

Announcer: Welcome to Hancock Conversations, an Allan Hancock College podcast. Join President Dr. Kevin G. Walthers and members of the Hancock community, as they explore the stories behind the people and places that make Allan Hancock College the unique hub for learning that it is today. You're sure to learn something new and even have a little fun along the way.

Kevin Walthers: Hello, and welcome to Hancock Conversations. I'm Kevin Walthers, superintendent/president here at Allan Hancock College. This is the podcast where we talk about all things Hancock, and today we have a very special episode where we have two former superintendent/presidents, Dr. Ann Foxworthy and Dr. José Ortiz. Ann, José, How are you doing?

Ann Foxworthy: Very well, thank you for having me.

José Ortiz: I'm doing great. Thanks for having us. Sounds like it's going to be a good time.

KW: We should have a good time. Now, Ann's still in the community, so I'm going to start with you, José. Why don't you give us a little snapshot of where you are these days, and who you're hanging out with?

JO: Well, as you know, some people know, that when I left Hancock in 2012, I went to take the chancellor position at the Peralta Colleges, which is in Oakland and Berkeley, up in the Bay Area. I retired from there after three years. I couldn't really take more than that. And, but I retired from there and then I figured out I couldn't afford to live in the Bay Area. So, moved back to the Davis/Woodland area, where I bought a new house, and my wife and I have been enjoying the retirement life. We own a 27-foot Airstream. That is a travel trailer. I was inspired by Betty Miller and her husband, Sam, to do this and since then, we've been traveling pretty much all over the Western United States in a travel trailer. We joined a club of Airstreamers. We just got back from a three-week caravan of 20 trailers up the Oregon coast. In California, we started in Crescent City, which was full of smoke from the fires, but we eventually were able to make our way out of California and into the Oregon coast, where it was virtually clear of smoke, and that put a damper on some of our activities. We really had a good time going up the Oregon coast, which I had never done before. And we ended up on the way up to Astoria. And then we kept going up the Columbia River to a place called Cascade Locks, which is the end of our caravan. And then, after that we made our way home, and we stopped in Ashland, which we've done in the past. And you know Ashland is, I guess the big brother of PCPA. And, but they too are being affected by the pandemic, most of the theatre schedule was canceled. And probably still canceled until things get a little better. But, so that's been pretty much my activities, because I try to stay healthy, stay away from the pandemic hotspots, and I live in an area where I'm part of the daily swim club, so I used to swim before the pandemic, now everything's changed. But I'm a swimmer, I'm a cyclist. I try to stay fit. I've actually, my wife and I have switched to a plant-based diet. We no longer eat meat, we're now vegans. And I feel as healthy as I have my whole life I did, so, we're doing well. And actually I'm going down to the Central Coast next week, to do some camping and cycling out of Arroyo Grande. You know I used to live in Arroyo Grande.

KW: That's right, yeah.

JO: And I know that area very well. I hope to stop by Hancock during that time, but anyway that's pretty much all we're doing.

KW: You know, you've got to get a special permit because we only allow a certain number of vegans into Santa Maria on any given day. So ... (laughter)

JO: That's right.

KW: Well, I tell you when we're having ... back in the day when we could have everybody on campus, we started bringing out a vegetarian group, and I like to walk around the line and say you know, 'There's a line for vegetarians and a line for Americans.'

AF: You're bad. (laughing)

JO: Well, don't tell Jim Glines I'm a vegan.

KW: So Ann, you're out in the Santa Ynez Valley, and been very active with a number of events out there. Why don't you give folks a little taste of what you've been doing, if they haven't been keeping up with you.

AF: Well, my husband and I, until the pandemic, always did quite a lot of foreign travel, elaborate travel that we planned together and I think we lived a very rich life down here, meaning me still, and of course drinking Lucas & Lewellen wine. But yes, I well I've been on two nonprofit boards, the Wildling Museum and now I'm on the Solvang Theaterfest Board. Solvang Theaterfest owns the Solvang Festival Theater, where PCPA comes every summer, except this one. First time in 46 years, they have not come down here and worked their magic, and added all that wonderful cultural dimension to our community. So it's been really a rather tragic, a tragic summer, in that sense. Well I'm also leading up their capital campaign for \$4.7 million dollars. And that's because the theater is 46 years old, and it's showing it, and to keep it safe and structurally sound and to improve many aspects of it, we really must do the renovation and that's what we're raising the money for. And I'm really excited because today, we just picked up a \$250,000 gift from one of our community members here. And well, a nice part of it was the gift was in memory of my husband Royce, who passed in the beginning of September, and so we've had many other gifts, not that size of a gift. But it just warmed my heart because, so this North County and Santa Maria and Santa Ynez Valley, Lompoc – it's just really wonderful community, and little acts almost every day that make you realize what wonderful people are here, and they've always, I was always involved with the foundation. In fact, when I came to the college, all they did was solicit scholarships, and they did no real fundraising. And so when the board asked me if I would create a community board and start fundraising, and we had our first fundraiser, capital campaign for \$90,000 and the new community boards, and think, 'Oh my gosh, you're not going to be able to, we're not gonna be able to raise that much money.' By the end, when I left our last campaign was for \$4 million. So, foundation, I'm really pleased to see too how beautifully you carried that on, Kevin, and to be doing the \$10 million Promise campaign and just, I mean that's what it takes, you never have enough money just from your tax dollars and such, so I'm real pleased to see that you've carried on that tradition.

KW: No, it's been it's been a great legacy that I inherited from both of you, in that the college had all the tools in place and were functioning well, and you know we're blessed to have a good budget and a board that focused on students. You know, I talk to other presidents throughout the state and their board members are fighting with each other or fighting with the president and, you know, our board members come in and take care of it. And I think that really has to do with, you know, kind of the training that that you guys gave them over the years. So I'm grateful for that because my job is a lot easier because you guys were here.

AF: Well I think we were always left with a serious board. I was the same way, I hear these stories about other boards and just shake my head. Thank goodness we have really good people for board members.

KW: So José, how long were you in Peralta before you realized you made a terrible mistake?

JO: I don't think I made a terrible mistake, you see I had some ulterior motives to go up there. One of them was to be near my children and my grandchildren. So, that really worked out in my favor. But I really wanted to retire when I was at Hancock, and live the rest of my days in Arroyo Grande. But by going up to Peralta kind of shifted my thinking and my plans, and of course, with my wife, Carmen, she wanted to be with the grandchildren so we ended up staying up here. And Peralta, you know, is a bigger institution that has four colleges, and it has about 27,000 students. And then, there's also the local politics you have to deal with, with Oakland, and Berkeley, and what have you. I won't get into any of that, but it was a fun time. The only thing I didn't like about it, mostly, and I knew going in, is when you're a chancellor, you're really away from students. And my dedication to community colleges really had to do with the students, creating access and creating programs that would make them successful. So at Peralta, I did much of the same thing. But unlike Hancock where I could walk over to the cafeteria and say hello to students, or walk over to a science lab and say hello to faculty, I didn't do much of that at Peralta because they had four colleges that were all spread apart. That was a downside to being a chancellor, but of course being an administrator was probably a culmination of my career. And unlike at Hancock, we had a seven-member board of trustees. And when you have that many trustees, there's a lot of juggling that goes on, and a lot of hand-holding. I'm not sure which. It was an interesting time, and I enjoyed it, but I was also happy to retire, and move on. And actually, I'm up here in Davis and Woodland area, and I'm working closely with the president of Woodland College and Yuba Community College District. I'm not sure I'd call myself a mentor, but they ask me to be a guest every once in a while. I did a workshop with the administrators, that sort of thing. And then I'm also working with some consultants, I'm a consultant behind the scenes, on doing institutional planning, student success initiative, equity issues. So, I keep involvement, I keep my finger on the pulse. But most of the time, I'm just living a good life, as Roger Welt would tell me.

KW: That's right. We had Roger on a couple weeks ago, and lots of energy from that guy. So, let's think about your time at Hancock and take turns telling a story or two, some event that you remember as being particularly funny or interesting, or whatever you like. So what's your good Hancock story? We'll start with Ann.

AF: Well when I first came in July, I started the year. It was the first All Staff Day, so it was the first time that I walked across the campus, and was going to address the full faculty. And one of the science teachers came up to me and picked me up, and twirled me around.

KW: Oh, jeez.

AF: And I thought, 'Oh, okay this is a little different.' I had to think what a new woman president would do now, but I just laughed and went along with it. And so, it was a very welcoming faculty and staff. They made me feel welcome and at home there fairly quickly, even though I was from outside the area. And I always look forward to the All Staff days. Sometimes I think we made them pretty interesting and fun, sometimes and then other times probably was just more business-like. And I know you do other things on the campus, but that is part of that importance of that climate, with your staff and teachers, as well as the students.

KW: You know what I think is interesting, about Santa Maria in particular, and I think one of the things that you talked about, the generosity of the people here. When I think of Santa Maria in particular, and the people here who really have a sense of place. You know, I'm from Texas and people will tell you that when you meet somebody overseas that's from Texas they don't tell you they're Americans they tell you they're Texans, unless they're from Austin, then they tell you they're from Austin, right. And I think Santa Marians are like that people talk about. They're from Santa Maria and they have a real ownership in the heritage of this town, but they're super welcoming, they're really, really friendly and they bring you into the community. And I think that's a remarkable thing for a community that has the kind of generational history that this one does, that they are very welcoming to everyone. So, José what you got?

JO: Yeah, let me take you back on that sentiment, because you're absolutely right about the Santa Maria community, and actually all of Northern County, as Ann would say, it's all very welcoming. And I guess, my favorite story is actually as soon as I arrived as the new president in 2005, I remember sitting down with Dr. Foxworthy, she was giving me a little transition workshop about the issues that I'll be facing, and who to stay away from, who to befriend, things of that nature. But I remember her telling me, she said 'Oh, by the way, José. No one has told you this but I think the board is going out for a bond.'

AF: And I got it all ready for you, and then I just gave it to you. You just had to get the vote.

JO: Well that's right. So, no one until Ann told me about that I don't know that we were going out for a bond, which was all well and good, except I didn't really have any experience going for bonds. But luckily, we had good people on staff. You know, Betty Miller and Felix, and the foundation director was a gentleman named Tim Fleming, and we also had a bond consultant team, a gentlemen, Jared Morgan, who was with TPWB, as they were bond campaign consultants, out of the Bay Area, San Francisco I believe. So, that the first thing that struck me as a challenge as a new president in 2005. And the bond measure was in 2006, I believe it was the June election. And so it was really a great opportunity for me to meet the community, because that campaign, man. Like most political campaigns, it meant a lot of walking and knocking on doors, and shaking hands, and meeting with the Rotary, meeting with the Elks, and all of the service clubs. And it was really a great opportunity for me to meet the community, and they, of course, to meet me. And during that campaign, it was a good three, four, five months of time, it was almost very exhausting and has to do with not only going out and meeting with people, but also considerable amount of fundraising. And I remember going down to the Chumash. And we were meeting with the Chumash Council, I guess, I'm not sure that they still call it that, but the Tribal Council, and we were asking them for a donation to our campaign. And I remember driving down there with Tim Fleming from Santa Maria, down to the Chumash. And when we get to the Chumash, I said to Tim, I say, 'You know, Tim. I'm really exhausted.' With this campaign, you know it's like, you have to be on all the time. And, you know, you just have to put out your best face and your best effort, when you're asking for money. So Tim turns around and says to me, 'Well you know, Dr. Ortiz, you don't have to be on all the time. You just have to be on this time.' (Laughter) When you go and meet with people. Now that stuck with me for a long time because he was right, you pick your spots when you have to be quote 'on.' And be gregarious, as welcoming, and then at the end, because you're making an ask for dollars, that hopefully they agree with the intent and the success of our students and as it turns out, I forget how much, we didn't get very much, maybe \$50,000 for the campaign. But the other thing that I remember about that campaign is that, with the exception of a few administrators and myself, we didn't have many people doing the legwork. And my recollection is that everyone, they use the term 'slam dunk,'

that the bond was gonna be a slam dunk, because this community loves Hancock College. And I, being new to the community, I wasn't that convinced about this 'slam dunk.' And about a month before the election, I had an all staff meeting, a special session of the all staff. And I told the faculty and the staff that, unlike they, I don't feel this is a slam dunk. And I want to make sure that after the election, I want to be able to look in the mirror, whether I win or lose, that we did the best we could. And I told this faculty and staff, you know, I need you to go out there with me, regardless of whether you think it's a slam dunk or not. So that we put in our best effort to pass this bond. And, lo and behold, people did step forward and you know, we won that election by just the smallest percentage. I think we had to pass 55 percent and we passed at 56 or 58.

KW: Yup.

JO: And it was close. And our colleagues up the road at Cuesta College, they also had a bond that failed. So, that told me that, as much as the community loves Hancock College. It was still a conservative community when it comes to taxes. And you know, you had to prove to them that their investments were going to make a difference. And we did.

AF: It's all about timing.

JO: That's right, it's all about timing, and when we passed that bond, we implemented our construction projects, technology projects, we had great people on staff. And I think the community saw that we were actually doing what we said we were going to do. And then of course, Kevin, you came along to finish up that work. And that's what I'm most proud of. And again, Ann, you're right, you set it up. We carried it out. And I think Hancock is the better for it today.

KW: It is, go ahead Ann.

AF: We had those buildings and it took all this time, and now when you walk on that campus it's been transformed. And finally, they're doing the Fine Arts Complex, so I'm happy about that. And then next year I have to go see.

KW: That's right. The giant trucks are moving dirt and digging holes, even as we speak, it's quite the sight to see and, and it's an exciting time on campus.

AF: Yeah, how exciting.

KW: And of course we have the Boyd gift, and we were able to move up to the top of the state rankings because of the Patty Boyd gift. I'll tell you my story that contributes to that. You know, Felix was our Vice President for Facilities and did a great job with that. And he got an email from the chancellor's office asking for, you know, just a project description and why it was important to the community. And he wrote it up exactly what they asked for when I said, 'You didn't mention the gift,' he said, 'Well, they didn't ask anything about the gift, they wanted to know about deferred maintenance and all those kind of things.' I'm like 'No, no, no, we need to lead with this community supports it, we have a \$10 million gift.' and we weren't expecting to be on the first round the state bond funding for that, and sure enough we get a call from the chancellor's office, and said you're going to be one of the first, I think there were six colleges that were funded that year. And the guy said, 'Yeah everybody was really impressed by that gift,' so that helped us accelerate that project a couple of years, probably three or four years faster than

we were going to get to it. So, it's exciting now to have that going on and now that I get to say I at least have a small part in doing a little bit of that.

AF: Speaking of, I remember the day Patty Boyd came in my office, and told me she was leaving her estate. Well, I'm not going to talk about exactly why, but she had taught piano and so she was, I had didn't know the extent or the amount of the estate, although I knew it was quite sizable. And so it was a really nice, nice memory, and I followed through the years and wondered when that was going to happen and it was a great day then too, when we announced on campus that the gift had been made and then she also gave part of that to PCPA, which was very nice. I have a 'By the Way' story.

KW: Okay.

AF: In fact, the newsletter that the whole time I was there, the newsletter that I would send out about once a month, you've carried on that tradition but the title of my newsletter was, 'By the Way', and the 'By the Way' came from Betty Miller. When I first came, one of my first days on campus, Betty said, 'By the way, Ann, do you know that we have to cut, and I don't know how many millions, but we have to cut millions out of this annual budget?' And it was, that was 1992 and the state had been in a recession. In fact, that's how I bought my house so cheap, because everything had sort of fallen through the floor, in terms of house prices and everything like that, and that had been going on for a while. So that was the big surprise that nobody had mentioned to me, even though I had been selected in January and started in July, you would have thought that I would have heard something about that. So, what it meant for us, was we had a pretty rough first couple of years when I was there, in that we basically had a hiring freeze. We didn't replace positions, other than with just someone temporarily from inside. And some of those eventually we stayed on in the position permanently, and others we opened up when we had the funds. So, it was a not a good time in that sense. But yeah, 'by the way' always stuck with me, and I'm wondering if most people when they go to a new job have some kind of discovery that starts with that phrase.

KW: You know when I got here it was, it was pretty calm. We were, you know, we were kind of coming out of the recession, so everybody was sort of numbed by the recession, I think, and so no surprises on my end, and just a chance to get to know folks on campus and in the community.

AF: I remember when you came in, you had some good budget years there to start with, and I went, 'Damn I retired too soon, I could have had a good budget.' Then it hit my thoughts – 'I'm sure glad I'm not president, in the recession.'

JO: And the pandemic.

AF: Well now, oh my gosh. When I think back to when we had our first capital campaign, the \$90,000, that was for computers to put in faculty offices, and they were going to draw a lot, who was going to be able to have them, because there weren't even any computers in their offices, and mostly they used them for just word processing. And then in those days eventually, we got a Title III grant and we were able to do some cabling so we can communicate back and forth, rather than the Internet, and I think about, what would happen in this pandemic, if this pandemic had happened then. I mean, the school would have just been dead in the water. I mean, without being able to communicate and teach virtually. It couldn't have, we would just have to close up.

KW: Yeah, there would be no way to operate. That is true.

AF: No, no, so that at least as bad as it is, I guess it could have been worse. And that's ... progress.

KW: That's progress. Yeah.

JO: It's like you say, yeah it's all about timing. So, being at the right place or the wrong place at the right time.

AF: Well the college, you know, technology is advanced so much and, you know, poised to be able to do that, is a credit to the college.

KW: Well, you know, in truth I mentioned this earlier you guys were, I mean you were here and Betty was obviously a large part of the budget stability, to where we have reserves and, you know, Larry Lahr is our board chair again and he and I talk pretty regularly about the budget, and we have, we have about \$2 million of our reserve fund built into the budget this year and, you know, Larry said 'Hey, you know, we built this rainy day fund. And it's raining.' We need to make it happen, and so we managed so far not to have to do the furloughs and the things that have happened to other places. And folks are still taking care of students, rotating into their office sometimes or just doing it from home. It's been good to see the faculty and staff kind of rally together to help our students.

AF: Yeah, definitely.

KW: So José, I was gonna tell you now, you know that this college is unique also in that the presidents tend to stay for a long time. And so this year, I passed your years of service. I'm in my eighth year, and you did seven and I think Ann was 10, so I got her in my sight. How many were you?

AF: Fifteen.

KW: Fifteen, I may not make it that long. But, you know, having been here eight years I'm still third from the bottom in longevity. So, it's a hard ladder to climb. So, what were you gonna say José?

JO: No, I was gonna go back to that budget issue, you know, the budgets are so fickle, there are ups and downs all the time and you have to even, even the good years you have to stretch the bad years, and in the bad years you can hope and expect that things will turn around so that's the reality of the policy, I would say, wouldn't you agree?

KW: Yeah.

AF: Absolutely.

KW: And you know what's nice this year is a solid plan. The state this year has realized that, oh, if things are going bad in the economy, probably cutting the community colleges isn't the best place to do that. So, they're trying their best to hold our budget stable and use some deferral tactics. And that's been a real positive. We'll see what happens next year, when you know, I'm sure income tax revenues will be way down.

JO: Oh yeah.

AF: Well, unless you're invested in the stock market.

KW: For the 10 percent of the people that have that, outside of their 401Ks.

JO: Kevin, I have a question. How's the online reality working out for students at Hancock College?

KW: You know, I met with our student leaders today. We've actually set up, we meet regularly and we go sit outside socially distanced so we can actually look at each other, and they were giving it a mixed reviews, but they were appreciative of the faculty that are really trying. One of our math faculty members has recorded all of his lectures. And so the students are supposed to go online and watch the lecture in advance, and then during the class time on Zoom he answers questions and interacts with them and helps them to understand, and I think that's tremendous value that that he brought to that class. But overall the students don't like online learning, and you know I think we've known that for a long time you know, the myth that there's this group of people out there who just want to do everything online is just that, it's a myth. You know, it's nice, online class. You know you can shift your time or do something like that, but students want face-to-face. And I've been telling our community to the extent I can, you know, over Zoom meetings that our college is set up to operate in exactly the opposite way of what you should do during a pandemic. We're designed to bring people into those spaces and be close to each other, and engage, and it's really hard, it's really hard for our students and hopefully we can get a vaccine soon that will allow the students to come back. It's not just our students, as you know our community has so many people living in multi-generational homes that it's not safe for them, you know for grandma and grandpa that they're living with. So it makes it really hard.

JO: I'm sure. It's hard everywhere.

KW: So, well let's wrap up, we'll start with Ann. Do you have final thoughts for our listeners?

AF: Well, I think that I always felt that there are decisions ought to be made, what's good for students. It's a 'students first' attitude, and I am not into the day-to-day operations or anything like that, but I read the newspaper and, you know, see the things that are on television about the college and I really have a very positive impression about what's going on at the college now, in terms of serving students. And I thought, when you started providing food for students, I mean I've never thought of that. I've thought about, we thought about all the making the services available and doing everything we could to assist students and all of that. But I never thought, I mean I never thought that was our mission, that that was obviously the food bank, or something like that. And so, that really warmed my heart to see that kind of support for students. And I congratulate you on having initiated that, Kevin.

KW: You know what, it's such a good program because our students lead it. The whole thing has really been turned into a student project. And now during the pandemic they've expanded that program to not just students, we do students on Wednesday and we do the community on Tuesday, Thursday, both here and at Lompoc, and in Solvang. Since the end of March, our students have put food in 46,000 cars. Imagine what that means. It's like 175,000 people that have got dinner because of our students, and it's an amazing operation. So, we're fortunate.

AF: Well, award-winning.

KW: José?

JO: I thought that meal program you have, I thought it was because you didn't want to bring lunch from home, Kevin.

KW: That's exactly ... our student workers just think that I show up to go to lunch these days.

JOL I think as Ann has alluded to certainly and I'm not in the operations, of course. But you know, it's clear that Hancock College and all community colleges are faced with uncharted challenges. Everything from the pandemic, to budget issues and political issues that are affecting everyone around the state. But I think that to community colleges and Hancock, in particular, that's not out of the running when it comes to dealing with student success. And what makes you know, Hancock, unique to that community. And that is the effort that you and the staff make, along the lines of diversity, along the lines of equity, and now of course the issues of inclusion. And, you know, we still have to deal with accreditation standards, you still have to do with the chancellor's office expectations, and those seem to shift a little bit every year. But Hancock does a great, great job I think, of keeping up with that. But you cannot rest on your laurels, because with the pandemic, with the budget issues, and then with the social justice issues, particularly in the Santa Maria area, you need to expect to see Hancock to be at the forefront of all of those issues. Serving that community and that's why Hancock is successful, that's why the community sees Hancock, and I think you mentioned this earlier Kevin, as the pillar of that community, to keep it united. And regardless of the ethnicities around that community, everyone is united. And I remember when I was there, that it worked for me, and I'm sure it's working for you.

KW: It is, it is a great community and Judge Rogelio Flores, who retired a couple years ago, this is just before the pandemic, he and I had lunch one day and he said, 'There's two things that are critical to the success of Santa Maria and Northern Santa Barbara County. And one was the hospital and the other was Hancock College.' And we're fortunate to have really strong faculty and staff and the administrative team, and especially our cabinet team that, you know Ann, what you said about putting students first, that's the decision point every time, what's best for students. Not what's best for our budgets or not what's best for our work schedule. Let's figure out how we can help students and you know, when you talk community college in 2020, you know, we're a Social Services agency and the state keeps adding more and more social services on top of us. So we're fortunate to have the community support, and the really good folks on campus who are who are committed. So, this has been a long conversation, I appreciate you guys taking time, and I'm truly blessed that, not only for the foundation that you laid that really makes my job a whole lot easier, but I'm really blessed to have former presidents that I consider friends and, you know look forward to seeing you guys when you're when you're in town or on campus, and I just think it's a good legacy that you've left. And I couldn't be happier, that you guys took out some time to talk to the community for a minute. So thanks for being here.

AF: You're very welcome and thank you for inviting me.

JO: I feel the same, thank you for having us, Kevin.

AF: It's a pleasure to just see how well the college continues to serve its community, and it's because of good leadership there, Kevin, congratulations.

KW: Well, thanks. Let's end it there, and say thanks to everybody for listening. This has been Hancock Conversations, your place for all things Hancock. We'll see you on the next podcast.