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# Fletcher, David Oral History Interview

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FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS  
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



**Fletcher, David (1973-1996)**  
**Professor of Engineering**

April 10, 2012

By Judith Chambers

Transcription by Kelly Gerhold, University of the Pacific, Department of Special Collections, Library

## UOP ARCHIVES FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS

DAVID FLETCHER

April 10, 2012

Judith Chambers: This is an interview with Dr. David Fletcher. The date is April 10, 2012, and my name is Judith Chambers, and I'm conducting the interview on behalf of the oral history project for the emeriti faculty. So maybe we can just begin, Dave, by having you tell me a little bit about your arrival at the university and how you happened to come here, and what it was like when you first came to Pacific.

David Fletcher: I finished most of my coursework and passed my qualifying examination in 1971, and at that time, I had applied for teaching jobs around the country, but there were very few available. So I took a job at the US Bureau of Mines, but I always had the intention of teaching at a university. About 18 months after I started working there, I got a call from my thesis adviser, Leonard Herrmann, who told me about a job at Pacific that was advertised, and he said he thought I would be a good fit. So I applied and came out for an interview early in 1973, and then was hired for the fall of 1973.

Chambers: And at that time, you were strictly faculty?

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: Can you remember back to those times about any early impressions you had of Stockton and the people here?

Fletcher: Now, I grew up in the Bay Area.

Chambers: Where in the Bay Area?

Fletcher: Daly City, just south of San Francisco. So Stockton was a place we went through on the way to the mountains or on the way somewhere else, but not a destination for us, in any case. So when my wife and I talked about the job, we said, well, it's a good opportunity to get into teaching, and maybe we'll be there a few years, but move on to someplace else perhaps. When we got here, the town was about what we expected. Well, it was different than it is now, but in some ways not that much different. You know, you didn't want to be in the south part of town then, and you certainly don't want to be there now. We rented for a year, and then we bought a house over by Weberstown area.

Chambers: Where all the pharmacy faculty were.

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: Which they called Pill Hill.

Fletcher: Yes: We lived by Sherwood Manor Park for a long time, and then moved away after about 14 years. Of course as it turned out, I really liked the university, and we liked the community. We liked the fact that we were somewhat centrally located in California. It wasn't that far to go up in the mountains, it wasn't that far to go to the ocean. Stockton has some advantages. Neither one of us really worry about the hot weather. I think many people from the Bay Area would not like living out here because it's so hot.

Chambers: I should have probably asked you this in the beginning, but did you go to school on the West Coast as well?

Fletcher: Yes, I went to UC Davis. I was there from 1963 to 1971.

Chambers: So when you first came to Pacific, do you remember what some of your early impressions were of your colleagues and the campus? Let's see, who would have been dean then?

Fletcher: Bob Heyborne was the dean; he had taken the job in 1969. The Department of Civil Engineering had four faculty members in it at that point. Vern Harrison, who was the chair of the department then, Bob Hamernik and Jim Morgali, both of whom had been there since the early sixties, and Dave Clack, who was a student at Pacific and then became a faculty member later on. I replaced a fellow named Russ Greenlaw, who took a job over at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. I really liked the faculty a lot. They are all very personable people. I really liked the dean. Over the years, we were really close friends, even though there were some instances where we had some disagreements. But by and large, we got along extremely well, and in my opinion he's by far the best dean the School of Engineering's ever had. The thing I really liked about the faculty was that they were really all about teaching. And I'd had some experience teaching at Davis, and I'd had some extremely good teachers during my time there, so that was what I wanted to focus on. One of the reasons that I chose Pacific rather than going to the University of Colorado, where I had an opportunity was because the emphasis was on teaching.

Chambers: Was Bob Heyborne the most important mentor you had when you first came here, or were there others who kind of helped you?

Fletcher: Oh boy. I think that probably Bob Hamernik was the person that I spoke with as much as anyone.

Chambers: Was he department chair?

Fletcher: No. Vern Harrison was chair.

Chambers: Oh, okay.

Fletcher: We had an office situation that was very interesting. Now they've all been divided up, but at the time that I came here, we had offices in Baun Hall. In the mezzanine level above the second floor, there were four offices. Two of them were separated by a partition that went about halfway up. Bob Hamernik was on one side, I was on the other, and Jim Morgali had his office in the adjacent room. Back then, there was a toilet on the west side up there. So everything that I said, or everything that Bob said, the other of us heard, and we heard most of what Jim said unless he had the door closed. So when you had students there, you had to be careful, because there's somebody working immediately next to you, and there's no wall separating you. So it was kind of an interesting time, particularly if you had some difficult conversations with a student.

Chambers: Well, yes, or something interesting to talk about.

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: Well, let's talk a little bit about the curriculum and the programs, because you have probably seen a ton of changes during the years you've been at Pacific, and I know that you were involved in mentor seminar and general education and that kind of stuff. Maybe you could describe – some alums who will read this interest probably don't remember things like mentor seminar, though everybody remembers general education.

Fletcher: Well, I guess the first thing that I got involved in, right after I came in 1973, was the curriculum in the School of Engineering. We had just been accredited for the first time in 1971. The mathematics requirement did not include differential equations, and I was convinced that that was an important part of engineering education, particularly if we wanted to have students who would be successful in graduate programs. So after talking with the faculty, and talking with people in the math department, Roland DiFranco in particular, we managed to get differential equations included. We added differential equations so we would have what I thought was a more complete mathematics requirement, particularly since I had some ideas about the kind of things I wanted to do at the advanced undergraduate level. So that was really the first curriculum development thing that I did. The following spring, I started doing an advanced structural analysis course that sort of evolved, over a long period of time, into two courses. We still had a sort of an advanced structures class, but we also had a finite element class, which is a specialized area of structural analysis. When I was at Davis, finite elements was nominally a graduate-level course, but it over the years has become more common at the undergraduate level.

The next involvement that I had was in developing the general education program that replaced the I&I. At the time I came here, I guess they were just in the throes of doing it, and I didn't get involved in I and I directly, although I did a couple of things like the Ascent of Man, where I partnered with a faculty member from another department. As I remember it, Larry Spreer, Roland diFranco, I and a couple of other people were working on the Category 3 areas – math, natural sciences and physical sciences – and trying to come up with required courses. I thought that it was a relatively successful effort. It's one of those things, politically, very difficult at any institution, because you have a lot of people, particularly in the arts and humanities, that don't think that science courses are particularly useful, I think partly because their students are quite resistant to taking them, but also because they have other cognates that they'd rather have their students take. This was particularly true of the Conservatory.

Chambers: Didn't we get nationally recognized on several occasions for the mentor seminar and the innovation of that?

Fletcher: That was the next go-round.

Chambers: Oh, okay.

Fletcher: That was back in the early '90s, or late '80s, we worked on mentor seminar. I was part of that with basically the same group. Mike Minch, from Chemistry was part of it, as was Carl Wulfman from Physics. The committee was developing the whole notion of mentor seminars: what the topics would be and who would participate. Eventually that did get national attention. The previous GE program was more of a distribution requirement that was a good start, but it wasn't the kind of thing we eventually ended up with.

Chambers: And then that evolved into the Pacific Seminars now?

Fletcher: Right.

Chambers: And did you, before you retired, did you ever teach the Pacific Seminars?

Fletcher: I taught right at the beginning of mentor seminar. I was the only participating faculty member from the School of Engineering for quite a while. I taught all three versions, mentor 1, 2, and 3, at one time or another. I never did teach Pacific Seminar. Mentor Seminar got converted to Pacific Seminar about the time I was retiring, and I wasn't really involved in teaching mentor seminars anymore. What had happened was that the School of

Engineering decided, and it wouldn't have been my choice, that they would hire what was essentially an adjunct faculty member to fulfill the Mentor Seminar teaching requirements. And I really felt like if the engineering faculty wanted the students to take Mentor Seminar seriously and that engineering faculty were really interested in general education, that they ought to be directly involved.

Chambers: Yes, that wouldn't be the way to make that statement.

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: Well, as you think back on your teaching, I know it was really hard to get people out of the arts and sciences to teach in mentor seminar. Very difficult, so the ones like you who did it were really courageous. And it was a huge add-on. As you look back, were there other academic innovations that you can think of in the curriculum that either happened in the School of Engineering, or that you were involved in at the university level? I mean, this is pretty good stuff, but are we leaving anything out?

Fletcher: Well, other than adding new departments and programs in the School of Engineering, which I had some involvement in, general education was really where I put most of my outside curricular effort, because I really believed in it. I thought that many engineers don't get enough general education. For example, I managed to wind my way through Davis without really taking many of the courses that you would normally expect to be included in general education. For example, I didn't have to take any literature classes. I ended up getting primate anatomy counted as a humanities class by the time I graduated. You know, this kind of thing that you did. So it was at least my own feeling that I had missed something that I thought engineering students ought to have.

Chambers: Well that's great. It's a kind of a nice segue into this section on administration. I know that at some point in your career, you became an associate dean, right?

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: Did you want to talk a little bit about how that happened and when, and what your responsibilities were?

Fletcher: Well I guess the first real administrative responsibility I had was in 1988, when I became the department chair. Vern Harrison had been the department chair for quite a long time, then Bob Hamernik was the chair for 13 or 14 years, and I was the department chair for 18 years. When I got ready to think about retiring, my wife and I had decided that 60 would be a good time, and we made it contingent on how TIAA-CREF was performing. When I was earning more at TIAA-CREF than I was earning at the university, well then it was time to retire. So I did that, but before that...

Chambers: Did you really retire when you were 60?

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: Oh, I didn't realize you were that young.

Fletcher: Yes. When Ravi Jain came, he didn't really have an associate dean, and at one point, he asked me to be the associate dean. I was the associate dean for about a year, about the time I was getting ready to retire. When I announced my retirement, I said, "Well, you better look for another department chair and an associate dean, because I want to have an opportunity to be here for a year while the other person's learning the job." I did that in

case they have anything they wanted to ask me. However, I felt it would be best if I finished out that year just teaching.

Chambers: And so who replaced you? I forget.

Fletcher: Louise Stark.

Chambers: Oh, okay. When you were an administrator, did your style sort of evolve, or did you have an administrative philosophy?

Fletcher: Well, as a department chair, at least in the School of Engineering, it was different than in other parts of the university. The College of the Pacific has always had the tradition of having chairs for a certain period of time. They're appointed by the dean, but it often turns out to be sort of an election by the faculty. The School of Engineering has always been that the department chairs are appointed by the dean. So it was the case that when Bob Hamernik decided that he was going to retire, then I was appointed department chair. I hadn't really had much in the way of administrative experience, except that which came from being part of the university governance structure. I always felt like our mission in the School of Engineering was to make sure we had practice-ready graduates and the emphasis ought to be on teaching and making sure that the faculty was paying attention to teaching. It was part of a problem that came about because we didn't really have a good research history in the School of Engineering, simply because the support wasn't there to provide matching funds. If you applied for a grant, in many cases you had to have some kind of match to be successful. I did get a few grants for small pieces of equipment, but not very much that would have made a research program go. Therefore, I decided that that must be what the university was looking for, and that's what I tried to focus on.

As far as teaching went, I did all of the evaluative things that are necessary. I visited classes and talked to the other faculty members about their teaching, and tried to be supportive and helpful if they had questions, but I never thought of myself as the boss, if you want to think of it that way. It was more, okay, I'll take the administrative responsibility, do the paperwork and all that sort of stuff, and you guys pay attention to your teaching and do a good job, you'll get good evaluations. At that time, I had a different kind of responsibility, because I had to work with the other department chairs to negotiate the budget allocation. We had, at least for a number of years, a school-wide budget in the School of Engineering, and every year there would be a meeting of the department chairs with the dean. If one department needed something big that year, the other departments would say, "Fine, we'll take a little less this year." Later we switched over to individual department budgets, which created kind of a problem because a department didn't really have enough to do those big things. It was hard, because of the way the budgeting was set up, to take something from somebody else. So I didn't really have the opportunity to increase resources the way I would have liked to when I was the department chair. And then, when I became the associate dean, then I was the one that was trying to figure out how to allocate resources, and that's something that...

Chambers: Another challenge.

Fletcher: Yes. Well, it's a difficult problem, because you don't really have enough for everybody anyway, and so then, when somebody really wants to do something significant, there's a lot of sacrifice that has to be made by the other departments. So it was probably just as well that I was only doing it for that short time, because I've never really thought of myself as being cut out to be a dean, for example. Resource allocation is a good place to start if you want to be a dean. I think somebody like Louise who succeeded me, would make a good dean.

Chambers: One of the questions here, (I'm not even really sure how I'd answer it), says, "When you got involved with these administrative activities, what were the things you did that you thought were the least productive? And what were some of the things you found to be the most enjoyable?"

Fletcher: Well, one of the things that I found really unproductive was writing annual reports. Because they typically weren't read, the recommendations typically aren't acted on simply because you're recommending things for which the resources aren't available, and the dean is often just collecting them because somebody higher up the food chain wants the information. That was one of the problems that we faced. The other thing that I really thought was unproductive was the whole switchover that WASC had, and ABET as well, to focusing on assessment. As it turns out, – at least my own experience, and I was a WASC evaluator for a long time – what usually ends up happening is that the faculty and administration spend a whole lot of time collecting a whole lot of data that they can't really act on in the way that they claim they can in the assessment programs that they put forward. Ultimately it all becomes – it sounds a little cynical, I guess – it all becomes window dressing. Because in the final analysis, the proof of the learning pudding, if you will, is how successful the students are in the long run. Looking at alumni performance is not a big enough component of the process. Accreditation mostly focuses on things that evaluators think are measurable.

Chambers: Oh yes. And they're all over it now.

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: They still are.

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: Well in that same vein, when you were doing administration, were there some things that you found really enjoyable?

Fletcher: Well I think working with the faculty to try to help them be successful was fun. We always had a great atmosphere in our department, except for a period of time where we had one person that we finally got rid of, but other than that, we always had a great relationship where we could sit down at the beginning of the year and say, okay, well, what things do you want to teach? Once we did that, I said, "Here are some things that need to get taught, and now who's going to do it?" We just shared those courses. One of the things I tried to do as department chair was, when there was some course leftover that really needed to be taught, but everybody else had a load, I would just take it. I was supposed to have a release time for being department chair. In the entire time I was department chair, I may have had that twice in 18 years.

Chambers: Oh wow. That's interesting. And I will get into this in much greater detail, but this will be a fun question for you. Do you think that the committee structure of the university produces effective governance?

Fletcher: Well, back at the time that I was heavily involved in the committee structure, which was from the late seventies to the mid-eighties, the real problem was that we had many committees and a lot of faculty involvement, but I thought the effectiveness was limited.

Chambers: Why do you think that was the case?

Fletcher: Part of the problem, from my perspective, was that the structure that we had was too diffuse. One of the things I tried to do when I was chair of Academic Council was to get the members of the council to be



representative on most of the major committees from the council, so that you had direct feedback all the time rather than annual reports at the end of the year. Another was that schools and colleges be, how should I say, more careful about selecting people that they thought could be effective, rather than just, okay, it's your turn, so you need to do this. The other problem I guess, that I came to realize after a long period of time, was that we probably overvalued committee service in the overall evaluation process, because there's no good way of determining whether somebody has done a good job or not. All of the information that you get about university service when evaluations come up is anecdotal. To often the comments were, "they came all the time", and "they participated." But when you start talking about whether somebody was effective, and actually did something that mattered in the long-run, there's almost no way of determining that. So from that perspective, I think the committee structure could have been more effective than it was. But as diffuse as that was, it got worse in later years, because it became so undervalued that nobody really wanted to be involved in it.

Chambers: You probably know more about this than I. I'm told that there's a lot more emphasis on research and publishing now than when you and I were in the thick of everything here, and that that, in a lot of ways, has diminished the participation in a variety of activities. Faculty now are focused on achieving tenure, which is more difficult. It's not only affecting the committee structure, but things like Student Advising. Do you have a view about that at all?

Fletcher: Absolutely. I think the value of the university service, whether it's advising, whether it's college visitations, whether it's serving on committees, all of that has gotten to the point where it is de facto meaningless in the evaluation process. There is a nominal percentage of the evaluation that hinges on service, but I will wager that if you went back and looked at all of the evaluations that have taken place, and all of the ones who were denied, there wasn't a single one that was ever denied because of lack of service, and there wasn't a single one which was sort of pushed over into the good column by exemplary service. So it ultimately becomes okay to put in whatever time they can squeeze out of you, and that's good enough. In addition, that was the model that Phil Gilbertson, I think, really wanted, because what it does is blunt the faculty voice and takes them away from focusing on governance as being part of the equation. I mean, if you're an administrator, I guess it makes a certain amount of sense, because it makes your life easier.

Chambers: Yes. Well, that's just what I was going to say. I just came from an emeriti board meeting, and somebody was saying, "It's been a long time since there's been any controversy on the campus." Someone was saying, "Faculty don't really have very much time to engage in controversial things," but also that, for example, the pay structure is better, and that faculty by and large have some of the resources that weren't available.

Fletcher: I mean that's the positive side of the coin. I think that it's absolutely true that once the finances were straightened out and faculty compensation essentially disappeared from the radar, what people became most concerned about was tenure, and that hinges on research and teaching. In reality, it's mostly research, although I will have to say that exemplary teaching can be a very powerful component of the evaluation process, and weigh the decisions. But one of the things that I worked on at the end of my career, the last three years, basically 2004, 2005, 2006, was that I started getting really disturbed about the way that some promotion and tenure things have been handled. And what I did was try to convince Becky Beal, who was the chair of Academic Council, that what we needed to do was to change the promotion and tenure guidelines so that we couldn't have letters from the dean and from others bypass the evaluation committee and go directly to the provost; a practice that had become commonplace. In addition, I argued that the dean's letter should be part of the evaluation package, rather than a separate recommendation. And after a long struggle, the Council finally got that done, but it turned out that there

were some cases after that, right after I retired, where people were denied tenure because of some letter that came “over the transom” to the dean.

Chambers: Oh, really?

Fletcher: Absolutely, without ever being reviewed by the evaluation committee!

Chambers: Now, that can't happen anymore?

Fletcher: Well, it can happen, and may continue to happen, because one of the things that Phil Gilbertson said at one point was that, “Well, I'll follow the guidelines except when I think it's in the best interests of the university not to.” Which basically means: “We'll agree to make these changes, but they don't really mean anything.”

Chambers: That leads into the next whole section, which is going to be really interesting since you've worked with so many of the faculty over the years, some deans and vice presidents and presidents, during your tenure. So who do you think were the individuals at Pacific that were the most memorable during your career here? You've already mentioned Bob Heyborne. Obviously he's very high on your list.

Fletcher: Yes. I think Bob brought the School of Engineering back from the brink, because I think there was a point at which the regents actually contemplated not having the School of Engineering. So he came and got everything together, got us through an accreditation visit, and then we've been we've been accredited for the full period every single time since. I think that we've had a number of good administrators. I think Bob Heyborne was one. I think Pat Cavanaugh is as good a financial vice president as you could want, and if not for his ability to be open and still have the ear of the president and regents, the university would never have made the strides it did in the 90s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Chambers: And you worked with him more directly after you retired. Did you want to talk just a little bit about that?

Fletcher: Yes. He telephoned me in April of 2006, after I'd already announced my retirement. Because I had an eleven month contract, I was going to teach in the summer, and he said, “Well, we've got these two buildings that are going to be built.” Paul Johnson, who'd been the university project manager for a couple years prior, had retired back to Iowa, so Pat says, “What do you think about being project manager for these two buildings?” I pointed out that I still had teaching responsibilities and that I had to finish that semester and teach during the summer. He said, “Well, they're not really going to get off the ground until later anyway, so why don't you just put in as much time as you can right now, and then we'll put you on full time.” I said, “Okay, I guess we can do that.” So I did serve as the project manager for both the university center and the biology building.

Chambers: And that probably enhanced your respect for Pat even more.

Fletcher: Absolutely, it was great to work with him. We had some difficult financial problems that arose along the way, and it was clear that he was not going to second-guess my decisions about how to handle them. Although I didn't do anything major without having enough conversation beforehand to know that that was the direction we were going to go. Because one of the things that people don't really understand about project management is that oftentimes, you have to make decisions that are worth a few hundred thousand dollars in an afternoon. It's not the kind of thing that you're used to when you're a faculty member, where you can sit down and think about it for a while

Chambers: There is no time for discussion.

Fletcher: You have to do it, because otherwise, it's just going to cost more money. A good example is that we had a lot of rain right at the beginning, and the foundation soil could not be compacted. So I just talked to the superintendent, who recommended we lime treat the soil. I said, "Okay, we're going to have to stabilize this soil so that we can build on it now." That was about a \$50,000 add-on that was just an over lunch kind of decision.

You know, as far as presidents go, I think Don DeRosa was a good president. He had some issues that were a bit problematic from my perspective. For example when it came to whether deans ought to be part of the promotion of tenure committee. That was probably the one place where we sort of crossed swords a little bit. I always felt that the dean gets one bite of the apple at the school level, so that having the deans be voting members of the promotion of tenure committee was something of a conflict of interest. Similarly, because the provost has to act on the recommendation by making a recommendation to the president, he should not have a vote. As far as I'm concerned, the deans and the provost ought to be ex officio, not voting members of the promotion and tenure committee. The president didn't like that, and when we were having this conversation about changing the rules for promotion of tenure, he said, "Well, let's try it for a couple of years, and then we'll revisit it." Well, we never did that. After I had retired, I tried to convince Lydia Fox, then chair of Academic Council, that she needed to take that up again. But I think its time had passed. It was overripe by then. I think that every president we had did some things that were good, and I don't think there's any question about that. Bill Atchley, for all his difficulties, did a better job with finances at the university than his predecessor had. No question in my mind about that. I don't think Stan really had any interest in budgeting, and he didn't really hold the finance vice president to the standards that we've come to expect from Pat, for example. And his style for evaluation, I thought, was ad hoc rather than well-structured.

Chambers: Now are we talking about Stan?

Fletcher: Right, Stan.

Chambers: Okay.

Fletcher: I just don't think that you can have a process of that sort and be a serious academic institution. To be fair, that wasn't why Stan was hired. At least that's what I understood, because he was already President when I got here. He did do some good things. We had sort of a long process of university evaluation, and came up with some good recommendations, I felt. I had a lot of participation in that process, and I thought that was good, because it suggested some changes that he was probably uncomfortable with. I think that those changes eventually became part of what we did.

I think Bill Atchley really wanted to do a good job, but I don't think that he ever really understood that you couldn't simply base your evaluations on your gut feelings about somebody. To ask people, just off the cuff, how a high level university administrator, is performing, without really setting some evaluation criteria, seemed to be somewhat pointless. However, I think his improvement of the finances was a really big thing, and I liked what he did in that regard.

Chambers: Are there other administrators that you worked with that you think were either extremely helpful in advancing the mission of the institution or not too helpful?

Fletcher: Well, I thought, for example, that Les Medford was extremely good as the chief admissions officer. He recognized how important it was to get really well qualified students in, even though he was over-ridden on occasion about who ought to be admitted. Because, as it turned out, once we sort of shed this notion that Pacific should try to be all things to all people and started being more selective, everything turned in the right direction. So Les ultimately was vindicated regarding his ideas about the way thought ought to happen. Let's see. Who else would I point to that I really had some interaction with? I mean, there are just so many people that you work with.

Chambers: Well, it could come out as we move along. How would you describe the working relationships between faculty and administration during the years that you've been here? It probably has something to do with who's in charge, too.

Fletcher: My own experience was that I had a pretty good working relationship with virtually every administrator on campus. I mean, you and I spent a lot of time going to lunch and talking and so on and so forth, even in difficult times.

Chambers: That's right.

Fletcher: And you know as well as I that... this is a tough thing to say. I'm not quite sure...

**Chambers: You can edit.**

Fletcher: Well, I'm going to have to think about it a little more I think. But I sort of lost my train of thought. Oh, administrative relationships, yes. Part of it, for me, is that I'm not naturally a follower. I don't like being told what things I ought to be doing. It's one of the reasons I chose teaching. We've had sort of a mixture of people over the years that had styles that ranged from virtually dictatorial to "Well, I don't know what's going to happen" kind of thing. Probably the best example I can give is, the years that I was Academic Council chair, Cliff Hand was the acting president because Stan McCaffery had gone on his year of Rotary. Cliff and I did have some disagreements, but I would say that mostly we had no problems during that year. You know, getting along and getting things done. I knew most of the deans pretty well over the years. I had quite a bit of respect for some and not so much for others, simply because of the way that they worked with their faculties. I think you have to have some empathy toward the faculty situation, but you also have to be willing to say no.

The conservatory is probably the best example that I can give. One of the things that I noticed over the years was that the conservatory faculty didn't have very much interest in university governance. It extended to the point that even when their own would come up for promotion and tenure, they didn't do a very good job of making the case for the promotion and/or tenure of the individual. When we changed over to this sort of research emphasis model, it became considerably more problematic. I can think of at least two examples where, as chair of promotion and tenure, I actually had to go and talk to the faculty member about getting the committee to be more direct, and getting the dean to be more active. The prevailing notion was, "Well, everybody knows this is important, so why are you asking me why it's important?" And that's the kind of thing that a dean needs to be really tuned into. They have to be an advocate for their faculty, so if the faculty member has done a really good job, it's the dean's responsibility to make sure the story gets told in an effective way. And that didn't always happen. For example, we had other deans that would withhold a raise from somebody who had announced their retirement. That's just petty silliness.

Chambers: Oh dear.

Fletcher: And then others who were... What should I say? I mean, they basically thought of their jobs more as administrative assistants than deans.

Chambers: Yes. Yes.

Fletcher: So they were way too involved in the details of what was going on. That's the one thing that I thought was most admirable about Bob Heyborne, is that he was a real advocate for the school, for the faculty.

Chambers: And he did that just extremely well.

Fletcher: Yes. Nevertheless, despite any misgivings I might have had about an individual, or their misgivings about me, I generally got along extremely well with just about everybody that was ever here on campus.

Chambers: Did you ever, over the years, see any difference in the structure and power and nominating process of the board of regents?

Fletcher: Oh yes. Well, when I first came here, I really didn't understand how the process worked. I was the chair of the research committee fairly early on in my career, because I took over as a one-semester replacement for the School of Engineering, substituting for Rich Harris. Later I became the chair, so I had quite a few opportunities to interact with the regents, because I had to make reports and so forth. By the time that I became the Academic Council chair, we were getting close to that period of time in the eighties where we ultimately had the no confidence vote in Stan McCaffrey. What I was noticed was that the regents were kind of a self-perpetuating group, where there was a little bit of new blood coming in, but not very much, and I thought it was all somewhat parochial. We needed people with a different perspective on the way the institution ought to be. I should say that we had some marvelous people. Bing Wallace was a marvelous lady for example.

Chambers: Yes.

Fletcher: But she had a kind of paternalistic view of the university. And that's okay, but you need a lot more than that.

Chambers: Balance, yes.

Fletcher: You need to have people who are financial experts. You need to have people who understand how industry is looking at the graduates. You have to have people who understand the politics of the university and how a private institution competes with public institutions. We didn't have that mix. One of the things that Bill Atchley did was to seek a more balanced Board, and it ultimately led to his dismissal as president. But that was the important thing about the changeover. And when you go back and you look at people like Jim McCargo and Dale Reddig and what they sacrificed to make the change happen, that was a really important thing. I would never say that there was a time when the regents didn't have the university's best interests at heart. I just think that there was a time where they weren't really cognizant of what the best interests were.

Chambers: Do I remember correctly that the vote of no confidence in Stan, was that the appointment of Oscar Jarvis? Was that the primary thing?

Fletcher: Well, that was certainly one of the contributing factors. The whole thing is a bit fuzzy in my memory, as to exactly what led to it. The thing that I remember the most about it was the letter that went out with all of the former chairs of the Academic Council that were still around, recommending a vote of no confidence, with one

exception, and that was Roger Reimer from the School of Education. Bob Heyborne was not pleased with this whole thing, not because he was a particular fan of Stan McCaffrey, I don't think, but he also thought that the order was important. So he told me he was quite disappointed that I signed this letter, and as I pointed out to him, I argued in the Academic Council that "poking the president in the eye" was not a worthwhile exercise. But I wasn't about to say that I didn't support my colleagues when I agreed with their perspective, even though I thought the action was beyond what we should have done. And I don't think that he really understood what I meant.

Chambers: Talk to me some more about Bill Atchley augmenting and adding to the board.

Fletcher: If you look at the people that came onto the board at that time –Bob Monagan, Hugh Barton, what was that other fellow?...

Chambers: Oh, the guy. Steve...

Fletcher: Steve, exactly.

Chambers: Yes. He lives in Arizona.

Fletcher: Yes. I can't think of his name.

Chambers: Steve Hunton.

Fletcher: Steve Hunton, thank you. I felt those people understood finances in a much deeper way than the ones we'd had previously. They were absolutely instrumental in changing the way that the university viewed its indebtedness, and moving us toward reducing both the long- and short-term indebtedness and sort of regularizing the way that we dealt with those things. I think that was incredibly important, because if you look at what has happened in the last fifteen years, we've been much more successful with our bond issues, the credit rating of the university has steadily gone up, we now have as much or more bonded indebtedness, but it's entirely manageable with the university budget. And it's not the case that we're sort of scraping around like we did back in the eighties, trying to have a process on the campus which was ostensibly a budgeting process, but which was really a process where convincing the regents that the budget was going to be balanced, even though it wasn't going to be.

Chambers: Yes. And getting the budget in shape enough that you don't have to start every year, count the number of students, and then decide how much you have to cut.

Chambers: This is the continuation of the interview with David Fletcher from the School of Engineering, and it is the 24<sup>th</sup> of April at around 1:30 in the afternoon. So now Dave, this is an interesting part, at least for me. You've been really heavily involved in the university during the years that you've been here, so as you look back, what are some of the really controversial things that you got involved in, and who were the major players, and what are your feelings about that?

Fletcher: Well, the first one that I can really recall was the series of events that led up to the vote of no confidence in President McCaffrey. I think we talked a little bit about this before, but he had made an appointment to Academic Vice President after a failed search, and I think that faculty was not happy with the process or the selection either. So there were several meetings of former chairs of the Academic Council and other people who are active in faculty governance, and it ultimately led to a recommendation from all of the chairs of the Academic Council that were still on campus, with one exception, to recommend to the faculty that they vote no confidence.

It had little official effect, but I think the unofficial effect was fairly significant. We had had a difficult economic year a couple of years prior, and there were not any raises that year. The finances of the university were a little unstable at that time. I think all of those things together created the atmosphere that led to the vote. I did get some negative feedback about being one of the signatories to this, but I tried to explain that it was a matter of my arguing against doing it because I didn't think it was going to be effective particularly, and would create problems we didn't want to have. However, once the Academic Council took the action, I felt like we had to be part of the previous chair's group and vote that way.

Chambers: It didn't have any effect in that, if you measure it, it didn't remove the president, but it probably had effect.

Fletcher: I would have expected that, had the regents taken what we did seriously, they would have had, I don't want to say an evaluation, but would have looked into some of the situations. But that wasn't the way the university really ran at that time. The regents didn't take those kinds of actions, as I found out when I was Academic Council chair. I recommended to the Board of Regents executive committee that there be an evaluation of the president with faculty participation, and I got a nice letter from Bob Eberhardt telling me it was none of my business.

Chambers: But I remember when the Academic Council, during Stan's time, voted that all the vice presidents should be evaluated. And I volunteered to go first, Stan appointed Bob Heyborne to chair my committee. And it took almost a year and a lot of hard work and a lot of involvement on the part of a lot of people, because the process called for having a peer, and so the vice president from Stanford came over here three or four different times to be part of this process. And some of that's a story for another day, but I don't think anybody, for whatever reason, I don't think there was ever any evaluation of any other vice president. Just because I thought, well, if we're all going to do this, why don't you be first? So they sort of were into that. I do remember that there was an attitude of, you're evaluated every day in your job, and we don't.

Fletcher: Well, yes, there certainly was that. And I think that there's some question as to whether or not for people at the executive level. Having evaluations that get input from subordinates is sort of questionable in the minds of a lot of people who work on administrative evaluations. I think that, at least in my own case, all the evaluations that I went through as a faculty member were probably valuable, because they caused me to reflect. They couldn't be a cause for dismissal, because faculty members have tenure, and that's something that's different about administrators, of course. However, I do remember when we had this whole series of committees back in the early eighties to look at the various areas of the university, there were some recommendations for evaluations, and many really uncomfortable responses from vice presidents.-

Chambers: That wasn't the only controversy.

Fletcher: Oh no.

Chambers: Or are you just getting warmed up?

Fletcher: I'm just getting warmed up.

Chambers: Oh, okay.

Fletcher: That was just talking about the first one. Ultimately, when President McCaffrey retired and we started the search, I was on the search committee, along with Roland DiFranco and Paul Hauben.

Chambers: For the new president?

Fletcher: For the new president. That was a committee that Gordon Schaber chaired. And I thought that we ultimately got some pretty good candidates. There were a couple: Hank Riggs, who ultimately became the president of Harvey Mudd, was one of them. He was from Stanford, and Roland and I tried to get him in the pool, and it didn't work out. But we ended up with Jim Appleton and a fellow from Willamette whose name I've forgotten.

Chambers: Yes, I know who you mean.

Fletcher: And Bill Atchley. When the committee met to make a recommendation, all of a sudden we were told, "Well, we don't really want a recommendation, you just bring us the candidates." Then, when the candidates came on campus, all of a sudden the regents had made a selection, and I think the faculty were dumbfounded, first, that it was being done that way, without any real consultation, and secondly, when the chairman of the committee is taken aback by the process, that you know it's a problem. It was pretty hard to surprise Gordon Schaber, but they certainly managed to do it. I think that it was one of those situations where you are fooled. On paper, Atchley certainly looked quite good. When we talked to him on the phone, it was good conversation. I was not part of that interview process. I did talk to the fellow from Willamette on the phone, and also to Jim Appleton on the phone as part of the committee responsibilities. One of the things I noticed was that, in the whole search process, some of the deans were not quite as engaged as other deans, and it kind of made the process a little difficult, but in any case, by the time we got to the end of it and the regents decided to hire Atchley, I think the faculty were really surprised. Many of them, however, I think were willing to see what happened without complaining a great deal about it. The faculty loved to complain about process, as well as results. But process, that's one of our favorite things to complain about. In any case, by the time he got here and people started to listen to him, I began to realize that he had an authoritarian view of the way things ought to work, and not a whole lot of tact, in the sense of bringing people together and hearing them out. I always got the feeling that when you went to talk with him, it was just a courtesy rather than that he really wanted to know what you thought. And ultimately, it turned out to be a pretty tumultuous period of time from the late eighties to the time that he retired. If you want to call it that, I guess.

Chambers: I remember it well.

Fletcher: Depends on your point of view. Right at the beginning of that whole process, Dale McNeal was Academic Council chair, and we had something going on which was basically a workload study. And there was a committee that I was on that was looking into workload, and we called universities all over the West, anyway. Not too many back East. However, what we did was come up with an idea that we ought to talk to universities that we felt were ranked below Pacific, universities like Pacific, institutions that we thought were better than Pacific was at that time and we'd like to aspire to be like. And went through this kind of a long, involved process, and it had some effect, but I never really felt like the information which we gathered, and which was, I thought, pretty solid information, ever really made it into the consciousness of the administration. And that created some real dissatisfaction with the faculty leadership at that time. Therefore, that was also a bit of a problem. Then of course, you remember that there was a period not too long after that where one of the regents, Hilda Yao, made some unfortunate comments.



Chambers: I forget now. Were they negative?

Fletcher: Well, I'm trying to recall exactly what she had to say. However, it basically had to do with the faculty roles, and that was when Dale McNeal led the walkout from the commencement exercises that she was to speak at. And if I remember right, that was like 1989, 90, 91, right in that era. I just don't remember exactly.

Chambers: I forget what she said. I can't remember now.

Fletcher: Yes. It was one of those things that people will say that people refer to as common sense, which I usually refer to as a defense for ignorance, but that's a whole different matter. In addition, I thought that it was really inappropriate for regents to make those sorts of public comments. And that created a division in the faculty. Then in the early nineties, we had another economic problem that led to a miniscule raise, and then a suspension of the retirement contribution. And that was a very ill-taken decision in my view.

Chambers: Didn't last long.

Fletcher: No. But it's the kind of thing that, when it happens, it has a very lasting effect because of the compounding of interest. So all of those things together finally led us to the point where I think the faculty were really upset with President Atchley's leadership, and some of the things he did which were just bizarre. Like when we had a meeting where he was going to give a talk and then take questions, he basically got up on the stage, gave his talk, and then asked if there were any questions, turned around and walked off before anybody could get them out. And then there was an incident where he had his desk out on the lawn in front of his office, trying to make contact with people and the students. I mean, Atchley was a fairly likeable man. I always got along reasonably well with him, even if I disagreed with the way that he took some of his decisions, but that's just the normal relationship. Faculty members oftentimes disagree, even when they don't completely understand what's going on.

In any case, that was actually pretty closely followed by recognition by the regents that there was a problem that needed to be addressed. I remember going to Pasatiempo golf course. I was watching Pacific play in the tournament down there. I'm walking down, must have been tenth fairway, and I look down at the other end and I see a man sitting down there. I said, "God, it looks like Ted Baun." And so I walked down, and sure enough it's Ted, who is then on the regents, and he said, "What did you think about us firing the financial vice president?" And of course, we thought, well, the faculty hadn't really realized that any firing had gone on. And I didn't know what to say. As you know, Ted...

Chambers: Said what he thought.

Fletcher: He'd never let tact get in the way of saying anything.

Chambers: That's right!

Fletcher: And in many ways I respected him for it, but on the other hand, when he talked about never having to use the library, that kind of worried me. And so that was the first time I realized what the process had been.

Chambers: Which vice president was he talking about? Goines or Winterberg?

Fletcher: Winterberg. Then not long after that, the regents kind of got in an uproar when Jim McCargo and Dale Reddig were elected vice chair and chair. The faculty was very positive about this, because it meant that there was going to be a change from the regime that had let this other stuff go on. And then that turned the other way after a

while, but not before we had faculty demonstrating at regents' meetings and going to Sacramento and doing these sorts of things, and talking about many of the issues that this all revolved around. And then eventually it came to Ted Baun to say to Bill Atchley, "You gotta go." As I said, Ted never shied away from saying what he thought. Then we started the next search process, which very fortunately, I wasn't involved in, and we got into a time with a lot less controversy. If I had to put my finger on it, I think most of it disappeared when Bob Monagan became chair of the Board of Regents. Because he is probably the most skillful chair of the Board of Regents we've ever had, at least in the time I was at the university. I mean, he understood how to get consensus. And I'll give Bill Atchley a tremendous amount of credit for bringing people onto the board – Steve Hunton and Hugh Barton and others – who were not part of the kind of parochial Board of Regents we'd had previously. And Bob was the perfect person to lead them. If it weren't for Dale Reddig and Jim McCargo making a sacrifice, I don't think that would have ever happened. Ever since then, the succession arrangements have been much more like other institutions, where you're really reaching out to people of stature beyond the local area and away from the local financial community. Not to say that the local financial community hasn't been supportive of the university: they've been tremendously supportive. It's just that I've been on enough WASC visits to know that when you have that kind of a really close relationship, where you have people that are both deciding on your finances and holding your finances, it's not a good arrangement, no matter how well-intentioned they are. When Bob stepped down, he left the regents a much more effective group, than they had ever been.

Chambers: I agree.

Fletcher: And the last thing that I would even consider a controversy was this whole program review process that we went through. I mean, that was going to be wrenching in any case, because I felt and expressed to my colleagues over a long period of time that the academic structure that we have creates some problems that we don't need, and one of the chief ones is that when you have rotating department chairmanships and small departments, you have a situation where no department chair wants to take actions which is going to upset people who might be the department chair later on. And consequently, in small departments, when you have that, they don't make very much progress, and things tend to get stuck. And so, when Phil Gilbertson announced the program review process, it turned out to be painful, but I think was necessary. And in some cases, it resulted in some very positive changes, in other cases perhaps not so positive, because I think there were some prejudices at the beginning about what ought to go and what ought to stay no matter what. And that is not the way you ought to start a program review process, at least not from a scientific perspective.

Chambers: Well one other controversy, at least I thought it was a controversy, with alums more than on the campus, and was a courageous decision, when Don DeRosa dropped football. Do you have any feelings about that?

Fletcher: Well, my principal objection to football had more to do with its effect on the budgetary situation than anything else. One of the things that was a problem was simply that there were a whole lot of claims about how it benefited or didn't benefit Pacific that were not backed up by solid financial data. It also was a problem within Athletics, at least in my view. I was quite involved in athletics. I was the interim tennis coach at one point, interim golf coach at one point, and so I had some notion of how this was all functioning. Most of minor sports, if you want to use the term minor, suffered because the resources were going into the major sports, and principally into football. I can remember talking with Ted Leland after he became the A.D. at Stanford. I was down there while my daughter played in a volleyball tournament at Maples Pavilion. I saw Ted and talked to him a little while. We'd been friends because he tried to get me to be the NCAA representative at one point. I said, "Well, we finally

have gotten off the football merry-go-around.” He said, “Yep. I knew it was coming. Even though I played football and I believed in it, it was the right thing to do.” It’s always easy to say that there’s a direct cause and effect relationship, but I always point to the fact that, from the time that we dropped football, the university’s been in the black every year since. I don’t think they’re completely unrelated. The other really important factor in there is the fact that Pat Cavanaugh became the financial vice president. That’s probably the biggest reason that we’ve always been in the black, but dropping football was an important milestone. It was not something that I had many emotional feelings about from the standpoint of losing football or getting rid of football or anything. I just thought the university overall would be better off without it.

Chambers: My feelings exactly. I’m going to switch on this agenda a little bit and save the significant achievements for later. Let’s just talk a little bit about students. Now, you mentioned earlier that you were department chair, and you did teach, and then you were an assistant dean. What do you remember about the students and their activities and involvements during the years at Pacific, and do you have any feelings about how students’ attitudes changed over the years that you were working here, and how they adapted to that change?

Fletcher: Well, when I came here and started teaching, I was 27. I was so young that at that time, I wasn’t even eligible to be part of the retirement program. I ultimately worked that out. That’s a whole story for a different time. But in any case, when I was in class, I was not that much older than a lot of the students, and certainly younger than some of the ones that had been in Vietnam and had come back and were going to school. We had really small classes. The School of Engineering, the entire student body was 100, 150 at that time, and so consequently, we spent a lot of time with students at various events, and we played on intramural teams together and all this sort of thing. And I really enjoyed the students from that time. I remember the freshman class from 1973, when they graduated in 1978; they asked me to be the commencement speaker. And I thought that was really nice. And I’ve kept in touch with a lot of them over the years. We had some real strong relationships with the various student clubs. I know we had a really active ASCE – American Society of Civil Engineers – group, and an active IEEE group, and the students, I thought were pretty well focused. You always will have those that are enjoying the recreational part of being at university, but I thought the students were pretty dedicated at that point.

The one thing that was, of course, common in engineering at that time was that there were very few women students. In fact, when I came, we didn’t have any women students in our department. There had been one that graduated the year before I came, but then starting in the middle 70s, we started to see a few. And all of them were really top-notch students, because they had to sort of fight through the peer pressure and all the other things that made women stay away from engineering at that time. So right around 1980, we had a succession of just really bright women that graduated. The valedictorian every year was a woman, for example. And then, after that point, the floodgates had opened and women were coming into engineering in greater numbers. I mean, it’s still nothing like the other areas of the university. Pacific, I’m sure, still reports that 56 -7% of the students are women and 43-4% are men. It’s much better in engineering than it was back then, but it still doesn’t match the university as a whole.

As time went on and we really grew, we reached a peak of 670 or 680 students in the middle 80s. We had these programs with Indonesia, Malaysia, and so on and so forth, and brought some really good students in, but we just didn’t have the capacity. And I thought the quality of what we did was being strained at that time, because we just didn’t add the faculty we needed to keep the class sizes manageable. Bob Heyborne was trying, but he was getting the response from administration that you have to have the demand, it’s going to take a while to build this up. A

lot of it had to do with the bizarre budgeting model the university had back in those days where you figured out how much you were going to spend by projecting what the enrollment was going to be. Then if the enrollment turned out to be less, you had a problem, and if it turned out to be greater, you didn't have the money to match what it was going to be. So we would not budget to be successful, which always kind of troubled me. In any case, as I got farther along, I began to see that the students had a much broader spectrum of abilities. At least that's what I perceived.

When you've been teaching a long time, you often have expectations that were centered on a previous time. And we also had this attitude on the part of students that they had a choice as to whether or not they were going to do a certain amount of work, and they would look at an assignment and decide whether they thought the value of the assignment was worth their effort. I couldn't imagine an engineer taking that attitude, so I finally got to the point the last few years where I actually had to require students to submit every assignment to my satisfaction before I would assign a grade. I really didn't like having to do that, but that's just the way things had happened. It wasn't that we didn't have really bright students, we did. It's just that we had more of this sort of attitude that, well, I'm going to decide based on how many points I'm going to get for doing it, and if I don't do it, what's going to happen? That is not the way people need to approach education. Presumably, nobody on the faculty is just putting out make-work things for the students to do. It all has to do with improving your understanding and their ability to solve problems, which is what engineering education is all about.

Chambers: I think you've covered some of this, but are there any issues that you were involved in that stood out in your mind as more important to the growth and development of Pacific, and where do you think the energy came from to make that progress and evolution possible?

Fletcher: One of the things I was proudest of had to do with general education. I really believe in general education, and I was probably the most vocal champion of it in the School of Engineering. I got involved in the two major revisions of general education that occurred after the I&I program. The first one when we came up with a set of categories and so forth and had a distribution requirement that really focused on the science and mathematics as coequal with the arts and social sciences. And that, I thought was a really effective change, and it improved the overall quality of education at Pacific. And then, when we moved to the mentor's seminar, I was part of that group as well, and I think that was an effective program as well, and made the university more visible in that area. Eventually, I think we were nationally recognized for some of that work.

Chambers: That's true.

Fletcher: I think that was tremendous. One of the things that... I'm not going to say it's a negative thing. I've always felt like the university tried to be all things to all students, which is a very difficult thing to do. To have so many schools and colleges with the infrastructure that's necessary to support them all creates problems in resource allocation. I don't think we ever really solved them until we got to the point where money was flowing into the institution. We had always had some difficulties with fundraising and so forth that would have made life a lot easier had we done a better job of raising money. I think those are major things.

Chambers: One of the questions is to describe the most significant achievement during your tenure. In terms of your own personal involvement, would you say that that was general education and the mentor program and your involvement in that?

Fletcher: Yes, I would think so. We also had, within the School of Engineering, some significant changes where we added new majors. While I wasn't directly involved in that process, I felt that we strengthened the engineering curriculum significantly, because we had the ability to draw people into the core engineering courses from different disciplines and different backgrounds. That improved the educational experience for the students.

Chambers: Have you heard Pam Eibeck say that when her son was looking for engineering schools that she had recommended Pacific because she had served on an accreditation team for the School of Engineering?

Fletcher: I'll certainly believe that. I just don't remember her. She would have been visiting electrical engineering. I wouldn't have seen her except maybe at the introductory meeting, and I just don't remember. I remember all the civil engineering evaluators.

Chambers: But I didn't know that. I heard her say it at some point after she came, but it certainly speaks well for the School of Engineering.

Fletcher: Bob Heyborne did a tremendous job of building a school. He really understood the value of good teaching and the power of co-op to be an integral part of education. That has sort of gone by the wayside now, unfortunately.

Chambers: When you look back on the many years that you spent here, do you think Pacific met your expectations, and if it didn't, why do you think that's the case, or if it did?

Fletcher: It's hard for me to say exactly what my expectations were. When I left graduate school, I went to work in industry because it was very difficult to get a job, and I'd never really been an enthusiastic researcher. I didn't want to spend a lifetime in a laboratory. One of the things that made Pacific so attractive to me was that Bob Heyborne made it quite clear in the interview process that teaching was what he was really interested in. And that's what I wanted to do, because I had had some incredibly good teachers along the way and realized that I had a good facility for explaining things. So I wanted to teach. From that perspective, I couldn't be happier with my experience. The only thing that was a bit of a problem is that because I was on 11-month contracts for all but two years of the time I was here, I didn't get the time away to work on other projects that I would have liked to have had. I did have some sabbaticals, and I did do some things there that were very enjoyable, but...

Chambers: Yes, that's hard. I had forgotten that engineering was those 11-month programs. Yes, that is hard.

Fletcher: You know- that was a funny thing. Just an anecdote: we had a program when I first came here that was part of the selling process that was what were called internal sabbaticals. What would happen is that when you were first ready for your sabbatical, you could teach the summer term and you got the fall off. Then you could take your sabbatical in the spring, and you'd have the following summer that you didn't have to teach. So you'd get an entire year off. That ended the first year I was eligible.

Chambers: So much for that!

Fletcher: Yes, so much for that. One of the things I had loved about Pacific is the opportunity to work with people from every discipline. I've been involved in many things outside of Engineering, you know. Paul Richmond from Biology was doing some work with algae, and I was able to do some things with him. I've also worked with people from the dental school and the law school over the years, and spent a lot of the time giving guest lectures in mathematics classes and all that sort of thing. I really worked hard to try to break down some of the barriers

that seemed to be around when I came here. We had a kind of rocky relationship with both math and physics when I first came here. There was sort of a “blame game” about students, who would not do well in calculus or not do well in physics. The School claimed that those departments were not doing a very good job of teaching, and that we ought to be teaching it. I said, “No, the last thing you want to do is have the engineers teach the mathematics classes to the engineering students,” and eventually we worked through that. Moreover, I’ve always felt that both the math and physics department had been integral parts engineering education, and have done a good job here at Pacific.

Chambers: That’s great. Do you think that the external perception of the academic quality of Pacific has changed over the years?

Fletcher: Absolutely. I think it’s much better than it had been, partly because, even though I despise the whole process, we got better at the publicity game. I think this whole business of ranking colleges, given the way that’s actually constructed, is just detestable. Unfortunately, it is also meaningful in a way that attracts good students. All you have to do is just go back to the period around 1990, 1991, 1992, when we had a woman whose name I have completely forgotten as the Dean of Admissions.

Chambers: Oh, is it Pat Speed? It was something like that. The one from the East Coast.

Fletcher: Yes. If you remember, we had some classes at that time with very low retention rates. I thought that was because we had gone away from keeping higher admission requirements. I mentioned earlier how much I admire Les Medford saying, “What we need to do is keep the standards up, those are the students you want.” As soon as Phil Gilbertson got here, we started going in that direction. I’ll give him great credit for that. The one thing that I haven’t really talked about and I want to make sure I say something about it before we stop, is how important the WASC process ultimately turned out for us. In particular, the visit in 1991 from the WASC team that included John Stein. If it wasn’t for his really clear understanding of some of the problems, and then ultimately, of course, becoming part of the staff and doing such a fantastic job as the president’s assistant, I just don’t think we would have made the changes that we ultimately made. That visit really started the ball rolling for the changes that came afterward, because it made the academic community realize, and the president appreciate, some of the problems that we were facing.

Chambers: That’s right. Don had a particular expertise with finances, which was really helpful. That expertise really informed his decisions.

Fletcher: Yes.

Chambers: The final part here is about the community and what contributions you feel Pacific really has made to this local community, and the response. And then that’s kind of followed up with, do you think it’s improved?

Fletcher: Well, there have been a lot of programs that Pacific has tried. I think that the principal benefit, at least from my perspective, has been the participation in the cultural life in the community. I think Stockton’s a better place because of our arts program and our music programs. They provide some... I don’t want to say inexpensive, but some entertainment of very good quality at moderate cost. That’s extremely important. I think one of the reasons our symphony was able to attract somebody like Peter Jaffe is because we’ve had some wonderful musicians here at the university who had were sort of the backbone of that orchestra, and did a wonderful job. Even though we don’t have as many of the faculty that still play in the orchestra, the fact that we have somebody

of Peter's stature here is wonderful. He's attracted some marvelous musicians, so I think that's been a positive aspect.

I think the athletic department has had a considerable value to the local community. We've had good teams over the years, particularly that long stretch of excellent volleyball that really got everybody behind it and basketball more recently. However, I think that it becomes a bit of a burden when the head coaches at the top are demanding such a big share of the resources. That's a problem as far as I'm concerned, and I think athletics in general has a much greater influence than it really should have at every academic institution, not just ours. But that's a whole different question. It's not that I don't believe in it. I think that students should be able to participate in intercollegiate athletics; I just don't think it ought to be one of the principal drivers of the economics of the institution.

I think that we've had many programs like projects that the ASCE Student Chapter has done: levee cleanups and other annual events. We've had students that were supported by grant money go out and be part of the local education community. There have been a whole lot of little things that I think have had positive impacts that the university did, and most of them have only one or two members of the faculty or administration that are just enthusiastic and get students excited. One of the things that I would say about the more recent students is that many of them were much more willing to be part of those kinds of programs. Part of the difference was just that we had many more mature students early on who had other kinds of agendas. I think our demographics have changed a little bit over the years in that regard.

Chambers: Well, we've covered lots of subjects, so at least for now, your last chance: Is there anything that you want to say that we haven't covered in the interview? Any topic you can think of?

Fletcher: I can't really think of anything off the top of my head. I think we've covered most of the things. I could go on and on about my turn as project manager, but I don't think that's really what we ought to be talking about here.

Chambers: However interesting!

Fletcher: Well, it's one of those things where I understood the process and so forth, but there's nothing like learning on the job.

Chambers: Well this is great, and thank you so much for taking the time to do it.

Fletcher: Well thank you for agreeing to do it.

Chambers: My pleasure. And it's been really fun, because I was here through so much of what you talked about, and it's just interesting to see it from a faculty perspective as well.