**UAA. Consortium Library. Archives and Special Collections student oral history interviews**

*Transcript of Becky Butler Gallegos, archivist, interviewing Aiden Arel Gutierrez, a freshman political science major and Union of Students senator at UAA, on April 8, 2025.*

Gallegos: This is Becky Butler Gallegos. I am here today in the Archives of the UAA/APU Consortium Library. And I am interviewing...

Gutierrez: ...Aiden Arel Gutierrez.

Gallegos: ...and it is 10:40 am. The date is April 8th, 2025. And this interview is part of the UAA/APU Archives and Special Collections Student Oral History Project. This interview will be made publicly accessible in the Archives Research Room and online. And you've already consented to this and signed over copyright, but do I have your consent to record and make this recording publicly available?

Gutierrez: Yes, you do.

Gallegos: Fabulous. Thank you so much for participating. Once again, let's start with your name again and your major.

Gutierrez: My name is Aiden Arel Gutierrez. I go by Ro. My major is Political Science.

Gallegos: What made you decide to study at UAA?

Gutierrez: Um, it was the scholarships offered here. I was . . I received the Alaska Performance one and the UA Scholars, which made me want to join here. At first, I was a little scared, but then I saw a university, the campus, and I loved it so much. I just wanted to be here.

Gallegos: Awesome. Are you from Anchorage?

Gutierrez: I originally was living in Fairbanks for three years. My dad's military.

Gallegos: Okay.

Gutierrez: Yeah, which they're over there. They had no clue about the scholarships until I came to Wasilla as we learned our thing about UAA.

Gallegos: Fabulous. Good job, Wasilla. What has been your favorite memory during your time here?

Gutierrez: I think it's the dorms. I've had many good friends. We've done some crazy wacky things together. I think- The best part is that you have a community and feel you belong, wanting to be a part of the campus life.

Gallegos: That's wonderful that you've found that in the dorms. How many- how long have you been living in the dorms?

Gutierrez: Going on for about a year now. I've been in the quad with three roommates. Crazy, but hilarious guys.

Gallegos: Did you know them before?

Gutierrez: No, we're all from different places.

Gallegos: Oh, gosh.

Gutierrez: And it was so weird. Then we just got along so well.

Gallegos: I love that. When it works out that way, it's beautiful. What year are you in school?

Gutierrez: I am a freshman still.

Gallegos: Wow, you're very, you're very active then for being a freshman. We'll get into that later in the interview. But, um, are there any professors who have made an impact on your time here?

Gutierrez: Professor Zuhone from Political Science has made an amazing impact. I was originally, uh, originally was, uh, a pol- a computer science major. But then I joined political science. I was a little bit scared at first again. But she is amazing. She always brings joy and fun to different activities. Like she brought a crown or just different, like, roles for political science to make us, you know, understand the process of it all.

Gallegos: So it was really the professor that helped you choose the major.

Gutierrez: Yes. I remember our first day in class, she was trying to explain to us between natural science and social sciences. It just- um, theirs is about being human and physics and she threw a stapler across the room is gravity.

Gallegos: A little, little physics diss. I appreciate that. So I guess you cut- that kind of answered the question of how you, what helped you decide on your major or minor? What made you initially start with computer science?

Gutierrez: So I had no clue what I wanted to do originally. And computer science just had lots of, um, good jobs currently with the whole, um, evolution of technology. So I thought it would be a easy job. How I did not enjoy it. Like I understood what- what it is, how you do it. But I wasn't enjoying so much. Which- at the beginning of October, I joined USUA. I just really loved the idea of advocating for the student body. And that's when I got introduced to the political science program.

Gallegos: That's wonderful. So and for the record, could you tell us what USUAA stands for?

Gutierrez: USUA stands for union of students of UA.

Gallegos: Okay. Excellent. That leads well into our next question. And what are some of the club's organizations, athletics you are in or have been involved in? Tell us a little bit more about your USUAA experience.

Gutierrez: So USUA is a big program offering to the student body as a student government. We're in charge of different things such as student social events, legislation changes, rules. We're all here just to help be the voice of the student body, advocate for any changes needed, and ensure everyone feels welcomed. As being a part of it, I have done many different roles. I originally started as a delegate in the College of Engineering, which is to be a representative for the college students in Engineering. I then became a senator, which I was also a government relations officer, which in charge of legislation affairs, which in charge of making any resolutions, changes, anything that students have concerns about. Like menstrual products in the women’s bathroom, in charge of trying to advocate for that. I've also been part of the Coalition of Student Leaders, which is the statewide student government. We're- we went to Juneau last February to advocate for this whole university of the concerns they need.

Gallegos: Oh wow. How was that experience going to Juneau?

Gutierrez: It was interesting. Yeah, I thought it was fun, met different people, [unintelligible] different views. Yeah. I don't know why. Juneau reminds me of like Twilight mixed with San Francisco.

Gallegos: Oh yeah, the southeast of Alaska is very different. I've never been to Juneau.

Gutierrez: Lot's a brain. I'll say that.

Gallegos: Okay, in February?!

Gutierrez: Yeah, February. It was like, it was warmer there. So there was nothing but rain.

Gallegos: Bleh, that's not so great. All right. Are there any other clubs or organizations that you're participating in? It sounds like you're pretty busy as is.

Gutierrez: Yeah, not currently.

Gallegos: Okay. You are part of Honors College. What drew you to that?

Gutierrez: Um, I think I just saw their pamphlet. I was like, sure, why not? I had good grades at the time. So I just, I thought they also offered good scholarships, different ways. And they had a leadership track, which I thought would be interesting to do. Also connects to political science and USUA in ways.

Gallegos: What is your proudest accomplishment in your education or personal life during your time here? Answer that any way you want.

Gutierrez: Okay, it sounds weird, but it was failing. So I was always a 4.0 student in high school. Always got good grades. Everything felt easy. And then I went to college. I did physics. I did a calculus. Don't ever do that together. It's a bad combination and it's really impactful because it did 19 credits last semester.

Gallegos: Holy.

Gutierrez: Yeah. And I just, I didn't do well and it taught me, you know, life lessons, you know, because failure teaches you how to grow, teaches you what you lack at and how to improve yourself. So I think, you know, the best thing to do is to learn how to fail, to accept challenges and go through it.

Gallegos: I agree with that. And I hear you on the calculus. That was my first failing grade in school career ever. Was in calculus. Okay, you touched on this a little bit about living on campus, that- how you've enjoyed it. Can you tell me a little bit about the setup, which building you're in, things like that.

Gutierrez: Yeah. Um, I'm living East Hall, which is the first year, um, Hall. There are different dorms, is what they call them, different rooms. They have singles, quads, duos, which we got, um . . . the worst ones is what everyone calls it because they're the oldest ones. So they're shared rooms with people, which at first we thought, oh, it’s going to be weird, you know, sleeping with a guy. But oddly it made us more connected in some way. Like we got used to each other. We enjoyed our time together. We created like a bizarre brotherhood. And which we had other friends, which we all invited together, we had like eight group guy, I think, going to different events. Like last Friday, we went to the Minecraft movie all together.

Gallegos: Oh, that's fun. You found a community in the dorms.

Gutierrez: Yeah, community. We have fraternities here, sororities, but I already have my own basically. Yeah, it's fun.

Gallegos: Didn't need that. What's your commute to campus? Like are you just walking back and forth? Do you use the shuttle?

Gutierrez: So I walk, depending on the weather, otherwise use a shuttle. Weekends, I go home to my family in Wasilla. So some ways I commute just Mondays only, basically. By living in the dorms.

Gallegos: Do you have your own car?

Gutierrez: Not currently. Trying to get my license.

Gallegos: Nice. Nice. Okay. This might be throwing it back to your favorite professor, but what's your favorite class you've taken? And why?

Gutierrez: Again, political science.

Gallegos: Was it just like the introduction to political science?

Gutierrez: Yeah, the introduction of political science.

Gallegos: Okay.

Gutierrez: She makes it really fun, I'll say.

Gallegos: What advice would you give to fellow or future students?

Gutierrez: When challenge comes to your doorstep, accept it. Take it on. Go for it. You may succeed. You may not. In ways it allows you to open your eyes to different possibilities and get you out of your comfort zone. So you can see who you are truly and in ways you'd never thought it possible.

Gallegos: Okay, well said. I can see also where your skills might suit political science. Did you take public speaking?

Gutierrez: No, I have not.

Gallegos: Well, you'll ace that one, I think, if you ever have to.

Gutierrez: I had stage fright in high school. So it's like this is interesting. Again, I'm finding stuff I never knew about myself.

Gallegos: Well, I appreciate you coming on and doing this. I get stage fright still sometimes with recording things. We have a departmental podcast, so I always get a little anxious there. So I appreciate that you came on and were willing to do the interview. I did have one follow up question. So now that you're coming to the end of your first year. And you've changed a major, seems like you've found something you really enjoy here. Do you have an idea of what you'd like to do with it in the future after graduation?

Gutierrez: So the- political science offers an internship with the state capital here, which I'm planning to try to become a staff member there and try to go either for state government or even federal.

Gallegos: Okay. All right. More power to you. All right. Thank you so, so much. We are going to pause our recording there.