that reading first grade, or?

Belinda Louie 8:22

No. At that time, when I got my first job, the Seattle School District hired me, and then I was a young teacher. I taught K-5. So when I went into the classroom, I said, "Wow." It was just, like, there was no way that children could learn like that. And I cried, and I cried. It didn't work. The children didn't pay attention. So I decided that if I could only conquer one problem that year: vocabulary instruction. And I did.

Joan Hua 8:54

Great. So it wasn't students who were learning English as a second language.

Belinda Louie 8:59

Yeah. At that time, it was those children I got that experienced the most trouble. So I just focused my energy on them.

Joan Hua 9:11

The students who were English learners.

Belinda Louie 9:13

Yeah.

Joan Hua 9:14

So you said you heard about—your professor gave you the application for UW Tacoma, and you decided to just give it a try and apply. And what happened next?

Belinda Louie 9:31

What happened is I went on with my life because I had a job. Actually it was my first year of being a faculty member at Seattle Pacific University, and it was a very busy year, and they were very good to me, and they were so happy that I was there. And they put me, they took picture, put it in the school's promotion magazine. They treated me really well. And they treated me very well. Actually, there was no position when I applied, and—

Joan Hua 10:09

At Seattle Pacific.

Belinda Louie 10:10

Yeah. They asked me whether I would like to teach some classes for them. And I said, "No." I said, "If I would like to teach some classes, UW always wanted me to teach some classes." I

said, "If you don't have a tenure-track, assistant professor, I'm not coming to teach for you." And the dean was kind of taken, I still remember. And he said, "No problem. It's just a budget issue. I would talk to my administration, and we will create a position for you." And they did. And then, so, I felt very bad when I had to say goodbye to them, and they said, "Anything wrong with SPU?" I said, "No, not really. But I really would like to go back to UW." I really love UW, so I really would like to go back to UW. SPU is a very good campus, very strong school for teacher training. But UW is UW. And all the resources, and I love the library and the books. And it's very difficult for a regional university to compare with the collection of UW libraries, and for that, I left.

Joan Hua 11:29

And so that was when you learned that you were offered the position?

Belinda Louie 11:34

No, I went for a job interview. And I didn't know that—I mean, I didn't pay a lot of attention. I was very naive, you know. I applied for jobs, I got jobs. So I was very naive. And then, so, the day before the interview, and a friend called me, saying that, "Do you know that 600 something people applied?" I said, "No, I didn't know. I didn't pay attention." And they said they're interviewing 18 finalists for six positions on both campuses. And I cried. I got so nervous. I said, "Ah, wow." And then they interviewed six at one time. So they divided 18 into three groups. So it's six individuals who were interviewed on two campuses for two or three days. So I was very ... it got me very nervous the day before the interview,

Joan Hua 12:29

You cried because you were so nervous?

Belinda Louie 12:30

Yeah, because I thought it was like whatever. And then my friend congratulated me. I said, "I didn't get the job yet." I had not got the job yet. It got me very nervous.

Joan Hua 12:44

How did the interview go? It lasted multiple days?

Belinda Louie 12:49

Yeah. It's almost like a circus. They had a campus and moved six of us. You have to listen to other people's presentations. It's very odd, huh? Those are your competitors. And then I went to Bothell, and I thought that presentation went well. But somehow I didn't like Bothell. And I asked myself a question. Basically the Bothell campus was only 10 minutes from my home. So if they hired me, it was very easy for me, because I got two young children. But I did not see myself writing on that campus. I didn't see myself ... I spent two hours a day writing, so I could not imagine myself writing in that area. And I said, "If I could not write, then why should I work there?" So after interviewing Bothell and Tacoma, I communicated with the search committee that I withdrew my candidacy from Bothell. And they said, "Are you really sure? Because you cut your chance for half." And I said, "I realize what I'm doing, but I just cannot see myself working

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in Bothell." And they also told me that, "You live there." I said, "I realize that." So I withdrew my candidacy from Bothell. I said, if I go back to UW, then I will go to work in Tacoma. Because I always, after the first day I came, I really liked the people who interviewed me. And Tacoma was smelly, just a very crazy place, scary, but I kind of said I'd like to be there, and I'd like to build the city. And I would like to be part of the mission to build UW Tacoma. And I think I can do my scholarship. I can write in Tacoma. That's how I said I only would like, if they offered me a job, it's Tacoma only. I'm not going to be considered. I withdrew my candidacy. Now I look back, it was naive and bold. But it's very true to myself at the same time.

Joan Hua 15:04

But you had a position at SPU.

Belinda Louie 15:06

I had a job. A very good one.

Joan Hua 15:11

So what was it about the Bothell campus that made you think you couldn't write there?

Belinda Louie 15:16

It's an industrial complex. It's an industrial building at that time. And I, actually, to me, even looking out of the window, it was the parking lot. It's so not inspiring that I just could not do it. I asked myself, "Do you want to sit there and write?" I said, "No." That's the end of the story. So that's that.

Joan Hua 15:46

What about UW Tacoma? When you visited, what did you see?

Belinda Louie 15:51

Because it's a place with character. It's very eclectic. And then ... it's just very eclectic. It has character. It is not very charming because it's very smelly. And then the downtown was very scary and rundown. But that is me since I was young. I dedicated my life to serve the underserved. So I taught at L.A. Unified downtown. Oh, it is quite a story. I think that it's for those people that I work hard, and I don't see myself—what is the purpose for me to teach at Bothell? I really don't see it. I don't see myself there.

Joan Hua 16:41

So when you came to interview in Tacoma, you got a sense of the city. The campus didn't exist at the time, right?

Belinda Louie 16:48

Well, nothing existed. It was just like in a rental building. It's a very smelly rental building because we faced the Tideflats. It's very smelly because of the paper industry, but I thought it was ... And I actually remember Mike Honey, and he talked about if I'm willing to join the

faculty—I said, "You haven't offered me the job yet"—then he would like me to be part of his multicultural center. And I said, "That is very cool." And then I'm very happy with the building and with the group that interviewed me.

Joan Hua 17:31

Because there was a different group at Bothell versus Tacoma?

Belinda Louie 17:33

Two different faculties. That's why we were interviewed at Bothell with the Bothell faculty. No, we went to Seattle and were interviewed by the Seattle faculty. And we went to Bothell to be interviewed by the Bothell faculty. And then we came to Tacoma to be interviewed by Tacoma faculty because I belong to School of Education. So it's kind of like I have to be interviewed by School of Education, right? But that was Seattle, because at that time there was no Education [program in Tacoma or Bothell]. That's why we are the founding faculty. There was nothing. And then, the non-education folks, they don't know whether we are good or bad. So School of Education, kind of like, it was a necessary stop to evaluate our expertise, our scholarship. So, Seattle first.

Joan Hua 17:43

And that was spread out over two or three days. What were the other candidates like? Do you remember?

Belinda Louie 18:32

Well, I remember one of them. One of the people became a Congresswoman. And one of them actually became my colleague, Marcy Stein. We were in the same group. So two of us were hired. And then the rest I don't remember. It's too long ago.

Joan Hua 18:53

That's fair. So you talked about how you were feeling this sense of mission, that you are serving the underserved. You compared this teaching position to your position at L.A. Unified School District. When you first started, how did you feel when you're facing the students when you first started teaching here?

Belinda Louie 19:16

I always enjoy teaching. I don't remember how early, but I always enjoy teaching. I went to high school in Hong Kong. I went to school in Hong Kong. So when I was in Hong Kong, I thought my geography teacher was very lousy. He was so lousy. It was just unbearable to me. So I talked to my friends, and I negotiated with him: if he didn't mind, he gave me the materials. I will teach his course to my friends, so that he and us the students will suffer less. And he agreed, so I taught the geography lesson for my class for that semester. I really enjoy it. I really, really like it. So even when I came here as a foreign student ... because we have to have teaching majors, right? So I finished A level in Hong Kong. So I came here. UW gave me two years [worth of credits], whatever. So suddenly, I found myself as a senior in history. It was very scary: one

professor and three students. So because UW gave me so many credits, and then I studied a little bit more, and then I'll get a degree. So I actually have a degree in English. So it's an English degree. I studied literature. I love English literature. And then I also have a degree in history. And then my mother said I need a job. "Okay. I will go to School of Education." So in the School of Education, of course, I had a teaching certificate, but at that time, they got a new bilingual education program. So, I applied. So I was double-major in education: K-8 certification and bilingual, bicultural education. So I was kind of certified to teach. So that's how I always liked, I always love teaching.

Joan Hua 21:23

What was something that was lousy about your geography teacher and you did differently?

Belinda Louie 21:28

Because he didn't make the materials engaging enough for us to learn. I think he just dumped the material on us and didn't even think about how to engage us. I enjoy teaching is, I enjoy engaging the students to learn something that is new, and I really enjoy pulling out the significant elements. So it's, there are things more important than others, and you should not, you know, approach the material as though they're all the same. They're not all the same. So, part of the training is whether you can identify the important elements, right? I really enjoy, I still enjoy it. I really, really like it.

Joan Hua 22:17

And so when you first started teaching at UW Tacoma, can you tell me about how it was like when you had your first class?

Belinda Louie 22:25

Well, UW Tacoma at that time was very, well, it was very small, like, three or four people in a class. It was very odd. But because the Liberal Studies—that is the IAS—they were here already. And then, they would like me to teach two classes for them. They just said, "Oh, you can be associate faculty." I said, "Okay." You know, what is not okay? I was so young, right? So, it's that they want me to teach Asian American literature. It's okay. I studied those things. And they want me to teach children/young adult literature, which is actually my specialty. You know, I have an endowed collection. That endowed collection here is under my name.

So, and then the children/young adult literature class, I remember, more than 40 people showed up. There was not even a chair for the instructor! And then, so each class, the students made sure that I got a chair. And then I remember at the end of the quarter, you know, all the paper grades, and then I found out that some of them did not register. "Did you just stay in class?" They said, "Well, it was so confusing." I said, "Okay, we'll add you at the end of the quarter." So I said, "You stay with me." It was very odd. It was very chaotic. I had fun. They had fun. And they are big, I mean, bigger classes than my Education classes.

Joan Hua 24:04

And that was juniors and seniors?

Belinda Louie 24:08

My Education classes? No, no, no. Those are master and master only. Even now it's master only in Education. And for the Liberal Studies classes—

Joan Hua 24:18

Like the Asian American literature class?

Belinda Louie 24:20

I don't remember what level. They just—oh, it must be third and fourth level because at that time, the campus, we only offered upper division classes. It is fine with me.

Joan Hua 24:31

So when you started teaching Education classes, they were master's.

Belinda Louie 24:34

It's always master's students.

Joan Hua 24:36

And then you also taught some classes in Liberal Studies and those are—

Belinda Louie 24:40

Upper division classes. It's fine with me.

Joan Hua 24:45

And so both the school districts you taught at in L.A. and Seattle and Tacoma, they're urban—

Belinda Louie 24:56

Urban. I love urban schools.

Joan Hua 25:00

What do you love about them?

Belinda Louie 25:02

I think I always appreciate the struggle of the families because I know how much my family sacrificed to give me my education. So I have a very strong sense I would like to help students who are just like me to be successful. It was a very strong sense in me even now. I will never forget that level of students in inner city. I will never, so I have not.

Joan Hua 25:41

Are there students that you mentored in those beginning years at UW Tacoma? Do you know much about their family backgrounds?

Belinda Louie 25:50

Well, no, the students, those are teachers. The teachers are middle class, white ladies. So, no. And then I talk about how to train them to reach out to students in public schools. My teachers, most of them were Caucasian, white, you know, Caucasian ladies, middle class. I don't remember many of them because I have taught so many, you know. I have taught for a long time. How about I routinely, I mean, this is, I expect myself not to remember them. Because, you know, if I go to Costco now, Safeway, YMCA, you know, they call me. I said, "Lordy ..." They said, "Oh, I'm sure you don't remember me." "Yeah, you're right." And then, they said, "I've taken your classes." And I said, "Great. What school are you teaching in now?" It's always like that. And they said, "You have never changed." I cannot say that you have changed. I don't recognize you. If you remained the same, I still don't recognize you.

Joan Hua 26:58

But there were, so some of them maybe would have been older than you?

Belinda Louie 27:02

How about that the whole class was older than me? The whole class. The whole class. Sometimes it is difficult because we got a lot of military, retired military from JBLM [Joint Base Lewis–McChord], right? And they would try to intimidate me. And well, I'm short, right? [Shorter] than 90 percent of the class. And those big guys tried to stand in front of me and ... I remember I told them, "Guess what, you know. You have accomplished a lot in life. But at this time you decided to become a teacher, that I happen to have expertise in this area to support you. If you don't mind, why don't you go back to your seat so I can teach. Go!" It worked. I am not very intimidated. I don't really care. Trying to intimidate me is not a good way. I'm not intimidated.

Joan Hua 27:39

But that did happen in classroom?

Belinda Louie 28:10

All the time. All the time. And sometimes it was so bad, you know. A long time ago, it was so bad: a Native American—he was not full blood because his mother was full German, okay—but he told the whole class that reading problems in the United States happened, children could not read because of working mothers like me. I should go back to where I come from. I should always call him the "first people." And then someone told me that he was very violent, and he threw a chair at a professor in another college. So if he threw a chair at me, I would be crushed. But I could not stop him from coming to class because of the Faculty Code; it did not protect me. So I had to post police the whole quarter.

Joan Hua 29:01

Oh, you postponed the—

Belinda Louie 29:02

No, I had a police in my class. I had post security the whole time. The whole quarter.

Joan Hua 29:12

Did other faculty in the program have similar experiences?

Belinda Louie 29:19

They are not minority. I'm a minority. I'm young woman, a minority, and English is not my first language. How about that? Three strikes against me? I know that.

Joan Hua 29:34

And the height doesn't help.

Belinda Louie 29:36

The height doesn't help. Yeah. Because I went to do research in the high school, and they ran over me because I was shorter than the high school students. So I tried to be more careful. It is okay. That was 20 some years ago, right? I'm still standing, so, it's okay.

Joan Hua 29:56

Yeah. So I'm also curious about conversations among the faculty. So the Education program had just started when you were founding faculty. Can you talk about discussions around developing the program? And how did you integrate with the Liberal Studies program?

Belinda Louie 30:22

Basically, I was so young. I just graduated. I didn't know what to do. I really didn't know what to do. I didn't know how the curriculum was put together. I remember they put us in a room for two days. And then there are six of us, right? So the Bothell folks, they are older and more experienced. I remember I sat there for two days eating cookies. I didn't know what they're talking about. I didn't know how to put the curriculum together. And at the end, they got a set of classes. I said, "Okay."

Joan Hua 30:55

So that that was after you got hired. And you had these two-day workshops where you put together a curriculum.

Belinda Louie 31:02

But yeah, I had no clue.

Joan Hua 31:05

And how did you feel? Did you feel at home or lost?

Belinda Louie 31:10

I felt very strange, but everything was strange at that time. And very strange. And people told me that, "They hired you. There are a lot of more experienced and skillful people they didn't hire. They hired you." I said, "Obviously." And then I felt very odd [that] people talked to me that way. So I asked Liberal Studies, you know, a full professor. He was there when I came for the job interview. And I said, "Why did you hire me?" You know, obviously, it was not, I mean, how can I be the most experienced? I just graduated. Of course I published. I had publication. I had three strong publications even when I graduated. I know my professor made sure that I had solo author publications when I graduated. He's a very smart mentor. And he said that they hired me because of my "sunny disposition." I said, "What is that?" They said that, "You know, you skipped upstairs and downstairs at your interview. Nobody did that but you." I said, "Oh, Lordy. I would have to be more mindful." And they said that it will take that type of personality to build a program, to build a campus, to have that type of disposition to build a campus because it is hard work. And he is right. My sunny disposition. That's why they hired me. That's what they told me. My disposition. But nowadays you cannot hire faculty because of disposition. But it's not that I'm bad in record. I have a strong record as a young, as a new PhD. How about that?

Joan Hua 33:03

They were looking for a specific type of personality.

Belinda Louie 33:07

But you should not be. Nobody hires professors for personalities. Nobody should. And I don't know why he told me that way. But I talked to a couple of them. And they agree. I think they talked about me skipping up and down the stairs, and they decided to hire me. They became my good friends and colleagues.

Joan Hua 33:33

So, when the Education program started, it was ... is it still part of the School of Education? No, now it's not part of the School [College] of Education at UW [Seattle].

Belinda Louie 33:43

Well, we become our own school. But at that time, our relationship with Seattle is very ambivalent. We are not part of them. But both me and Marcy, we graduated from Seattle. We went back to Miller Hall like nothing. It's very easy for us. But we know that they did not try to control us; they did not try to support us either. They just let us be, right? Because, you know, if we got issues, Marcy and I both went back to Seattle for support because we, our network was up there. So it's almost like we could do anything that we wanted. But this is very fun. That's why I think. Whenever we got courage to get to do that, we could do that. I find it very, very fun.

Joan Hua 34:37

So it wasn't like—I thought the accreditation was through UW?

Belinda Louie 34:43

Nope, we're separated. They make sure they would not include us to shame them. I said "Really? Okay."

Joan Hua 34:52

Can I just—I can kind of hear the scarf. I think it's just like any fabric rubbing on it.

Belinda Louie 34:59

Okay.

Joan Hua 35:00

So yeah, I think that's fine. I was also curious about UW Tacoma compared to Seattle Pacific because you made a big decision to choose UW Tacoma.

Belinda Louie 35:17

Because Seattle Pacific is a very strong teacher training school. It's very strong. To me, that teacher certification program actually is better than Seattle, because Seattle is too theoretical.

Joan Hua 35:28

UW Seattle?

Belinda Louie 35:30

UW Seattle is too theoretical, but SPU then and now hit a very good balance. And they have very strong faculty. They have national faculty, so it's not so simple. So it's almost like if you want to train teachers, SPU is a more prestigious place. But somehow I would like to do research. And then the only thing I'm very disappointed at SPU is that their library is not the same as UW. But no regional school's library is as strong as [UW] Seattle, right? As UW. And then I always go back to Seattle because I'm alumni, so I have full access to the library. And then to me it's very problematic. Because then I need books. I need books. I need library, and I want to do research. My mentor had a very strong hand on me: "Make sure that you do publish." So I published three top-level articles solo before I graduated, right at my graduation. And then the first year at SPU I got to five national presentations. At that time, it was just like, five different topics. So ... and then, SPU thought I was very strange, but I was very fortunate that they did not have any money for travel—any money, anything—but I happen to have a very good husband. He paid for everything. He is a medical doctor. He paid for everything. And then I said, "Well, if it goes like that," at SPU I, by and by I sensed that I became a pretty odd duck at SPU.

Joan Hua 37:35

You mean because other faculty weren't—

Belinda Louie 37:37

Well because whenever a national whatever presentation got accepted or one of my articles got accepted, it was all-campus announcement. My name appeared too many times. Even I realized that. I needed the ceiling to be higher so I would not be so noticeable for my lowly, humble accomplishments. I could not hit the ceiling in my year one. They are a very strong school. But I just, I sensed that I maybe needed a bigger place. And I really wanted to go back to UW if I can. So that's why, and Dr. Kasuners [phonetic] really wanted me to apply. So I said, okay. That's how I decided to apply. And I got the job. And I was very fortunate to get the job. I still believe that. Every time I come to campus, I am still very thankful that I have this job after so many years. And never, never regret, and I'm always, always thankful.

Joan Hua 38:58

So how was UW Tacoma supporting national research and presentations like that at the time when you started?

Belinda Louie 39:06

Well, because they didn't support anything. It was nothing. I didn't even have a table, a chair, computer. There was nothing. But so, I do whatever I like, right? So, I did my research, and I submitted my proposals. I mean, I accessed the library. So what is there to support or not to support? I think naturally I'm a very independent person, and I take a lot of initiative. So when I need support, I will look for support. So instead of, there's no mentor, nothing. So I just, whenever I have a need, I will look for someone that will support me. Even now. There's no path nothing—nothing, nothing, nothing.

Joan Hua 40:02

Although you do have access to the UW Libraries.

Belinda Louie 40:05

Yes, which is very important to me. UW Libraries are very important to me. Very important.

Joan Hua 40:15

And so, I kind of asked about this, but I'm wondering about the role that faculty played in defining the direction of the university. You said you felt like you were very young at the time and didn't necessarily take an active role in designing the curriculum. How did that go as time went on?

Belinda Louie 40:40

Well, after a couple years and things ... well, UW Seattle gave us three majors, you know. So: foundation, multicultural ed, and then integrated curriculum. So it was a given; it's mandated. So we just built that. And I had ... well, I did my job. But after a couple of years, then I learned more, I learned more. And I learned more as a person. And then, I'm always very entrepreneurial. I'm always like that. I said, for us to be ... I remember I thought about, I would like to define myself. So I would like my program to define ourselves so that nobody can define us. And I said, "What

is a winning strategy to make sure that we have students?" We cannot copy Seattle because it's the sizes, right? There are three of us. You know, it's just, you have to define yourself in a way that is reasonable, a way that makes you strong. So I think Marcy and I, at that time, we said that we will go for the high need areas. Because we both cover high need. She is a special ed professor, and I am very strong in ELL. After 30 years, those are still the two strong, high need areas in the nation in this state. And then we say we build high because we are both committed to serve the underserved. So we will build signature programs. So for us it's we build special ed; we build ELL program. And then we, by and by, after 10 years, we build secondary science, even though it was still very difficult because we cannot find teachers who were, you know, science people who would like to become secondary teachers. But I think that strategy—to build signature programs and then to serve the high need populations—actually makes us strong and become who we are today because at one point, Marcy and I decided that: nobody to talk to, just the two of us, right? Well, we could do whatever you like; no approval, whatever. Who will approve you? You build your own path.

Joan Hua 43:18

So EL is English Language—

Belinda Louie 43:21

As language learners. And special ed. So those are two forever high need populations, right?

Joan Hua 43:32

And you knew that ... did you do any study of school districts in Tacoma, or how did you decide that?

Belinda Louie 43:42

Well the state declared that.

Joan Hua 43:43

Oh, okay.

Belinda Louie 43:44

The state declared the four high needs. And then we were two of them already. It doesn't need to be very creative. They declared, and we decided to build signature programs. Well, because we also build on our strengths, too, right? You serve us really well, because we build our strength. And so we work very well. We always work very well with the school district. We always have very good relationship. And also with that, School of Education does special ed and ELL, and we have a lot of national grants. So I think since—I don't remember how much grant money, maybe close to six million dollars now of grants. I still carry grant. I am carrying a three million-dollar grant now. So, because we build signature, we build high need, we support the school districts. We build the teachers to serve the students. And then our work enables us—you know, not just me, but Marcy—to get national grants, competitive grants. So, it is a very

coherent and very integrated approach. So our scholarship is our teaching. Our teaching also verifies our scholarship. It's a very good move.

Joan Hua 45:17

And so you were working closely with Marcy. What were your other colleagues like? You worked with supporting staff also?

Belinda Louie 45:27

Well at that time, but now we have more, I worked very, very closely with the staff. I think I have a stronger relationship with the staff than my faculty members, because they are always there, because, you know, I come to work—now I cut back to five days a week; before, six days a week—I'm always there. So and then the staff members are my, they are my friends. And when I'm in trouble, those people will help me, and they support me, and they make sure that I get things done. You know, my staff is not just the Education staff. I have IT, I have librarians, I have security—security has to keep an eye on me because of my hours. I came so early that they really had to know that I was around. Not as difficult now but in Security Building, when I was in downtown, when I got there so early, it was very dangerous because it's urban campus. I requested the bathroom door to be locked. So I carry a key, so I cannot be in bathroom; people walk in. We, because we have all kinds of people, all kinds of offices in that building. So it's not safe. So it's very odd. So, security supported me a lot in the late night, early morning. And IT supported me a lot, library supported me a lot, copy centers supported me a lot. I could not function without them or Teaching Writing Center [Teaching and Learning Center] supported me a lot. A lot, a lot more than I can appreciate.

Joan Hua 47:15

So you were talking about the campus, or being in the Perkins Building at first?

Belinda Louie 47:20

And Security Building. My program is in the Security Building, too. There are two buildings. Perkins and Security. We are in Security Building.

Joan Hua 47:28

Okay.

Belinda Louie 47:29

One floor. Two.

Joan Hua 47:31

Was it also very hot?

Belinda Louie 47:32

I found it very interesting. I'm just like, everything is kind of strange. But we do everything. We recruit. We look at architectural plan for the campus. We do everything and, just, you're in

everything. And I was naive. I didn't, I mean, just like, "That is what that is. We signed up to do it. It's fun." Sometimes I was just like, "I don't know what I'm doing." But most of the time, I don't know what I'm doing anyway. You serve on all the committees.

Joan Hua 48:11

And you were commuting from Seattle?

Belinda Louie 48:13

Well, when I first worked here, we lived in Lake Forest Park—50 miles. And then I missed daycare too many times. I said, "I just cannot do that." It's, what, two dollars per child per minute? It is expensive. And then, so, we decided to move to Tacoma. We still live in Tacoma, the same house that we purchased at that time.

Joan Hua 48:46

So you moved your family here.

Belinda Louie 48:48

Yeah. And then it's easier for my husband to find a job. It's more difficult for me to find a job. So I moved; he found another job. You know, he can be a doctor. He was a doctor at Franciscan at that time. So fine, he can find a job. So, we moved here, and then, we're very involved in the Tacoma communities. We really have this, we really support the UW Tacoma mission that we build. Look at downtown. It was changed just because of UW Tacoma. And then, so I work very closely with the Asian community in Tacoma. Very close.

Joan Hua 49:35

In what capacity?

Belinda Louie 49:36

I, you know, the Asian Pacific Cultural Center here serves 47 constituents. I'm the vice president of the board.

Joan Hua 49:46

And that's, is that part of UW Tacoma? No?

Belinda Louie 49:48

No, but I really am part of the community. I believe, we really believe in that. We really believe in that.

Joan Hua 49:57

And I am interested in hearing more about the relationship between the university and the local community. Can you talk more about your involvement?

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Belinda Louie 50:08

Well, because a lot of people approached me because I'm Chinese, and then they need minority. They approached me. The History Museum wants me to serve, the Art Museum wants me to serve. The Sinfonietta wants me to serve. So, any organization in need of a minority, they want me to serve.

Joan Hua 50:27

On the board.

Belinda Louie 50:28

On the board, and then also, because on the board, because we are—not me—my husband is very generous. So he donates his money substantially. And then at the end, we decided that we will serve with the Asia Pacific Cultural Center. Because those people just want a minority. I said, "No." They really want one? I sent my daughter. They refused at the beginning. I said, "When it's time to donate, we will write a check." They said, "Okay." Because what member you have to donate substantially. That's what they are. They are very honest with me. So they need my skin color and they need my pocketbook.

Joan Hua 51:24

So is your daughter involved?

Belinda Louie 51:27

Well, yes. I think both of my children are very, they believe in the mission. You know? My husband and I also established a church 20 years ago. So my husband is the pastor.

Joan Hua 51:44

Oh.

Belinda Louie 51:44

Yeah, still is the pastor. In Tacoma. So we really serve the community. So my daughter now, she's a lawyer. She's in Seattle, but she still ... she serves on the [Tacoma] Art Museum because I sent her there, and she served on the [Washington State] History Museum because I sent her there. So she came back to go to their meetings, and they don't mind to have her because she is a lawyer and she's our family and she's Asian woman that's kind of similar to me.

Joan Hua 52:29

So at the Asian Pacific American Center—

Belinda Louie 52:32

Cultural Center.

Joan Hua 52:33

—Cultural Center, what kind of work were you doing?

Belinda Louie 52:36

Well, I'm very heavily involved, just like every ... I ... that's a big center; you can Google it. So I'm involved in the fund raising, their building. They also have the signature event. It is the New Year event in February. Ten thousand people. I chaired the event. It was as difficult as anything could be. And I support them whenever they wanted me. Just like, I'm the Vice President of the board. So if there's any function, anything. The only thing I do not do for them—I'm very compliant—I do not lobby for them because UW doesn't want the faculty members to do that. So, whenever they go to Olympia, I am not going. So it's very clear that I do not lobby because it is UW. Yeah, I won't do that. And I'm very clear at the beginning. So I'm still very clear. But I reach out to different private communities, community groups. A lot of cultural activities and a lot of things.

Joan Hua 54:02

And so that's your personal and your family's involvement with some community groups. How would you characterize the relationship between University of Washington Tacoma, the institution, and the wider community here?

Belinda Louie 54:16

Well, but you know that they want me, it's not just they want me as the person. Me as a person was not very significant, but they want me. But who am I? I am a faculty of UW Tacoma. They always know that. And I serve on behalf of the, just like, I serve on whatever. They want someone Chinese, the campus will send me. Just like, any Chinese, this means me; it's like, "Okay." So, just like, I serve on behalf of the campus. They always introduce me as a faculty member of UW Tacoma. So I, it's always me, so it is, I do ... my life is very integrated. So I go out as a UW Tacoma faculty member, I never deviate. So why Art Museum wants me, it is just because I'm a UW faculty. Art Museum. Yes. And Children's Museum because of my children and young adult literature, right? You know, you think about that. Because they've come, at the beginning, even Asia Pacific Cultural Center, they came to know me because I am a UW Tacoma faculty. That's why they know me.

Joan Hua 55:34

And that's something meaningful and in the city.

Belinda Louie 55:38

Yes. And then because UW Tacoma is very supportive of the local communities, and I support the UW Tacoma mission. And I really believe that university here is to increase access and to build a community. I strongly support that. And since the beginning and even now, especially now.

Joan Hua 56:02

Let's see, I am trying to think if we should skip ahead. So you talked about being sought out because of your identity as a Chinese American woman, a member of a minority group. Were there affinity groups or other kinds of organizations on campus that you were part of, among faculty and staff?

Belinda Louie 56:43

Well, whatever that is expected of a faculty, just like at the beginning, I serve as the ... promotion and tenure, and I serve as the campus liaison for human subject review for nine years; after nine years I said it was too much. You know, at the beginning, you do everything. And then now I don't need to do it. Just like a very different life, right? At the beginning you're everything. You are in all the communities. I mean, there are only three of us on program. And then sometimes the chair cannot do that because, you know, they want faculty members, they don't want the director, right? And then only two of us. So we divide and conquer, and then you serve on half. That's a lot.

Joan Hua 57:28

And what about in hiring or recruiting? Were there conversations about representation?

Belinda Louie 57:36

Well, I have in recruitment; it's in my blood. I'm so shameless. I could go to my children's parent teacher conference and recruited the teacher to be our student. It's in my blood. I'm shameless in recruitment. I drew up a plan, and I went to visit school districts, and I talked to the gatekeepers. I recruited. That is my second nature.

Joan Hua 58:01

Was there, but I think, there were news stories from the '90s when there was conscious efforts in increasing representation of certain minority groups and in the students—

Belinda Louie 58:15

We always try to recruit minority, but we try to recruit people, people who need students. You know, after the first cohort, you lost half of your students; you cannot survive. So, yes, we always want to recruit minority. How about that we do not reject you if you are not minority, right? We need students ... and I am still in recruiting. I worked with, at that time, the chancellor told me to work with the School of Business so they would teach me how to design a plan for recruitment. So I worked with them—free consultation, right? So I developed a plan. So I looked at the school district. I went out. I talked to the gatekeepers. And I talked about: how could UW Tacoma serve you? What kind of classes do you need? How do you want teachers to be trained? So I went to 13 school districts, and that was the peak before the internet days, right? Because now it's like, you know. So at that time I drew a circle, about 45 minutes driving distance, visited all the schools, all the school districts. And then to understand them, to see how we can serve them. And then I remember the most intensive time I didn't do anything

except teaching performance. I did it for four intensive months. And then at the end, I recruited half of the program.

Joan Hua 59:56

That's very impressive.

Belinda Louie 59:58

To me too. Because I think I drafted the plan, and the plan was very good. The plan was approved. But there were only so few of us. What, four, three people? Then I realized that it was a good plan. But the plan would be dead if there was no implementation, and then who would implement and then it was very obvious to me I was the person who had to implement the plan that I designed, and the faculty, the two others, approved. So, I cried because I realized that it would take very hard work, very hard.

I worked with the school districts. I asked them to circulate the flier internally. I went to three schools per school district. I went there to meet with the teachers. And then I took my calendar. And then whoever was interested, they would immediately make an appointment to see me when I came back to campus. I immediately sent a letter out on my behalf as a reminder for those people to come in to see me, and they came in to see me. I completed the application form. it was very hard. But it worked.

Joan Hua 1:01:26

Can you also talk about—were you involved in tri-campus faculty governance?

Belinda Louie 1:01:33

Have to, because they sent me there. I remember at one point Vicky Carwein sent me and Charles Amber [phonetic], that we are part of the tri-campus team. It's just like, there are only so few of you.

Joan Hua 1:01:49

So you were really ...

Belinda Louie 1:01:50

Well you look at Education. There were two of us, you know. Just like Marcy cannot do everything. I cannot, I mean, you have to. There's no way that we are not involved in tri-campus, and for me, is easy because I actually went to school at UW Seattle. It was not difficult for me.

Joan Hua 1:02:14

How do you see, how do you think the relationship between UW Tacoma and Seattle and Bothell has evolved?

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Belinda Louie 1:02:24

Well, it's collaborative at times. At this time it's very collaborative because we are strong. But at the beginning, Seattle faculty always would like us to go away, you know, because we take money, you know, because the budget is tight and then certain percentage would go to UW Bothell and Tacoma. Many people, you know, people did not like that. But at this time, and then there was tension, of course. But at this time, we are not going away. They know that. We know that. So we try not to compete, but there's no need to compete. So if it is at all possible, collaborate.

Joan Hua 1:03:10

So you talked about how you think serving the students has been very important. And you said it's even more important now. What did you mean by that?

Belinda Louie 1:03:27

Well, because if you look at the special ed population, it's rising. And the ELL population is the fastest growing student population. Just like my first major grant, five years with the Tacoma school district, within my grant—the grant year—there was a 57 percent spike of ELL population just in Tacoma. And then just like see how fast it was growing. And then the ELL students were not immigrants. They were, 80 percent of the first to third grade ELL students, they were born in the United States. They are children of immigrants. Okay. They were not immigrants; they were children of immigrants. And then for the Hispanic population and even the third generations still need language support. So you see how big the surface area is. And then you just look at—well, not Tacoma; Tacoma is Tacoma—but you look at the national at the 2019, okay, 2019, the condition of education. 33.8 million of teachers in the United States, right? Okay. And then only two percent, only two percent, were trained to teach ELL learners. Like, wow, you are just like heading toward a train wreck, you know? And then Tacoma, 1,800 teachers, only 5.2 with the grant, up to 5.5 percent teachers were trained.

Joan Hua 1:05:07

So you really see your work as you're serving also the school districts students because you're training education master's students.

Belinda Louie 1:05:18

I teach teachers, actually I teach the in-service and pre-service teacher. I teach the teachers to serve the population. And I take it very seriously in a funny way. I'm kind of like, more relaxed. My students think I'm very relaxed, but I'm very intense at the same time, so I really know what I'm doing. I really am very focused on what I do. And I know the mission. I know my personal mission; I actually know it. And I am very dedicated to the mission that I set out for myself, is to serve the underserved.

Joan Hua 1:05:58

That's inspiring. So as we are reaching the end of the interview, what were some of the most rewarding aspects about working at UW Tacoma?

Belinda Louie 1:06:09

I think I really sincerely appreciate the fact that UW Tacoma accepts me.

Joan Hua 1:06:16

As in giving you the job in the first place?

Belinda Louie 1:06:19

Giving me the job in the first place. And all that I tried—I tried a lot of things—whatever I've done, I've always found many people who support me. And they give me space. They give me room to be myself. They allow me to do things that normally in an establish campus, people like me, they will not allow. But they allow me to do whatever I care. They really allow me, and I feel very comfortable, very free. And I know that I will never hit the ceiling because UW system is huge. But I always feel very supported. I always do even now. You know that I'm going into robotics, right? Robots. Because the teachers are so slow. I mean, I cannot train teachers fast enough. So I'm training robots.

Joan Hua 1:07:23

And you have support for that?

Belinda Louie 1:07:25

My dean said, "Sure." I think they, nobody, people do not discourage me. I know that they think that I'm very spunky. But they also allow—I mean, just like, I tried to teach online when there was no need, so I failed so miserably. And they supported me. They supported me. And this time, that online is the reality. I knew that at that time if I would try it, before it was required of me, so if I fail, people will still support me, celebrate my failure, because at least I tried. And then all the way to the point that a few years ago I collaborated with Stanford to teach a MOOC. I felt, I mean, what is there not to do? I mean, nobody here stopped me. If I want to apply for multiple grants, nobody is here to say no. But sometimes people do not support me, but not that they appreciate me, not that all people appreciate me either. Right? So I try to focus on that I have a clear path for so many things. I do not need applause to move forward. I just do it, and then I sincerely appreciate.

Joan Hua 1:08:55

So looking at the evolution of the campus over time, have there been missed opportunities on campus?

Belinda Louie 1:09:06

I think they're always missed opportunities because we can only do so much. You know, just like you can keep on running a marathon, you know, running a marathon—at the middle, you know that you should keep on running, but you're so tired, you need to walk a little bit, and sometimes you will need to sit a little bit. And so, and then when you sit there, of course, you have missed opportunities, but you cannot run at that speed, top speed, throughout the duration

of the marathon. Well, we are not that type of runners. How about that? You know, if you're an Olympic runner, you can run it all the time. I'm not an Olympic runner. I need to slow down at times. And then also on campus, I find a community and a family. When I was young, I got young children, and my colleagues watched my children for me when I was in meetings. We watched each other's children. We babysat for each other in our offices so the other person could go to a meeting. So it was very ... it's not that everybody was kind to me. But the overwhelming kindness stays with me and makes me who I am today. I mean, I come to campus every day to work, and I always, when I come to campus, I'm just like, I'm so glad that I work here. And that I will miss the campus. There will be a time that I have to retire and I will miss it. I will miss the time that I spent on campus. I come back to campus. I don't feel the tension. I actually find it very relaxing when I come to campus. But I always have a very strange policy. My door never opened. You know I never opened the door for you, and, you know, so that I set my boundary: when I go back into my office to work and write, you cannot disturb me, so that you can text me, you can email me, you can do a lot of things. But you cannot walk in on me. I really have a very strong boundary. So when I write, I write. You can call me and I'll say, "I'll come out in 15 minutes or in five," but you cannot just, no. And I have a door never open policy. My students know that. They can text me or email me and say, "I need to talk to you now." I'd say, "Give me 10 minutes. I'll come out." But you cannot just walk in on me. I don't allow it. So give me a very strong sense of order for me to handle different tasks that are part of my job here.

Joan Hua 1:11:49

And, and thinking back on why you said you decided to take the job at UW Tacoma now—you said because you wanted to be part of UW, and it's an urban campus; you had a good feeling about Tacoma. And Tacoma has transformed a lot over the last 30 years. How do you view those decisions now? And has the campus stayed true to what you hoped it would become?

Belinda Louie 1:12:13

Look at downtown. Downtown was very different. I could tell, I mean, I really know each building before the building has the current shape. I really know the buildings. And then I am just so, so thankful that when all those wonderful things are happening, and I'm in the middle of it. I'm just forever thankful that it is part of my personal history. And I'm just so thankful I can be a part of it. And then I also, I am an active contributor, and that because of my work here and then my support of the community, 10 years—I mean, 10 years ago?—10 years ago, my husband and I received an award of outstanding contributor by the Asian community. And a couple years ago, we got a Lifetime Achievement Award and we told them, "Number one, we're not retiring. Number two, we're not dead." You didn't give Lifetime Achievement to people who are still actively working. They said ... but they gave us a Lifetime Achievement Award for our contribution to the community and the Asian American community. Invest in Washington, not just Tacoma. So, so that's what that is.

Joan Hua 1:13:41

You feel thankful and kind of proud of being part of—

Belinda Louie 1:13:45

I'm always very proud of UW Tacoma. I am always thankful to be a part of the UW system, and I'm very thankful. You know that the library, my husband's, our 25th wedding anniversary, and that was his gift to me, is to establish an endowment for my children/young adult literature, and that is my signature. And per endowment requirement, the books would never leave Tacoma. I make sure that Seattle would not. And then because of that, at that time, Charles Lord was the director. You know that our family picture was on the wall. That was, that was our family picture.

Joan Hua 1:13:48

Oh okay, I and I'm pretty new here. So I hadn't ...

Belinda Louie 1:14:03

Yes, my family picture was there. Sometimes it's very odd to me. Very odd.

Joan Hua 1:14:38

So my last question is, what do you see as the future direction of the campus?

Belinda Louie 1:14:43

I think the campus still stays, you know, true. It's not that, nothing is so straightforward and so defined, but I think it's just that we stumble forward in the right direction at all times. We forever serve the community. It's not that we can see what is the ... there's no best path. Sometimes you just try it, and then you will develop the path as you move forward. But I think UW Tacoma forever is true to this community that we come to serve, and come to embrace. I mean, the community also embraces UW Tacoma campus. And I'm just so, so proud of what we are doing. I mean, we're not perfect, but we are forever precious. So I sincerely appreciate that I'm a part of the development.

Joan Hua 1:15:34

All right.

Belinda Louie 1:15:34

Okay. Thank you.