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Interview with Dr. Brad Williams - VP for Student Affairs

Brad Williams
Nova Southeastern University

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Nova Southeastern University

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History of Presidents

Brad Williams

JP= Dr. Julian Pleasants

BW= Brad Williams

JP: This is Julian Pleasants. I'm at Nova University with Brad Williams and it's 4th of May 2011. Brad, when did you first come to work for Nova and why did you decide to come to Nova?

BW: I came in the summer of 1989. It's a great question, why I came here. It's interesting. At the time, I had moved away from Florida, had lived in South Florida for a while. My wife was a little homesick, so I went back, and for 5 years I was an athletic director back in Ohio. I had loved living in Florida before. We kind of realized we were a little bit like Thomas Wolfe, we couldn't go home, and so I remember distinctly in January, scraping the ice off the windshield, and we had little babies in the car, and I'm mouthing, "You sure you wanna be here", you know. So, at the time I thought let's take a look at coming back to Florida. There was a school called Nova University. I'd never been here, but they had a toll-free telephone number,

so I thought well it's not going to cost me even a dime at the time to find out whether or not they've got any openings. They said they were looking for somebody in Student Affairs, student life to kind of create a sense of campus life, and I thought I can do that. So, came down, interviewed. I was fortunate enough; I had 3 interviews and got 3 job offers. And the reason why I tell the story, it's kind of distinctive to Nova. My first job interview was at Florida State University. My second job interview was at the University of South Florida. My last job interview was at Nova. At Florida State and USF, they said in August, that's orientation and you'll do this, this, and this. September's parent's weekend, this is what we do, and of course October's homecoming, and it's the big game, and this is what you'll do. When I came here, they looked at me and said nothing exists, nothing. I remember driving down College Avenue. A student picked me up at the airport, I'm driving down College Avenue, and I'm looking over at Broward College now, BCC at the time, and thought, "that's not too bad." Suddenly the car starts going to the right, and I looked at the student, I said, "Where are we going?" He said, "We're going to Nova" and I said, "This is Nova?" There was a sign out front, and there was nothing behind the sign, like nothing. I was like, where in the world.

JP: This was 1989.

BW: Uh huh, interviewed that day. There were only 3 buildings on campus and a couple of residence halls. Interviewed and went home and told my wife, I said, "Well that's the nicest people you'd ever want to meet, but there is nothing there. There is a sign that says Nova University, but there is nothing there." She looked at me, and I'll never forget, she said, "You know what, you have always liked to create things. Maybe you should really consider that place", compared to the other offers that I had. Wives can be very wise, and I did, and it's made all the difference.

JP: Did you, at that point, understand what the potential might be?

BW: No, not even remotely. On my first day, the guy that hired me, Dan Sullivan, at the end of the day we walked up to the highest point on campus, which at that time was the top of the Mailman Hollywood Building, which is like, I guess the 4th floor if you will, and there was a little way you could walk out on the roof. I'll never forget at the end of the day, Dan looked out and said, "Imagine, this could all be yours." Dans a little bit taller than me, I looked at him and said, "You are crazy."

There was nothing. There was sand and scrub and all of that, and there were 550 students on campus at that time, so we sat out to kind of build a sense of campus life and a sense of campus traditions, and all of that.

JP: Give me some idea of your working conditions when you started out. Did you have a decent office, decent benefits, that sort of thing from the very beginning?

BW: Uh huh. My office was over in the Rosenthal Student's Center, which until I arrived, even though it had been built in 1967 and it says Rosenthal Students Center on it, had never been used as a traditional student's center. Because of the university's, as you probably well know, financial problems, everything else had been in there except it had been a student center and so part of my charge was to bring life to that. I carved out a little office over in the corner, and it was just make it up as we go. I was the whole division of Student Affairs. I was the proverbial guy that if, like the old spoof on the Carol Burnett Show, where you go to the airport, the person checks your bags in, and then stamp your ticket and now they're flying the plane. I would get up, come to work, have tie on. About 10 o'clock in the morning, I would take the tie off. I'd go out and run barbeques at lunch for the

kids. We're doing all that kind of stuff. I'd take a shower, put the tie back on, and go to meetings. At 5 o'clock I'd take the tie back off, put on an intramural shirt and I'd be out until 8:30-9 o'clock riffing, using my athletic background because they wanted to create a recreation program, up and down fields. I told my wife I was like superman, taking clothes off, putting clothes on, and all that.

JP: But obviously you enjoyed the work.

BW: Loved it, loved it. I knew every one of those 550 kids. I knew everything about them. It was very familial. My wife would come, she's a great cook, and she'd bring, you know it was just a very small college. The kids who were here really had no campus life, so it was fun, and I was engaging them and trying to do all the student development theory things that I'd learned in my prep program.

JP: So one of the things you're already thinking about in 1989 is student recreation center at some point down the line. I mean this is obviously a little early, but any time you go to a university campus, people going visit the campus kids, say, "Where's the Student Center?"

BW: Absolutely.

JP: When the Taft Center was finally brought on line, that was a huge difference, I would imagine, at this University.

BW: Yeah, huge difference. Again, Julian I'm a huge story teller, but I think there's a story to everything practically.

JP: Good.

BW: In February 1989, the original plans were not to have that Taft Center where it is. The original plans were to build a field house over adjacent to where the Miami Dolphins complex is, and I was never comfortable with that because what they were doing is they were putting essentially, if there was going to be any recreation component, really on the outskirts of campus --

JP: Doesn't make any sense.

BW: But there was some political leanings toward doing that because Nova, particularly in the early years, and we still fight this a little bit, we think in kind of a corporate culture in terms of the external communities, and I have always seen my role as being an advocate for students. You know the student, the campus life, and

everything that's associated with it. So, in February of 1989, and I still have the plans somewhere, where myself and my director of recreation, Tom Vitucci, were tramping out in what was a field, and I said, "I think we could put the field house, rec center, whatever, right here. Recognizing that I knew that a library was coming, and I thought, Jefferson always referred to the library as the intellectual center.

JP: You've been talking to George Hanbury again.

BW: I thought, okay, interestingly the library is in the absolute geographic center of campus, so the Taft Center is right next to it, so my sense was, wow, what if we had the intellectual center and the energy center of campus right side by side, wouldn't that be something as we build the sense of campus and sense of campus community. So, we drew up these really low tech, like really low tech plans, and began holding meetings and presenting it, and got a lot of resistance, because other people had agendas and they already wanted it out there, but we were able to sway the powers that be. It took a long time but --

JP: So you were in on the planning all the way through?

BW: All the way through.

JP: And at what point did you realize that you were going to have to have much larger vision of what the Taft Center was going to be, that there would have to be a food court, and there would have to be recreation, and a basketball court, all of that. I mean, it's a much bigger final product than you would have anticipated say in the early 90s.

BW: Oh, absolutely. Our original drawings, I believe, had about 100,000 square feet, and it ended up 366,000, so -- but what was interesting about that is, at some point Malcolm Gladwell wrote this book called *The Tipping Point* and at some point we were able to get enough people excited about this, that then other partners started coming on board, because there was going to be a performing arts center somewhere, there was going to be a student union somewhere, and we said, okay, what if we fused all this because as you well know, the history of this university was, and has been, very entrepreneurial but very segmented. My colleague, I don't think any more, but at one point we looked at each other and he said, "You know this isn't a university, this is a polyversity." So, the sense was really more than just bricks and mortar, culture, what

could we do to really bring all this together, and that's when things got really, really exciting about the university center.

JP: What would have been the timeframe and who would have been president? Was this under Feldman or later?

BW: No, this was all Ray Ferrero.

JP: All Ray, okay.

BW: This was all Ray. I came when Abe was here, and then Feldman, and then Ovid, and we were building -- what was interesting is how we built the recreation program relative to -- I only had 4 things on my job description when I first came here, and the 4th one was other duties as assigned. So, I was kind of --

JP: That's expanded a little bit.

BW: Yes. So, I thought, okay what can we do, and the way I started, I always try to talk in, I'm kind of like Bob Dole, I talk in the third person, but at one point it was just me. The only recreation piece that we had was, at the time, just west of Founders, Farquhar, and Vettel Hall, there was a little tiny sand volleyball pit that had been built out there. I looked at that and thought, okay, outdoor sand volleyball. Maybe I can start an intramural

rec program with that. So I went to those residence halls and, "knock, knock, knock". Kid opened, and I said, "Hey, you want to play intramural volleyball?" "No." Next door, "knock, knock, knock" "wanna play ..." "No" The third one, I was like, "do you want to play intramural volleyball?" He said, "Is there gonna be beer there?" and I go, "No" He goes, "I don't want to play." But I thought, if I can get 16 kids, 4 on a team, I've got a league. Again, I was a former athletic director, and had run all these large things, and I'm thinking, "Holy smokes." And, I did, and it was the 80s, and I went out and bought. I don't know if you remember the old boom boxes --

JP: Oh yeah.

BW: I bought the biggest boom box you could possibly get, and every night I'd blare that towards those res halls, and suddenly kids are coming out, going, "Hey, what's going on here?" and now we're building community, and from there we started intramural flag football, which was, it's really had to imagine now, but out here, Goodwin Hall had not been built, so it was just a big wide open field, and I mowed a football field with a push lawnmower, and we had 7 teams for that. The reason why I say that, is this past year we had over 3000 student, faculty, and staff

participate in intramurals alone. All from that, "knock, knock, knock" you know. So, what was happening is suddenly these intramural programs are really blowing up and getting big, because we had so many graduate students, that they played intramurals when they were undergrads, and now they were really enjoying it, and finding it's a way to relieve stress and different things of that nature. So, all of that created momentum, I believe, for creating a Rec Center.

JP: Because, as you mention, when I talked to Abe Fischler, the whole idea was that every institute on campus was separate. You did your own thing, and he was over everything, but everybody was separate. The law school was not dealing with the rest of campus, so one of the things he mentioned, and Ray mentioned the same thing, there was no spirit of unity, and people didn't talk about being at Nova, they talked about being at law school. You know, there was no sense of a university, and I think that's one reason that Ray thought that this center, the Taft Center, would, as you said earlier, bring all of these different interests together in one building. So that was the essence of what you were trying to accomplish.

BW: Yes. And what was interesting is Cannon Design did a masterful job of not only designing the building, but

designing it from a philosophical base. Here's what I mean.
See if I still have that here somewhere -- here it is.
You've been in the University Center, right Julian?

JP: Yes.

BW: Okay. So if you've been in the University Center, the site lines are such. There's lots of glass and lots of site lines, and that's because they wanted to create something where this kind of very separated university could come together. But not only that, this is the proposal for the growth of the residence halls, and this is our residential village, which right now only this building and this building exists, and there are some small buildings here that will be scheduled to be torn down. The reason why I'm sharing this is, this is where the academic classrooms are, this is the residential village, and if you look, coming right out of here, the quickest way to get there, is to go right through that building. So, that idea of having it as a campus hub is very, very deliberate and very, very strategic in its design, which goes back to why I felt it should be in the center of campus.

JP: Do you think it's accomplished that purpose?

BW: It's getting there. Yes, I think it is. I think that right now we just need more people in that building. We need to grow the undergraduate student population.

JP: And when did the Taft Center officially open?

BW: August of 2006.

JP: So, it's very recent. In other words, it took you a good 15 years to get from what you originally wanted to achieve to the final product?

BW: Absolutely.

JP: But it's changed not only the face of the campus, but it's changed the attitude of people in terms of how they relate to the campus.

BW: Absolutely.

JP: Because people go in there all the time, they go into Starbucks, and they, you know, there's a place for people to gather.

BW: Absolutely.

JP: Kind of like a forum. You know, there are people who can get together and meet friends, and that sort of thing.

BW: Yes.

JP: Now, give me a little bit of background about the evolution of sports on the campus because initially, you had a few intramurals and eventually, I guess, the first sport was baseball?

BW: No, the first sport was basketball, and the intercollegiate athletic program began in 1982, so that's how far back it goes. And it began with basketball and then, I believe, either 2 or 3 years later it added baseball. Basketball, soccer --

JP: You guys start at division 2?

BW: NAIA.

JP: NAIA.

BW: NAIA for probably up until, I think, 1996/97. So we have not been NCAA all that long.

JP: And currently there is men and women's golf, have been very successful, and swimming. Hopefully, not football.

BW: No football.

JP: Ray said he did not want a football team.

BW: Right, right.

JP: The cost of building a stadium, and in here there are so many other schools, there's pro football, there's University of Miami, I mean, it would be hard to make that a viable program I would think, and it's a small undergraduate.

BW: It's really interesting, I don't waffle on a whole lot, but I kind of waffle on football. Because one part of me says I know of no other sport that just by its design, lends itself to building community better, for a variety of reasons. How many have people show up 2 hours in advance to picnic and tailgate, and then you have a sport that, I thought this was interesting, they did an analysis of pro football. They said, how much actual time is spent in plays versus, out of the 60 minutes, it was like 8 minutes and 27 seconds are actually action, and the rest of the time -- so you're sitting there, and you're chatting, and you've got all of that. Then you have half time, and then you can involve bands, so it builds community. The flip side of it is, it's so doggone expensive. It just really, really is.

JP: So what point are you now? How many athletic teams do you have and what is the long-term?

BW: There are 13 different athletic teams now. The intercollegiate athletic program is about the only thing that doesn't report to me. That actually reports to the provost.

JP: Okay. That is to say, that's about the only thing that does. Ha ha.

BW: Ha ha, outside the classroom. I can tell you though that there's discussion to where do we belong. Do we belong in NCAA Division II, do we belong in NCAA Division I. What would that look like? If you say, I want to grow the undergraduate student population; you have a facility that is a D1 facility over there. Lots of schools do D1 without football, and there are some schools, I mean Butler's had a pretty good bump off of what they've done basketball wise.

JP: But for the immediate future, that's going to be about where the sports programs are.

BW: I think so. Yes. I don't see continued growth there.

JP: When you first started out, how would you describe how your workplace and your responsibilities changed over 20-25 years? I mean, obviously in the

beginning there was not much to do but, as you evolved, you took on more and more responsibilities.

BW: Yes. The responsibilities changed from being, I was the Jack of all trades. I've done every job within the Division of Student Affairs, so that when I'm working with my team, I can say, "I remember when I wrote the student judicial code, I remember when I --"you know, all of that. In the early years there was a lot more physical stuff, as I talked about. Now, with 84-85 members of the Division of Student Affairs and 12 different offices and all of that, it is far more supervisory in nature. I often think, remember the guys in the old Ed Sullivan Show with the plates, and they would be running to get one plate going, that's what it feels like a lot relative to what I do now.

JP: Has the University been supportive of Student Affairs most of the time you've been here?

BW: I would say yes. I would say, as I tell my team, this university if you can demonstrate that something is succeeding; if you get it started and you can demonstrate that it's succeeding, and it's succeeding potentially at a high level, it will support that. If you say, "I want to do this but I'm not going to do this until all the resources

are poured in and everything is perfect," you're just going to be spinning your wheels for a long, long time.

JP: And that's part of the entrepreneurial process. I would imagine that Ovid Lewis would have been a very strong supporter of student.

BW: Very much. Ovid was a strong supporter of students, a dear person, probably one of the most thoughtful people I've worked with here over my 22 years, and sorry to see him pass.

JP: Yes, and the process changes once Ray comes in, because Ray is much more aggressive, much more visionary, that sort of thing. Does that change your job and your relationship to the executive branch as it were? I mean very different personalities.

BW: Yes, very, very different personalities. Not so much because -- the reason why I say this is, when Ray came in, it wasn't too long until George came, so for all of those years up until just this past summer, I reported directly to George. George and Ray are very different in my opinion. So, my relationship with George is very similar to what it was with Ovid as it relates to my relationship with Ray, and I've told him this, just the facts, get in, all of

that, but by the same token, if I can lawyer myself up and put on a good argument, he's been very supportive, he really has.

JP: How would you assess his presidency since it technically just ended?

BW: I think he was the right man in the right place at the right time. This university needed an infrastructure that it didn't have. It needed somebody with strong local ties that could really rally a number of people in favor of the university, and that indeed happened. So, I think that obviously the infrastructure will be his lasting legacy I believe.

JP: And what of these changes made by Ray would have been the most important?

BW: That's a great question.

JP: I suppose to some degree, when Ovid was doing all the negotiations with Southeastern, that obviously the medical complex and that union was significant, but that was really a little bit before Ray started (UNINTELLIGIBLE). He was the Chairman of the Board.

BW: Those were extraordinarily bumpy times. We came out of the Feldman era, who started the negotiation with

Southeastern. Ovid came in. It was the longest time, and there's still little elements where there were 2 distinct cultures. I'll never forget, this is in the early years, but I was over at the Health Professions at the Terry Building one day, and an administrative assistant looked at me. I told her who I was, and she goes, "Oh, you're from the east campus." She said, "We refer to it as the east campus." It was just across the canal. So, that was very, very difficult. I think that relative to Ray, his decision to hire George was huge because I see him as 1 and 1A because Ray would have a vision, George would make it happen.

JP: Because he had been Broward County manager so he knew how to --

BW: He knew how to put it together.

JP: So that's an important team. One guy can think it up and get the money, and somebody else has to get it done.

BW: Absolutely.

JP: That's a good point. Now, when you were here, all through this period of time, my understanding is that even today people in Broward County and Fort Lauderdale, leave

alone the state of Florida, do not know what goes on at Nova University. Is that right?

BW: That's right.

JP: Why is that?

BW: I think that reputation sometimes can be easy to build and hard to get rid of, and I think that in the early years we were definitely the back of the matchbook cover type of university, and so we were trying to survive and do the best we can doing that. I think that one of the reasons, to answer your question directly now, and again this is nothing that I haven't told the chancellor or the president, the very things that made us strong, entrepreneurial, lots of ideas, every tub on its own bottom to survive, is holding us back from being a great university. Our DNA is still designed that way. So, if people say, "Well, I don't know about Nova Southeastern University" that's why, because our success is not defined as a university.

JP: So people might know something about the law school but not know much about Nova.

BW: Absolutely.

JP: And part of it is this lingering view of Nova as a diploma mill. I mean that still, in some people's minds, has this school sort of in an inferior academic position.

BW: Absolutely.

JP: So, how do you change that?

BW: I think part of it, and it'll be interesting to see as George becomes president, and I've seen numerous times his vision, 20/20, is to get a really clear and good understanding of how we define success as a university and then go after that. Quick story aside, again. Each year I recruit young student affairs professionals as an opportunity to come to work here, and I was at a national conference, probably about 3 or 4 years ago, and I was interviewing this bright little young gal, just had a newly minted degree, I knew she could have her pick of any job, and we had a great conversation. Of course, I asked her at the end if she had any questions for me, and she asked a couple, and finally she said, "Dr. Williams, just one final question. Nova sounds like an amazing place. How does it define its success?"

JP: Good question.

BW: And I looked at her, Julian, just like I'm looking right now, like a dog caught in the headlights. I recovered and I talked about the buildings we were building and this and that. So, I came back to a meeting with George. I said, George let me tell you a story. So I tell him, and I said, "I didn't know what to tell her George." He's got the same look I had. Then Ray's walking down the hall, and George goes, "Ray come in here. Tell him that story." Ray goes, huh. Well, even to this day, how do we define our success? What's that North Star?

JP: I would have hired the student just for asking that question.

BW: She got gobbled up and got a better offer than I could ever offer her. Because that answer changes with whomever you talk to. If you ask that question, instead of us saying, this is how we do it. This is how we define our success; all of our energy is moving in this direction, it would be the biggest challenge --

JP: There's really no overview for this university because, again, each tub on its own bottom. Everybody has been striving, the medical school does their thing, the law school, its interdependent parts, but there's not much of a center.

BW: Yes. What is the one common thread that defines an NSU degree whether it be from medicine, law, undergrad - nobody can answer that.

JP: So from talking to George, that's my understanding of what he wants to do. He is more, I think, focused on that than Ray was. Ray was building buildings and getting things done, and not thinking so much about the perception of Nova, but that seems to me for the future, if we're coming up on 50 years, the next 50 years, that's going to be vitally important is it not?

BW: Absolutely. The question that I always ask is, we train doctors, we train lawyers, we train teachers, but what kind. Because absent of that, I believe, and again this is my 37th year working in colleges and all that kind of stuff, absent of that, I believe you just almost become what I refer to as a white collar vocational school. We'll get you there, we'll get you registered, but we won't help you grow, define what it means to be a part of this, whether that be in Tampa, Orlando, or in Davie, or whatever. This is a common thing that binds us and bonds us.

JP: And part of it was the whole school started with a lot of off-campus students. Virtual classrooms, so there

is a sense in physical development that there's not been people who think, we're at Nova, as opposed to being at the law school, so increasing undergraduate, developing the Taft Center, all of that, and more on-campus housing.

BW: Yes. I'll give you an example though Julian. This is, from when I first got here, we were more defined as an institution I believe when I first came than we are now. I'll give you an example. When I first came to Nova, everything was innovative; we're cutting edge, innovative. That's the only thing, we didn't have anything else, so we were going to be innovative. I remember one of our tag lines in the early years, is we used to say, you can't get through the word innovative without seeing Nova. Which I always that was great. I thought why in the heck did we ever get rid of that. So, when I'm starting Student Affairs, I was going to be innovative. When you looked at the delivery systems and 8-week course formats, it was innovative. When we were going to build the Sherman Library, we were going to do it innovatively. That was a common thing that bound the university, we don't have that now, nobody talks in terms of that. If we did, we would look at the curriculum and say, okay what's innovative about our curriculum.

JP: What in terms of your perks over the years, how has your insurance, pay, and all that, at this private institution? Has that been better pay than you might get if you were at South Florida?

BW: Not in my current position. Actually, not even in my original position. I look at the chronicle salary survey, as everybody does, I am not to the average of what you would see at a doctoral granting institution.

JP: What about general faculty salaries?

BW: Actually, I think those are pretty darn close. Again, the ones that I'm thinking about are almost spot on, if not even a little bit above.

JP: So, do you have good health plan, do you have vacations?

BW: Yes. I think the retirement plan is extraordinarily solid and generous. I think the health plan is pretty solid; it's actually gotten a little bit better. Our whole family, our physicians are here at the university, so that's a wonderful bonus and a perk. I just, as you can tell, invested the best years of my career here.

JP: One of the things I found interesting is really not much, or has not been in the past, of a faculty voice.

There's never been a faculty senate. How do people on the campus, I guess you talked to George and the guy at the law school talks to the dean, and seldom does it get back to Ray or George, only from the hierarchy. In other words it's like a Marine Corps system.

BW: It is, exactly. I think that's been a problem. I think that's been a challenge. I don't know if you're aware that Gallop came in a few years ago and did this significant survey, and one of the things most identified was communication and communication flow. I think that Ray has attempted to make inroads in that because he held a series of, what he referred to as, town hall meetings with line level staff and faculty. I think that there's a certain level of autonomy that the academic deans provide faculty, perhaps even more autonomy than you would see on other campuses, and normally when you get that, you get very happy faculty that doesn't really drive the desire to have a senate and everything associated with it.

JP: There's a plus and a negative aspect to that.

BW: I think the negative aspect to it is, I think that, and I'm kind of a traditionalist at heart, I think faculty add an important voice that should be structurally there when there aren't any problems. You know, that help

to guide the direction of the university. It's a shared vision.

JP: Do the students have any input?

BW: Yes. The students, probably about 9 years ago now, as the programs developed, in only true Nova fashion, instead of having one student government on campus, or maybe an undergraduate and a graduate student government on campus, I have 23 student governments at this university. I have 16 here on the main -- every program. It's total Nova Julian. There's the dentistry student government, there's the student bar association, there's the undergraduate and all of that, and I'm running around going, okay! What I heard, I guess it was like 9 or 10 years ago, and I'm thinking, okay, we need to bring all these guys together, which I do on a monthly basis, and we have what we call pan-student government. Even with the 7, like one in Orlando, one in Tampa, and all that, and we have either compressed video or interactions monthly meetings that way. To begin to really look at what's important campus-wide relative to students, and then we attempt to solve problems, have Lydia come in to meet, because they want to talk about library hours, and different things, so we try to really resolve, and I find my colleagues very, very

responsive. At the end of each semester, in December and in late April or early May, those things that cannot be resolved, we create an agenda and meet with Ray, and the students have an opportunity to have a voice, this is --

JP: One-on-one.

BW: One-on-one.

JP: What are they complaining about most, other than food?

BW: Parking.

JP: Parking. What else? Does the Shark Express, or whatever, does that help?

BW: No. It doesn't help. It doesn't help because we kind of created a parking plan where we kind of stuck our little toe in the parking plan, because students can drive all around campus, they don't have to park in a specific place, so it's great that you have shuttles that run all around campus, but if you don't have a place where your car lives, you're not going to take the shuttle. I'm trying to think of other things --

JP: So, if you could have an off-campus parking lot, with that shuttle, that would work?

BW: Absolutely. Absolutely, My daughter had graduated from Florida State several years ago, but when I took her to freshman orientation, I'll never forget the orientation woman said, "Here is a map of campus, here's your residence hall, and here's where your car will live." You, your car, and they just made it very, very clear. Now, you can choose to bring a car, but this is where it's going to be, and you need to be -- I wish we would go toward that kind of a system, because I think you would, again, see people walking by.

JP: And, people would be on campus more if they could park, right?

BW: Absolutely.

JP: So, if there was a lecture in the afternoon they wanted to see and they didn't have a class, they might show up for that.

BW: Absolutely.

JP: And we know there's no public transportation of any quality around here, so you have to have a car.

BW: You really do.

JP: What else might they complain about? Do they complain about class requirements, class rooms, curriculum, do you hear anything about that?

BW: No.

JP: Tuition?

BW: Well they'll always complain about tuition but I've never heard students take a real firm stand. I've never seen them write a resolution that said, at this particular point we can no longer -- I think that would be a very interesting and mature move on their part, and I'm a big advocate. When I get with them, I'm like, I exist because of you. You guys go away, I can't pay my bills, so let's get real authentic about what we're going to talk about here.

JP: How effective is student aid on this campus?

BW: Student aid is pretty effective. It think what my major concern is, and again, we don't have an effective enrolment management plan.

JP: I've come across that several times.

BW: Okay. Again, who are we? That's a great question. Are we Phoenix? Are we DeVry? Are we FAU/FIU? When I

benchmark for my bosses, I benchmark UM, Vanderbilt, Tulane, Wake Forest, and people say, why? I say because those are schools with medical schools, law schools, or both, and traditional undergraduate; who I would think we would want to aspire to become.

JP: Absolutely.

BW: And people go, wow, that's pretty lofty. Well, if you don't set a goal, you never get there.

JP: You don't want to go back to DeVry.

BW: So, if you look at undergraduate enrolment management, in particular, and you say what's the profile of student that we want to bring in?

JP: There is none.

BW: There is none. Absent of that, what we have a tendency to do, is we try to recruit kids from Broward Community College or we recruit kids who candidly, Julian, cannot afford to be here. One of the saddest times of my year is December when I have great kids that set up meetings with me, that we're having to kick out of the residence halls because they couldn't afford to be here in the first place, and I really question from an ethics standpoint. I use the analogy, when we had 3 kids, they

were all little, we didn't have 2 nickels to rub together, and at one point, I looked at my wife and said, "you know we should get a Mercedes." She said, "Really?" and I said, "Yeah, we'd look good in a Mercedes." Fortunately, we got smart, and I had no business doing that, but I'll never forget that. We have kids that need to be driving whatever, Toyota, but price tag here is what the price tag is --

JP: What is the current tuition for an undergraduate?

BW: \$22,000 a year.

JP: That's less than Miami.

BW: Oh, it is, absolutely.

JP: But quite a bit more than FAU.

BW: Right, but I guarantee, Julian, that Miami is not recruiting Miami-Dade Community College as its first choice. They're up in the northeast, they're mining the place that they always have.

JP: Where does the money come from? Is the loan money fed money, college money, where?

BW: Mostly it's loan money. The institutional aid has gotten better. I will give Ray credit for that. Probably within the last 24-36 months. There is more institutional

aid than I've ever seen here, as we're attempting to really kind of shape a stronger student.

JP: Because as you said earlier, it's not fair to bring a kid in and not take care of him once you've admitted him.

BW: Yes, but we do.

JP: Yes, well you're not alone.

BW: It doesn't take a financial analyst to sit there and go, okay at some point very quickly you're going to run out. It's like mid-way through their sophomore, at the beginning of their junior year, and then you sit there and say, what kind of disservice we did to this kid.

JP: It's a disservice, it really is. What's the admission standard for undergraduates now?

BW: I believe it is, I'm pretty sure it's 1,100 SAT, and that's gotten better, and I think it's gotten better because what the provost, I don't know if you've met Frank DePiano or not.

JP: Yes.

BW: Okay, I give Frank credit. What was interesting is, as early as 3 years ago, 4 years ago, before it really

got under Frank, we would have kids with 1050 SAT, get rejected in October because we're going to raise our admission standards, then in June we're admitting kids with 850s, because we need to make numbers. You know, fortunately, Frank put a stop to that.

JP: 850 is really low, and GPA would be what, have to be?

BW: Well it would be sliding.

JP: 2.5 to 3, something like that.

BW: Well, really what they do is, if your SAT is low, they do a kind of combination with your GPA --

JP: If you're 1000, you'd better have a 3.3 or whatever.

BW: Exactly.

JP: Well, you're not competing with Miami for students. You're taking kids who might otherwise go to FAU or FIU, which is considerably cheaper.

BW: Right.

JP: So, there's got to be a niche for Nova and what you're saying is, you really haven't quite focused on that.

BW: Right. And my question would be, is I'm not sure we can win that. You know, FAU or FIU.

JP: No, you can't.

BW: So, if we really want to grow, should we be looking at new markets and really getting out of the Tri-County area?

JP: That would seem to be logical. You remember, in the winters in Ohio, some of these kids who live in the east in the winter time, be glad to come to Fort Lauderdale, I mean sometimes you have to sell sunshine.

BW: Absolutely.

JP: That's one of the advantages of being here, and it's a nice campus. I noticed at one point that, and I don't whether you are in charge of this, started holding some open houses on campus, to try to get families in, that sort of thing, did that help much?

BW: I think that's really done by my buddy Dave Dawson, who oversees university relations and marketing and all of that.

JP: Yes, I've talked to Dave.

BW: Dave's whole mantra is just get 'em on campus, get 'em on campus, get 'em on campus, get 'em on campus.

JP: Now?

BW: Yes, now.

JP: 10 years ago?

BW: No. So, toward that end, I think it's helpful. Is there a payoff? I'm not sure. Again, normally those open houses attract people from the Tri-county area, and I have 1,492 beds that I need to fill with people outside the Tri-county area.

JP: You are responsible for all the housing right?

BW: I am.

JP: How has the new graduate dorm, what used to be the hotel, whatever, has that helped a lot?

BW: It's helped a lot. It's helped a great deal. Number 1 it's full all the time.

JP: Plus there's a shuttle.

BW: The shuttle. The students. I was telling a candidate that I had interviewing in yesterday, the interesting part about that, I knew we needed to provide

the service per se, what I see happening at New Rolling Hills Graduate Hall is you have mentoring going on that I didn't anticipate. We group them according to their academic, like the 7th floor is all law students, the RA we put on the floor as a law student, and a few second years live there. I guess I didn't anticipate -- there's a lot of trepidation these kids coming in, and they create community very, very quickly, and that's been a real bonus that I didn't anticipate when we bought that building.

JP: So you even have RAs for the graduates?

BW: Yes we do.

JP: Obviously you have to have them for undergraduates.

BW: We have 48 RAs total.

JP: What is the relationship between the town and gown here? I know in the last few years it's gotten better with the Broward County Library and the art museum, you know there's some interaction between the city, the county, and the university. My impression is that prior to the last 5 or 10 years, that was not very high priority.

BW: I don't think so. I don't think there is the self-identification Clemson, you know the town-gown there

is very, we are a college town, there is a self-identification and everything that goes with that. I don't think Davie sees itself as any part of that, so I think the relationships interestingly are good, healthy, and maintained because of all the permits and the building, and the constant flow with John Santulli facilities that they have with them.

JP: And the relationship with the county, I think improved a little bit when George came, but it seems to me over a period of time, it's almost like this campus is divorced from downtown Fort Lauderdale, it's like it's in a different county almost.

BW: Yeah. It's strange. There are people who live east of 595; they think this is like the wild, Wild West. I mean, it's very suburban around here, but they think anything that --

JP: Because that's the way it was.

BW: Back in the day.

JP: Yes. So, I think people who've lived here think, oh my god they've built out in the everglades.

BW: I think that's true.

JP: But that has to change, does it not, in the future, as this school is going to get bigger. The interaction with people in the community and in the county really needs to improve it would seem to me.

BW: Yes. You would think it would do that almost naturally when you look like we're the second largest private employer in Broward County, Florida, and all the other elements, so yes.

JP: I don't know, do you deal with international programs as well?

BW: Only in so much as we help with the acculturation piece. One of our 241 student organizations is the International Student Association, we work, and do airport runs, and we do different things of that nature. We have a new Executive Director of International Student Services, Tony DeNapoli, and he is doing a really, really good job. Absent of him, we were just trying to do what we could. I told him, "Look, you take it, we'll support you with whatever you want to do."

JP: Is there enough emphasis on international studies, international study abroad, students coming on campus?

BW: I don't think so as it relates to what the potential market is, and the way, particularly undergraduate students find those programs attractive and make decisions oftentimes, based upon, wow, if I go there I could be in wherever during my junior year. I think we are behind in that regard.

JP: Plus there's a great source in Latin America. I mean, you would think you'd recruit students, good students from Latin America who would be happy to come here, it's close to home, and Spanish and all of that, you know.

BW: Absolutely, and we haven't tapped into that market. I think, again, Tony is very insightful in that regard, and I think he'll do a great job in that position.

JP: Before I forget about it, tell me the Hurricane Andrew story?

BW: So, Goodwin Hall was built and finished in early August of 1992. We opened it up and let the kids move in on August 20th. On August 22nd Hurricane Andrew hit; like 2 days, and here's a major, major hurricane. We got every single kid, we made them get their mattresses and their pillows, and we had the biggest slumber party in Broward County because we put them out into the hallways, we

wouldn't let them stay in their rooms. They had to get permission to go in and go to the bathroom, and ride out the hurricane, that's the only thing that we could do.

JP: There was no other place to put them, was there?

BW: No, there was no other place to put them, and that was clearly, quite frankly if we had a big one coming right now, I'd go right there, because I've watched Goodwin Hall get built, and it is solid, really, really solid.

JP: Didn't do much damage to the residence hall did it?

BW: No. Up here there really wasn't as much damage as what there was -- we had more damage during Wilma. I remember getting in my car and driving around trees and everything to get down here. We had leaks in the top of our residence halls and some openings.

JP: What year was Wilma?

BW: Wilma was 2005.

JP: 2005. Andrew did knock down all these palm trees that had just been planted --

BW: Just been put up.

JP: There must have been what, 50 of them?

BW: Absolutely.

JP: What happened to those trees? Did they, could you replant them? You can replant palm trees can't you?

BW: Put them back, put them right back up.

JP: But they'd just been put up, right?

BW: Just been, just getting ready for the new school year. Everybody was all excited and ready.

JP: Well, at least you survived that.

BW: I'll tell you. It was pre-cell phone era, and our phones were out just for a little bit, but my phone was ringing off -- because I have 300 kids over there, and every parent, if you can picture --

JP: Wanted to know, sure.

BW: Of course, so, we were able to --

JP: How have the students changed since you've been here?

BW: The students haven't changed, well yeah they have. It's the whole tech piece. It's the way they build community. When I came, if a student had a computer -- first of all the computer labs were jam packed, jam packed.

If you got a spot in the Computer Lab, it was coveted. Now, I can't imagine how much the labs get used because people have their own. The way students would build community, we didn't have, every room wasn't wired for cable, so the students would all come together and watch in the student lounge, TV shows. You know, they all came together. Now they're all this way. They build community on-line.

JP: So, now their community is via text.

BW: Yes.

JP: So the technology has provided a lot of benefits but, in the sense of Nova, it has hurt this community you are trying to build?

BW: Very much so, very much so.

JP: It's an interesting development isn't it?

BW: Yes.

JP: It would not be so true say at Florida State, but it would be here.

BW: I was over at the Taft Center the other day, and I'm sitting there and the kids texting, and I go, "Who are you texting?" He said, "Bob" and Bob was right there, 2

tables over. I'm like, "You don't walk over and talk to him?" "No." I'm like, I'm just a dinosaur.

JP: Talk to me a little bit about the student newspapers, student interaction via this communication system. Do the kids read the newspaper? What does it come out, once a week?

BW: Comes out once a week.

JP: Is it a good communication vehicle among students?

BW: I would say no. I would say the kids do a good job, and I think it's a very strong learning tool. I don't think students read any newspaper. I just don't see that that's where they get their information from. Interestingly, there's an E-student newsletter that our Office of Student Media and Information puts out, and they do a beautiful job.

JP: Events that are coming up, that sort of thing.

BW: It's called SharkFINS, Fun and Interesting News for Students is what the acronym is. Students read that. We get over 7000 hits, separate hits.

JP: So that's an effective way.

BW: That's quick, bang, boom.

JP: Not in depth.

BW: Not, I have to pick up something and read it.

JP: Now, on some of the older campuses, the University of Florida, The Alligator is read by a lot of people on campus. It's not a great newspaper but they read it.

BW: Right. I think that there is a sense that the Alligator is the voice of the students, and the students feel a sense of ownership being 'Gators.

JP: Because it is an independent newspaper.

BW: Exactly, it's an independent newspaper. I have told The Current that they are welcome to go independent any time they want, and they're like, "That's great, but independent means you've got to pay your own bills. Don't want to do that Dean Williams, not quite there yet."

JP: But that's a potential option down the line that would give the students an outlet that they really don't have at this point.

BW: Right.

JP: So they can communicate with the administrators, faculty, and other people, not just students. This is the student point of view.

BW: I have told them repeatedly, like it's my little speech at the beginning of the year. I said, this is the student newspaper. It is not the University administration newspaper, you need to own it. That's a certain maturity level. It was last year, 10 out of our 14 paid positions for the student newspaper were biology majors. They just wanted to write.

JP: But you don't have a journalism school?

BW: We have a communications program, so we don't get that, "I'm a journalist, I'm going to really dig."

JP: That what helps Florida because they have a journalism School? Do you have fraternities and sororities?

BW: We do.

JP: How many?

BW: We have 11.

JP: Of?

BW: We have 11 total Greek organizations. We have 3 Panhellenic sororities, we have 3 IFC fraternities, and we have 5 multicultural Greek organizations, 2 Hispanic.

JP: (Unintelligible) black student center, or whatever.

BW: Yes. Two Hispanic and three historically African American.

JP: And what of the IFC fraternities?

BW: IFC is Beta Theta Pi, Kappa Sigma, and Fiji. Solid.

JP: Yes, those are good fraternities, been around a while.

BW: Beta we had to put on probation last week for misbehaving.

JP: That would not be the first time a fraternity has been put on probation. Some of them have actually been closed down, and those were (unintelligible) so out of control that you couldn't. But, do you have that supervision of them? You have restrictions on drinking, parties, and all of this?

BW: In 1993 is when we started the Greek system here.

JP: I didn't realize they'd been here that long.

BW: Yes, I started it back in '93. At that time I had spent a year, Julian, studying, I was not Greek as an undergraduate, so I thought I'm really going to take a look at this because of the whole Animal House persona and students were wanting to do this, and the more I really studied it, the more I discovered that there's a lot of value if you do Greek things the right way, to having fraternities and sororities on campus. The big if is if you do it the right way.

JP: because there's always been this image of the elite, that the people in the fraternities, and there's other people can't get in or can't afford them, and therefore you're dividing what is already a small undergraduate population again, but you haven't had that?

BW: We have not had that. What we have done is we take a very, even today campuses do one of two things, either they just don't even acknowledge that Greek organizations exist, out of sight out of mind, and really we assume no responsibility for them, or if you're going to, you need to be very, I call it strong partnerships between yourself, the Greek organization, and their national, and that's what we've done.

JP: Now, they don't have their own houses?

BW: No.

JP: Is that a future consideration?

BW: What we wanted to do, is we built the Commons Residence Hall in that it has really defined and dedicated wings that you can only access, and we were hoping to see whether or not the Greek organizations would have an interesting in taking, you know you could have your own wing, and it's got its own lounge and kitchen and all of that, and we have not seen enough of a critical mass to do that.

JP: How are the dorms, the Commons, how are they organized? Is it a central place with 4 bedrooms, how do they work that?

BW: It is primarily suite style, where you have 4 or 5 students living in either 4 or 5 rooms. They are mostly single rooms, and then there are 2 shared bathrooms.

JP: And a kitchen and a parlor --

BW: There is a general kitchen, but not kitchen in the suite.

JP: Are they mixed, male/female?

BW: Yes. They are mixed male/female.

JP: Are there any problems with those?

BW: If you look at national studies, one of the things that I found interesting, and I tell parents this, which is true, there is less crime and less assault in a mixed gender facility than there are when you separate them. If you put all the women in one hall, that normally is kind of a target.

JP: The guys are trying to get there.

BW: Well, what's really interesting is, what we find is, you get the kind of, "I'm a big brother, I'm going to watch out for you." And that seems to deter other people from getting out of hand.

JP: That's good. How many of the undergraduate students, 2600, how many would live on campus?

BW: 1100.

JP: 1100. So, what you want to do is increase the size of the people who actually live on campus as opposed to commute?

BW: Right. Very much so. I believe that, going back to my tipping point comment, I think we need to create a

critical mass of 2000 residential students. When you do that, suddenly there's an energy that begins to sustain itself.

JP: And you attract more people. I was just mentioning today as we were walking across campus; it's the end of exams, but times I've been here before, you walk across campus, you can see a lot of people walking around, and when visitors come they are like, "where are the kids?" And it sort of undermines the sense of a university.

BW: You're the seventh largest private in the United States, where are they?

JP: Yes. And you walk on the Florida campus, and you can't walk.

BW: Exactly, and that energy, students thrive off it.

JP: You're right, there is a level if you have enough people, then that attracts other people in the system for expanse. If you're looking back at your time here, what would be the most satisfying experience you've had?

BW: One would have to be the opening of that University Center that was an important moment. One was, again going back to my wife's comments of, "You always like to be creative," in 2002 I was walking around campus

saying, "I don't think people are very connected into our mascot" because I never saw any kids with any knights T-shirts on or anything like that. So, I did my own survey. I surveyed 500 students, faculty, and staff, and I just asked them real basic questions. The most basic question was, "Can you tell me what our mascot is?" and 41% of the people didn't know what the mascot was. Didn't know, not do you feel connected to it, they just didn't even know. I can't fathom going, "What's your mascot?" "We're the Gators." Everybody knows that. So, that got me thinking, okay, what would it look like if we changed the mascot? Try to build community knowing that we're going to be building this University, but that time we knew we were going to be building the University Center, and what would all this look like. So, I was able to put together a school pride/school spirit task force. Everybody was represented there, and I pitched a number of different ideas. I made sure Ray was comfortable with moving that, and we ran this thing for 18 months. We actually had a lot of different things that were recommended, as well as changing the school mascot. We ran a contest. We had 447 entries, possibilities to change the school mascot. Probably about 47 of them you couldn't print.

JP: I'm sure.

BW: But the other 400 were good. Then we got it down to a final 10, and then people were starting to pick up The Current. Every week it would come out, so we were really using the media strategically, and we got down to the final 2, which was the sharks and the stingrays. We did on-line voting.

JP: But stingray was already taken right? Wasn't there another team that's the stingrays?

BW: Well, there were tons of teams that were the Knights, so we had over 5000 online votes. Everything had to have its own E-mail. I already won. I got 5000 people excited about this, and 83% picked the sharks. So then if you can picture, it's the homecoming dance, and interestingly we had about 400 students at that homecoming dance, because we were going to unveil. So now I'm using it, we're going to unveil this, and all the athletes are there, and we've got this media thing, is it going to be shark, stingray, shark, stingray, and then boom you had this kid jump out in a shark costume, and we're playing Jimmy Buffet "Fins" and people are going crazy, and I'm there with my wife, and I said, "this is good, this is when you know that you're creating energy".

JP: Then you can do the shark statue.

BW: Yes.

JP: Which is out front of the building. People walk in and they see that first right?

BW: Exactly.

JP: So, now they have T-shirts and caps --

BW: And ties, and all kinds of good stuff that we sharkified people with. You know the students paid for the shark statue.

JP: No I didn't know that. It's good to know.

BW: Pan-Student Government Association. George came to the Pan-Student Government Association one night and said, "I want to move forward with this but I want it to be a student-centered project." The students fronted all the money for shark statue and around shark statue are bricks that, as they are sold to commemorate their time at NSU, again more of a connection point, will go back to the student fund.

JP: How much did it cost for the statue?

BW: I think about \$300,000 when it was all done.

JP: \$300,000, wow that's a lot. They raised all that money?

BW: Yes, out of their student activity fees.

JP: Geez, that's a lot of money.

BW: They ponied up. Now there are about 3300 to 3400 -- Piya helped on this project -- bricks that, the big ones are sold for \$500 and the small one for \$100. It will create, when it's all sold, about \$400,000, so the students will recoup their money and then a little bit, but yes, it was an expensive --

JP: Is it worth \$300,000?

BW: I don't know, yeah, I think, they had this Swedish sculptor come. He sculpted it in Sweden, I think it adds another \$25,000 to \$50,000 just to tell the story, so I'm not sure I would have done it exactly that way, but at that point it was in George's hands. If you go down to the Fort Lauderdale Convention Center, when George was city manager, there's this giant marlin sculpture, and it's the same guy. So George already knew them. This guy comes. This guys is a friend of Guy Harvey, have you heard that name around at all?

JP: No.

BW: Guy Harvey is an interesting guy in that he has a research center down at the School of Oceanography, and Guy Harvey is a wildlife artist, a marine artist. If you ever go to Bass Outlets, where you see these guys wearing T-shirts with fish on them --

JP: Yeah, I know who he is.

BW: That's Guy Harvey, and if you go through the University Center and you look up at that massive shark mural, Guy Harvey did that. So, he's connected into the University as well.

JP: That's great. That's exactly the kind of story I need, how that whole shark statue developed. That's perfect. What would be the most disappointing experience you had since you've been here?

BW: That's a good question. I try not to dwell on disappointments. There were a lot of disappointing days trying to get this University Center launched.

JP: Setbacks?

BW: Oh, I mean, former employees here just making stuff up and lying. Like just lying to try to get their way about doing things and screaming and yelling. You know, I was a ballplayer, I just don't give up, you know, if I

think I believe in something, and so those were really challenging day.

JP: Can you think of some other memorable events or people, maybe some speakers or faculty member, or outstanding students, or hurricanes, or national championships, or whatever. There are certain people and events that stand out in your mind during the time you've been here?

BW: Yes. I can just off the top of my head talk about, we started a student radio station. The student radio station was started by a kid named Rob Armstrong. Rob Armstrong was just this kind of energetic, he had his little DJ thing, and he'd go out and do the parties. He came at holiday, Christmas time, and we were having egg nog on the top of the Rosenthal Building, he said, "You know I think we should start a radio station. I used to DJ and this and that." I said, great! So the story of that radio station is, it was not coax cable, it's like a linear, the way we started it was we had something that would only work in the, it worked through the electricity of the buildings, like way, way, way back in the day. I don't know if it was for you, but do you remember the old dorms that you could have a radio station in, but you had to plug your radio

into the wall, that's what we had. So, if you had your radio that close to the outlet, you could pick up a signal, and we were happy. We had a radio station, and we were DJing and having fun and playing music and doing all that, then it went to Jones Intercable, we did coax cable all around campus, and then it graduated, finally we were able to share a frequency, which we now do with the Broward County School Board, but this little tiny radio station from inside the walls now, goes throughout all of Broward County and into southern Palm Beach and northern Dade County. All from that little guy saying, "Hey, let's --"

JP: Exactly, that's a great story.

BW: "Let's try to do something like that."

JP: Stories like that are great. That's just what I'm looking for to get the student perspective on how things evolved. That's a perfect example of somebody starting out, entrepreneurial sense. Start a radio station, well nobody's going to listen to it, well, boom.

BW: And then boom. And you can see what happens. Again, the Greek system that we started, this will probably be one of the guys that I'll have you connect in with, was a guy names Scott Chitoff, who had been in a fraternity at

University of Florida, was coming and had transferred into Nova. It's his senior year, I said, "Hey, I'm thinking about starting a Greek system. I'll bring you on if you want to take this baby on." Now this kid had to be 22 years old. By that point in time we had about 650-700 undergraduates, overnight 250 of them went Greek because of what Scott did. Everybody wanted to wear a letter, it was exciting, it was like a really, really big deal. I was paying this kid like \$5 an hour and he was working 80 hours a week. Only getting paid, I think, for about 20-25 of it, but again, it's his legacy of what he did, and he wrote all the constitutions. He's a hot shot lawyer now in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

JP: No surprise there.

BW: And has done just a really wonderful job. But, again it's that kind of sense of ownership.

JP: So that's really what you need more of. Teach kids and developing these ways to communicate and interact.

BW: If you go to the upstairs of the Rosenthal Student Center, you'll see a wall, "Student of the Year" and it goes back to my very first year here. The very first student of the year, and we award that every single spring,

the first time I ever tried to do anything on this campus, from programming standpoint, to build campus like the very, very first thing was the "Welcome Back" get together over at the res halls, they still do, this little tiny patio area, and I was asked to do that to try to build, kind of kick off the year properly. Sure, I'm going to do it, I'm the new kid on the block, I'm going to build campus life. I planned the most elaborate thing you would ever see. I had the best food, and I had all the right posters up, and I decorated. I had, again, it's the 80s. I had this really cool band that had brass, there were 5 guys, and I had it all out there, and nobody came.

JP: Not a person.

BW: Kids were up in the halls kind of looking down. Four people, there were 5 in the band, 4 people came. I had more in the band than -- you know, and I'll never forget, it was like, the band would be done playing, and you would have that awkward clapping where you could hear everybody's individual clap. I went home, and I'd done all this --

JP: That was really discouraging.

BW: That was discouraging. So, I go home --

JP: What year was that?

BW: 1989. I'd been here a month.

JP: So at this point you were thinking that maybe you'd made the wrong career choice.

BW: It's the following Monday, I'm sitting in my office over in Rosenthal, and I'm just sitting there going, I ran state football playoffs with 10,000 people, I can't even put on a little welcome back thing and get the kids to come out. There was a knock at the door, it's a little girl named, Gina DeGiovani. She goes, "Hi, I'm Gina. I'm a cheerleader. I heard you're new here. I've got an idea to do something. To have a beach party." I go, great, knock yourself out. She goes, "Would you mind if me and some of my girlfriends, and this and this -- and I said, "Sure I'll help you, whatever I can do." So, I did practically nothing but just encouraged. There were 3 girls. Go down to the beach on Saturday, there's 130 kids there. Then the light bulb went off in my mind. It's like, it's not me, it's them.

JP: Sometimes all you need is encouragement?

BW: Exactly. The very first student of the year is Gina. You know, she got the whole thing going.

JP: And that's what you really needed. You needed some social life at that point. I mean there was nothing.

BW: There was nothing here. There was no dining hall back in the days. So, there were kitchenettes in the 3 dorms, Founders, Farquhar, and Vettel that we had, and --

JP: Where did they eat? If they didn't they'd have to go out into Davie?

BW: Yes. Here's what would happen. These kids would come down from the Northeast. Mom and Dad would give them money for the semester. First weekend they'd go to the keys, blow all the money. I'd have kids. I learned really quick. They'd come to a cookout, they were starving. They were like, "Dean Williams, can I have another hot dog?" "You've had five." "I'm starving." You know, there was some crazy stuff that happened back in those days. Just crazy. This is a very different kind of place.

JP: But in a way it turned out to be what your wife thought it would be. Gave you a chance to be innovative and creative.

BW: Sure.

JP: So, in the long run it was the kind of challenge that you've enjoyed.

BW: Loved it. For the first 8 years, every year, there were 6 existing student organizations when I came. Now keep in mind, there's 241 now. From year 1 to year 2, we went from 6 to 31; 25 in one year, with not that big of a student population. It was like Student Affairs Miracle Grow, it went "pow". But it occurred to me, I had all these kids walking around that had virtually no leadership skills. So, at the beginning of every academic year, before they would start, we would do what we would call the Annual Leadership Conference Getaway, and we would take the President and Vice-President, so there's about 60 kids of each club, away. We took them one year to the keys, we took them one year to Captiva Island, we took them one year all the way to Key West, and we would get these places that were large, and my wife would cook for the kids. She just loves to cook. And we would do 3 days of leadership, this is how you -- just basic stuff -- this is how you run a meeting, this is how you set an agenda, this is -- but the interesting thing, and the thing that I refer to as million dollar E-mails is right before Christmas, I got an E-mail from this kid and just, he was at the first leadership conference, and he just got promoted to the Senior Vice President of his company, and he just said, "Just want to

let you know, stuff we did back in the day, I'm still doing." It's like, ah,

JP: That's what it's all about.

BW: That's why I do what I do.

JP: Sure.

BW: Wouldn't trade it.

JP: I know I'm taking a lot of your time. Have you got any other stories or things you want to talk about that would help me in writing this book?

BW: Um, you asked me what's changed the most about the students. You know, if I had to answer one other thing, what I was thinking about the very first thing, the parents. Since I started here the parents have changed tremendously.

JP: In what way?

BW: Their involvement level with their student.

JP: Much greater?

BW: Oh, yeah. That whole idea of helicopter parent is

--

JP: Drop them off.

BW: Well not necessarily, no not drop them off.

JP: I mean initially in 1989 that you found that.

BW: Oh yeah. I mean, again Julian, I don't know what it was like for you, but when I got dropped off at college, it was like, "good luck" and then if you were calling home, and it was collect, it better be emergency, because that's why God created letters and post stamps. You know, so the students will tell you, they call their parents 2-3 times a day. I am constantly on the phone with parents now, and my concern with this is, and again I believe I'm in the student development business, I will tell parents, look you've got the best interest of your daughter at heart, and so do I. So, I'll communicate with you, so long as they sign a waiver, but let's let her work on her own problems so that when she -- you know -- and most of them will get that. Some get offended, and they just can't possibly let go.

JP: So there is a happy medium between the helicopter parents and dropping them off?

BW: Absolutely, yes. That's what we try --

JP: That's what you're trying to do.

BW: That's what we try to get to.

JP: Some will never accept that.

BW: No, I had a woman the other day, she was going on and on and on, and at some point when she started talking about, I said, "Excuse me, what program is your son in?" "Law school." He was 32 years old. I'm like, time to let go. I said, have so-and-so come see me, we'll talk directly, and so --

JP: Well, this has been great. Really terrific information, and if you would be kind enough -- we can cut it off now I think --

[End]