

Oral History Interview Transcription:

- Narrator: Gabriela Miramontes
- Interviewer: Saul Oliveros
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Saul Oliveros: Okay, thank you for taking the time out of your day to do this oral history interview. Just to start things off, I just wanted to start with a basic introduction. Could you tell us a little bit more about yourself, what you do, and where you're from?

Gabriela Miramontes: So I'm Gabby Miramontes. I use she/her pronouns. I come from a family of immigrants. So my parents immigrated from Mexico and ended up in Long Beach, California. So not too far from here. It's about 2 hours north of San Diego, and then I moved here because of college. And then I just ended up staying here after. I'm 1st gen, and now, like, 1st gen professional and I'm currently working under Trio Student Support Services as the Assistant Program Coordinator.

Saul Oliveros: Okay, thank you for sharing that. Could you just tell us a little bit more about what it, what it was like growing up in Long Beach?

Gabriela Miramontes: Yeah, so I did move around to a couple of different parts of Long Beach. But I ended up in North Long beach most of the time, and I would say it was pretty diverse, like, I think it's predominantly a Latina community. But I was always like around other folk from different backgrounds. So I would say, it's pretty diverse. There's a lot of like other like immigrant families around in the neighborhood. I know some places where some folk would say that. It's like not the safest place to be, but it was like what I called home, and I didn't really like feel like it was very unsafe for me at the time. I like went to the school that was nearby. So a lot of the times I would like either walk to school or use my bike or just, you know, hang out with the other kids in the neighborhood bike riding and stuff. So I would say it was. It was a pretty good experience for me. I think it was. I started to appreciate it even more. Once I went to college and I came to La Jolla just because it was so different from what I knew. And like, you know, La Jolla was like up on a hill. And like at that time we didn't have the trolley to like get to different areas of San Diego. And so I just felt really out of my element. And yeah, it was kind of a shock to see so I'm glad that that's available now. And I have more appreciation for Long Beach. I know now it's like very different like when I go back. It's I feel like it's very gentrified. So like sometimes I feel like a stranger in my own hometown cause. A lot of things have changed. And like, there's buildings that we're never there before, like high rise are being built. So it's kind of interesting all those changes. Cause sometimes I think about like oh, if I were to want to to go back that it would just be well, it is very like an attainable like you know, to get a house there especially like I don't know being from there. It's kind of kind of a surprise.

Saul Oliveros: All the changes throughout the years, and you mentioned just seeing La Jolla and drawing that contrast. It was a little bit of a shock at first.

Gabriela Miramontes: Exactly.

Saul Oliveros: And can you just tell us a little bit more about the TRIO organization, such as the resources that you offer and the populations that you serve.

Gabriela Miramontes: Yes. So trio, that's kind of big like question. Because so like, the trio student support services program that I'm part of it's 1 of 8 programs that are under that was actually under TRIO programs. As a whole, they were a product of the Higher Education Act in 1965, and so like the goal was to help support like students from disadvantaged backgrounds to hopefully like attain higher education or post-secondary education. So like the first 3 programs, which is like where the TRIO name comes from is from educational talent, search upward bound, and then student support services. So it's kind of like the origins of the name and the program. We're basically like funded in 5 year cycles. So like, right now, we're actually trying to, or actually, next year is gonna be the last year of Margaret. And so we have to reapply and hopefully get funded for another 5 years. And it's all like through the Department of Education. So like our funding is subject to change, based off of like you know, laws that go into place. And so that's kind of been somewhat of an issue like over the years. Because. you know, it's a it's a program that's like proven to work and support folk from marginalized backgrounds. But sometimes it's not always like prioritized in in terms of funding. But yeah, we do what we can with what we have. And then the program here, which is one that I work for. We support first-generation, college students, low-income students, and students with disabilities. And most recently, actually starting last year, we have been able to start serving undocumented students,

so I'm really happy about that. Some of the things that we offer, we're kind of like a transition program for folks. So like we start over the summer with our summer experience. It's like a 1 weeklong program where students can get exposed to like different resources on campus and build community. We also are open to both first-years and transfer students. So sometimes, like the transition programs are focused mainly on 1st years. And so we're fortunate that we get to serve both populations. So we get a good mix of folks from like all, all different backgrounds, and locations. But I think something that differentiates the program is that we can serve like students all the way from when they 1st get here up until graduation. So I think that that's good, because we can just support them along different parts of their journey. So whether that's like looking for their 1st job or helping them apply to grad school like, we're kind of there. All the steps. In that journey. Some of the resources we offer are mentoring. So a big component is like peer-to-peer support. So we have tutors that support our students, and they're also peers as well as peer mentoring. Like the 1st years that come in. They get a mentor for 2 years, and then transfers that come in. They have a mentor for their 1st year. Especially in that crucial time, because it's like, you know, I'm sure that maybe you can relate that it can be very difficult when it's like your 1st year at UCSD. That's probably like the most I says, on your mind to maybe question your belonging at UCSD, and all of that. And so we we get to provide that and then advising. And we also have free printing for students and then we also loan laptops, because I know, sometimes, like, you know, you can't really control stuff that might happen throughout. And it's not so rare that someone will have computer issues. And it'll be like right before finals and need that support. So we try to have things that that might be useful for folks to borrow in the meantime.

Saul Oliveros: Those are all amazing resources. And I'm sure that just seeing the growth of students from the point that you first connect with them all the way up to graduation or to the point where they're finding their 1st job. I'm sure that's also very fulfilling and gratifying work.

Gabriela Miramontes: Yeah, that's my favorite. Well, yeah, one of my favorite parts actually, cause I can see just like the transformation. I know when I came in. It was we had our summer experience online. And so it was virtual and it was pretty different from what I had experienced before, because when I was a student in the program, I was a mentor. And so I saw, like multiple summer experiences in person. And so we did have to shift things a little bit, but it was good to see that we were still able to like. Bring all that all of the students together, and kind of. know, try to build community in in the way that we could. And so I'm seeing some of those students graduate this year. So that's pretty awesome. it's just I think it's it's really fulfilling, like you said.

Saul Oliveros: Absolutely. And so just on to the next question, how did your upbringing or just your previous experiences influence, your decision to serve as the assistant program coordinator at the trio or within TRIO?

Gabriela Miramontes: I mentioned it a little bit, but I was actually.

Student of students, you know, trusted and support services. So I think it was just really helpful to find other students that I could relate to because I had come in as an engineering major, and in my class site didn't feel like there was a lot of Latina folk, and especially like women in engineering as well, and like those beginning classes that I needed. Like the, you know, Chem

6A, 20A, All of that. It goes through like huge lecture halls, and so it was hard to feel connected with other folks and I just felt like I wasn't really like prepared and so I would say that I think that led me to question like my belonging in that major, but also my like upbringing kind of made me want to persist regardless if it was like, if I was questioning like oh, should I be in this major like? It's not really aligning with me right now. I still felt like, because my parents, had sacrificed so much to like for me to be here I felt like if I switched out then I know that they would have supported me, but I just felt like a little bit of a letdown. And so I feel like a lot of folk can relate to that. And eventually, I did end up switching majors. So I graduated with a psychology degree. But that was a really hard like change to come to and I think a lot of like. I see it now with a lot of the students that come in. They have very similar experiences because of that. Like, you know, all the students that come in. They're like first-generation and low-income. So a lot of their parents also didn't have the opportunity of education. And so there, there kind of is that pressure to you know, want to do what they couldn't or that they weren't allowed to rather cause they could. But they just didn't have the opportunity so I think that influenced me because I had many experiences, especially at the beginning of being at UCSD where I thought about leaving altogether and I'm thankful that this program was available because the the staff actually like noticed that. And they were like, Hey, like, you know. They brought me in and told me about different things that I could do, like trying different classes, even if it wasn't necessarily related to my major, just to see if there was things that interested me. And then also reaching out to community. So I got involved in a few organizations on campus, and that, like, you know, changed things completely for me. And so I think I learned a lot in kind of all those struggles. And so those experiences made me want to come back and just do the same for for students that come from similar backgrounds.

so yeah, that's kind of what what made me want to come back and serve at UCSD.

Saul Oliveros: Thank you for sharing all of that. Yeah, it also resonates with me. I'm also 1st generation and just kind of feeling, almost like an imposter syndrome or feeling like not belonging. It has a huge impact on your academics, because other students are able to just, you know, that's all that they know. Whereas for us we kind of have to out of our shell, or just really have additional barriers to overcome. You also mentioned that you got involved with some organization. So that kind of segues to the next question, which is what kind of connections do you have with the Raza Resource Centro, or even the Student Affirmative Actions Committee (SAAC) previously as a student, and now as an alumni.

Gabriela Miramontes: so the soon affirmative actions committee the org that I was part of, which was MEChA or is one of the orgs or the SAAC orgs and so my involvement first started as a GBM. And that was, I think, like a critical point, because like, I said, that was like around the time where I was trying to like find community and really questioning whether I wanted to stay at UCSD. And so in MEChA I found, like other folk that were, you know, identified as LatinX and in those GBMs I feel like it allowed me to explore my identity a lot. So learning about what it means to to, you know, be a Chicana, or to be someone who like values, activism, or what social justice even, is like all of those things I didn't know coming in and so I feel like that was a space where I was able to kind of grow a lot in learning about my different identities and how that influences our broader context. So it was really educational for me, and I really like was able to make some close friendships from there. And so later in my 1st year I joined as a board member. And so I was the publicity chair. So you know, chaired different MEChA

events online, and tried to keep like a centralized place where folks could like find find us and get involved. And I think it was, you know, like a really big commitment to to be like on board, especially as a 1st year I think. I kinda like jumped into it, but it taught me so much. And I wanted to also, just like, you know, learn a lot from other community members there and in making like GBMs, there's frequently like collaborations with the stack org. So we would sometimes make like joint GBMs we were frequently in collaboration with different SAAC orgs, so that we could just like, involve, like the members from both communities, to kind of like mingle, and not just be like isolated in MEChA so that's kind of how it was involved with SAAC. I was also very like involved with the cross-cultural center as well, like a lot of the SAAC orgs have a pretty strong relationship with the CCC and I was an intern there. So I was kind of connected with student work sometimes with like, you know, because we would close the center sometimes. And so we would get to see, like all the different orgs that would come and use a space with the Raza Resource Center. I would attend some of the events that the RRC provided sometimes we had, like MEChA programming there at times, like, I know one on one time we had, like our retreat in one of the rooms, and you know it was a really cool space, because there was a lot of like books that were were there, that from like Latina authors. So it's just nice to see, like a space on campus. That you know, felt like home. So I think a lot of like, you know, the resource centers. And then the organization I was part of Metra really felt like a home away from home. And as well as OASIS, which is where the TRIO SS program is housed under.



Saul Oliveros: Okay. And just in terms of collaborations. What changes or additional collaborations between TRIO and other organizations within UCSD, would you like to see just so that the communities are better served?

Gabriela Miramontes: Well, I know that there's a lot of like departments on campus that, we do collaborate with already, especially for like our summer experience like that program. It would, you know, not be able to happen without a lot of folks coming into like present about the different resources. I think it would be cool to even. I mean, this might not be like something that is possible now, because our program got kind of big and space might be a little limited.

Gabriela Miramontes: But to actually have the programming in those centers. So for example, if we had well, they, the basic needs hub usually comes and presents to our students and sometimes, like the students like, they'll get that information. But there's so much going on that week like it's nice to go like physically to that space. I think at that point it's a little bit more like ingrained in their memory like, oh, like I'm walking by, you know, week one in fall and then walk by the hub. And you're like, oh, that's where I can go to, you know, get some fresh fruit, or you know, whatever you might need in that moment. So I think that was good. I think this year, actually, we were able to do something like that at the Raza Resource Centro, and we have really enjoyed that, because we were a large group, we were able to split it in half. There was like about 30 students that were upstairs with Monica doing like a tour of the Centro, and then the other half was downstairs with Dr. Padilla kind of learning about the different services offered at the RRC. So. It was nice to have like that walkthrough, and to see where it's at since I think like coming in. Folks are just like, you know, campus is so big and so where things are it's kind of difficult. So I think it's that was something that I'm hoping to to keep doing just to have

folks like really know where things are at, so that when they need those resources they kind of already know where to go.

Saul Oliveros: Sometimes they have to look online. And obviously just the college student lifestyle, you're already so overwhelmed with classes and maybe other responsibilities where, even if you really do need resources sometimes, it's that additional barrier, not knowing where to go or where to find it. So, that that would benefit students greatly.

Gabriela Miramontes: I, for example, I know sometimes, like many places, many centers like they'll have like dedicated study areas, or like even a shared kitchen. And so that's really like helpful for folks to just like even be like, oh, well, I can go study like at this place instead of Geisel, or like, maybe study with, like other community members. And I think it's takes it to another level to actually see that space, because, being at the the RRC. And like the new location it was just very cool to see, like the use of the space, and like where the computers are. So I think, that kind of like inspires folks to be like, okay, well, like, I can come up here to study and like it doesn't have to be like I have to reserve it, or or even like the shared kitchen space, like, I know that there was a lot change that had changed from the old spot where the RRC was at. I think it it kind of like makes the invitation a little bit easier to accept, just to be like, Oh, wow! Like this is like, not that far, you know.

Saul Oliveros: Yeah. And the Raza Centro also has the benefit of kind of being like in a hub of other student centers or resource centers.

Gabriela Miramontes: Yeah, that's true. Cause y'all are connected. Or the RRC is connected to the transfer hub, I believe. So, you know, if you're kind of like in that area already in your transfer like that would be a really great place to kind of get some resources from both spots.

Saul Oliveros: Exactly. That's all I had. Do you have anything that you wanted to end the interview with? Again, thank you for your time and for participating in the oral history interview. And on top of that, thank you for what you do, just being a 1st generation Latino. I also. I'm very appreciative of that just because there are a lot of barriers being 1st generation and just students are very thankful for any services that that we could benefit from.

Gabriela Miramontes: Well, thank you. I appreciate you saying that.