0:01

Welcome to the valley college connection where John Kawai and scott Weiganad, two valley professors engage in a

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conversation about success with educators and students. Each week they'll sit down with a different guest to find

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out ways each of us have had to plan persevere and overcome to where we are now. The show will also highlight

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resources and services that are working to make a difference at Valley college. We are joined this afternoon by Raul

0:25.

Castillo executive director of the foundation at Los Angeles Valley College. Thank you so much for joining us Raul.

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Oh thank you for having me Scott, thank you John. We've been wanting to talk with you for

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quite some time now so we're really excited to have this opportunity and to be able to hear about your journey to

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Valley College and then to really dig in and get a much richer understanding of the foundation and all the different

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ways that it it contributes to the college and the community. So with that in our typical fashion we like to throw

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out the invitation to our guests to take your story as far back as you'd like to go in terms of how you ultimately got

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here to Valley college, and so if if that journey begins you know in kindergarten and you take us all the way through it.

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That's awesome if you want to jump ahead a little bit that's okay too but it is oftentimes helpful just to hear sort of

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the steps along the way and sort of framing how you got here. Yeah well you know i've listened to a few of the

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podcasts the two of you have done and so i mean I’ll take you way back when uh

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first off I am an alumnus of Los Angeles Valley College it has to start with just

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like a lot of our typical students i mean many families immigrated here

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and my family was among them you know my family immigrated to the united states on listen to this july 4th

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1974 and i remember that first night my dad would came ahead of us and

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got an apartment near echo park and later that night i hear these loud

1:56

explosions and popping and i'm thinking that there was a war going on outside but it was just a fourth of july

2:01

celebration so so that's how it started for us we moved to the san fernando valley in 1977

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i attended a nearby catholic school in high school called st genevieve high school in panorama city when i graduated

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from there i was kind of hoping to enroll in a nearby catholic university

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but my grades just weren't up to par so the other thing too it would have been really really expensive to go to that

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school and so you know i decided that the best and most economical way to go about higher

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education is to attend community college and los angeles valley colleges wasn't

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far from where i grew up in in arlida let me stop you or interrupt you for just a second just to wind it back a

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little bit just for some more details there about that that sort of experience so where did your parents immigrate from

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uh the philippines okay and so when when your family came here did you have other family who was

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already living in the area did you come with siblings what was that experience like that you recall yeah uh so my dad

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came first you know he came here to find a job we were actually supposed to

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live in orlando florida but because my dad had family in san francisco and la

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they convinced him you know you can start a living here there's a lot of opportunities so

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you know he got a job with pacific bell which was part of the

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american telephone and telegraph company att and he got a part-time clerical job at

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the los angeles time because he could type 75 words a minute so that the man worked really hard he

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would get up he would leave the house at six o'clock and come home at nine o'clock at night my mom also worked and

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i have two younger siblings one other sibling also attended los angeles valley college she went on transferred to cal

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state northridge so what was the experience like when you came onto the valley college campus you know

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surprisingly it was a very smooth transition for me it started off with

4:04

visiting the counseling office somebody had recommended to me go visit a counselor and treat your counselor like

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you would a dentist or a doctor visit them regularly you know so that way they get to know

4:17

you they know about you know what you're pursuing and that's what i did and and i i remember the counselor that pretty

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much attended to me most of the time was bruce thomas bruce yeah yeah so that's a name from the blast from the

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past and you know what i remembered about bruce was he had this mullet

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that he wore in in the mid to late 80s so you can never forget who he was you know and i always joke about that with

4:43

him ever since i returned to valley college i said bruce i'll never forget who you were you won't remember me but

4:49

uh you counseled me through my classes and told me what you know how to go about the next steps and

4:55

i told him how grateful i was to him and he's he's like you remember the mullet

5:03

when you were being counseled by bruce when you were here at the college and sort of with that transition that you made from high school too to valley

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college did you have any sense of sort of your major your your future career sort of path inclinations on what you

5:16

wanted to pursue or were you more kind of wide open just exploring you know i was on a fence on a few

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things you know my grandparents had lived with us and being an asian family

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you know they encourage you to be you know a doctor a lawyer an engineer

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you know my grandfather was an engineer so i thought okay um i guess i'll pursue

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that but one of the things i found out was i'm really horrible at math

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so you know and so i was just trying to figure things out i just wanted to get the general courses out of the way

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and figure things out and i eventually came to that and said you know what i have a pretty good

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understanding of you know business economics and i had some great

6:01

instructors at valley college that kind of helped me find my path so to speak an

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economics professor by the name of blaine gunn i mean everybody kind of made fun of him because he was kind of

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other students that kind of hum drum but i was just fascinated by what he was what he was teaching in class

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we had talked about the emergence of the south korean economy and i remember going into his office

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asking for something helpful we ended up talking about something like that for half an hour and i mean he was just

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totally engaging and then there's the power of speaking properly and i learned

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that from a gentleman by the name of jim martini and jack sterk who taught critical thinking classes at

6:44

valley college and then there was the fun fun classes taught by richard

6:49

raskoff you know you know the guy had a hurricane machine a tornado machine in

6:55

his classroom i don't know if you knew that but that was one of the things he used to

7:00

show and demonstrate in his classroom and i always remember that and

7:06

when i returned to valley college i saw him i said do you still have that tornado machine because oh yeah

7:11

absolutely what subject did he teach he taught

7:16

geography i'm trying to think i'm i'm missing i'm forgetting the name of the class but he but i think it was just that's a great

7:22

class if you can remember a lesson more than the name of the class right yeah

7:28

yeah you had some uh some of these kind of you know uh legendary professors at the college with with with richard

7:34

raskoff who was just beloved by you know students and faculty and jim martini you know as well that's that's pretty you

7:40

know bruce thomas is the counselor what what a great time to be at the school and when i returned to valley college

7:46

they were still there yeah you know of course they're retired now you know i learned about the power of writing

7:53

from an english professor named john zunez the guy really challenged you you know i

7:59

never got an a in this class but i always challenge him i mean why why did you do this this way well

8:06

maybe you can change your style to doing this maybe you can talk a little bit more about this so he taught me that you know writing

8:13

having technical writing skills as well as creative writing skills are very important in any work any path that you

8:20

take so these are things these these are people

8:25

that you know really you know it resonated with me i connected with them and i'm

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there a number of other folks that i'm i'm forgetting to mention i mentioned that i was horrible in math i had glenn

8:37

padgett oh he's he told me my first day when i came to

8:43

valley college i walked in and came up to me and said this is my dream job my

8:48

dream job was to teach math with my mentor who was at valley college and yeah he said this is my dream job and

8:55

then you know to be met on your first day the first person to say for a guy who says this is a

9:01

great job you're going to have a wonderful career here you know welcome that was just a great way to start my

9:07

career here yeah it's a lovely man and the thing that was striking was that um

9:12

he has ms and he was a paraplegic he was in a wheelchair right yeah back then

9:20

you know when we're talking about the 80s he always used to come in with these cargo shorts and sandals

9:26

and a hawaiian shirt that was glenn i struggled in his class but you know the

9:31

guy was nothing but encouraging and i think a lot of the professors

9:36

were that way another another class i struggled with was in

9:41

is um uh business law with um dr marielle and pangonis uh

9:48

she's long past but she was there when i retired my assistant introduced me to her and i said oh man this is the tough

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the tough teacher uh that i had and one of the things i remember when i returned

10:01

was she was such a a sweet lady but a very tough uh teacher

10:07

and uh when i first saw when i saw her again she said uh oh it's so nice to meet you

10:15

i heard that you were in one of my classes and i said yes ma'am i was in business law one i said how did you do

10:22

and then my head just went down and i said uh i believe i got a c or c minus in your

10:29

class and you know she looked at me and you she i thought she was kind of

10:36

giving me the once over and looking me down looking you know up and down at me and she says well

10:43

you probably worked hard for that crc minus i'm like what

10:48

and she says let me explain let me guess were you working during when you were

10:53

going to valley college i said yes ma'am let me guess 25 to 30 hours a week

10:59

he says he says you look like a very sharp and intelligent guy and and my classes

11:04

weren't a picnic and i said uh yes they're tough she said

11:11

you probably given what your circumstances are you deserve that c and then she says let me further explain

11:18

there are people that have received a's in my class and i knew they didn't deserve it

11:23

and i said what do you mean i said oh you know i i couldn't prove it but i knew that they didn't deserve that

11:30

a meaning suggesting that there were some students who were who are cheating and ended up getting the a

11:36

because that's how she had to do it that was my reintroduction to dr pangonis uh

11:41

in her own way was encouraging me and you know she ended up being one of our more generous donors to the valley

11:48

college foundation you know she asked me a lot of tough questions as the executive director and part of my job is

11:55

to gain folks trust before they make those very generous donations so yeah

12:01

nothing nothing but praise for the folks who taught me at valley

12:06

college i ended up receiving a degree in economics and an associate's degree in economics bruce thomas told me that

12:13

you're eligible for one or two degrees and i said which ones and he says can i have either economics

12:19

or or business and i said can't i have both it says no you can only choose one

12:25

so later on when i return i i talked to him about that he says you know what i think

12:30

you can actually receive both of them well ron let me let me ask you this how

12:36

you do find education in two-way street and there's some people that you talk about education like how was college and

12:42

i was like yeah i was okay and then there are other people who talk about it and it was a very cherished moment and

12:49

you could tell sort of as we go through these lists of teachers that have touched you it wasn't the grade that

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touched you but the person that tests you what do you think from your side created this

13:00

really strong relationship with these teachers in that you felt so moved like what characteristics or what did you do on

13:07

your side that made this experience so valuable and rich so back in the 80s i don't think i

13:15

appreciated those people as much as i do today i was a 19 year old i was a 19 year old kid

13:23

and i want i just needed to to transfer but

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the thing about those relationships was for some reason after so many years i still remembered

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it you know you know i'm sure that there were other instructors there that i had that were there were terrific

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but those those folks that i just mentioned to you they just stayed in my head even when i

13:47

returned to valley college uh the third day i started as executive director jim martini walks

13:54

in and first thing he says to me hey i heard that you were in my class

13:59

and he said why on earth would you come back to this place

14:05

and of course you know you know he was a kitty of course but that was a the that was a personality of

14:12

jim martini i remembered you know back in in the 80s and you know like like the

14:17

two of you said raskoff martini uh folks like that they just resonated

14:24

they make they connected well with the students you know right off the bat and i don't

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know if it's their humor you know or they just they were just gifted with that with that connection but i would

14:35

surmise to say that you know anybody who's teaching at valley college has that gift of

14:40

connecting to the students and that's why i appreciate you know the work that you know that the

14:46

two of you do because what you say and do in in class you know it may not feel like it

14:53

at times but you do you do make that connection with them and you know there's so many valley college alumnus

15:00

that i have spoken with over the years and i asked them you know

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did you have a great experience at valley college 99 percent of them said yes and they always go back to a certain

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professor you know that that spoke to them so what happened after you left valley college

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did you transfer somewhere or i i did i attempted to go to cal state northridge i was

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accepted there but when i went there turns out all the classes were full so

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and it was the same way at long beach state san diego state san francisco state and finally there was this small

15:39

cal state in carson called cal state dominguez hills and i went down there

15:44

spoke with a counselor i must have listed like 18 or so courses and a guy just looked at me really funny

15:51

because you have 18 classes here and i said yeah which ones are available and he says well all of them are available so

15:58

that's where i ended up transferring i ultimately received a degree in business marketing but my senior year i was hired

16:07

as a marketing intern for the alumni association and i was working in what

16:13

the universities called the development office at the university so the development office

16:19

is involved with a lot of the fundraising activities and so

16:24

that's where things kind of turned turned around for me uh yes i was i was going to be

16:30

graduating with a a business marketing degree but i was just really drawn to the work

16:38

that the folks at the university were doing as as it uh relates to alumni

16:43

relations uh developing those relationships raising money i mean my

16:48

my boss at the time she says you know you're pretty good at this as i said what good at what uh you

16:55

know talking to people talking about the university the needs of the university you're making that connection

17:02

you're involved with this club and that fraternity and you're doing these fundraising events have you ever thought about a career in this

17:09

and i just kind of looked at her and scoffed i mean you mean fundraising and and she says yeah you can you can

17:15

actually make a pretty good career and the thing about it it's a relatively new industry and then i again i chuckled and

17:22

she says what's so funny i said i just never really thought of it fundraising that as a as a career

17:28

because well what have you always thought about it i said well i remember when i was a kid going door to door with

17:34

a milk carton in my hand you know march of dimes doing those kind of things but then i remembered you know when i was a

17:40

senior in high school i was doing you know we had to do 40 hours of they

17:45

call it christian service hours but it was community service hours they wanted us to volunteer at a terrible

17:50

organization and you know and help out and i remember doing that in high school

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with an organization that you folks may be aware of called mend meet each need

18:01

with dignity it's a really great organization here in the san fernando valley and then i said yeah i guess i'd

18:07

be interested in it and my boss kathy then set up a series of informational

18:14

interviews for me that pretty much made me decide this is what

18:20

i want to do with my career i met with a lady named ann lewellen

18:25

who was the executive director of the norton foundation this is peter norton's foundation of

18:32

norton anti-virus yeah i i didn't meet uh peter himself but i i met ann llewellyn the executive

18:39

director of his foundation who her career was as an uh an attorney

18:45

and she became his executive director and she asked me these really really

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cool questions about so tell me you know tell me i read a little bit about your resume it sees i see here you're part of

18:57

a fraternity that uh raised that raised uh uh eight thousand dollars for the

19:02

local community rape crisis hotline you know why did you do why did you guys decide to do that and i

19:08

explained to her i said well one of our one of the sisters of our fraternity brothers you know was was raped and so

19:16

she was like a sister to all of us she says i think that's great that you guys are doing that but did you guys try

19:21

to tell that i said no we did we didn't want to tell that personal story but she was telling me because here's a

19:28

fraternity raising money for a rape crisis hotline and she says it's kind of like ironic

19:34

but really cool it in a good sense and she says you ran you

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ran this comedy show fundraiser i said yeah what was your budget i said well about three thousand bucks it's how much

19:46

it cost to put it on you knitted about what six thousand bucks i said yeah around that so she kind of held a mirror

19:52

to my face and said you know the things that you just described to me are

19:58

some if not a lot of the stuff that i'm currently doing but on a much larger scale

20:04

and so her along with a you know a number of other folks that i met with just really inspired me to say this is

20:11

the right i think this is the right path for me to to take now conversely

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i had a fraternity brother who also wanted me to get into fundraising too but

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it wasn't terrible fundraising it was political fundraising and so there's

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there's a vast difference in the two one is more community and service

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oriented while the other is more for and this is just my two cents

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power and gain you know so it was a no-brainer for me my frat brother told me you can make pretty good

20:47

living a lot of money doing this and i said yeah and and and i was on the fence i was just like okay

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what is what's my heart telling me and i said okay i think this is what i want to pursue

20:59

and so that's how my path to the the fundraising and non-profit

21:05

industry i was directed so how have you seen the process changed because you had

21:11

originally talked about the march of dimes right older people although march of dimes

21:16

unicef and younger students won't know what that means what that means is that in grammar school we gave kids a box and

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then we said walk around your neighborhood knock on the door on strangers and ask them for a coin and

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let him put it in your box like the reason why we would never do that

21:35

again nowadays you cannot do that with exception you know of maybe

21:42

well not even the girl scouts go door to door anymore they just you see them park it in front of a supermarket or

21:48

something with their with their mom selling cookies but before they used to go door to door and say you

21:54

know would you like to buy a box of box of cookies i think those those days are gone but there are there are still for

22:01

young people i think you know today's young people you know are start their philanthropy off at a very

22:08

young age uh girl scouts is a great organization that teaches leadership it

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talks about ways to conduct business public relations marketing so that's just an example of

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an organization but you're right john i mean gone are the days where you can go door to door with a milk carton you know

22:27

in your hands and asking for a donation because on on the milk carton says march of dimes right and people would put

22:32

their dime in there you know speaking of glenn tadgett i went door to door pledging to read books from the multiple

22:38

sclerosis society it's very it's very different from today but in

22:43

meeting with those folks that i mentioned to you i found out that fundraising was

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a science and a lot of the elements that i was learning in school like marketing

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public relations business you needed to have those skills in order to be successful

23:01

in this industry and so the thing about that was i was a senior in college i was getting a business marketing degree

23:08

who's going to hire me you know right out of college to do some fundraising i needed to have build some

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credentials so first thing i wanted to do was find a job you know out of college so i used my degree i started i

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started a uh i started working for a sports public relations and marketing firm

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to start right and actually my boss is what you know i moved back to the valley and

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my boss ended up being one an lavc alumnus his name is steve brenner

23:39

um who you know him and his partner toby zweikel you know hired me and i told him i said you know i'm really trying to get

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into the non-profit industry but we'll help you guys in any way until that time

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and so worked there for about a year and it was a fun gig too i mean i got to do

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traveling did golf tournaments boxing in vegas did some traveling met some celebrity uh athletes but my heart

24:04

was still in the nonprofit arena and one day i got a call from one of those

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individuals who i interviewed with doug stewart and he says listen i know

24:16

that you're working for the pr firm but i remember our discussion and i just

24:22

got a job as director of development at ucla neurosciences and

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i want i want you to work for me as my administrative assistant and so

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he promised it by saying before you say no to me i'll tell you this it's not just any administrative assistant

24:39

position i will teach you everything you need to know to be successful in this industry and so that was my that

24:46

was my next job and he showed me and true to his word he showed me everything we went we did

24:53

these small receptions would you you had some high level donors and you know he would show me simple

25:00

things like putting my name tag you know on my right side and i said why

25:05

because you're going to shake with your right hand and you want to pull them close to you so they can read your name and you can read theirs told me how to

25:12

hold a cup with hors d'oeuvres so you can still mingle around and and you know shake people's hands little things like

25:18

that but most of all it was just i came to learn at ucla that is it's a major fundraising machine

25:26

and the people that work there all had built relationships with people and they built it from the

25:34

first floor working their way up and it's all about building trust making sure you inform you know those

25:42

prospective donors that ucla can be entrusted you know with their generosity

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and that's the attitude i've taken at valley college so over the course of the years

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i've worked really hard to build those relationships many of them are folks at valley college because

26:00

one of the things i decided to do was i need to look in our own backyard to see who would be able to

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support the foundation and our in our mission started at ucla as far as i'm

26:12

concerned and then after that i worked for the entertainment industry foundation

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the greater los angeles zoo association and then before coming to valley college i worked for the music center uh in los

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angeles so raised money for their educational program secured sponsorships

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for the dance components and and that was a very fun job to to do as well and

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and many people often ask me because why did you leave the music center i said well i found a

26:43

bigger calling at valley college as its executive director when you came to valley college what was happening with

26:49

the foundation and then what was your vision for where you wanted to take the foundation

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that's a great question john so i need to talk a little bit about where the foundation was before i i came so so the

27:02

story goes the foundation was originally started in 1971

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by a group of folks who worked at valley college and they formed a ladies high tea club

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if you can believe that right so every afternoon you know or thursday or friday afternoon the ladies would get

27:23

together have their high tea but one of the things that they did to their credit was secure

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what's called a 501c3 designation by the the department of treasury to make them

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a charitable organization this allowed them to raise money and that's what they did they did very grassroots type of

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fundraising activity like a newspaper drives donut sales and in a year they

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probably you know raise about fifteen hundred two thousand dollars they turned around and john

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this is going back to what a lot of folks think about the foundation is they turned around and awarded scholarships

28:00

for students now students back then they didn't pay they didn't pay any student fees or tuition

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to the college but they did have to pay for books and you know price tag on books are pretty up there

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and it was it was just that way in you know the 70s and so that's what they did

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and then later on the club dissolve and i don't know why but the college

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president at that time alice thurston said you know we should try to keep

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this group their 50163 charter in in place and so that's what they did

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and it was the organization was renamed the patrons association

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they continue to do the same activities newspaper drives those small fundraising activities

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but it wasn't until 1988 when an associate dean by the name of george copolis became

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part of the patrons association and actually became there wasn't a director or an executive director but he was the

29:00

associate dean of the foundation and so one of the things george did was instead

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of just keeping this to valley college let's open it up to the community so george was a member of rotary he invited

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rotary members to become members of the patrons board then took the the fundraising activity next level next

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thing you know they're raising ten thousand dollars annually again the mission was to award scholarships but

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they also started helping a couple of programs here and there doing that george retired a few years later and in

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1994 the dean of fine arts dennis reed took over for george and dennis

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took the patrons association to that next level by having big time events big

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fundraising events the most well known that if anybody's been around more than 20 years is the vegas nights where they

29:55

would raise you know they would raise funds for the the patrons association dennis wanted to get back into the

30:01

academic side of things and he he suggested to the college president who was tyree weider as well as the

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foundation board you know what you need to bring in somebody who who has some

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credentials and knows exactly where they want to take the foundation board and

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direct the board of directors as well as guide the college president and what that can be and so

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in 2001 i interviewed for the job met with tyree there was a panel of folks

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who interviewed me and i came in i think with a lot of grandiose ideas because i

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was thinking valley college i was i was thinking of ucla and cal state dominguez hills but i

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quickly realized that community college fundraising versus four-year university fundraising are apples and oranges very

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very different they like the picture that i painted as far as a three to five year plan

31:01

for for valley college and it's fundraising activity and the foundation but then

31:06

i turned around and it was my turn to ask the questions and i said so how big is my team am i going to have

31:13

a director of planned giving am i going to have a marketing person i'm gonna have am i going to have a director of

31:19

alumni relations and the panel of seven folks and i kid you not they all kind of

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succinctly looked down at the table you know and and dennis reed was among those and he

31:32

says well raw it's basically going to be you an administrative assistant

31:37

and maybe a couple of student workers and at that point i realized okay i need i need to backtrack here so the model i

31:44

had originally had painted for the the interview panel was that of a

31:50

four-year university now at a four-year university just in the fundraising department or

31:56

development program along and i'll show an example maybe csun you probably have

32:02

30 or 40 professionals with probably a couple of administrative support for each and every one of them for different

32:08

departments in the area so at valley college it would just be me as a lone

32:13

professional and so the model that i then started painting was that of a grassroots organization a

32:22

service organization that was just trying to get off the ground i think the folks appreciated that i told them

32:29

you know we're not going to do this in the three to five years instead this is what i hope to accomplish within three

32:35

years and then maybe we can start building on these things tyree weider

32:41

when i when i met her for my second interview i think she appreciated that as opposed to somebody who came in with

32:47

a lot of promises i told her what the hurdles would be but i also told her

32:53

what my expectations would be as far as valley college was concerned and it wanted to build upon

32:59

that and so to this day i continue to be grateful to tyree for um

33:06

for selecting me and i've always told her i said you know boss i hope i i've made you proud um you know i hope we've

33:13

checked off a lot of your boxes and she always smiles with me like a proud mother hand

33:19

what were the commitments that you were asking valley college to make to you this is one of those touchy things

33:24

because i had set these benchmarks at a certain timeline and i had one of the

33:30

things i wanted to do was build capacity now every time that time came the

33:36

college was always in a really tough situation so in 2007 2008

33:43

tyree retires dr wieder retires sue carlio steps in amidst a major budget

33:49

crisis at valley col not just for valley college it was throughout the whole district

33:54

i mean we were talking about furloughs at that time and you know cutting budgets and not hiring positions it was

34:01

never the right time to be able to do that but given the adversity you know

34:08

the hurdles that i think our foundation has overcome a lot and it's not because

34:13

of me but because there have been supportive folks on the campus i've always had terrific members

34:19

of our foundation board that have been nothing but supportive and engaged you know with our community and trying to

34:26

get them involved with the goal of our foundation when i started in 2001

34:32

foundation's assets were right at around close to 300 000

34:38

and one of the things tyree asked me was if there was one

34:44

thing that you that's going to be your charge as executive director what would it be and i i was quick to to respond

34:51

saying build our endowments and she says what endowments and i said exactly for those

34:57

of you folks who don't know what an endowment is it's where you raise funds but you don't spend it instead

35:04

your organization invests it and into a portfolio an investment portfolio and

35:11

then the earnings that it makes through interest and dividends or market gains or losses that's what you would use to

35:17

support the college and the students so we only had one maybe two

35:23

endowments within the foundation and it was just a little over a hundred thousand dollars so one third of our

35:29

assets were endowed and i said we need to build that because if you want the foundation to be a long for a long long

35:36

time we need to provide perpetual funds and that's going to come by way of endowments there's a story that i heard

35:44

about i don't know if it's necessarily true but way back when benjamin franklin donated

35:49

a couple of thousand dollars to yale and harvard if you were to look up what yale and harvard's endowments total it's in

35:56

the billions of dollars over the tenure of the last you know 20 20 years now

36:01

that you've been the executive director what are some of the other accomplishments or contributions that

36:06

you're most proud of of the work that you feel as though that yes you know this is this has really moved the vision

36:11

forward and this has been really good for the college one of the things i'm proud of

36:16

for the foundation is that we have been able to

36:22

to build the endowments i i told my foundation board of directors back then

36:28

this is what we need to work on and a couple of folks understood how an endowment works they were part of

36:35

committees or boards uh working with the likes of pepperdine ucla usc so they

36:41

know how an endowment works but it they also realized that it's going to take a lot of work our assets were barely 300

36:48

000 the first thing was to try to get a financial manager to manage our assets

36:55

they usually don't pick up uh organizational clients unless their assets are a million dollars and we weren't there we had we actually had to

37:02

persuade or sell prospects on this is why you want us as

37:08

a client and shared with them our visions and we were successful to do that because of a

37:15

couple of board members who um help open doors to allow us to do that and once

37:21

that was set in place then i was able to go back and and this mind you that i'm like two or three

37:27

years into the job i was able to go back to folks like dr marielle and pangos who asked me those

37:33

tough questions like do you guys have an investment portfolio that's managed by

37:38

somebody or do you guys manage it who are they what are your visions she was asking all these really really good

37:45

questions and i said we're almost there and when we were there i went back to her and said guess what dr pangon is we

37:52

have our investment manager and so one of the first things she did was she pulled a checkbook out of her out of her

37:59

purse and you know wrote me a check and then richard raskoff one day came into

38:05

my office and he had a friend with him he had professor joe nordman retire a

38:13

retired professor of chemistry one of the found one of the founding faculty at

38:18

la valley college so professor joe norman came in my office escorted by richard raskoff and

38:25

introduces professor nordman to me and professor nordman said you know i've been thinking about giving to the

38:31

patrons association and i and i told professor norman you know what we're planning on changing that name he says

38:38

oh to what i said lavc foundation because uh we

38:43

nobody knew why we had that name and so but professor nordman you know had been

38:49

following he had made small donations throughout the years he retired in 1978 he made his money a lot of his money not

38:56

only at valley college but in real estate investment and it moved up to to northern california pacific grove and uh

39:02

amassed a lot of you know uh wealth and so he was asking me those same tough

39:07

questions that dr pangonis did and he says who's your financial manager and i

39:13

said it's morgan stanley smith barney and amy says really that's who i

39:19

that's who i invest with and so like dr mary allen pangos you know he

39:24

had his checkbook in his back pocket and he says i want to do a chemistry assistantship is that something you can

39:31

you facilitate for me i said absolutely and so can we endow it i said

39:36

absolutely and so he started off with a check but in the preceding years

39:42

he would make gifts of stock to valley college totaling anywhere between 25 to 30 000 a year

39:50

to to benefit chemistry assistantship and professor norman passed away in 2015 but

39:56

his his cumulative gift to the foundation is over a million dollars and that's in his endowment that

40:03

same endowment creates about 25 000 that provides

40:09

uh tutors uh on campus scott you may be you might be aware of that you know uh haley lucas

40:16

has that it's focused not only for chemistry but biology and and so

40:22

that's what that endowment does dr pangonis she passed away in

40:28

2015 i believe uh as well you know her total life giving was over

40:34

a hundred thousand dollars to uh the the foundation that we're you know really grateful for

40:40

setting things up like our endowments our investment portfolio started paving the the way for folks to

40:49

be more engaged with valley college because they wanted to make sure first of all that we were structurally sound

40:55

uh we were trustworthy and that we would we would facilitate their their their

41:02

wish and so with professor nordman it was the chemistry biology assistantship dr

41:08

pangonis it was you know a business scholarship uh that we we've

41:14

been awarding you know since they since they started it and

41:19

if you were to fast forward today i mentioned that our assets were right around three hundred thousand dollars in

41:25

2001. our our assets are are right at around eight and a half million dollars

41:31

today and six and a half million of that are endowed

41:37

so i kind of hope we would be at a higher place but given the circumstances you

41:42

know where we're at with you know a staff i think we've we've really come a long ways

41:49

there have been a number of generous folks and you talked about other highlights

41:55

you know in the last 20 years we facilitated a donation from j.h schneider for one and a half million

42:01

dollars that built the family resource center on campus i talked about professor norman's we

42:07

received a 500 000 gift that was that actually predates me but it didn't come around

42:14

until 2012 from the jewish community foundation from a gift from belle and harry krupnic

42:20

harry krupnick was a former dean here at valley college he just wanted to make sure that foundation was in a stable

42:27

place before he instructed the jewish community foundation to make the donation

42:32

and so that donation has also been endowed to benefit the media arts program

42:38

here on our campus that generates about anywhere between thirteen to fifteen thousand dollars a year

42:44

that the department uses to purchase equipment bell and harry's name are on the

42:50

television studio if you walk by it a more recent news that we have we were just notified

42:57

from one of our long-time generous supporters had passed away her name was roz heyman she used to be on our

43:03

foundation board in on 19 from 1997 1998 had continued to

43:08

support the foundation after you know she stepped down she recently passed away and we've been notified by hers by

43:17

her state and trust that we are going to be the foundation is going to be a beneficiary of a 2

43:22

million dollar gift and she knew the struggles of our foundation from from operations from an operations standpoint

43:29

so she said you know raw she says before i pass just please tell me that you're going to be able to

43:35

facilitate my request and i said what's that roz and she says please name a

43:41

building after my beloved max max l heyman was a history professor here at

43:47

valley college i think he retired in the in the mid 1980s

43:52

and and so we're working to to uh name a building here on campus after

44:00

uh max heyman with the generous gift from his wife roz who who just passed away at the at at the age of 94.

44:08

if you're talking about my legacy my legacy is that i i've been privileged to work at valley college after i leave

44:14

valley college i i feel strongly that that work will continue to be there i think we can

44:20

build upon what's already been laid because there's always room for growth there's

44:26

always room for growth i mean our foundation could be even more larger we have a number of new buildings

44:32

on campus there are naming opportunities there i'm trying to encourage folks open your

44:39

rolodex let me know if you know somebody who is philanthropic

44:45

understands or would like to understand you know the plight of the community colleges

44:50

because we have a terrific college at la valley college let's talk about the programs like the

44:56

writing center let's talk about the math program that's very plugged into stem

45:02

programs and activities here on campus and let's try to bring in corporations

45:07

other organ you know nonprofit organizations private foundations or that individual

45:13

that may want or be interested in supporting those things one of the things i encourage folks to

45:19

do is if you identify folks who have who who who are looking to be generous

45:26

and support why not talk about valley college and you're not asking them for money you're just talking about the

45:32

story of valley college and what its needs are okay a lot of people feel very uncomfortable

45:37

about asking for money i've never taken my position as asking for money but

45:43

rather telling the story of the organization that i work work with and nothing has made me more proud to talk

45:49

about the story of valley college as a former student and an alumnus

45:55

it's very easy for me to talk about valley college i'm always encouraging other alumni

46:01

to think about supporting valley college you know we have a we have an alumni and friends association here on campus but

46:08

it's it's what i would call your your template alumni association you know you sign up for it for about 30 bucks a year

46:14

you get discount coupons to the amusement parks you get you know you have one year library privileges and i

46:22

ask people you know that that i run into in the community that are former students or alumni you know i chide with

46:28

them and say hey you should join the alumni association at valley college and you know they kind of look at me weird

46:33

and they would there's nothing malicious about what they say they just say well i'm already a member at usc

46:40

you know and i remind them i said but you just told me you had a a great experience at valley college and valley

46:46

college was your first college so there's this reality that sets in

46:52

like you're right you know that 30 dollars would probably mean more to valley college than it does

46:57

to to usc and other folks would say you know say why why should i give to

47:04

valley college versus usc i said your donations your donation your support would go a long way at valley college i

47:10

said the other thing i i would say is why would you bring sand to a beach

47:16

i mean that's the whole malcolm gladwell argument like it's insane to donate these giant

47:23

sums of money to yale and harvard when they have so much money they can't possibly spend it

47:29

and think about it our you know our our political leadership

47:34

is encouraging everybody to go to a community college right

47:39

but there never seems to be enough financial support coming in by way of the state

47:45

to to to our community colleges and so one of the things i'm asking them is

47:51

listen you know if you're going to send our kids our way which is great you know encourage folks that the big

47:58

players to also be philanthropic and support our our community colleges as well

48:04

and so that's been my mission since i've been here um you know i think there's still a long

48:11

ways where you know organizationally we're nothing like the four-year universities

48:16

like a csun usc or ucla but

48:22

that's what we aspire uh to be you know a number of community colleges

48:27

here in the state of california are pretty much there they have what's called a

48:33

an advancement model is what they refer to it meaning a model of

48:39

fundraising and development to help their their community college structured very similarly to

48:46

that of a four-year institution but out of the 113

48:51

community colleges i would say you know probably maybe three quarters

48:57

have a foundation and that out of that probably

49:03

40 percent have an active you know operating foundations others

49:08

are really just trying to struggle along just look at our district alone

49:13

um if you're to ask anybody within the district who are the top foundations in the district

49:21

it would be city uh east and us

49:26

and i'm not bragging i mean that's that's the truth and then you have you have other foundations that are just

49:32

struggling to get off the ground and do do some sort of fundraising activity and then others that are just you know

49:39

non-existent i mean being run out of some out of president's office and that's not the way this this is set up

49:47

i'm just happy that valley college and the leadership back then invested in

49:52

a person like me i was able to share my vision with them and made a lot it made sense to them so

49:59

much so that they entrusted me with leading the the foundation and i again i

50:05

i'm just really fortunate and privileged to still be here you know

50:10

you know working for the foundation one of the things as a as far as a personal takeaway if

50:16

there's anything that i really appreciate during my time here is and this was nothing i had

50:23

anticipated coming in is learning about our students

50:28

you know they would come in saying mr castillo i'd like to apply for a scholarship

50:34

so one of the things i would do way back when was ask them a little bit about themselves

50:39

at i'm hearing a very similar story that story being mine

50:45

you know it was it's a struggle financially um you know these are these are my

50:51

dreams these are my goals this is what i want to do but i've also had to listen

50:58

to things that i didn't have to deal with as a student

51:03

one is food insecurity homelessness guys these these are big

51:10

important things that we need to try to help our students with um

51:16

and our foundation has been you know working with folks on campus i'm sure you've heard of helping hands

51:22

program headed by ellie rabani and a committee of folks on campus to help our you know

51:28

to help our students out with with food insecurity um you know our current president dr barry

51:34

grip ribbons he's he's been very supportive and and wants to engage

51:40

our food pantry again these things are important because it it

51:46

helps our student in succeeding you know in completing get trying to attain their academic goals here

51:53

and and and hopefully we can push them to the next level where they can you know receive their bachelor's degree

51:59

and in turn you know find jobs and be a contributor to society

52:05

and yeah you know i'm hoping down the road they become very very successful

52:12

and take them out to lunch and say how about it why don't you start a scholarship at valley college

52:18

so yeah a lot of people laugh at that but it's it's not it's not far from the

52:24

truth i mean i remember in 2002 we we awarded a scholarship

52:29

to this young lady who ended up transferring to berkeley and then in 2012 she

52:36

stopped by our office and said wow it's finally found your office and she told

52:41

me who she was and she says i received a 250 scholarship back in 2002 from from

52:47

the foundation and then she pulls a check out of her out of her purse and she says

52:52

i hope this is enough and it was a 500 check and and she says wow

52:59

i said that's incredible and she says it i know it's not a lot but you know as as my career takes off because she says

53:06

she was an engineer you know i'd like to be able to to to to give more i said this is very generous of you and you

53:12

know what she told me she says i'm just paying it forward i mean that stuff is priceless guys

53:18

and i get to be a part of that i don't know if there would be any any person better to to serve in the capacity

53:25

than you ralph you know the the time that you've been at the college and you sharing your

53:31

story it's easy to sort of see now from what your experience was like as a student with all the connections you

53:36

made with the faculty here and then at your time at cal state dominguez and the connections that you made with your mentors there

53:42

that there's the characteristic about you as an individual that endears you know and

53:48

brings forward relationships and wanting to work with you and and and as you said that the type of work

53:53

that you do is is is really built upon trust um it's built upon integrity um

54:00

and and you're somebody who just embodies those characteristics in such a powerful way that that it's it's

54:06

it's easy to sort of see the trajectory of sort of your path and what you brought to the college now that

54:13

you've been here for 20 years and so you you've done just such an amazing service to the college into the community

54:19

um and it's it's just been a real privilege to sit down and to hear to hear your story this this afternoon i

54:25

just want to say thank you thank you for sharing your time this afternoon but thank you for everything that you've done for the college for valley college

54:32

the way you talk about students the way you you understand sort of the struggles that they've been through the way you

54:37

talk about the reverence for the professors here it's all the things that that make valley college

54:42

a very unique and special place thank you so much ralph thank you i'm just so humbled by your story i mean it's such a

54:49

honor to have someone who who can go to people to say i want you to share the joy of what we

54:56

do here at valley college right i want you to share the honor of these stories and what we do

55:02

and i want you to be a part of our student lives and for to be someone like that to say

55:09

i'm gonna bridge people who have more to give to people who have needs

55:14

and to do it in a way in which everyone feels um advantaged you know what people feel

55:20

really good about receiving and also good about giving it's a it's a great life's work so thank you so much

55:28

could have said that better john um you really captured it there i i guess

55:34

one of the questions might be for us now as we kind of wrap it up here is and maybe this is an obvious one but what's

55:40

the best way to contact url how do people connect with the foundation at valley college if they

55:45

want to find out more how to contribute more about the foundation what do you recommend is it our website is there an

55:51

email address all of the above scott you can you can call us

55:57

rania waters is my colleague in the foundation office um as well as jade martinez and they can be

56:04

reached at eight one eight nine four seven two six one eight

56:10

you know uh if you just have any questions about you know what your thoughts are as far as you know you want to start a

56:16

scholarship we can certainly do that you want to support the math department the writing center on campus

56:21

we can help facilitate that that's what the mission of our foundation is we're also online at

56:28

www.la that's different from the valley college

56:33

website which is lavc.edu again that's www.lavcfoundation.org

56:41

you can make an online donation and designate your your support for programs

56:46

such as the helping hands programs uh that helps you know uh our students who have food insecurities

56:52

who are who are homeless or or just need clothing to the family resource center on campus

56:59

uh um we can certainly you know use the support um

57:04

if there's anybody who's been very supportive it's the folks at valley college um the

57:10

faculty as well as the staff uh you know they all do their their you know they have their pet areas of

57:17

course of giving and that's certainly fine um but we also want to raise what we call unrestricted dollars to give us

57:24

um the flexibility in dishing out the monies where it's needed most on on campus so

57:31

um a lot of you participate with employee payroll giving that campaign is going to be launched usually in

57:37

august usually on faculty opening day so if you know by time you you listen to

57:43

this uh hopefully you can participate if you haven't already and and to those who who

57:50

uh have been supporting the foundation again um thank you for your your kind generosity

57:58

um you know i i really do appreciate it and just want to thank you on behalf of

58:03

myself and our foundation board wow that was amazing thank you so much

58:09

yeah me too thank you so much rob it's it's really really

58:14

wonderful afternoon to sit down and talk to you about this thank you so much for sharing the valley college connection

58:19

podcast is dedicated to sharing the dynamics of our community and supporting the fascinating lives of students

58:26

faculty and those in pursuit of college life information the valley college connection podcast is produced by kvcm

58:33

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58:39

faculty staff and students of los angeles valley college