

How to Manage Your Career When You Have Absolutely No Idea

Dr. Pedro Douglas

Moderator: Well, welcome. Thank you all for participating in our Higher Education Speaker Series. We appreciate your attendance. As always, it's an opportunity for those of us who've been around a while to share information about our experiences. It's not always about the experience, this is about the journey, it's about passing on institutional knowledge sometimes that is equally as important so that, when folks leave that that knowledge is continued to be passed on so that you can use that to benefit your careers and most importantly the services -- to service students that you all serve, so it is with my great pleasure that I introduce you to Dr. Pedro Douglas. He joined CSU Chico in January 2001... You can hear that well?

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Yeah.

Moderator: Okay [laughter]. ...as the Director of Student Health Services. Under his tenure the department successfully passed two accreditations by the American Association of Ambulatory Health Services; reorganized the Student Health Center Advisory Committee; implemented the first Annual Health Fair; established the Health Education Internship Program; a collaboration with the Department of Health and Community Services and established a chapter of Undergraduate Fellows Program, also known as NUFP -- to name a few. The focus of the NUFP program is to encourage minority students to consider careers in higher education and to this day this program is booming and I can't -- I'm sure he'll talk about the number of folks that have moved on to higher education because of his mentorship. On October 2007, Pedro became the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, currently reporting to the VPSA, our Student Health Services Counseling and Wellness and Disabilities Support Services. Additionally, the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs is responsible for the overall budget -- thank you, Pedro. So if you have any [laughter] budget questions or complaints, this is the guy you need to talk to. Pedro prior to joining CSU Chico, Pedro was the Assistant Director of Health and Wellness Center of -- at Florida International University from 1999 to 2000, and the business manager of Student Health Services, University of Connecticut from 1991 to 1998. It's my great pleasure to introduce you to Dr. Pedro Douglas [applause].

Dr. Pedro Douglas: It is certainly a pleasure to be here and when the opportunity was presented to me, I certainly jumped on it. And I know that you've had several speakers ahead of me that spoke and I heard they did all outstanding jobs, so I'm just going to challenge that I have to come behind [inaudible] However, I will do my best, and I think, you know, so to know a lot about me, it's probably good to know a little bit of where I've come from because it has certainly helped shape what I am today, and why I do some of the things I do and why I have the passions that I have. Some of you may know that I'm from New Jersey, from Plainfield, New Jersey which is a small city about 22 miles outside of New York City, and it was -- it's a very interesting place to grow up, so if you know people from the East Coast, they kind of tell you how they feel and they have all these little sayings that they have. But, I will tell you that it's certainly helped prepare me for the journey that brought me here.

My mother went to the same elementary school and high school that I went to. However, when my mother went there, when she graduated from high school, there was like seven black students. When I graduated from high school, the school was 100% African American and Latino. So the shift of the whole town changed. However, many of the same -- interestingly enough, people who taught in the school were there when my mother was there. So, it really gave me a different perspective than she did but, again, it prepared me for the journey that I would eventually take. Once I finished up there, I technically had no plans at all to go to college. College was not on the horizon for me and, you know, my mother has MS. She's been in a wheelchair since -- gosh, since I've been in junior high school, so my thought was that I would stay home and help take care of whatever need to be done there. My sister -- had two older sisters who had gone off to college, and here I am, it's like March of my senior year of high school, and I'm hearing -- they're like friends of mine have been accepted to college. And again, I had no desire to go.

So one day, I was talking to a friend of mine who had just gotten accepted to college, and my father who says nothing about anything overheard my conversation. And the question that a friend did post to me and says, "Well, where do you plan on going?" And I said, "Well, I don't plan to go. I'm going to stay here and help out with my mother until my oldest sister finishes college, then I'll go." Now, this man who never has any comments, his comment to me was "If you don't go to college, don't let your mother be your excuse." She said -- he said, "If you don't go to college, don't let your mother be your excuse." And then my mother, now mind you, this is a couple, they can't agree on anything [laughter]. My mother's comment was, "And if you don't go to college, you have two weeks to find a job after graduation and the rent will be [laughter] -- X amount of dollars. So here it was, March of my senior year of high school and I said, "Okay. I got to get the hell out of here [laughter]." Seriously, seriously. So I applied to three schools, Trenton State College which is now known as the College of New Jersey, Rutgers University, and I applied to Montclair State, and I was so desperate at this point I said, "Whoever accepts me is where I'll go." Well, I was accepted at all three schools, but I went to Trenton State College because I had a sister there and certainly if you have a sibling at an institution at least there, you got a little discount. And knowing where we were financially because, you know, we had no money, that's where I went.

I want to give you an example of two experiences I had at Trenton State College that helped shaped me. I was an EOP student and on Trenton State College campus they called them "chance." Now -- and chance was an acronym for something, but the word "chance" really meant and I think about it now and how inappropriately "We're taking a chance on you." That's what it meant. So here, the demographics of our EOP program were a lot different but in New Jersey it's predominantly African American, at that point. So, during the summer I took an English course, I took a math course, and I took a reading course. It was a six-week program, residential program. All right? In the math course -- now math when I was in high school, I used to take math classes and math classes to me were to help my GP. I was always very good in math, so I did very well during the summer, got all A's; my first semester, I started out as a math major. I took my first math course. And I remember when I got my report card at the end of the semester, I got a D in class.

Now, some of you maybe -- if you went to institutions that were impacted, what they normally do is bring on more freshmen than they need, of course, you know, when the winter comes, there's some fallout. So what happened, there was six of us living in a resident hall -- I mean, living in a lounge in a resident hall. So at the end of the semester, everything was cleared out. I tell this because it kind of sets the stage of what happened. When I went back to challenge this instructor about this D grade that I received, I had to have proof, you know, I couldn't have the proof, so they cleared this out, they put us in different rooms. The reason why this happened was because the professor that I had Norm Neff I say his name and this is being recorded but, Norm Neff because he's still a faculty member at the College of New Jersey. He could -- he did not believe that an EOP student could maintain an A average in this class. I had to negotiate to get a C. That's when I changed my major from math to recreation, and if you remember in the early '80s business was a big thing, so after a hot minute in recreation administration, I became a business major and that's how I ended up getting a business -- degree in business.

But the idea that a faculty member could not believe that a student that came in through an EOP program had the knowledge, the ability to maintain A average -- and I did have an A average in that class. And the reason why I know the guy is still there because I said, "If I ever get a job at that campus [laughter] --" seriously. So anyway [laughter], the next thing that really -- but that really was a blow to my ego because then you begin to doubt yourself. You have to understand, I went to high school it was an all-black and Hispanic situation, right? So the first science class I took, Physical Science, was a mandatory course. I was the only person of color in this class. And I remember taking an exam and at the -- when we came back to class to find out how we did, the professor was really distraught. He said, "You know what, as a class, we did lousy. There were a number of A's, B's but the majority of the people got D's -- or the F's on this exam." So I remember going up, he had all the tests in the front of the class on the lab counter, and I remember going up to get my exam. And instead of looking for my name, I was looking for the lowest grade. And I was looking for it so I knew it had to be an F paper. So I'm studying this going, just looking for the red F, and I couldn't find, I'm like, "Well, where the hell is my test?" I was one of the A's. But it's just how environments have a way of making you think negatively about yourself and starting to come in from the school that I came from, I felt that, "Well, if I've gotten F, you know, I come from a school that's -- you know, has issues, so, you know -- but this really helped me rethink about what I could be.

I ended up leaving Trenton State College because I felt, "All right" I didn't say this before but I changed my major from math because I figured I really -- you know, I challenged the professor. So, am I going to stay in this field and challenge this professor, you know, through my next four or five years? No, you know, because you know how it works. You know, you get a bad rap. In a major, you need to move on, even though we tell our students to fight but we know how this can be. So I ended up going to Kean University where I finished up in a degree of Management Science. Again, once I finished that, you know, here I'm looking for a job. The first job I received was at the factory that my mother used to work at, you know, doing line work. So, of course, that was a blow to my ego. I spent all this time and all this effort to go to school and I'm working at the same factory my mother worked at. And I did that for about two and half years and, you know, I wouldn't even tell people I had a degree because, you know, the

first thing people would say, "Well, what the hell are you doing here?" "Well, you're there because you need to work and you've got some loans to pay back."

Eventually, the first job that I got that I really felt as though I was utilizing my degree was at Merrill Lynch in Manhattan. And then I felt as though, "Okay. I have a little something I can be proud about." Worked at Merrill Lynch for a few years, and if you remember in the mid-80s we had a slight little crash in the stock market, right? Well, that was enough to go because people were showing up at investment houses and killing people and I said, "You know what, this is not what I need to be doing [laughter]." So I want to give a shout-out to career services because, and the reason I'm going to do this because the job I received at Merrill Lynch was going through our career services.

Then when I left in the mid-80s after the crash, I went back to the school I went to, went back to career services and I got a job at a hospital, Barnert Memorial Hospital, which was a Jewish hospital in Paterson, New Jersey. And I got -- I was there, I was the financial analyst. And I worked for the Vice President of Ambulatory Care, and what he did, which I appreciate to this day, when he went to the University of Connecticut to become their Director of Health Services, he asked me if would go. The first time he asked I said, "No" because most folks on the East Coast at least people of color, they're trying to go South. You know, the jobs would -- you know, they're trying to go South, not to go New England. But this individual asked me a second time and that doesn't normally happen.

So he asked me a second time would I consider taking the position at the University of Connecticut, I said, "Yes." Interviewed, got the job and I was there for about nine years. And it's the greatest thing because that was my introduction to higher education and working on a college campus. And through that position, through that position, I had a chance and start working with students. I wasn't that crazy about the job per se, but it was the fact that I was able to reach out and connect to students that really impressed me. And I saw the impact that we -- who really cherished this as a profession, the impact that we can have on students. At the University of Connecticut, I realized if I wanted to move up I really need to go back and get my master's. So luckily through the union that I was a part of, they did have a reimbursement plan, so I was able to go back, earn my master's. And after I was there for about six years, I really started thinking about, "Okay, I need to figure a way out of this, to go on," and if higher education was going to be my passion and if it was -- if it were to be my career that I need to move on.

And in 1998, the -- and this is why it's good to always have a good rep with the folks that you know. The pharmacists at the University of Connecticut shot me a job announcement and this was for Florida International University. And I just said, "For the hell of it I'm going to apply and see what happens." As it was, I got the job. Now, what's interesting about Miami is that if -- usually in Miami or any school probably in the South where it's really hot, they usually call you down for interviews, white -- in the fall, in the spring, not in the middle of the heat. So when I went -- of course, when I interviewed at Miami, it was winter in Connecticut and it just made the school look so much more beautiful with all the palm trees [laughter]. So any flaws that you might see, you have a tendency to overlook. But it was a totally, total different culture, you know. I had been working at University of Connecticut and at University of Connecticut. If a meeting starts at 8 o'clock, it's usually people are there by quarter to 8:00, you know.

It's a total different atmosphere. When I got to Florida International University, they had this term called "CP time." How many people know what CP time is [laughter]? Okay. Well, I thought I knew, too, until I got to -- until I got to FIU, CP time is "Cuban people time [laughter]." And -- but what I liked about it was that, you know, and up here, you know, it's "color folks time."

But, what I loved about it was the fact that even though the atmosphere was laid back, they were no less productive. This was an institution that was found in the '70s and they -- now they have about 38,000 students. They have the first medical school in South Miami to serve that community. They have a law school -- a state-run medical school, you know, University of Miami has one, but a medical school. I mean, they have within four or five decades, they have done tremendous things. So, I'm proud to have a short stay with them, but one of the things I had to do when I got the job there and this was -- this speaks to younger professionals as you maneuver yourself through your career.

When I left the University of Connecticut, I got the job offer at FIU, it wasn't an increase in pay; it was like \$1000 which was nothing to uproot your family. But what I negotiated was a title change. At the University of Connecticut I was a business manager and that's exactly how they want to hire me in Florida. I said, "I will come, but you need to change that to an associate director position." I'll take the same amount of money because, if you think about it, the payoff comes down the road sometimes. Okay? You have to be patient. So I got the job with the job title change, and I think I made like \$1000 a year more, and actually I was in the hole because we lived in Connecticut, I had a three-family house. You know how that does, you know, you collect the rents, the rent pays for the mortgage, all that stuff, so I couldn't do that in Miami.

But, once I got that job, two years later, a cousin of mine sent me the announcement for the director position at Chico State. And as an associate director, I could apply for the position. So it was a -- you know, two years, you know, I was able to make that transition to the director position here. And most of you -- I've told the story before but when I interviewed at Chico, I knew nothing about Chico. I really didn't know that much about California. You know, I think folks on the East Coast, you know, for us California is, what? San Francisco and L.A.; all that in between, you don't know; and anything north of San Francisco, forget it. But the mere fact that there's a place that exists this far up north, you know.

So when I was making plans to come here for an interview, they asked me, you know, that I want to, you know, arrive in Chico or Sacramento and I said, "Well, Chico, that's where the interview is and I wouldn't have to worry about traveling." So, you know, when you come here [laughter], well, you have no idea [laughter] -- you certainly have no idea where you are geographically, so honestly, Chico to me is a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful place. Interview I think went well. Went back to Miami and I said, "You know, hopefully I get the offer." And luckily when I got back, you know, I try to keep all my cards on the table with whoever you report to because Jim Moon contacted the Vice President of Student Affairs and she was on the Palmetto -- this is the major highway in Miami, and she like -- just about had a heart attack knowing that I was applying for a jobs.

But, what I had to do, I had to come back and find a place to live and so my partner and I, we said, "You know, it really it's Thanksgiving break to come up to Chico to see if we can find a place to live." This time, we flew into Sacramento [laughter] and if any of you have been on 99 -- well, I'm sure you have [laughter]. You know, when they burned the fields, well, my partner was like, "What? They might have to beep this, but what the f..k have you gotten us into [laughter]?!" And this is when I realized where I was [laughter]. But at this point it was a little late. I already -- I had already resigned my position and I was like, "Oh my God, I didn't realize we were so out [laughter]." So, and we're driving up the highway, now you know where they have that big lumber jack statue on 99, you know? Then I begin to understand, "Oh my gosh, this is where I'm at [laughter]."

But, you know, sometimes -- you know, but without fail, every decision that I have made, I've been lucky enough that have worked out -- and no knowledge behind it but has always worked out. It has always worked out. So we get here and we look for a place, we find an apartment that we decided to live in. He was still back in Florida taking care of the home, you know, the transition. Everything went well, and I do have to share this other stories that when we started -- when started looking for a house, again, not knowing the area well and I blame people like Cece, Herman Ellis [laughter], Eddie Basin [assumed spellings], people that I thought -- even Dr. P [laughter] that I thought would've had my back. So when I was looking for a house [laughter] -- you have to understand, when I was looking for a place to live, you know, you really -- you know, prices here at that time were a lot higher than they were in Miami. I sold a house in Miami for like 130, so I'm looking at houses here that were like, half the size and they were going like for 150 and up, and at that time that was kind of high.

So, you know, I said, "Well, let me look up in Paradise, this, you know. You can find cheap property up there [laughter] and it's large." And so, again, there's always somebody watching over you. So actually I put a bid on a house in Paradise, and waited here and it was -- and I'm talking about those folks, but nobody saying to me, "You might want to rethink that [laughter]." The person who pulled me aside was Jim Moon. He said -- he called me to his office and he says, "Pedro, you might really want to reconsider the house there." As it was, somebody outbid me on the house and luckily I didn't get it. Again, somebody, you know -- I believe in divine intervention [laughter], somebody was looking out for me. So, you know, eventually we ended up getting a place here and all worked well.

My stint at the health center, it was a great learning tool. I think the thing that has prepared me most for the AVP position, isn't the fact that I went back to school and I thought that was important, was the fact that I worked in health centers. And this is not anything negative about the health centers, but if you work on -- it was more in this campus that I noticed it that when you worked with physicians -- and we have great physicians, so let me just preface anything I say. But, on any campus, you know, and then I worked at two research campuses, and [inaudible] institution, M.D.s feel that their doctorate outranks anybody else's. That's just the nature of it. If there is a pecking order, it's M.D., P.h.D., E.d.D., and this is how they feel. Whether it's true or not, this is how they feel and in so many ways they will let you know that. So having worked at, you know, Yukon with, that was the case; in Florida that was the case, you know. So I felt compelled. I said, "I really need to go back. They have credibility with the group here." I knew I had the experience of working health centers, but I really felt as though I needed to go back to

school. And, again, not doing my research -- and I tell everybody to do their research before they leave -- I didn't know that we didn't offer, you know, doctorates here. And then, you know, we're caught in a situation where you're not close to anything. And I really -- and that's the one time that I said, "I might really have to leave here because I can't get a doctorate," and I didn't know.

And so in talking to our then vice president, Paul Moore, he had told me that [inaudible] just went to the USC program. And so, I said, "Great." And this is ridiculous, but [inaudible] [laughter]. I didn't. Honestly, folks, I know it's kind of pathetic, but -- and then I was torn because, you know, this is way down in Southern California, I had no idea. But [inaudible] I had a chance to talk about the school situation. To make a longer story short, I was able to get in and go to school, which I think really gave me a level of credibility with the staff there. And the other piece of it and I don't want to underestimate this is the fact that I knew college health. I knew it and I knew it well.

A challenge that I had when I first came on board and these are things that I think you should think about when you get those first positions. There was a task that the VP had set before me. At the time, I guess people used to do a lot of working from home and collect comp time, there was a big issue; and so that was the same in the health center. So I had to really address that, and what bothered me about it was the fact that I have really just come onboard and to make a major decision, to really change the way we did things I felt would have a negative impact -- and, shit, I just got here [laughter], honestly. And I was a little upset about it because I felt that -- and then I asked the question, "How come you didn't have my predecessor address this before you left?"

And the truth of the matter is, the VP of Student Affairs was very apologetic; he says, "Well, that may be the case, you still need to fix it." And I had no idea. I really had to think about this for a couple of weeks, like how am I going to go and tell these folks that, "You know what, you no longer can earn comp time." And that -- and not to mention the fact, I didn't know how they were earning comp time because we had a facility that was open from 8:00 to 5:00, and I really had to think about this, and this is where the benefit of working in other places really helped me, because we had a health center at University of Connecticut that was the same size as the health center we have here but operated 24/7. And that's because docs were on call; they traded off time and we didn't do any of that thing.

So after really thinking about it, I was able to go back to the staff and say, "We need to change and these are the reasons why." But I also had a foundation to make that decision and when I said, "Okay, if you still want to this, that we need to change into a 24/7, or at least 24/5 hour operation. You know, some of you can be on the call, you know, that --" well, when I brought that up, it was a new point. So, we were able to solve the problem and there was no grumbling, but it was difficult to come into a situation where you have to make a major change right off, because people are used to what they're used to, and I'm not saying that's a good thing or a bad thing, but it happens. But it happens.

Let me go back. You know, after traveling up and down the road, finishing school, and I remember a conversation and say this about -- this isn't to speak negatively of any school, but I would say a conversation because I was really torn, honestly if I should stay here and leave because of the school

situation. I remember I had a conversation with Dr. P, and I'm not going to mention the other school that I was looking into, and I said, "This other school is closer -- is cheaper. What are your thoughts?" And his comment to me was, "You know what, that's true and they probably teach the same thing. But when you finish up, whatever program you're going to finish up, you don't want people questioning your degree." Which made it all the reason why, and because of that -- now I'm not going to mention what the other school was, but that was the reason why I did it and stuck with it and I will be forever grateful to him because that was some good advice, it really was, because people don't question what you do.

So anyway, to make a long story short, we did -- I did the health center for a number of years. We really got through those AAAHC accreditations which are nerve wrecking, and I think I earned all my gray hair trying to go through those. But then, there was a point in time which I felt that it was really time for me to transition out of, not just the position but really try to get back East. And I had been looking and started interviewing for positions and the VP at the time -- because I had contacted the VP and asked if he would be a reference for a position for me. And at the time when I called, just to give you -- let you know I'm praising my life is sometimes, I was in a hotel in Michigan in the process of adopting my first son, he was days old, and I'm getting ready to have an interview with an institution in Texas and this kid is crying; so I'm trying to figure out where I can hide, put this kid [laughter], you know, so they don't hear. So I put him in, you know, a baby carrier but in the bathroom, you know, while I was going through the interview. And so I had the phone interview and it was such -- you know, the connection was so bad, I knew that I had blown everything. But because then they called me up and they brought me down.

When I called Jim to say, "Jim, this is what's happening. Would you be a reference for me for this position?" He said, "Well, how come you're not interested in the one at Chico? Well, I said, "Listen, there are a lot of very capable people, you know, more so than I am." And the other issue was, I knew I wanted to get back East." He said, "Listen, I will be a reference for that job if you apply for this one, so if you apply for this one." He says, "There are a number of people --" and he was honest with me. He said, "None of you are heads and shoulders over the other. All of you bring certain talents to the position and some of you -- and all of you have things you need to work on." He said, "But I want you to put your hat." I said, "Fine. I'll put my hat in the ring but I need you, if you promise to be a reference for this position also." The rest is history, so I ended up going to the position and, you know, what's really crazy, I looked back on it now and I really thought that I was all that good, that I could be a VP without disposition. That was like wishful thinking because I've learned so much in this -- in the position that I'm in now, that it's unbelievable. It's unbelievable.

And the things that I've learned most are from people who are directors because now I can see there -- I can see what they do, and, you know, when you're a director you're in your own shop. You're worried about the survival, how you're going to do. Here I can really see and I will tell you that there are directors across the board but I have no doubt that can do the job that I do, and do it much better. And so the other thing is humility goes a long way, folks. It goes a might long way. Be humble. Please don't ever think that you're the only person that can do what you do and do it as well as you do. And many folks can come and I'm not going to say anybody, so I know for a fact that there are people that sit at that director's table that can come in and do a job and do it better than me, I realized that. But, what

that does, it keeps me very humble. It keeps me very humble. And I'm privileged to learn from them. I think that's an important thing. That's an important thing.

I mean, it's -- I have a couple of cheat notes here. I want to talk about mentorship because one of the things -- my title is, you know, how do you figure a way through all of this stuff and you really don't know? And trust me, I feel as though if I had a mentor starting on early in my career that there's certain milestones I could've hit maybe years earlier. But, you don't know what you don't know, and like most people -- well, I'll speak for myself. You know, you think if you ask a question, it'll show your ignorance or your stupidity and my feeling is, you always want to ask those questions because I know faculty say this all the time, "If you don't know it, half the class probably doesn't know it either." But it's difficult when you feel -- when you feel differently.

And it's also difficult -- and I don't always like to say this, but I'll speak from, you know, the perception of a black male who's always been -- when we talk about stepping aside your comfort zone, I do that every freaking day. But it's difficult, you know, when I think of where I've come from or where I've been to always like, "Do I always have to be the one stepping out of something?" Like here somebody is just like step in [laughter], but seriously, seriously. But having said that, having said that, not being -- I want to tell you, one of the things I love about this position because then I also realize what people don't know, and a lot of folks don't know but what a lot of folks are willing to do, are ask the difficult questions, and you're not afraid to say, "I don't know something."

And -- but if you get that mentor like I mentioned before, you get that mentor, he or she can help you maneuver your career and that's what's so important. And that's why I have such a passion for the NUPF program; it's not for any, you know, glory or anything on my part, because I look at what some of our students are able to accomplish with -- and I think I come from that thing; I come from very little. But some of these kids come from a situation that I know I would not have been able to maneuver myself out of. I mean, when Cece -- have you ever hear a Cece's story, it's so passionate, but the fact that he is where he is today and I'm like, "Damn." And I think I've had issues.

So people like that really encourage me, but when I see students who are able to do that and be successful, it's amazing to me. There's a saying "To whom which is given much is required." But I always measure a person's success not by where they are, but what they -- where they started to get to where they are, because everybody doesn't start at the same start line, you know. And there are some people that I've met and I may not tell them this, yeah, you should be successful. You had everything right in your hands -- [laughter] damn, but you ought to be successful." And when you're not, trust me, I may not say this, I'm like, "Well, you really f...d up [laughter]," you know. But when I see -- but when I can see -- when I can see that those cards have been stacked in your favor, and not that you take advantage of it in a negative sense, but you haven't taken advantage of the opportunities, I'm troubled by that. I'm troubled by that.

I think that's about all that I can share. I want to open up for certainly some questions. I mean, you know, you can ask me questions about what I do, and my job and all that, and how I view the institution,

all that kind of stuff. But I want to leave some time for us to spend answering that, okay? So open up for questions.

Yes?

Audience member: In receiving your doctorate, I heard a rumor that he made a remark the fact [inaudible].

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Oh. I had take out a little -- well, I had to take out a loan, you know. I'm still paying for my doctorate degree and it's probably a little sore spot, too [laughter], if you ask me, because my feeling is -- my feeling truly is -- well, first of all, when I was at FIU, I put a year and a half into a doctoral program. They had their own campus and it was free. So, again, do your research, so when I came here, you know, they didn't have one, so they would fund your master's, I believe. There's a program out there and I would say that [inaudible] something about the program. What is it, \$5000?

Audience member: Tenure for three years.

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Tenure for three years? The truth of the matter is, I didn't think it's going to be that long. I was like -- because I think -- I think what happens, at least my understanding was that if you didn't work to pay it off, you would have to end up paying them back. And my feeling was, to be honest with you when I first came onboard, "I'm going to get this and I'm gone." So that. But the other thing I didn't know with -- at USC you had to do a residency program. And I've saved up vacation to do that. I should've been smart enough to ask, you know. You know, for me it was, you know, staff development, perhaps that could've been paid for. But, again, I didn't know the questions to ask, and I should've done a better job at that. So partly, I'm partly to blame. But that commute to Sacramento every weekend, I mean, certainly a help could be or, you know, we'll find you a hotel room. You know, I would leave here on a Friday, go to class, come back Friday night, go back down Saturday morning, get on the road and you do that for -- yes, you know. I mean, if you have family down there. I don't know anybody down here, you know. But if you have those -- certain things I think any institution can do to help people, you know, you'll have more people willing to do it. And we're in a difficult location. There's nothing really close. I mean, now -- well, even Sac has a program but you still have to go there, so there's certain things that I wish I had asked or were available. [Inaudible].

Audience member: [Inaudible].

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Uh-huh.

Audience member: What's been your roughest challenge?

Dr. Pedro Douglas: I would say that the toughest piece -- well, first, let me say what's been a great piece and this is not just because Drew's my boss or my supervisor, and I don't use the term "boss" loosely because there are some people that I certainly report to, I would never call them my boss. He's -- you

know, but I know that he's passionate about what he does and so while I may not always agree with decisions, I always know they come from a good place and I think that's important. But I think the most difficult piece is the fact that there's not enough of us at the table. You know, we're trying to explain -- you know, I really am worried when I hear senior administrators saying that, "Okay, well, you know, I'm out of here, you know, three or four or five years." I'm like, "Oh my God! This place is going to totally shift." And I know that our brothers and sisters all across campus whether they'd be black, Latino or white, whatever, I mean, they have passion for our students, but I do know the role that we play just when students walk across campus and see us. I know the role I played when I was a student even if I didn't get a chance to speak to you, to see somebody like, "Okay, there's somebody I could go to." It makes a difference, so that's troubling. While I also think that sometimes, you know, other administrators, you know, at -- you know, say, at the AVP level or director level and up, voice their concerns about what may or may not be happening. Again, as we see a decrease in the number of people of color, I think that voice is getting smaller and smaller. Not that we're not being as vocal as we need to be, but there's fewer people. And so that's going to be a concern and I think it already is. So that's a big piece of it and, you know, if I -- like if I want to move on to another job, I mean, there would be a sense of guilt that I have like, "Damn, I'm leaving a job. You know, I'm leaving something undone." So that does trouble me.

Audience member: I have a question.

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Yes?

Audience member: You made that comment when you were speaking about -- you said everything just sort of fell into place, and I would probably guess that it's not giving yourself enough credit and I'm wondering if you could speak to a little bit about what attributes you have that you think helped.

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Oh, yes! I think I'm great -- no just joking [laughter]. No, no, no. You know what, I think one thing is, number one, I've never been afraid, again, to step outside my comfort zone. Trust me, when I moved from the East Coast to here, this is -- you're not going to believe this. One of my sisters said to me, "You're breaking up the family." I'm like, "What are you talking about?" You're breaking -- because my family is so close knit that, you know, first of all it was like, "How dare I move from Connecticut to Florida where I can't be like within a couple of hours ride from my home in New Jersey? But to go to California?" And even now that I'm in California, my -- one of my sisters have been out twice and it wasn't really for a social visit, it's because I was taking on -- you know, I was taking care of my nephew, they got into so much trouble, we figured we'd bring him to California. So when you leave, you know, the group, its like, "Okay, you got to do all the traveling." So, you know, whenever -- I used to go back when I first came here twice a year. Now, I go back once a year because it's four of us. But, it's like you stepped out so you have to come back, and the expectations that you will. So that's one step you get outside of your comfort zone.

The other piece of it, I think I have prepared myself well, you know, because I never wanted to be said that something was given to me, you know. "Oh, he wasn't qualified [inaudible]." No, I, you know, went

to school. I was a good student. I went -- earned my MBA and I went back and earned my doctorate, and I think that I did all the things that I, you know, needed to do so that at least I could be a viable candidate for something. And, you know, and if not here, somewhere. And, you know, it's really interesting because all the things that you do at an institution when you get those opportunities. For example, when I was on the -- remember the Avian bird flu, you know, that we had to come up with the whole contingency plan, you know, the health center is a lot to manage but then, I don't even know who the VP was at the time, to be honest with you. "Well, can you chair this?" I'm like, "Really?" You know, but you do it because that's what we do. So I did it and I didn't realize how those things were going to help me, you know, down the line because certainly at the time I really felt that this is really a pain in the neck, you know, considering what I had to do.

But, as you move up in your career, you realize those things and everything you cannot put a monetary value in. You have to talk it up as, "Okay, this is going to help me, you know, a couple of years down the road." I mean, certainly, you know, when we think of all -- and I think of student affairs mostly but I know other folks do and so, please, I'm not discounting all that we do. But the fact that we do all that we do for students, you know, beyond our jobs. You know, I'm thinking of evaluations, most of you, well, we get out sending evaluations, anyway, if you didn't do that. But that's what you do in addition to, knowing that you don't have to do it, knowing that you're doing it because you want to pay it forward, somebody did it for you. I mean, one of the reasons why I do it, it shouldn't take -- I'm looking at some of the students, the first students that came into the NUFPP program, some of those first students now are working with their doctorates, and it's like I realized a couple of things, "Damn, I'm getting old [laughter]." But secondly, but we had some really [inaudible] students that were very capable, and that are really passionate about higher education and are really willing to give back.

And I have one student that sticks out in my mind, I know some of you, all the folks remember Cathy [inaudible]. Well, Cathy became a NUFPP student. I mean, it annoyed to me to know and because we never come to meeting on time -- never came to meeting on time. And I don't mind saying some of this stuff because her life is totally changed now. I mean, I was even skeptical if she would even get to the program because at the time you had to have like, a 2.2 and she was this b-a-r-e-l-y getting there. But got into the program and just -- you know, there's very few people that amaze me. She really amazed me. Finished up, she did a summer internship. Then she went to -- she was working at a two-year institution and while she was there, you know, her GPA would not get her into a grad program but what she did, she took an online class at Indiana State University and just aced the course, got to know the dean, got into the program, got a full ride there ISU, earned her master's. I mean, that's a great success story and we talk about success stories and she could -- what we've done, and trust me, it wasn't just me, there was a whole lot of folks -- she was here long time before I got here. And now she's at, you know, Ohio State University and director of her program.

I mean, I think that is good, I mean, validation for what it is that we do and our commitment, and it's never the issue of you wanting to hear students say "Thank you." The "Thank you" is when you see what they do and the fact that they are paying it forward, and I know it sounds kind of like a cliché, but it's seriously. And just so you know, the reason why that program was initiated was because the program

now is about 25 years old but years ago when it first started, the president of NASPAA was an African American guy and I know -- and this was before I was even in higher education. But, he initiated the program because he knew that if they didn't do something to encourage, underrepresented students to consider careers in higher education, that we would end up in the same place we were like in the late '60s or early '70s or higher education when you think of really, almost all over but that director level and up really was all white and mostly a lot of white men.

NUFP was put in place to address that, number one, to take a student and say, "Have you ever considered this?" I mean, what students will say to me right now that are coming to the program. I say, "What do you want to do?" "I want to do what [inaudible] is doing." "Well, do you really know what is it that she does?" But, you know, what I want to do is Cece does and they're saying stuff like that because, I don't really know but maybe you can tell me. Now, I don't hold true to the program because initially if you all remember, what I would do is send students to, you know, intern with you for a while. But I found that with a lot of our students need because a lot of our students work. They work in those areas so they kind of know they have a better idea, but what if our students need help with -- they need a lot of help with applying to grad school [inaudible]. And you know, I guess all students feel, you know -- shit, I hate to hear that, excuse me. I hope you do a lot of beeping [laughter]. I hate to hear the word "No," but the issue is, all of us have heard "No." Do you think every school I applied to I heard a "Yes" from? No, absolutely, I mean every job. But the fact of the matter is, you're not afraid to hear that. And when they get out of that fear, because nobody has to know about the "No" except who? You. All we're going to know about is the school that said "Yes." And I think when they begin to realize that, then it's like, you know what? I can do it. And it's amazing what they're able to do, so... Yes?

Audience member: [Inaudible] things a lot around the idea of service, that the flipside of that is leadership. And so I'm wondering if you talk a little bit about your style of leadership and how you developed that.

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Okay. Well, I would say -- I want to say servant leadership, but then I want to make sure that I know what it means. And to me, is, you know, my goal for the people -- and the people that report to me know that I want them to be successful. I never want to be a hindrance to whatever they're -- you know, whatever their goal is. When I sit down with the folks, I assume that Cece knows, you know, his area. I'm not the, you know -- I'm not the professional and the know it all. So, again, when I learn, when -- if I talk to [inaudible] about EOP, [inaudible] is the EOP guru. So I assume, you know, my goal is not to come in and second guess decisions. The only thing I may say is like, "Well, why was a certain decision made?" We talk about the funding. So I think assuming that the people that are in the positions they are, are the right people until they prove you differently. Okay. And the other piece of it and it sounds a little repetitive but I lead -- my leadership is kind of from a humble perspective knowing that I don't know it all. I'm bright enough to learn. I mean, I don't think there's too many things, you know, that go in here that I can't learn, but I also understand that there's -- we did it -- I think we do a good job of putting people in positions to do a good -- excuse me, to do a good thing. So I would say servant leadership and also leading from a perspective of humility. Yes?

Audience member: There are some of us that are, you know, [inaudible].

Dr. Pedro Douglas: [Laughter] Oh my gosh! Yes.

Audience member: [Inaudible] [laughter] appropriately explore your passions in the workplace to find that great job?

Dr. Pedro Douglas: Well, you know, I always tell people, first of all, right now while -- you know, while you're young, this is the time at least from my perspective that, you know, it's easier to move around in positions. Even on -- even to different campuses, I mean, if you were to tell me that, you know, I know that Chico State is the place that I want to round up my career. And my comment to you would be -- especially today, you know, the way things are, well, I want you to try some other campuses and you can always come back here, always leave the campus with their reputation intact, always leave your reputation, something you cannot pay for, leaving with your reputation intact and go experience other things. So even if it's in different departments, if you are geographically bound but you want to explore certain things, ask if you can be, again, mentored by somebody in an area that you think might be an area of interest.

Would you be willing to work your regular 40 hours at a job but also add no additional salary, spend like maybe, you know, 10 hours a week at another department just to learn the function of that department? I mean, you don't have to answer that but I think that's a question to all of us. Or, are we always looking for "well, if I do this I need some more money." I mean, because it says something about a person who wants to do the latter, you know, you always want to put a dollar amount on it, or a person who just wants to learn just for future -- you know, to explore certain goals or objectives. So I think that's a way to do it. I think that just sitting down with people, you know, just interviewing folks in areas that you think may be areas that you're interested in is well worth doing. And those -- just to name a few. Mm-hmm. Any other questions? Yes?

Audience member: So what do you enjoy the most about your job?

Dr. Pedro Douglas: What I enjoy most about my job, I think the people I work with. Well, first of all, those -- how many people here by show of hands work in the division of Student Affairs? All right, well -- all right, that's good. Student affairs, I cannot imagine working any place else, you know, for the exception of, you know, in student affairs. Luckily we have our immediate office, you know, we have some great folks there, and I have a great person, I work with Kathleen and I realize today how important a good support person. I don't underestimate that at all. And I can remember -- I'm trying to think of, Garfield [assumed spelling] -- Professor Garfield when I was working in my -- when I was in grad school, he had said, "Wherever you go, you get to know whether that's important because they can either have you fall flat in your face, and especially if they have a history, you know, they have a history to the environment." So one of the faults I have, I don't say "Thank you" enough, I don't say "I appreciate all that you do" enough; I take her out to lunch a lot to make sure I make up for all those

things [laughter], but -- no seriously, but on the very serious note, you have to know, those folks, you know, if they -- they will have your back. So I think that's a good thing.

I'm so glad when we are able -- I'm proud of our division because I think we really do a lot to help make all students successful. We try to figure out a way to do with nothing, but what we do for underrepresented students is just amazing. There was an article years ago, I think it's even before I came to Chico, but it was in one of the NASPAA publications. And the lady who wrote the article, she was a president at a college. But she became a president not from the normal way, she was a VP of Student Affairs, you know, very rarely do they become presidents in colleges. And she was saying in her article which is very true, how that position has prepared her so well to be a president because when budget times hit, right, the areas that get hit the hardest are, say, student affairs. I would say student affairs because usually advancement is such a small piece of the pie and so student affairs really gets -- hit hard. So you figure out a way as a -- there's an old church song "To make a way out of no way," you figure out a way to make a way out of no way; and she said when she became the president of her institution, and budget cuts were hitting, academic affairs was having a fit she said -- but she had known from student affairs, "Oh no, you figure out a way to do this and it's all doable." So I think that I love the fact that as a division, we always try to figure that out and so I would say those are the things that I admire the most about, you know, my job and the folks I work with and the division I work in.