The Goodwin Trust and the Disappearance of the Research Vessel \textit{Gulf Stream}

A controversial event that had a significant long-term impact on Nova’s future occurred on May 3, 1976. On that date the trustees of the Leo Goodwin Sr. Foundation of Fort Lauderdale notified Nova University that it would receive “all of the net corpus of the Leo Goodwin Sr. Unitrust after certain distributions to Holy Cross Hospital and the Fort Lauderdale Oral School.” By the terms of the trust, executed by Leo Goodwin Sr. on May 21, 1971 (one week before his death), the Fort Lauderdale Oral School would receive $10,000 and Holy Cross Hospital would receive the sum of $45,000 plus the greater of either $1,000,000 or 12 percent of the net unitrust corpus. The remainder of the unitrust, 87.5 percent, would go to Nova. The funds were to be distributed in 1976 after a five-year waiting period. During this five-year period the income from the trust would be used to pay off personal tax liabilities and other estate debts. The document specified that “none of the undersigned Unitrust Trustees (Leo Goodwin Jr., Helen Furia, and Alphonse Della-Donna) have now, have had in the past, or will by agreement or understanding have in the future control over University expenditures.” The Goodwin Unitrust Board of Trustees further certified that they had made “no commitments whatsoever with respect to the expenditure for educational purposes of any funds that may be distributed to Nova University.”

The unitrust was a gift in the memory of Leo Goodwin Sr. “for the use of the University exclusively to further its educational functions, to be expended or added to an endowment—as determined by the [Nova] University Board.” The legal document expressed the hope
that Goodwin “would be suitably memorialized” and indicated that the current net value of the unitrust exceeded $8 million. The trustees pointed out that the unitrust was in negotiation with the Internal Revenue Service about paying estate taxes and the money would not be released until that controversy had been resolved. The Goodwin gift was manna from heaven for Nova and apparently totally unexpected, although Leo Goodwin Jr. had been a member of the Nova Board of Trustees.

Abe Fischler hoped that this important donation would solve most of his financial problems—the law school would get $5 million, enough to build a new law school and have enough money outside of tuition to get accreditation, and Nova could pay off some of its debts.

Leo Goodwin Sr., the founder of the Government Employees Insurance Company (GEICO), was, at the time of his death, one of the wealthiest men in America. When Goodwin Sr. executed the unitrust in 1971, the charitable gift consisted of 800,000 shares of GEICO and $4 million in cash. At that time, 800,000 shares of GEICO stock was worth some $48 million. However, by 1976, due to huge underwriting losses by the company, the stock value had plummeted and was then estimated to be worth between $8 million and $12 million.

Although the terms of the Goodwin Unitrust could not have been more precise, Alphonse Della-Donna, a local attorney and a trustee for the unitrust, decided that he would try to hold up the disbursement of the funds. Della-Donna, who emigrated from Italy in 1948, was a certified public accountant who earned his law degree from the University of Miami in 1964. He had persuaded Helen Furia, who had been Leo Goodwin Sr.’s secretary, to vote with him. Della-Donna thus controlled two votes and could force the trustees to accept any position he desired. When Leo Goodwin Jr. died, his wife, Fran Goodwin, replaced Leo Jr. as one of the three trustees. Della-Donna was the only trustee with a legal background, so he called the shots.

In anticipation of receiving the Goodwin money, Abe Fischler went about fixing up the Union Hall building on the east campus for the law school and committed the university to additional campus expenditures. Fischler soon faced a dilemma: Della-Donna did not want to release the funds, because as long as he controlled the money, he continued to earn legal fees. He had already received $1 million for his work with the unitrust foundation, and he wanted more. Initially Della-Donna proposed setting up a new foundation separate from the unitrust foundation, and he would be in charge of disbursing the funds to Nova University. Fischler refused to agree to Della-Donna’s
proposal for a separate foundation because the Goodwin Unitrust was an unrestricted gift to Nova University and, Fischler said, “unrestricted means unrestricted.”

Tinsley Ellis, who often negotiated with Della-Donna on behalf of the university, said that every time he thought he had an agreement with Della-Donna, the attorney would come up with a new request or add a different concept or change part of the legal agreement. In April 1978, Della-Donna announced that he would go to court to stop what was by then a $14.5 million bequest to Nova University from the Goodwin Unitrust because the 1970 agreement between NYIT and Nova University essentially gave control of Nova to a New York institution. According to Della-Donna, because of the NYIT merger, Nova was not an independent institution, nor was it a local Broward County institution. Della-Donna said he was certain that Goodwin had reserved his funds for local Broward County charities and would not want to leave money to a New York university.

The Nova University Board of Trustees, trying to appease Della-Donna, went so far as to pass two resolutions declaring that Nova was not controlled by NYIT and that all of the Goodwin monies “would be used exclusively for institutional facilities in Broward County” and nowhere else. Della-Donna insisted that although the resolutions had been passed, they did not mean anything because the trustee resolutions had not been ratified. “If these resolutions had been ratified,” testified Della-Donna, “I would have given up the money.” Fischler replied that the resolutions “had been passed, ratified, and hand-delivered to Della-Donna’s office” to prove to the attorney that the resolutions had been fully approved by the board.

Della-Donna then accused the Nova Board of Trustees of fraud for lying to him about certain facts and providing him with false information. Fischler vigorously denied the charges. He pointed out that Della-Donna had been on the Nova University Board of Trustees and had served on the finance committee, so he knew what was going on at the university and could not say he was uninformed.

Judge George Richardson of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit Court in Broward County, in a law suit filed by Della-Donna to prevent issuance of the proceeds from the fund, had already ruled that the Goodwin Unitrust was an unrestricted grant and the trustees had no right to rescind the original commitment to Nova. The money, ruled the judge, should be paid forthwith. Della-Donna, unrepentant, refused to give up the fight and continued to play out this legal charade—all the while getting paid for his time. He said he was determined to prevent
the Goodwin money from leaving Broward County and going to New York. Della-Donna’s argument was a clever ploy to appeal to local citizens since some Broward County residents already resented the influence NYIT had on Nova. The Nova administration asserted yet again that the university was not a satellite of NYIT.

Della-Donna, ever crafty, decided on a new tactical move: a bit of coercion. He had learned that the ABA had given accreditation to the Nova Center for the Study of Law but could remove it if a law school building was not erected in the immediate future. He knew Nova University did not have the funds for the new building, so he proposed giving $5 million of the $14.5 million unitrust bequest directly to the law school for the purpose of putting up the new law center. Della-Donna stipulated that the $5 million would not be available to the law school unless control of the law school was removed from the Nova University Board of Trustees and, by inference, control by NYIT. Here the attorney tried appealing to the law professors who wanted the money and resented being the university’s “cash cow.” He also asked that the law school be moved away from the Nova campus. Several trustees and Nova administrators wanted the law school at all costs and were willing to settle for the $5 million just to keep the law school viable and on the Nova campus.

As Della-Donna expected, the new proposal to give $5 million directly to the law school ended up splitting the Nova Board of Trustees into warring camps. One group of trustees did not want to continue the legal fight. They wanted the law school to become a reality and feared that if they did not take the $5 million, they would never get any of the Goodwin Trust and the law school would lose its accreditation. Better to take the $5 million in hand, end the cost of litigation, and get on with the progress of the university. Of course, if the board of trustees agreed to accept the $5 million for the law school, the remaining $9.5 million would revert to the unitrust, controlled by Della-Donna.

Abe Fischler finally decided that he had compromised enough with Della-Donna. He concluded that Nova would never get its money unless the university went to court and sued Della-Donna for control of the corpus of the Goodwin Unitrust. Fischler believed that Della-Donna would draw out litigation until Nova finally gave in and settled for a lesser amount. Fischler, in addition to dealing with the huge cost in time and money contesting Della-Donna’s legal actions, was trying to run an institution and the failure to obtain the Goodwin money had put the university’s existence in danger.
Fischler accused Della-Donna of continuing to come up with various legal challenges and pointed out that he had brought suit against Nova in three different legal jurisdictions. According to pleadings in Broward County Circuit Court files, Della-Donna had initiated twenty-seven lawsuits and appeals and unsuccessful libel and slander actions against President Fischler, Nova attorney Terry Russell, and the *Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel*. Mary McCahill, chairman of the Nova Board of Trustees, argued that if Nova gave in to Della-Donna’s demands and accepted the $5 million, it would be admitting the truth of his charge that Nova was not locally controlled. The cost of litigation was eating away at the value of the unitrust, and the only way to stop Della-Donna was a multimillion-dollar lawsuit.³

With the future of the university at stake, the board of trustees met on April 17 and 25, 1978, to determine the best course of action to take in regard to a legal challenge against Della-Donna. The heated discussion centered on whether to settle for the $5 million or to begin what would certainly be a lengthy and expensive lawsuit. Chancellor Alex Schure argued that to accept Della-Donna’s offer would be to violate Judge Richardson’s order that specifically directed the funds to be paid to Nova without restriction. He pronounced Della-Donna’s charges of fraud and lies as “specious and after the fact.” Schure reminded the group that Leo Goodwin Jr. had been on the Nova Board of Trustees and Della-Donna had also been on the board since December 15, 1976. The two men could not plead ignorance about Nova’s activities.

The trustees of the unitrust, continued Schure, could not arbitrarily withdraw Nova as the beneficiary and could not impose unreasonable conditions on the payment of those funds. Della-Donna originally proposed that Nova agree to restrict the funds’ use to Broward County. The Nova Board of Trustees did so, only to have Della-Donna reject the very stipulation he requested. Schure repeated that Nova was not dominated by NYIT, but what was really at stake was “whether or not we’re going to appease someone that is unappeasable and whether this institution is going to retain its independence; whether it is going to protect its academic freedom and whether these trustees [Nova] would exercise their discretion as they are charged to under the law and the bylaws” Schure proclaimed that Nova’s only option was to enforce the university’s rights “to the fullest extent permitted by the law.”⁴

At the same meeting, trustee David Salten, vice president at NYIT, added some venomous comments about Della-Donna’s behavior. The
attorney’s charges were not only malicious, Salten said, but also a public affront, and the conditions he sought were “as imperious in tone as they are defective in content.” Salten accused Della-Donna of having been paid legal fees of some $900,000. Della-Donna replied that the accusation that he had received $900,000 in fees was “absolutely false,” and that he had billed only $100,000 for his legal work with the unitrust. He said that he had received $950,000 in fees, but that money came from the Goodwin probate estate and not the unitrust. Della-Donna raised the stakes when, in a new filing, he included a clause that if Nova lost its court challenge against him, then it would get nothing, not even the $5 million to be set aside for the law school, and would forfeit all rights to the law building, the law school, and the law school’s land. Della Donna added, with hubris of the highest order, that he regretted the Nova board did not “feel that we are dealing in good faith, because we always have.”

After much discussion and argument during two meetings of the Nova University Board of Trustees, the twenty-member board (the number had been revised from the original agreement—in April 1978, Nova and NYIT each had ten voting members) came to a decision. The initial vote was nine to nine, with two members absent from the first meeting. Board member Cy Young said that he hoped the law center would become a reality and thought Nova could not wait the length of time it would take for the courts to decide the legal issues of the unitrust. “If they [Nova trustees] don’t give in a little bit, they are going to destroy this university as sure as I’m sitting here,” said Young.

A majority of the board chose to ignore Young’s concerns and finally voted to pursue the lawsuit against Della-Donna. As a result of this decision, board members Lester Moody and Clinton Lagrosa resigned, as did Robert Ellyson, who did not approve of the way the dispute had been handled and felt that some resolution should have been worked out. Ellyson’s resignation was accepted with “deep regret” as he had rendered yeoman service to Nova over the years. The resignations of Moody and Lagrosa were accepted without comment. Then the board of trustees, in a completely unanticipated move, decided to oust trustee Cy Young. The board accused Young of leaking detrimental details of the conflict to Della-Donna and the press, which led to some damaging stories about Nova’s motives. Young, after being unanimously removed from the board for actions detrimental to the university, called his eviction “a surprise and disappointment.”

Nova did not have long to wait for a resolution to its lawsuit against Della-Donna. On August 3, 1978, in the Seventh Judicial
Circuit Court, Judge Richardson, in a summary judgment, upheld his previous 1976 ruling that the entire $14.5 million unitrust should go to Nova on an unrestricted basis. (It should be noted that the final disbursement value depended on the value of GEICO stock at the time.) The judge ordered Della-Donna to turn over $6.5 million of the fund within ninety days. The remainder would be turned over when the estate’s tax liabilities had been settled. Nova agreed to pay his law firm $1.1 million to cover its fees and costs. In exchange, Della-Donna promised that he would end all appeals and other legal proceedings. Fischler said he was “delighted with the decision” and immediately planned to allocate $5 million from the unitrust to the law school.6

Fischler, Schure, and Nova had been vindicated, but it had been a long, hard, costly two-year battle that stymied university growth and drained $2 million from the unitrust corpus. Della-Donna, in a clear example of personal greed, had broken his promises, drawn out the court fight, and antagonized and frustrated everyone at the university. He did, however, eventually get his comeuppance.

In 1988, the Florida Bar Board of Governors prosecuted Della-Donna for violating his ethical and fiduciary responsibilities in several cases, including the Goodwin Unitrust. The bar association investigation spanned six years and cost $104,700, making it the most expensive disciplinary investigation in the history of the bar. The board of governors concluded that instead of properly representing his clients, Della-Donna “initiated, maintained, and encouraged the frivolous litigation for personal and financial gain.” The Florida bar charged him with mishandling the Goodwin estate with “baseless and unjustified litigation” to prevent the disbursement of the unitrust funds, in the process nearly bankruptcy Nova University and slowing accreditation for the law school. The $1.1 million settlement paid to Della-Donna to end all appeals and litigation “constituted a clearly excessive, illegal, and unwarranted fee” and “was tantamount to extortion.” The bar wanted Nova to be totally reimbursed for the $1.1 million. That amount, with interest, would come to $1.9 million. After a thirty-five-day hearing, referee Hugh Macmillan agreed with the Florida bar and ruled that Della-Donna be disbarred for three years, pay the costs of the investigation ($104,700), and return $100,000 to Nova University.7 On June 22, 1989, the Florida Supreme Court upheld most of the rulings by the Florida Bar Association and ruled that his misconduct warranted a five-year disbarment. The court did not ask for the return of Della-Donna’s $1.1 million fee
to Nova because the court had no authority to determine if the legal fees were excessive. During the time that Abe Fischler and the university attorney, Terry Russell, were exerting such energy and expense in fighting Della-Donna over the Goodwin Unitrust, Nova University had fallen on hard times. However, during the fiscal year 1980, Nova received an infusion of $920,000 in cash and 500,000 shares of GEICO stock, which then had a market value of $6 million. Another $9,841,828 in treasury bills, cash, corporate bonds, and other stocks was later awarded. By the time all of the money had been distributed on June 30, 1979, the amount was $15.9 million.

In anticipation of the Goodwin Trust, the university expended money it did not have and the university went deeper into debt each year. Nova had given $5 million to the law school and paid Della-Donna his $1.1 million fee and some $700,000 in legal fees to its own attorneys. The corpus of the trust had by then been reduced by approximately $7 million. Nova quickly spent much of the unitrust money, paying off its loans and other debts, FICA and pension funds and investing part of the gift for future operating expenses. Nonetheless, the university still faced significant deficiencies in payments to FICA, pension funds, salaries, and withholding taxes.

Once again, Alex Schure and NYIT came to the rescue. Since the local banks refused to lend money to Nova, Schure let Nova use NYIT’s line of credit with a California bank for a loan of $1.5 million. Even so, Nova still had to cut $900,000 in expenses to remain solvent. Survival was once again the primary goal. Most of the cuts were in personnel. Nearly fifty vacancies went unfilled and several major positions had already been eliminated. These personnel and spending cuts reduced morale and caused some griping and grumbling among faculty and staff, who also expressed anxiety about if and when their next paycheck would arrive and if they would have the money in time to pay their mortgages and bills. Despite these tense times, there remained an air of optimism, and most who worked at Nova still believed the school would survive.

The conflict over the Goodwin Unitrust, the local displeasure with NYIT’s alleged dominance over Nova, and Nova’s continued financial dependence on NYIT led to a serious rift in the relationship between the two schools. These issues and other events would eventually lead to the final breakup in 1985. David G. Salten, a vice president at NYIT, complained in a “confidential” memo that was leaked to the
Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel that Nova was constantly in need of financial help and its situation was becoming “increasingly unrealistic.” Salten also accused Nova administrators of mismanagement and that the university’s financial reports were so confusing that a person trained in accounting practices could not understand them. Furthermore, Salten alleged that communications between the two schools were inadequate. Nova had downplayed NYIT’s contributions to the “point of extinction” and exaggerated Nova’s contributions to the federation “to such an extent that one is reminded of Stalin’s rewriting of Russian history after the purges.” Fischler denied that Nova had downplayed NYIT’s contributions, but had no comment on the mismanagement charges. Salten’s negative comments angered Fischler and other Nova supporters and was yet another issue in the deteriorating relations between the two schools.

While Nova leaders grappled with the controversy over the Goodwin Unitrust, from 1976 to 1980 Fischler struggled mightily to maintain the viability of the Life Sciences Center, which needed new faculty and more space for research. Director Joel Warren, lacking adequate funding, had been unable to hire the talented young research scientists he needed, and by 1978 it became clear that he would be unable to realize his goal of establishing a top-notch research institute at Nova. Since the Life Sciences Center had never been in the black and Nova had to make deep cuts in spending, Fischler sent letters to the Life Sciences Center faculty in September 1978 indicating that all faculty contracts would be terminated unless funds became available. When the necessary funds were not forthcoming, President Fischler, in 1979, announced the dissolution of the Life Sciences Center and the severing of relations with the Leo Goodwin Institute for Cancer Research. Warren resigned as director effective June 30, 1980, and the Goodwin Institute left campus and moved to new laboratories in Plantation, Florida. The failure and the departure of the Life Sciences Center, one of the first three centers on the Nova campus, was a blow to the prestige of the university. Fischler and others had high hopes for science research, especially in cancer, but the lack of funds and the failure to get significant grants had undermined the center’s ability to stay afloat.

While Fischler coped with problems in the Life Sciences Center, the Educational Leadership Program was being battered by intense criticism from all over the country. Nova continued to defend the program with letters to editors and expensive lawsuits. Fischler also had to fight for law school accreditation. He went through two law deans until he found one who could stabilize the leadership of the
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In short, from 1976 to 1980, Fischler’s plate was full, and with all these problems, observers wondered how much longer Nova, teetering on the brink of insolvency, would survive.

Nonetheless, the Goodwin Unitrust payment helped to resolve some of Nova’s difficulties. Of the initial $6.5 million payment, $1.5 million was used to pay off the $1.5 million loan to NYIT, and Fischler designated $5 million to the Nova Center for the Study of Law. Of that $5 million, $1 million was used to establish the Leo Goodwin Sr. professorship and the Leo Goodwin Sr. Scholarship Fund. Approximately $2 million would be invested and the accumulated interest used for the new law school building. Income from an endowment would be spent on normal maintenance in the law school building. Income from another endowment of $1.5 million would be set aside to fund interdisciplinary programs and to purchase law library materials. Fischler recognized that the funds from the Goodwin Unitrust and money from NYIT had once again enabled Nova to continue. Without it, Fischler said, “We would never have made it.”13

The Disappearance of the Research Vessel Gulf Stream

In January 1975, Nova University suffered a great tragedy when the university’s research vessel, the Gulf Stream, and its five-man crew vanished in the Atlantic. Nothing was recovered except for the body of James Riddle, as well as one drawer from the galley and a life preserver (the life preserver is currently housed in the NSU Archives). How could an experienced crew in a well-equipped ship disappear almost without a trace?

The Gulf Stream was a 48-foot, steel-hulled former oil-drilling support vessel powered by two 460-horsepower diesel engines. The ship had all the necessary safety equipment, a magnetic compass, an automatic pilot, two 110-volt generators, and two separate radio units. One of the generators had been recently overhauled, and the steering cable had been repaired. All of the equipment had been reported in excellent working condition, except for the radar equipment, which had been removed prior to September 1974.

The crew consisted of five men: William (Bill) Richardson, age 51, director of the Nova University Oceanography Center; William Ben Campbell, age 49, captain of the vessel; Jack Spornraft, age 25, a mate on the ship; James David Riddle, age 41, a research technician; and John Wayne Hill, age 28, the assistant development engineer.
Richardson, the popular director of the Oceanographic Center at Nova University, led the expedition. He was a Navy pilot in World War II and an experienced sailor. He held a BSc and a PhD in chemistry from Harvard University and was a well-known and highly regarded oceanographer. Richardson had taken over as director of the Nova Oceanographic Center in 1966 and had been slowly building the center to elite status. Much to President Fischler’s delight, Richardson had received many grants and directed one of the profit-making centers at Nova.

Captain William Ben Campbell, who joined the Nova staff in 1968, spent much of his life working on and sailing boats. Spornrafft, who was hired in 1974, and Riddle, who came on board in 1970, were experienced seamen. The final member of the crew, John Wayne Hill, was employed by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and had been invited to accompany the expedition so that he could test some of Scripps’s buoys.

Figure 4.1 Nova University research vessel Gulf Stream, 1974. (By permission of Nova Southeastern University Archives, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.)
The purpose of the trip, as had been the case on many similar voyages, was to perfect a heavy weather buoy testing system. The results would provide vital information to a number of large national and international programs in oceanography and meteorology. Richardson designed the buoys to drift with the ocean currents. The buoys would then transmit data via satellite on their positions, as well as air and water temperature, wind velocity, and the salinity of the seawater. The ultimate purpose was to obtain a better understanding of the oceans and their impact on climate change. Richardson explained that oceans can store enormous amounts of heat, and the absorption or radiation of just a small amount of that heat could cause atmospheric changes in the United States.

Richardson had chosen Maine as the launching point for testing the buoys for a variety of reasons: “We need a place to test those buoys where the seas and weather are nasty. Maine is it. You have quite deep water close to land and excellent facilities at Boothbay.” The director had every confidence that the Gulf Stream would do fine in heavy weather: “Oh, she’s a good old boat. We’ve been in some bad stuff. She can handle the Gulf of Maine if it does not gang up on her.”

Prior to departure in the cold month of January 1975, Richardson expressed concern about the possibility of ice: “I’ve been thinking about that. We don’t have much high superstructure, but I don’t think the ice will bother us.”

Richardson estimated that the Gulf Stream had gone onto the chilly waters of Maine to attend to the buoys at least fifty times, so the crew had experienced January weather before. The crew’s actions in gathering buoys and recording the scientific information was routine, something the crew had done many times. The crew was upbeat and optimistic about the trip and did not worry about danger, especially since the weather report indicated that the weather would be good from January 4 to 6.

The crew’s plan was to leave Boothbay Harbor on Saturday, January 4, and recover eight buoys scattered thirty to forty miles south of the harbor. They would first pick up buoy number one, which was one of the larger and more difficult buoys to get on board. After securing the other buoys, they would put into Gloucester, Massachusetts, for the night; on the following day, Sunday, January 5, they would return to Boothbay Harbor.

At approximately 10:00 a.m. on January 4, 1975, the Gulf Stream left Boothbay Harbor with its five-man crew. What happened after that point is not precisely known. The ship simply disappeared. It has
never been determined if its disappearance was due to bad luck, errant judgment, foul weather, or an accident. Many theories have been put forward about the cause of this disaster, and there is little agreement about the ship’s fate, but there were some clues to the possible circumstances.

A few witnesses saw the ship before it sailed. Francis Pierce, owner of Pierce Marine Services in Boothbay, knew that Campbell had filled the forward fuel tank to 175 gallons—only half of its capacity because he did not want excess fuel to weigh down the bow. The aft tank had been filled with 500 gallons. At an average speed of sixteen knots and consumption of forty-two gallons per hour, the ship would have had enough fuel to operate for sixteen hours.

Bill Richardson and Charles Yentsch, a former Nova employee and now director of the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Boothbay Harbor, had agreed that Richardson would contact Yentsch by radio or telephone when the ship made port in Gloucester and if the ship were not going to return to Boothbay on January 5. Yentsch needed this information so he could notify Jerry Erich, pilot of the Nova University plane, to bring the plane to Gloucester. In Gloucester the plane would pick up the Gulf Stream’s automatic direction finder, which would then be placed inside the aircraft to help in locating the buoys. Since the original plan had been for a quick one-day turnaround, the call would have been made on either Saturday, January 4, or the morning of Sunday, January 5. The call from Richardson never came. There had been a phone call to Yentsch’s house, but the babysitter did not answer the phone. Could it have been Richardson? Possibly, but there was no way to know.

By the morning of Monday, January 6, with no word from Richardson, Yentsch notified the Coast Guard that the vessel was missing. The Coast Guard in Boothbay reported that it had received a transmission at 10 a.m. on January 4: “Coast Guard Boothbay, this is R/V Gulf Stream. Over.” The Coast Guard responded, “This is Coast Guard Boothbay. Can we be of assistance?” The response: “Coast Guard, this is the Gulf . . .,” and the transmission abruptly ended. The Coast Guard’s attempts to reestablish contact on January 4 failed. Nothing further was heard from the Gulf Stream until Yentsch notified the Coast Guard on January 6 that the ship was missing. The Coast Guard issued an alert on January 6 but did not manage to contact the ship, nor did the Coast Guard begin a search for the ship. However, on Tuesday, January 7, at 11:30 a.m., the Coast Guard received a message: “U.S. Coast Guard, this is the R/V Gulf Stream. Over.” The
Coast Guard again tried to respond but was unable to establish contact with the ship.

Wilson Francis, a local lobster fisherman, reported that at around 10 a.m. on Monday, January 6, he spotted the *Gulf Stream* “coming around Squirrel Island, near Boothbay Harbor, not Gloucester, heading in a southerly direction at approximately fifteen knots.”

John Hammond, another fisherman, was certain that he saw the ship heading south from Squirrel Island at about 10 a.m. He commented to his wife, who also saw the vessel, “There goes the *Gulf Stream*. It’s the only research vessel around here that does any work.”

Yet another witness testified that he recognized the voice of Captain Campbell on January 6 on a radio transmission. He said the call was not a distress call and was short and routine in nature. Since he could only hear the ship’s side of the transmission, he had no idea as to the recipient of the call.14

It was unclear why, after forty-eight hours, the *Gulf Stream* was still cruising close to Boothbay Harbor and why the vessel had inexplicably been out of contact with Yentsch and the Coast Guard for that same length of time. The Coast Guard had received an abbreviated message from the ship at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, January 7, so if the dates were correct, the *Gulf Stream* was still afloat on that day.

If the ship were navigating the waters off the coast of Maine on January 7, it would have been in deep trouble as the weather had deteriorated rapidly. The crew would have faced low visibility, and the danger of ice in the freezing waters was a high probability. By January 7, the Coast Guard had launched a sea search for the *Gulf Stream*, but the cutter *Cape Horn* encountered twelve-foot seas and strong winds, so they called off the search and returned to base. Later, there were reports of twenty-foot seas with forty-knot winds.

As the wind increased and the seas rose, the crew must have realized that they might not survive the vicious storm. Anyone who has been at sea under those conditions (probably an eight or nine on the Beaufort scale—a strong gale) can attest to the paralyzing fear of being at the mercy of a rough sea. The ship would pitch and roll violently, blowing spray would reduce visibility, and the rain would hammer into the windshield so loudly that you could not hear yourself talk. Twenty-foot waves would roll over the ship; each time a large wave struck the vessel, it must have appeared that the vessel could not stay upright. At some point, the crew must have accepted the fact that the ship would sink and they would perish. The terror of those last moments must have been unendurable. Henry David Thoreau knew well
the fury of the ocean off Cape Cod: “It will ruthlessly heave these
cylinders to and fro, break them in pieces in its sandy or stony jaws, and
deliver their crews to sea monsters. . . .”

The ship was probably strong enough to ride out the storm, and
it had faced similar circumstances, but apparently it did not manage
to ride out this particular storm. There were several possible explana-
tions for the sinking of the ship. Since Campbell filled the forward gas
tank only to half of its capacity, the ship might have run out of fuel,
and the captain would have been unable to maneuver the ship perpen-
dicularly to the waves. The vessel would have tossed and rolled help-
lessly against the angry sea and may have succumbed to a series of
large waves. Witnesses testified that the Gulf Stream crew had loaded
the heavy buoys onto the back of the ship rather than towing them—a
safety hazard in high seas. A rogue wave could have capsized the ves-
sel. Prior to the trip, Richardson had pointed out that the ship did not
have a high superstructure, and he had been somewhat worried about
ice since it was January in the Gulf of Maine. The Coast Guard never
reported a distress signal, but the ship could have had a problem with
its radio as two earlier transmissions had ended abruptly and the
Coast Guard could never reestablish contact with the Gulf Stream.

Charles Yentsch always believed that a larger vessel had run over
the ship. The ship was small and not easily visible on radar, and they
were operating at night and in bad weather near shipping lanes, so a
supertanker could have hit the ship without knowing it unless there
had been severe damage to the propeller or rudder.

Of course, there were the usual irrational explanations. Some Nova
students thought the ship had become a victim of the Bermuda Tri-
angle, even though the Gulf Stream was nowhere near that area. One
wag thought the crew had merely escaped to Hawaii or Mexico or
Brazil. Another story had the ship sunk by a Russian submarine. One
knowledgeable person said he heard that the crew had plugged up the
drains to put in some instrumentation, the ship took a wave, and the
water could not drain out.

The parents of Jack Spornraft, seeking closure, hired a psychic
or a “parapsychological consultant” named M.B. Dykshoorn, who
claimed that a huge wave washed over the boat and sent it to the
bottom. He also claimed he could pinpoint the exact place on the
map where the ship had gone down. Interestingly enough, scientists
at Woods Hole, after much calculating of wind, drifts, and weather,
came up with almost the same location as Dykshoorn.
On April 14, 1975, the U.S. Coast Guard submitted its final report on the fate of the *Gulf Stream*: “There is no evidence that any act of misconduct, inattention to duty, negligence, incompetence, or willful violation of any law or regulation on the part of licensed or certified personnel contributed to the casualty. There is no evidence of any mayday or distress signal sent from the *R/V Gulf Stream* at any time. It is recommended that no further action be taken and that this case be closed.”

Since there was no specific knowledge of what happened to the ship, the Coast Guard could not possibly have known that no misconduct or inattention to duty had occurred and had no evidence to make such a claim. The Coast Guard report, however flawed, proved to be beneficial to Nova. The insurance company had balked at paying for a ship registered in Fort Lauderdale that went missing in twenty-below-zero temperatures in Maine, but since it could not prove the crew had been at fault, the company had to pay.

The disappearance of Richardson and three members of his team saddened the university community. The campus was small, and everyone knew Richardson and the other crew members, so the loss was personal. Richardson’s death was significant for the university because he had successfully organized a first-rate oceanographic center. Now, half of the ocean sciences department, as well as its research vessel, had been lost, and it would take years to restore the center to its previous level of excellence. On February 7, 1976, to honor Richardson, Nova University named the library at the Oceanographic Center after him and initiated a campaign to get $750,000 to endow the William S. Richardson Professorship of Physical Oceanography. The university reprinted an epitaph dedicated to the five men lost at sea: “The story we tell is not a pretty story, the ending certainly not a happy one. Although there are no memorial stones to mark your graves, there is a record of who you were. The scientists, the adventurers, the researchers, the engineers, the mariners—all of you lovers of the sea, respectful of its powers and mysteries. The who, the what, the why, and the when shall ever be unknown to us.”

Richard Dodge, later the dean of the Oceanographic Center, recalled the situation at the center when he first arrived in 1978 as a coral reef geologist and biologist. The center had gone into a tailspin in 1975 after Richardson’s death. Not enough grants were coming in to keep the center in the black. In 1978, in hopes of reviving the center, Nova hired three new faculty members with grant-writing
skills: Julian “Jay” McCreary, a physical oceanographer; Pat Blackwelder, a geologist; and Dodge. A new director had also been hired. In 1979, however, the difficult fiscal position of Nova University required Fischler to notify the center’s faculty that the university would no longer award academic contracts and faculty would be on soft money. Fischler informed the staff that if they had grants, they were encouraged to stay and use them, but if they did not have grants, he could not guarantee support. Despite some demands that Fischler shut down the center since it was a drain on the university, he refused to do so: “I wouldn’t shut it down. I just fought that battle through” and saved the center.

As a result, some faculty and staff departed. The end of the 1970s saw the staff reduced to a few faculty and support personnel and only one academic program, a PhD in physical oceanography. Compounding the center’s problems, both the houseboat and the Forman Building, named for Charles and Hamilton Forman, were in bad shape. In the early 1980s, to attract more students, the Oceanographic Center created a master’s in coastal zone management and in marine biology. The center stayed afloat with grants from the State of Florida, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Nature Conservancy. By 1982, the Oceanographic Center was operating in the black once again.

Slowly but surely, the center began a period of growth and over time added additional faculty and staff. In 1990, it acquired the Schure Building, formerly owned by New York Institute of Technology. The center renovated the Schure Building in 1992 with an NSF award and constructed new geology and biology labs. In the late 1980s, Charles and Lucy Forman gave the center funding to create an endowment for research. By 1986, the center received approximately $800,000 in grants and contracts, employed seven researchers and faculty members, and enrolled approximately fifty students in its graduate programs.17

**Nova College**

In 1976, in an attempt to attract undergraduate students, Nova set up an experimental undergraduate school known as Nova College. The original idea for the college came from Gordon Sweet, the director of SACS. Sweet thought it would be important for Nova’s development as a full-service institution if the school would come up with a strong academic program for underclassmen. Sweet said he would like the
college to be accredited by SACS and encouraged Nova to move forward on his suggestion.

Abe Fischler, interested in the experimental and educational aspects of Nova College, came up with a plan for a three-year undergraduate school. He created several interdisciplinary, broad-based “circles” of learning: behavioral science, business and finance, and leadership. The circles met three hours a day, four days a week. Students studied each of the circles for nine weeks and then went on to another topic. In addition to their work with the circles, all students were required to take English and math. Within each circle of learning, students pursued several provocative themes: change and tradition; human nature and the individual; leadership and greatness; the individual and social organization; essence and existence; and wealth and poverty.

At the outset, approximately 100 students were enrolled, all on scholarship. The students were to read, gather facts, and then debate and write about the philosophical concepts. The purpose was to teach them to analyze and synthesize the material they read and studied. Fischler viewed the concept of general education at most traditional universities as flawed. Students took a few courses in English and math that were not interrelated or interdisciplinary and not designed conceptually. Fischler’s circles/courses would help students think critically and give them the intellectual tools to excel in their chosen field of study.

In later years, the Florida state legislature, enamored of the innovative concepts created at Nova College, gave the university money to build a small science building; a voucher to make up the difference between tuition at Nova, a private school, and a state institution; and a grant of around $350,000 to implement and expand the program. Fischler was grateful to the state legislature for its largesse because the money helped Nova’s bottom line. The legislature’s support gave the school some welcome publicity and indicated that Florida was willing to use public tax money to benefit private independent universities in the state.

SACS accredited Nova College in 1980, but the circles concept did not succeed for a variety of reasons. First of all, Nova University had difficulty marketing the program since it did not correspond to what most parents and students thought a college curriculum should be. Because the program was much more intensive (twelve months in length) and time consuming than the regular curriculum, several students, who wanted a summer vacation, dropped out. Nova College lived on as Fischler and others ended up compromising on the
original concept. The final result was still innovative but vastly different from the original idea. Fischler noted that if Nova College had come from the faculty instead of the administration, it might have been more effective. He had implemented a program that was simply too esoteric and complicated to work, and in the final analysis Nova could not “implement it to the extent that one wanted.”

**Athletics and Student Affairs**

In 1980, to boost the limited undergraduate enrollment, Nova University and its board of trustees decided to sponsor and organize student activities, including athletics and social events. In 1981, Charles “Sonny” Hansley, the first director of athletics at the university, faced the monumental task of starting an athletic program at Nova. It had no established sports programs, no facilities, very little money, and only 200 to 350 undergraduates to participate on the teams. In 1982, Nova administrators decided they needed to choose a sport that would not require a large initial outlay. They decided that men’s basketball would be the first sports team since the players needed only shorts, shirts, and sneakers, and they could use the local high school gyms for games. In 1982–1983, the men’s basketball team, known as the Nova Knights, with Hansley as the coach, began its inaugural season as an independent program, unaffiliated with any conference.

As one might imagine, organizing a basketball team at a mostly graduate university was a formidable challenge. Very few potential recruits had even heard of Nova. As the season began, Hansley had only eight healthy players and no gym or locker room. The players changed into their uniforms in their dorm rooms and then drove over to the Lutheran High School gym, their home court, to begin play. This was no-frills basketball, where the team used a high school classroom as their locker room. Player Tim Moore, who played basketball at Pompano High School, said playing for Nova was worse than high school. At least in high school, griped Moore, the manager would wash the uniforms. “Here, we take them home. At least they give us a lot of clean socks.”

Nova made a bold move in 1984 by adding men’s soccer, women’s volleyball, and men’s and women’s cross-country. These new sports did not require a large amount of funding and could be played on the athletic fields already available on campus or at the facilities of Broward Community College and local high schools. As Frank DePiano,
the first coach of the men’s cross-country team, recalled, basketball players needed a uniform, shoes, and a place to play, but in the warm Florida sunshine, cross-country runners needed only shoes and shorts and could roam all over the Nova campus.

In the fall of 1985, although the undergraduate enrollment had dipped to 222, Nova joined the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) because it needed to be a member of the NAIA to add new sports. In 1987, with enrollment up to 1,000, the university augmented the athletic programs with baseball, women’s tennis, and men’s golf. Despite meager resources, some of the early teams found success. The women’s volleyball team finished its second season with a record of nine wins and four losses. As might be expected, the other programs struggled to achieve a winning record, although basketball had a respectable 11-13 season during its third year.¹⁹

Nova University had made a concerted effort to increase athletics and other intramural activities to attract undergraduate students, but the campus lacked any sort of social planning or social activities for them. Zeida Rodriguez, an undergraduate student in 1983, liked the university and enjoyed her classes but was disgruntled with the lack of social amenities. There was no cafeteria on campus, so students had to leave campus for fast food. She had no place to relax and hang out with her peers except for a small room in the Parker Building. Rodriguez liked the small classes at Nova, however, and was impressed that the faculty was accessible to students on a personal level. A cursory glance at the student newspaper, The Nova Knight, from November 1983 until the end of 1986, indicates that students were constantly complaining about the dearth of social activities and demanding that the university build a proper student union.

The Student Government Association (SGA) sponsored several events in an attempt to get students to remain on campus and get to know their fellow students better. The SGA held a free picnic on the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving 1983, coupled with a canned-food drive “for those in need who might not be able to celebrate the holiday without our help.” The SGA held its annual holiday party on December 22, 1983, featuring the “hottest disco sounds.” Unfortunately, the party had to be held in the cramped confines of the third floor of the Parker Building as no other venue was available. Of course, various organizations on campus held other typical student events, such as movie nights and “Get Blitzed Night.”²⁰

The SGA saw itself as a watchdog for student rights and besides parties, planned fund-raising events for more important purposes,
such as providing scholarships for needy students. The *Nova Knight* urged students to vote in every election, both local and national. The paper had culinary reviews of local restaurants and provided information about concerts by U2 and Julian Lennon. Staff members wrote reviews of new albums by Van Morrison and Bob Dylan.\(^{21}\)

The student newspaper took great pains to inform students about important university-sponsored events, like the forum on U.S. and Soviet affairs presided over by David Brinkley of *NBC News*. The *Knight* encouraged students to attend Nova’s “Distinguished Speakers” series to learn about world affairs. The first event featured Sir Edward Heath, prime minister of the United Kingdom from 1970 to 1974.\(^{22}\)

The main focus of the newspaper from 1983 to 1986 was a continual plea for a central student union and an on-campus bookstore. The students complained about the service and the high prices at the privately owned Corner Book Store and urged the university to set up its own not-for-profit bookstore. The *Knight* asked the administration for a career information center to help graduates find jobs and a computerized central catalog for the library. The paper pointed out errors and misinformation in the 1984–1985 university catalog and asked for more convenience in class scheduling.

The loudest and most frequent grievance remained the lack of a student center. The editor of the *Knight* found a “high degree of apathy” among Nova students. Student indifference was not surprising “considering the basic resources that have been made available to us till now, including a degrading, dirty student lounge and an almost complete absence of school-based activities on campus.” The *Knight* repeatedly expressed the need for more campus-based events.\(^{23}\) These complaints were made as late as 1986, but the university moved very slowly to accommodate student’s needs. Abe Fischler believed he had more important things on which to spend money, and with the university constantly in debt, student athletics and social events were a very low priority. If Nova intended to increase its undergraduate numbers, that attitude would have to change.

**International Programs: Panama**

Desiring to take advantage of the physical proximity of South Florida to Latin American countries and expand its off-campus programs, Nova University decided to start an overseas program in Panama.
Nova initiated its program in 1977 just after the United States agreed to return the Panama Canal Zone to the people of the nation of Panama by the year 2000.

Aware that Panamanian officers would eventually man the Canal Zone, the U.S. Canal Zone Police knew they would have to turn to some other form of police work and requested that Nova set up a master’s program in criminal justice. Nova organized a program essentially limited to the Canal Zone police force, but this initial venture led to other contacts with the Panamanian authorities and eventually to Nova’s Panama Center. Nova recognized that the Republic of Panama served “as a bridge for understanding and cooperation among peoples of the Americas through the educational process.”

First conceived as a limited off-campus program, the venture quickly developed, and on March 15, 1982, the president of Panama signed a decree recognizing Nova University as an autonomous official university in Panama. At the time, it was the first and only institution of U.S. origin so honored.

By 1986, the center offered intensive English- and Spanish-language courses and had graduated American and Panamanian students with bachelor’s of science degrees in the professional management program, master’s degrees in business administration, master’s of arts in teaching English as a second language, and doctoral degrees in public administration.

During the Cold War, the stressful period of diplomatic animosity between Russia and the United States, Camilio Fabrega, chairman of the Nova University Panama Center Board of Governors, expressed pride in having Nova University in Panama. With 4,000 Panamanian students being educated behind the Iron Curtain, Fabrega noted that Nova had played a significant role in providing education at a democratic institution instead of in totalitarian Soviet Union. In 1986, Dominador Kaiser Bazan, the Panamanian ambassador to the United States, said that Nova’s presence and its influence on the 1,000 or so students enrolled on an annual basis had a major impact in curbing Soviet influence in the area. “The relations between Panama and the United States are very good now,” he said, and education was the key to continued peace between the two countries.

Martin Taylor, the chief administrative officer, directed the daily operations in Panama. From 1977 to 1987, Nova created a professional-level university to provide educational and cultural services to personnel and dependents of the Panama Canal Commission, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development,
the U.S. embassy, the government of the Republic of Panama, and the private sector. From 1979 until 1987, a total of 335 students had graduated in all the programs.

The Nova University Board of Trustees assessed the Panama program as very successful since it raised the university’s prestige in international circles and made a profit. The board wanted the Panama program to have a more visible presence and insisted that a permanent classroom/office building was essential for future progress. With proper facilities and an expanded curriculum, the center became self-supporting.24

**Nova University Administrative Structure: 1975–1985**

By 1975, Nova University administration had become more stable and efficient. The hierarchy began with the board of trustees, then the chancellor of the university, Alex Schure, followed by the president of the university, Abe Fischler. The dean of graduate studies reported to the president, as did the directors of each of the five centers: the Nova Center for the Study of Law, Behavioral Science Center, the Life Sciences Center, the Center for Professional Development, and the Oceanographic Center. In 1975, university faculty participated in most academic matters, including curriculum and degree requirements, but had little influence on the actual running of the university.

Nova faculty used the university senate as the primary vehicle for administrative and academic recommendations to the president. Meetings were held four times a year and were open to all members of the university family. The chairman of the senate chose voting members, and there were student representatives from each of the five centers.

More important to the decision-making process was the administrative council. Composed of the president, the chairman and chairman-elect of the university senate, and the directors of each of the five centers, this group met monthly and advised the president on important matters. The latter group was smaller than the university senate and could discuss and act more efficiently than the larger body. Over time, depending on the president, the administration could—and in Fischler’s opinion, should—ignore the university senate and provide them with the necessary information about the university’s direction.25 Due to the critical economic circumstances and the university’s uncertain future, it was perhaps inevitable that the president would end up making most of the key decisions.
During this early period, Fischler ran the university without a provost or all the layers of bureaucracy that characterize most universities. Fischler preferred it that way because he favored a system that he described as “each tub on its own bottom.” He chose the leader of each center, calling them directors instead of deans, and they served at his pleasure. When they began their time as director, Fischler told them that they had to do two things: maintain the academic quality and economic viability of their center. If they were successful, Fischler would leave them alone. If not, they would be replaced. If they came up with new ideas and demonstrated that the concepts would work, the president would give them the tools and funding necessary to implement these new programs. Fischler’s operating system was another example of the university’s entrepreneurial focus.

Fischler wanted the centers to keep most of the money that they earned as an incentive for them to earn more. To pay for operating expenses for the entire university, Fischler asked each center to contribute 25 to 30 percent of their earnings. The administration—that is, Fischler—operated as the service arm for the university: secretarial, administrative, and accounting.26

In 1977, on the tenth anniversary of its opening, Nova University held its first convocation to honor the founding trustees and other civic leaders who aided in establishing the institution. Among those honored were Jim Farquhar, Robert Ellyson, Tinsley Ellis, Myron Ashmore, Robert Ferris, and some of the major donors to the school—William C. Mather, Leo Goodwin Sr. (posthumously), Louis W. Parker, and William Horvitz. In his address, President Fischler traced the development of the institution’s growth, commenting that the school started with only seventeen graduate students and now had approximately 8,000 students in twenty-three states and three foreign countries. The annual budget had increased from $500,000 in 1967 to $19.2 million in 1977. Fischler observed that Nova’s struggle was not over: “Our infancy is over, but we need nourishment as we enter adolescence. We need the two-way dialogue. We need both your intellectual stimulation and your monetary support.”

Fischler pointed out to his audience that independent universities like Nova were competing with tax-supported institutions that were also receiving private philanthropic support, so Nova would “require even greater support in the future.” The president stated that private universities educated around one-fourth of the more than 11 million students currently in universities and thus saved taxpayers around $6 billion per year to educate those students in state schools. The
country, said Fischler, needs independent universities because they provide diversity and choice in the educational marketplace, are more flexible and enterprising than public universities, and are relatively free from political pressure by the state legislatures. The public sector and the state legislature needed to recognize that a dual system (public and private) of university education is in the public interest.27

If one were to take a snapshot of the university’s activities from 1978 to 1985, one would focus first on the economic situation. Nova’s economic status remained precarious and unstable, and the school had to be bailed out yet again by Alex Schure and NYIT. On the surface, however, Nova officials discussed the future as if everything were proceeding in a positive direction. In 1979, when Fischler published “The Report of the President on the 15th Anniversary of the Founding of Nova University,” no public mention was made of the acute financial distress. The major purpose of this document, as well as the 1977 report, was to bring the public’s attention to the university’s significant achievements in its fifteen years of existence. Also, despite a reluctance to face fiscal reality, Fischler used the bully pulpit to allay fears of the school’s imminent demise. Fischler stressed that Nova’s programs were mission oriented and designed to improve the performance of professionals. The university announced several new initiatives, including a master’s program in criminal justice that targeted employed professionals in the criminal justice system—law and the courts, the police, and corrections. The National Graduate Teacher Education Program offered graduate courses for K–12 teachers.

A new and very successful off-campus program was the Center for Public Affairs and Administration, aimed at midcareer officials in government, universities, and public service areas. The program awarded a doctorate in public administration (DPA); from 1973 to 1979, 198 men and women had been awarded a DPA from Nova.

The university, continuing its idea of cradle-to-grave education, set up the Institute for Retired Professionals (IRP). Nova understood that professionals often felt lost at retirement and faced physical, emotional, and intellectual strains. The university decided to involve retirees in activities that would establish a sense of self-worth and provide a place where “highly trained retired professionals can expand their intellectual life and learn from teaching each other.” Max Salzman, the associate director of IRP, said, “What we have is wisdom . . . a lifetime of accumulated knowledge and experience. It’s all just a matter of bringing these people together and convincing them that they are a valuable resource.” The course offerings included poetry, literature,
contemporary affairs, music, art, theater, estate planning, and conversational French. IRP members served as both teachers and students in their twice-daily classes. Libby Klinghoffer, a recent retiree, declared that the IRP offered “a very broadening and stimulating experience.” Participant Charles Weiss talked about the challenge of a new lifestyle and emphasized the need to stay mentally active.\textsuperscript{28}

One on-campus center that expanded quickly was the Behavioral Science Center (BSC), which focused on the study of man and his behavior and offered an EdD in early childhood education. Also offered were master’s of education degrees in mental retardation, reading, the gifted child, elementary education, and health education. The center included the Foster Parents Training Program, which trained welfare workers, and a biofeedback laboratory. The Department of Psychology offered a PhD program in clinical psychology, child psychology, and research and evaluation. Students could earn a master’s of science degree in counseling, gerontology, applied psychology, and school psychology. The center opened several mental health clinics around the county, with one clinic specifically designed for children. Nova was beginning to expand its services for the local community and increase its interaction with local residents, and was thus becoming better known in Broward County.

In 1981, the Florida School of Professional Psychology merged into the Behavioral Science Center. The School of Professional Psychology, which lacked regional accreditation, had 120 students paying $4,700 per year in tuition; this new income provided a financial boost to the center. The merger enabled the center to begin offering a PsyD, the professional degree, in addition to the PhD, the academic degree. In 1983, the American Psychological Association gave full accreditation to the PsyD program.\textsuperscript{29}

All of these new initiatives and expanded programs raised Nova University’s profile and added money to its coffers. The new injection of funds, however, was still not enough to keep Nova in the black. Nonetheless, the programs in psychology and early education, the public administration program, the master’s in criminology, the courses for national teachers’ education, and others would form the basis for a successful and viable Nova when the university eventually separated from NYIT.

Due to insufficient funds, certain academic areas suffered more than others. As is often the case, the library was shortchanged financially as the administration tried to get by with as little funding as possible. Robert (Bob) Bogorff, the director of libraries at the time, bemoaned
the administration’s lack of interest in library holdings. There was no central library in the early years, so the books were crammed into a small library in the Mailman-Hollywood Building. The Parker Building also had a small library with limited space, and the Oceanographic Center had its own library, but the holdings for the university were limited. The library got help in the late 1970s when the School of Psychology ordered many volumes when the SACS representative came to evaluate the university. The SACS investigator recognized the library’s plight and, after getting a laundry list of the most-needed materials from the director, made certain that those needs were met so it wouldn’t imperil Nova’s accreditation. Eventually, by the mid-1980s, the university began to fund the library to build up collections that had been ignored. For the first fifteen years, Bob Bogoroff recalled, library staffing was inadequate, and “it was not a satisfactory university library.”30

**Early Technology at Nova**

Another area of concern for the growing university was technology development, computers in particular. Abe Fischler had long been a proponent of new technology, and all of the original graduate students at Nova had to learn Fortran, a general-purpose computer programming language. Fischler predicted that ultimately technology would be used for his distance-learning programs. Nova later developed a comprehensive program in computer education, including a master’s in computer science and computer applications. Soon computer science became Nova’s most popular major at a time when few campuses in America were offering such courses. Nova broadened its offerings with an EdD in computer education. Fischler knew that this new technology was the trend of the future and made certain that computers were “in the very fabric” of all doctoral programs. He also began to devise a plan to use this new technology for the university’s off-campus programs.

Technological innovation came quickly in the 1980s. In 1984, Nova established the Center for Computer-Based Learning, which included master’s and doctoral programs in information science, computer education, and computer science. In 1985, the university revolutionized distance education with the development and implementation of the electronic classroom for delivering synchronized online courses. By 1992, with the advent of audio teleconferencing, Nova could service
all courses via online computers from the Nova campus. In 1987, the Center for Computer Science was set up to contain both the graduate and undergraduate computer science degree programs previously housed in the Center for Computer-Based Learning. Nova University, along with a few other institutions, had changed the focus of higher education in America. First, with the idea of off-campus programs and later with the technology that enabled Nova to teach these programs online from campus.

Nova University had suffered a tragedy with the loss of the Gulf Stream and its crew, but it finally received the long-overdue funds from the Goodwin Unitrust. Nova slowly recovered on several fronts: rebuilding the Oceanographic Center; offering academic, social, and athletic opportunities for students; and upgrading its technology. Nova was now ready to free itself from its alliance with NYIT and embark on its own as an independent university.