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# Hamernik, Robert Oral History Interview

I. Dale Dunmire

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FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS  
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



**Robert E. Hamernik**  
**Associate Dean and Professor of Civil Engineering**

June 13, 2003

By I. Dale Dunmire

Attached are the responses from Professor Hamernik to the five major themes discussed during the oral interview by Professor I. Dale Dunmire.

- |      |                               |   |
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| I.   | Impressions of UOP & Stockton | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Upon arrival in 1962</li><li>2. Contributions to community</li><li>3. Hopes for future</li></ol>   |
| II.  | My responsibilities           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Teaching, area of expertise</li><li>2. Administrative</li><li>3. Off campus, ELC, ABET, etc.</li></ol>   |
| III. | Changes in Engr. Programs     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Enrollment question, student diversity</li><li>2. ABET Accreditation</li><li>3. Co-Op program</li><li>4. Addition of new majors</li><li>5. Addition of computer science</li><li>6. Impact of computers</li><li>7. Physical plant needs and additions</li></ol> |
| IV.  | Effect of growth              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Fragmentation by department</li><li>2. Eleven month teaching contracts</li><li>3. Fragmentation by student programs</li><li>4. Separation by buildings</li><li>5. Cultural changes in student body</li></ol>   |
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[Session 2 ... June 13, 2003]

Robert E. Hamernik (REH) and Jim Morgali were interviewed together by I. Dale Dunmire (IDD). Only the responses of REH are included.

IDD: What circumstances brought you to UOP, and what in particular attracted you to UOP and the position here.

REH: After I graduated from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, I began working for the Oklahoma State Highway Department. The office was located in the state capitol building and I was placed in the bridge design section. At the same time I taught some basic mathematics classes in the evening program at Oklahoma City University. I was exploring both professions. When I received an offer from one of my professors, who had moved from Oklahoma to the University of South Carolina, to teach in their freshman engineering program, I found that teaching and working with people was more interesting than designing bridges. Before I could accept, the position lost its funding. Deciding that I wanted to try teaching, I wrote universities seeking a full time position. UOP invited me to visit the campus, offered me a position, and I remained at UOP through the 1997-98 academic year.

IDD: What were your first impressions of the city and people of Stockton?

REH: My wife and I moved from Oklahoma City in August of 1962 in preparation for the fall term. My first impressions of Stockton were less than exciting because as we entered the city for the south on El Dorado street we saw many blighted areas. The downtown area redevelopment was not yet started. The University campus, in comparison, was a very beautiful place. Gordon "Vern" Harrison, who was the Chair of the Civil Engineering Department, Jim Morgali, CE faculty member, and Dr. Samuel Meyer, who was the Academic Vice President, all made me feel very welcome. The "Pacific Family" feeling was conveyed by everyone I met.

IDD: During what years did you teach and were they all in the same department?

REH: My first semester teaching was in the fall of 1962. In fact, all my years at Pacific were in the School of Engineering however my responsibilities changed throughout the years. I was appointed Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering, progressed through the academic ranks to Full Professor, served as Civil Engineering Department Chair for 15 years, appointed Assistant Dean in 1982, and in 1989 appointed Associate Dean. I served as Associate Dean under two deans, and I was the Interim Dean during the 1990-91 academic year. I formally retired on August 31, 1998 but continued to teach on course for two semesters after my retirement.

IDD: What were your first impressions of UOP based on campus buildings, faculty, students and administration?

REH: Everything was very positive. On my interview visit, the campus was well groomed and beautiful. The ivy covered buildings were very impressive, and the faculty members friendly and encouraging. I do not recall meeting any student at that time and the main administrator I met was Dr. Samuel Meyer, the Academic Vice President. I was impressed and looked forward to joining

the faculty and the challenges of teaching.

IDD: Were there any particular person or persons who were especially helpful in your orientation to UOP?

REH: When I came to campus in September of 1962, I was joined by the new Dean of the School of Engineering, Henderson McGee. At that time in the University's history, new faculty received a minimal orientation and training because the University had no formal orientation. We were given a "Faculty Handbook" which covered University policies and most of what we learned was by experience. Jim and Vern were very helpful to me and are two people that I respect very highly. I had the professional qualifications they were looking for in a new faculty member and during the interview process our personalities matched and we sensed a mutual bond.

IDD: Your impressions of the program and curriculum changes that you have witnessed over the years?

REH: That question could take some time to answer because of some very significant changes during our tenures. I will address three areas to discuss.

First, enrollment. In the early 60's the School's enrollment was very small varying between fifty-five and sixty-five students. Because of this, the University considered dropping the engineering program in the late sixties. With the support of Ted Baun, then Chairman of the Board of Regents and an engineering graduate, the University agreed to give the School additional financial support with the expectation of increasing the student population and having greater stability in enrollment numbers. A new dean was selected. Dean Robert L. Heyborne from Utah State University strongly supported introducing a new educational concept to the undergraduate engineering programs. The Cooperative Education Component, new to the west coast, required one additional year of "on the job experience" to the bachelor's degree. Consequently, this resulted in a five year undergraduate degree program which created some controversy because of the tuition costs at UOP. However, Dean Heyborne was very successful in promoting this new program, and it proved to be very attractive to prospective students. After a few years, Dean Heyborne and President McCaffrey set an enrollment goal of 250 engineering students.

Equally important, perhaps even more so, was the need to get the School of Engineering to attain accreditation for its programs. Previous attempts failed. The national accreditation organization, then called the Engineering Council of Professional Development (ECPD) visited the campus in the 1970-71 academic year and after the two days of review and inspection of the curriculum, evaluation of students work, faculty qualifications etc., the team of examiners approved the School's programs in civil and electrical engineering. Although we are not supposed to boast, I am very proud to say the accreditation of these two programs and three new engineering majors programs introduced in later years have consistently been reaccredited for the maximum period of time. A proud record for future faculty to uphold.

Lastly, I want to comment on the physical plant for the School. Jim and I shared an office in Baun Hall which was the only engineering building except for a small fluids laboratory located in a metal building adjacent to Baun Hall. It is interesting to note that Baun Hall was the original boiler house for the campus, then converted to the library, and in the late 50's used for the start of the engineering programs. The desks were positioned so that we were facing each other and this was often awkward when working with students and their problems, but we managed. In the 80's

Khoury Hall was built to house the mechanical engineering program and later Anderson renovated for electrical and computer labs. Both of these buildings contained more faculty office spaces. When I began there were three faculty in civil engineering, two in electrical, the dean and his secretary. Growth in the teaching faculty and the supporting staff through the years has been quite remarkable.

IDD: What courses or programs did you help develop and what activities did you especially enjoy participating in?

REH: I was responsible for the development and teaching of all courses in my undergraduate and graduate major studies, i.e., structural design and analysis. This included structures of all kinds: buildings, bridges and other specialized structural components using different materials and construction techniques. I taught all the classes related to these areas along with other general engineering type courses which were taken by all engineering majors. Throughout the years it was certainly challenging to keep abreast with the many changes introduced, especially those using the computer. Many of the old topics were discarded, some topics I took in graduate school were now included in the undergraduate program and pre-requisites were constantly a concern. I enjoyed participating in the civil engineering students club activities, the American Society of Civil Engineers. They included both social and professional functions. Other school events included freshman orientation, freshman picnics at the Dean's house, and the annual senior picnic at Mickey Grove.

IDD: Was there anything about UOP's program that gave it uniqueness?

REH: Although most universities and colleges boast about faculty-student relationships and emphasis on teaching, I believe that during my tenure at UOP these qualities were indeed the primary emphasis. We had small classes so one got to know each student on a personal level. My wife and I would invite students over for barbeque or hamburgers and today we still exchange Christmas cards with several former students. As for the program itself, the co-op component clearly made UOP unique throughout the west coast. We promoted the fact that it was the only co-op program west of the Mississippi River. Under Dean Heyborne's leadership UOP became known for this program and he received several national awards and honors for his work.

IDD: Okay, let's talk about people. Who were the individuals at UOP you admired most and why?

REH: I previously mentioned Jim and Vern. I want to include Dean Heyborne, whose knowledge of academia, and his leadership skills in working with the administration, the faculty, and community business leaders were most influential in the success of the School of Engineering from his appointment in 1969 through his retirement in 1989. He introduced a concept at engineering graduation exercises where each student is recognized for his/her achievements as they crossed the stage. This program is still in use today. He encouraged our students to enter in statewide scholarship competitions and UOP students were consistently winners in these competitions. Likewise, he encouraged and gave financial support to the faculty to attend local and national professional meetings, seminars etc. One other individual, Helm Haas, who is no longer at the University but was very instrumental in starting the co-op program. I enjoyed my

relations with all the engineering faculty.

I also have to include Ted Baun in this group. When Ted was on campus everyone expected him to “drop by engineering” and visit the dean and/or some faculty members. He always asked about our equipment needs and was most generous. Without Ted’s support, the School of Engineering and my life could have been different. I appreciated Ted for his untiring interest in the School, and I enjoyed his sense of humor across the bridge table.

IDD: During your tenures at UOP, what changes did you note in the students, the faculty, the administration? Comment on the sense of community that prevailed on campus.

REH: Regarding students and faculty, one word would sum it up. GROWTH! Our student enrollment approached 700 students in the early 80’s which severely strained the faculties time and the laboratories facilities. Throughout the years the diversity of the students is also noteworthy. Students from all parts of the world studied at UOP, and the increase in the number of women who enroll in engineering is significant. During the decade of the 60’s one female graduated in engineering whereas today a significant percent of the student body is female. The Society of Women Engineers (SWE) is one of the most active student clubs. Several women currently hold faculty positions in the School.

As for the administration I was surprised at the different philosophies and approaches with each of the four presidents I served under. As the School grew in numbers and the programs attained accreditation, with the students taking the UOP name outside the Stockton area in co-op assignments and by winning state wide awards and recognition, I believe the administration developed a greater appreciation for the School of Engineering. Students were introduced to the community through the co-op program and employers, some UOP graduates, were hiring our graduates. Recognition spread beyond the local community into all parts of California and beyond. Students were placed throughout the United States and other countries such as Germany and Japan. Other academic programs on campus now attempt to make community involvement a part of their program.

IDD: Let’s talk about the administration and faculty relations.

REH: As Dean Heyborne often said, “I work for the president.” The dean’s office door was always open and it was the primary way I learned of most administrations thoughts, attitudes and actions. The dean held faculty meetings and informed the faculty and staff. Typically the administration gave us the support requested after we showed evidence of success. It is interesting to note one difference the campus experienced. Under President McCaffery many new buildings were constructed on campus. In contrast, President Atchley’s philosophy was that we had plenty of buildings but they were not used to the best efficiency. The pendulum has apparently swung back under President DeRosa. We again see new construction, building renovations and the removal of the old Quonset buildings. My only face-to-face experience with the upper administration came in the year I served as Interim Dean. I do not recall any major problem during that year.

IDD: Over the years, do you feel that the students, the faculty and the administration became more united or more fragmented?

REH: I believe there is more fragmentation among the engineering faculty now than in my early years on campus. This is at least partly due to the fact that we grew so much. Initially, the School of Engineering was housed in one building, Baun Hall, but with the addition of Khoury and Anderson Halls, the faculty became separated. Also with each additional engineering major being concerned about their specific accreditation requirements, plus faculty demands changing with more emphasis on paper presentations, undergraduate research projects and other similar professional expectations, I believe fragmentation will continue. Many of these changes are natural and have to be expected with younger faculty. Across campus I suspect faculty relationships have changed little.

As for students, in my case I think the changes were very real. I'll call it the age factor. Student rapport is greatest with the younger faculty. I earlier noted that in the 60's I often invited students to my home. The students and faculty celebrated St. Pat's day together with a picnic and baseball game and part of the School's tradition was that the freshman and transfer students had to kiss the "rock" located in front of Baun Hall. Some of these activities have been lost, others occur less frequently. I believe this reflects the additional responsibilities placed on the faculty. I know that I had more administrative responsibility in my role as Associate Dean.

IDD: Continuing along these lines, what changes did you observe between the faculty and the Board of Regents.

REH: When I first came to UOP, I believe there was very little exchange between the two groups. Other than the School's association with Ted Baun, I had no contact with the Board. As time passed, I believe the faculty has gained more input to the Board through the committee process. An example of this would be the faculty input in developing a new Faculty Handbook. Also, I believe that faculty now has representation at Board meetings, and that lines of communication exist through personal contacts at social and business functions.

IDD: How did the difference between faculty, deans and administration affect your department's growth?

REH: I can only think of a couple of isolated cases. They were a result of the co-op program which required an 11 month program, and consequently, the need for faculty appointments during the summer period. Through the years this created a conflict between a couple of faculty members and the dean. Two faculty members resigned because they wanted the summers free to consult. In general Dean Heyborne, who served the University for 20 years, had the respect of the faculty. He had certain expectations, such as mandatory attendance at the graduation exercise, maintaining office hours, etc. In retrospect, considering the administration's demands to increase enrollment, develop a unique academic program and to get UOP's School of Engineering into the public eye, Dean Heyborne proved to be the right man for the dean's role.

IDD: How would you describe campus activities, consider both students and faculty.

REH: Things have unquestionably changed. Probably growth in the School of Engineering student population and student attitudes influences these activities. When I first came to campus there were two student groups representing civil engineering (ASCE) and electrical engineering (IEEE). A uniting factor was "The Rock" which, until the construction of Khoury Hall, was close

to the entrance of Baun Hall. It was placed there by a group of engineering students in 1960 or 1961 and remains a talking point among parents and campus visitors. It was painted on a daily basis often carrying the theme of a local or national event. Every freshman and transfer student was required to kiss the rock at a location closest to the ground. The tradition was broken when one student, a basketball player who graduated and went on to become a very successful industrial leader, fought off his fellow students and managed not to kiss the rock. Through the years the students had close relationships. I mentioned St. Pat's day activities (St. Pat is historically the patron saint of engineers) when the faculty and students picnicked, played baseball, the civil and electrical engineering majors had a tug-of-war and then everyone ate lunch together. In addition some Saturday morning flag football games (with some injuries including a faculty member separating his shoulder), and other social functions such as the "faculty roast" also were uniting features. Some of these activities also included our families. My wife and I developed close relationships with graduates, exchanging notes when children were born or other important family changes took place, and we even visited each other when the opportunity presented itself. I do not mean to imply that these relationships do not exist on campus now, but my personal relationship with the students the last few years clearly was different. Again I say that age does make a difference.

IDD: What issues were you involved in that stand out as being important to growth and the development of UOP as a whole?

REH: Much of what I could say has already been said. The beginning of the co-op program, the accreditation of the civil and other engineering programs, my service as chairman of the department address the academic side, and my roles as Assistant and Associate Dean gave me the opportunity to carry the Pacific message to other California campuses. For many years I was the School's representative at the Engineering Liaison Committee (ELC) bi-annual meetings. This group consisted of representatives from all private schools, both the UC and CSU systems, and from Community Colleges throughout the state and their work ensured that any transfer student was assured that he/she would graduate in accordance with the schools published program. During the last ten years of my career I served as an ABET evaluator (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) which gave me the opportunity to inspect and evaluate undergraduate engineering programs from the east coast to Alaska, and from the gulf coast to the Canadian border. I can honestly say that the engineering programs at UOP were on par with the large state research universities and the smaller private schools across this nation. I always came back to the Pacific campus proud of the strong degree program at our institution.

IDD: Let's talk today. How are you currently involved with campus activities?

REH: After retirement I taught one course for several semesters, and my association with the School of Engineering has been to assist Dean Ravi Jain whenever called upon. Typically these have been at meetings with graduates. I also served a two year term as the secretary for the Emeriti Society on campus. Currently I have no formal ties to either the School or the University. I still do, however, enjoy walking on the beautiful campus, visiting with faculty and staff, and enjoy a morning coffee with a community group, the Weber Point Coffee Club, which meets on campus daily.

IDD: What are your impressions of campus today. What changes have you noticed since you retired?

REH: Based on my informal visits to campus, the greatest changes I see are in the teaching faculty and staff. I see many new faces on campus. Of course moving the computer science program into engineering has, by itself, created changes. A second major change is in the physical plant. The old Quonset buildings are gone and construction projects have appeared on both sides of the Calaveras River. A new student union building is a goal and I believe engineering has plans to construct a new building somewhere near the existing engineering complex. I cannot address policy changes because I have not kept up with campus politics.

IDD: What contributions has the University made to the Stockton community.

REH: A standing issue since I first arrived on campus in 1962 has been the assumption by the community that the University stands aloof and is separate from town. I think that this feeling has broken down with the years. For instance the Community Involvement Program (CIP) has provided many community people the opportunity to attend UOP at minimal cost. In the 80's I served with former Stockton Mayor Dean DeCarli as the co-chair for one segment of President McCaffery's outreach endeavor called "The Stockton Project." The committee involved several area businessmen and community leaders. I also served on a Transportation Study for the county, on a fire protection program, and represented the School on the opening episode of the TV show California Morning. Each of these gave me the opportunity to integrate the University with the greater Stockton area. Starting in 1964 I began consulting with several local engineering firms but primarily with a local structural engineer. This consulting practice continued beyond my retirement. Outside the Stockton area I participated in some panel discussions on structural engineering and represented the School of Engineering at the annual Sacramento Engineer's Week celebrations.

The SWE society annually hosts the Expanding Your Horizon day which attracts several hundred of young ladies to campus. The day long event has the young students doing many scientific experiments. The MESA program encourages and helps minority students reach their academic goals. The University also offers the community non-academic opportunities such as free admission to athletic events for children under twelve years of age.

IDD: In closing, what do you see as being special about UOP and what hopes do you have for future institutional developments.

REH: As I mentioned before I believe the University's greatest asset is the emphasis on teaching. I hope this quality never gets lost. I understand the administration's desire for greater emphasis being put on research and publications, but without a graduate program in each engineering major I am not sure the faculty will continue to devote their energies to student demands, assist in recruiting, contribute at parent orientations and perform other similar duties as in past years. Regardless of what changes occur, I hope that UOP retains as its number one asset, teaching.

Lastly, I want to express my thanks to the Emeriti Society for considering me to be one of the faculty members interviewed for their History Project, and thank you Dale for your time today.