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## Interview with Elaine Poff - Director of the University's Registrar Office for Enrollment and Student Services

Elaine Poff

*Nova Southeastern University*

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Nova Southeastern University

History of Presidents

Elaine Poff

JP= Dr. Julian Pleasants

EP= Elaine Poff

JP: This is Julian Pleasants. It's June 24, 2010. I am at Nova Southeastern University, and I'm speaking with Elaine Poff. Would you tell me your first experience at Nova when you first came to work here, and why you decided to take that position?

EP: The full-time position? Well, when I first started I was working through a BETA program through Broward County.

JP: Okay, talk about that then.

EP: It was a program that they had to educate and train people to work in the working environment. Since I had never had any experience they put me in this program and placed me at Nova University at that time. I worked for a couple of different offices.

JP: Now you were working for Broward County at this point?

EP: For Broward County. I was being paid through Broward County.

JP: All right.

EP: The Dean at Nova College liked my work so much that he recommended me to Dick Olman, who was a Dean of Center for Advancement of Education, and they hired me full time at that time.

JP: Okay, when you started here you also -- this was 1980 I believe, right?

EP: Yes.

JP: So what was the campus like in 1980?

EP: A lot of open space.

JP: A lot of sand.

EP: There was the Rosenthal Building, the Mailman-Hollywood Building, and the Parker Building.

JP: Just three buildings at that point?

EP: Three buildings, yes.

JP: And no landscaping to speak of.

EP: Well, there was a tree here and there. There was more sand and parking space, parking lots.

JP: A lot of parking.

EP: Yeah, a lot of parking.

JP: So when you first got out here, what was your reaction to being on a so-called campus that really didn't look like much of a campus?

EP: Well, I was born and raised in Broward County.

JP: Okay.

EP: So I knew about the University. I knew it was here. My grandfather had donated a lot of money to the campus when it first opened back in the 70s.

JP: Who was that?

EP: Edward Naus.

JP: Okay.

EP: At one time in this building there was a door with his name on it that was presented to him. So I knew about the campus, and I was always interested in the University. And when I was offered through the BETA program to work here, I grabbed that offer.

JP: The early interest in Nova, in Broward County, was pretty limited. You obviously, because of a family member, had some knowledge. Did other people in your group know anything about Nova at all?

EP: No, it was kind of a well-kept secret back in the 80s. At least the people I was around, even the high school I went to, I never heard anything about Nova. And I went to plantation high school right up the street.

JP: What was the reason for that do you think? I mean, obviously most of the early programs were long distance and off campus.

EP: But they were also the higher level, they weren't the undergraduates.

JP: That's right. So since it was all professional-type schools, graduate schools, the high school/college-type students were not too involved or knowledgeable about this.

EP: No, I mean, they knew about BCC across the street, but I don't think they knew that Nova even existed here.

JP: And at that time was Broward Community College, right?

EP: Yes.

JP: Now, when you started here one of the areas I understand you were working in was the Lifelong Learning Institute. What was that?

EP: It was for elderly professionals that have retired.

JP: Oh, that's right, yeah.

EP: And they would come back, and they would have speakers that would speak to them about different things like taxes, and different things that were going on in the county that would benefit them.

JP: Health issues, that sort of thing.

EP: Yes, yes. And I think they met maybe twice a week. So that's why the office I was in also dealt with Bachelors in Professional Management and the Lifelong Learning Institute because Lifelong Learning Institute was only like two days a week.

JP: And this was something that had been started by Abe Fischler, is that right?

EP: I believe him and David Mailman -- I think that was his name, who were in charge of the Lifelong Learning program at the time.

JP: And it still exists?

EP: Yes.

JP: What would be the major benefit for Nova to have a program like that?

EP: I think it's like a community service. It keeps us connected. I have always thought of Nova as from the womb to the tomb type of an organization, that we have something for everybody.

JP: In the beginning I happen to know that was exactly the thinking behind that because they said, well we've got graduate programs, what do we have after that? And somebody said, well we need to do something for retired elderly people. And do you feel like this was beneficial to the people who were coming twice a week?

EP: Oh in think so. I think they were very excited about coming. They had their own little niche. They owned a space in that building at that time, and you didn't dare cross them because they'd let you know that that was their

time. I think they really enjoyed it, and they really owned it.

JP: Now it didn't cost them anything did it?

EP: I don't believe it did. I think it was free.

JP: And I wouldn't have been a huge expense for Nova to provide these services.

EP: No.

JP: Because I suspect they could probably get speakers to come free of charge. So it's a good idea, and in South Florida there are a lot of eligible people, right?

EP: Yes.

JP: You wouldn't have very much trouble getting a crowd.

EP: A class, no. And they were also allowed to take undergraduate courses as an audit.

JP: Did many of them do that?

EP: I know a few of them did.

JP: Of course there weren't that many undergraduate courses I guess at that time.



EP: No, but later on there were.

JP: Yeah, there would be. Okay, so that was your first experience. So the BPM program was eventually done away with or phased out of the business school.

EP: Well, it's being phased out, yes. They're changing it I believe. I believe they're trying to change it to a Bachelors of Administration.

JP: Okay, so where did you go from then? So you started in the Parker building.

EP: Well, that's when I was working for BETA.

JP: Okay.

EP: I went from the Parker Building to the Rosenthal Building, and back to the Parker Building. And when I first went to the Parker Building, the law school library was just moving out, and they were moving to east campus.

JP: Now I understand there was something on the third floor of the Parker Building.

EP: Yes. They provided entertainment. You never knew when you were going to find a little mouse running around in your office that escaped from the labs on the third floor.

JP: Because that was the Leo Goodwin sort of research lab up there?

EP: Yes, cancer research I believe.

JP: Cancer research. And I understand that there was from time to time a difficult odor to deal with that some people complained about.

EP: Well, yeah, but I don't remember too much about the odor, but I know people talked about it.

JP: So what you have here is like with all fledgling universities, you have got one building -- you've got all kind of different groups and entities in sharing that one building not necessarily interrelated. Was that a problem in the beginning for space?

EP: Well this University I think has always had an issue with space. I mean we've always had -- it's been growing so quickly, we've always had room issues, you know, space for classrooms and such. So I think it's always been. They've always tried to fit people where they fit the best, and people move a lot sometimes.

JP: And I know the old concept of centers that you know, as they would say, each tub on its own bottom and that all of these centers sort of operate semi-autonomous,

but from time to time, like the computer center, would be moved from one center to another center. They're always sort of reorganizing, and then they had to move people, and it was just pretty chaotic sometimes.

EP: Right. Well, it's the best way to clean your office out.

JP: Okay. Well now I did talk to the people in the library, and they have moved, and I forget which building, but they had moved all the library books to Mailman or whichever one, and they found that it wasn't load bearing.

EP: Oh, that was the Mailman, yeah. It was this building.

JP: So they had to take them all out and move them back. And they did that. They didn't hire anybody to come do it. So in that sense it really was chaotic. I mean, of course the library didn't function the whole time they were moving books. So they were a little frustrated I guess. So now with their new building they are just thrilled.

EP: It's beautiful, yes.

JP: So you know there are always long-term problems with a new school in technology, and space, and parking; all of those things. So you've been here for a long time.

So you're aware of how all that has evolved. Do you see it now as being a pretty efficient system with the shuttle and parking and space and all of that?

EP: The shuttle and all is nice, but it seems to never be there when you need it. When you have a meeting on the other side of campus it's never there when you want it to be.

JP: You can't get the shuttle in?

EP: Yeah, but no, everything works very well. The shuttle system is a smooth system.

JP: Okay, now you were then going to move to the Dean's Office. Talk about what your job was at that point.

EP: The Dean's office is when I went over to Rosenthal Building, and then when the Dean's office moved back to Parker Building, we went back to Parker Building. My main responsibility was for maintaining their recruitment system, the students that they are recruiting. And I would have to go over to the Mailman-Hollywood Building. They had one little lab-type place that everybody in the University that wanted to put information into the computer system had to go over there and wait for a seat to open up.

JP: That was the only place you had?

EP: Yes.

JP: And what kind of computers --

EP: You didn't have computers on your desk at that time.

JP: No, no of course not. What kind of computers did you have then?

EP: It was like a CRT. It was just like a monitor and a keyboard. There were no PCs back then. It was just that dummy system that it went right into the main frame.

JP: Well, I just talked with Ed Simco, and he was telling me about when he started in 1973 trying to develop a computer system here, you know when they had nothing. And that by 1980 they had made some pretty significant progress, but still had a long way to go. So in your case it was at the very least inconvenient. Let's put it that way, right?

EP: Well, no, but it was nice to get out. I mean --

JP: Okay, get away from the mice. So what did you do after that job?

EP: Then I was hired on full time.

JP: So your time with Broward is over now?

EP: Yes. Well it was going to be over in July, but I was hired full time in June. So I started working for the Center for Advancement of Education that's now called the Fischler Center. We did all the graduate programs in education; Masters and Doctoral programs.

JP: And this is when most of that was distance learning, right?

EP: Well, no we had a big on-campus program.

JP: Oh you did? Okay.

EP: Yes, but all the off sites --

JP: Now it's in -- Miami is the official school?

EP: Yes, North Miami Beach.

JP: But at that time it was on the campus, yeah.  
Okay.

EP: Yes it was.

JP: So what specifically --

EP: It wasn't really even on campus, we were at the Davie Professional Building over on Davie Road between Wendy's and the pancake house.

JP: Well, at least you could get something to eat all the time.

EP: Yes, lunch wasn't a problem.

JP: Except after a while you would need to go somewhere else, right?

EP: Yeah, well after a while they tore the pancake house down, so yeah.

JP: That was probably good. Now if you're in this situation, you're at this point contemplating a career at Nova?

EP: Well, I still didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up. I was still fairly young and I had young kids. So I was -- I probably worked here for a couple of years before I started doing my Bachelor's degree. By the time I started doing my Bachelor's degree I think I pretty well knew I'd be here for quite a while.

JP: Because the campus was still in a state of transition and flux, and, as you probably remember, the financial circumstances were not always great.

EP: Yeah, we had to go a couple of times without a check.

JP: You always eventually got paid.

EP: Oh always, yes.

JP: But you may have had to put off receiving the check a few days or not cash it.

EP: Yeah, we had to come in on a Saturday to get the check, and then we couldn't cash it until Monday.

JP: Couldn't cash them until Monday. Did that give you pause about the future of Nova?

EP: No, I think I was just thankful that I had a job, and it was a good place to work, a comfortable place to work. So I felt secure in working here.

JP: Even though there were people who were also working here were not sure if it was going to survive.

EP: Right, but I think it was at a low enough level that I didn't know -- I was just a clerk/typist.

JP: So you didn't have any sense that this was a dire economic situation?

EP: No.

JP: As long as you continued to get your paycheck, it was okay. So then where did you go from there?



EP: Well, I was with CAE for quite a while. The program came to campus and we moved into the third floor of the Mailman/Segal Building. It's a little white building right over next door here. So we were up there on the third floor, and we had an office with about five or six people, and we did the registrar's functions.

JP: For the CAE?

EP: For the CAE, yes. CPS had their own registrar's people, and undergraduate had theirs. They were all out in different offices.

JP: This is part of the long-term problem with this semi-autonomous system because everybody had their own computers, their own registration, their own personnel records.

EP: Their own policies and procedures.

JP: Their own calendar. I mean everything was dispersed as it were. So you wouldn't have had a lot of interaction with Central Administration or with the other centers?

EP: No. We did our own thing.

JP: Just focused on your own thing and that was how you ran your operation? How did that change over a period of time?

EP: Well, the registrar at the time was --

JP: There was a University Registrar?

EP: There was a University Registrar, and his name was Hennessy, I believe, and he passed away, and they hired Robert Meinhold, and he became the new registrar, and he decided that he wanted to pull all of those offices together. So, I believe, it was right before he started is when I started computerizing all of the CEA records, and that took about two years to do. And we would use part of his staff to come over and help proof read what we had entered into the system. So we were starting to work with the other registrar's offices throughout the University at that time.

JP: And this is the first time you got to the point where you are starting to computerize student records?

EP: Yes. Undergraduate was computerized, but I think they were basically the only ones.

JP: Of course there weren't too many of those at the time, yeah. Where would you be if you looked at University

of Miami or other institutions? Had they already gone to computerized student records, or were you sort of on the cutting edge?

EP: I really don't know.

JP: I'm not a computer person, so it's sort of hard for me to understand all of this evolution. At some point it gets pretty sophisticated.

EP: I had the feeling that we were ahead of the time, but I really don't know.

JP: Ed Simco sort of indicated that because Fischler wanted to move ahead, that he understood how important technology was going to be, and if you're in an innovative experimental institution, and you're already doing long-distance -- I mean, he knew ultimately that you were going to get the virtual classroom and electronic classroom. So I think he may have pushed the University a little faster than some other institutions. And of course it's a private school. Therefore you don't have to get permission from the state to --

EP: Or money from the state, yeah.

JP: Which can be good or bad. As you go through the process of starting to -- and of course everything had to be done manually.

EP: Yes.

JP: You had to just take each --

EP: Yeah, we took each file and created it from scratch. We created the student record, and then added the courses and the grades, and the whole thing.

JP: And it took a while.

EP: And we did, what they're now called is SCCs. We did one student center at a time. So would like take all of the students from Orlando and build all of their records. Then we'd take all of them from Miami and build all of their records so that we had one site done at a time.

JP: And how long did it take you to do them all? Two years?

EP: It took about two years.

JP: Now once you had done that, was this a pretty efficient system once you had it finished?

EP: Yes.

JP: I'll tell you a story, and I don't know if it has to do with you specifically, but it would be part of the early years at the institution. Frank DePiano told me that when he first came, and he came I think '78, '79, that at the end of the semester he was going to put in his grades for his class, and he went to whoever was in Center for Psychological Studies and said, "I'm ready to turn in my grades," and she said, "Oh they've already been turned in." And he said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Oh the students turn in the grades. They tell us what grade they want and we enter it in." And he determined that a student he was about to give a C to had put in an A.

EP: I bet they did.

JP: I told Frank, I said, I would assume if they had choices they would all be As. Was it that discombobulated or was it --

EP: Not in the CEA. I mean we had rosters that we would send out to the instructors, and they would have to tell us --

JP: The way it's been done forever.

EP: Yeah, and we always had like 20 students added onto the bottom of a roster. So that was the problem

getting students to register and register in the right sections.

JP: Oh, there's always that problem. And I did it for years, and I always had, at the end of the semester I'd come up with a student who wouldn't be on my grade sheet. And of course he had taken the whole course in my class, but he was supposed to be in another class. So then that gets dumped in the registrar's lap who has to figure out how to get that straightened out.

EP: It's a lot better now though because a lot of classes are tied to WebCT and a student can't be in a WebCT class without being officially registered. So we have very few students who get to the end of a course nowadays who are not officially registered.

JP: Would it automatically spit them out or what?

EP: They wouldn't have access at all. They wouldn't be there. So the instructor would go into WebCT and say, "Joe, why aren't you here?" Well, they're not there because they're not registered.

JP: Okay, yeah. Much easier to check on that stuff now than it used to be. Now as you go through the process,

you are now going to end up working for the assistant registrar, is that right?

EP: Yes, Rob Gablesen, yes.

JP: You really now have moved into the central registrar's office, right?

EP: Yeah, Bob Meinhold brought us all into the third floor of the Parker Building at some point. And we had different supervisors. The supervisor that was in charge on CPS was brought over. I was brought up over as a supervisor of CEA. The only one they didn't bring was law school. Law school stayed down at Ninth Avenue.

JP: They stayed separate?

EP: Yes. Until they moved up here. And after a couple of years of being --

JP: When they moved from the east campus back to the main campus, okay.

EP: To main campus yes. And then a couple of years after them being here, it was found that we could absorb them into our office.

JP: So now all of the student records are in the main registrar's office?

EP: Well, they were in the main registrar's office before everything was computerized, it's just that when law school was doing a registration I would go down to the Ninth Avenue and --

JP: Oh I see, physically to the -- but now --

EP: We used to do it with the cards that would be fed into the machines and everything.

JP: But everything's online, so --

EP: Everything's -- yes.

JP: What happened when you merged with Southeastern, was that a problem?

EP: It wasn't. It was another time that we had to have a big computer project, though, that we had to take all of the student's files and enter them into the system. So anybody that graduated from Southeastern from '94 on are in our current system. Everything else is on microfilm.

JP: So every time you expand and there's a new school, or new dental school, all of these sorts of things, you need comparable computer technology to keep up because obviously it's a whole new set of students, more information.



EP: Right. We're constantly getting new majors, new programs that we have to build the coding in the systems.

JP: And everything now, is there a standard coding system for all of these?

EP: Yes.

JP: Which is University wide, nationwide, what?

EP: Yes, it's University wide.

JP: University wide, but your system would vary from other schools. I assume the state has a -- I know the state has a uniform code system, yeah.

EP: Right, but our codes aren't anything to do with theirs.

JP: How do you develop those codes? Where do you get the standard from?

EP: Well, when I first started and we started computerizing, we had a home-based, a home-grown system that somebody from Nova actually created. Then in '89 we bought a Software Information Associate. So we converted that data into what we called the IA system. And then in '98 we bought the Banner System because the year 2000 thing that the other system wouldn't handle.

JP: You had to.

EP: Yes, and upgraded to that. Again, we moved all of the coding into Banner. So we basically took the coding with us as we went.

JP: And just put it into a new software?

EP: Yeah. We've gotten to where Law School's codes will all start with L. Undergraduate all start with U. The School of Business all start with S. So we've got some naming conventions that we use when we build codes to make it easier to pull reports and stuff like that.

JP: But you now work through the standard software system that probably a lot of schools use, right? I don't recall, you may know this, at the University of Florida they put in some new entirely different system for the whole university, and it turned out to be a complete and total disaster. Do you know anything about that?

EP: No.

JP: It was all over the country. It turned out the Syracuse and these other schools had adapted this new program, and it turned out to be a disaster for everybody. Somehow the people at Florida didn't check to see how had it gone at these previous schools.

EP: I know PeopleSoft had some problems.

JP: PeopleSoft, that's what it was.

EP: Yeah, I know they had some problem for a while, and were being sued by a lot of people.

JP: Exactly, PeopleSoft, that's what it was. What a bad name because the people in our University, where you were not getting paid; some people got paid three times, which I felt was good.

EP: Yeah, if it was you it would be good.

JP: Yeah, but you couldn't get away with that since it was on record. But anyway, this can be, if not properly done, a disaster.

EP: Right.

JP: And if you mess up somebody's grades, send out the wrong transcript, they don't get into graduate school or something --

EP: Right, they don't get a job, yes.

JP: Yeah, this can be some pretty serious business. There's a lot of responsibility to -- so what kind of checks and balances do you have to make sure you get this right?

EP: Well, we have what's called an enrollment processing center that's located over in the car dealership. It used to be the Buick dealership on University Drive.

JP: Doesn't give me a lot of confidence, but okay.

EP: It's just a processing center that's housed there. It has nothing to do with used cars. They do a lot of our processing like transcript requests. They have a little group of people that handles just transcript requests. They process the degree conferrals. They have another group of people that handle the processing of degree conferrals. They have a data entry area that handles changes of address, transfer of credit, and stuff like that. So we have very tightly controlled groups that handle different functions.

JP: And that's all they do is that one function?

EP: Yes, well they do have some cross training, but that's their main function, yes.

JP: And so, when you have that issue, they are the ones who deal with it, right?

EP: Yes.

JP: So you don't have to worry about handling that --

EP: They're like specialists.

JP: Is this outsourced or is it a part of the registrar's office?

EP: It's not a part of the registrar's office, but it's part of enrollment in student services that I report up to. And enrollment processing reports up to --

JP: So this is Stephanie Browns.

EP: Stephanie Brown, yes.

JP: Who started out with you earlier on --

EP: Possibly yes, on Ninth Avenue.

JP: And then comes back. And so that means --

EP: This made our relationship real nice.

JP: Well, you would have known each other at a different time. That means that the administrative function is that the registrar reports to Stephanie Brown. And to whom does she report, the Associate Vice-President?

EP: No, she reports to President Hanbury.

JP: She reports to the president?

EP: Yes.

JP: Not to Frank? Okay. So that's a little bit -- a lot of times they would be reporting to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs or Provost. But in this case, well of course I guess that's what Hanbury's job is now.

EP: Well he was --

JP: He was Associate Vice-President of some -- yeah, well never mind. Okay. Now, how much interaction do you have with University Office of Technology? Are you always working with them on new concepts and changes and stuff?

EP: Yes. Yeah, when we got IA and Banner I was in with OIT in the conversion process. For the Banner system I was even part of the team that helped select the Banner system. So I have always been very close with this office. They are very nice to work with and very easy to work with, and they will bend over backwards to help with any issues that we have.

JP: And they really are important for troubleshooting when something -- if the main frame goes down.

EP: And we get a message or something that something's wrong, they're the first ones we call.

JP: Yeah, of course. But of course, by the time you've called them everybody else has called them, too, and they can't get to you for another day. I know how that works. Well when you're working with them, are they just troubleshooting, or they're going to come to your office and say, "You need to upgrade these computers. You need a new software system." Are they constantly working, or was that your job?

EP: Well, we have someone under ESS that she handles the hardware and software, mostly the hardware. So she knows which computers need to be replaced at what time, and she keeps all the kind of stuff.

JP: So you do that in-house as opposed to OIT doing it?

EP: Right. But I think they also have a list of what computers need --

JP: Well, they would have to.

EP: She was with them.

JP: Now one of the problems that always come with registrars is transfers and international students. Those, I would imagine, tend to create a little more problems than the basic student.

EP: I don't think it's a problem. I mean international students -- I have an office that handles just international students. So again they're specialists in that area, and they know all the international students on campus, and they deal with lawyers all the time and the government. The hardest thing is working with SEVIS. The government has a system that we have to report international students to, and that's how we get I-20s and such, and their system is constantly going down. They are constantly having problems that students are getting cancelled. So the government system is causing the most problems at this point.

JP: Yeah, since the --

EP: Since 9/11.

JP: Since 9/11 you've found that the reporting system is much more strict, much more detailed and all that sort of thing.

EP: Yes.

JP: But part of the problem in the past would be, for example, if a student in Germany had been to gymnasium, a lot of people in this system wouldn't have any idea at what level that would be or some of the schools in the middle



east, you know, in China -- you know, it's not like high school.

EP: Right. No. Every international student coming in has to have an evaluation done by a credentialing agency. Most of them use WES.

JP: Okay, and that's not done here?

EP: No.

JP: You get the assessment from them --

EP: We get the credentials --

JP: And say, Okay.

EP: Right.

JP: All right because that's a problem. Because many people around here wouldn't have the faintest idea. So they have to go through this credentialing agency. Is that a private agency or government agency?

EP: It's a private agency.

JP: It's a private agency. Are they reliable?

EP: Yes. They're one of the best ones.

JP: What do you do if you get a kid from Iran or something and there's some sort of restriction by the federal government on Iranian students in the United States as there was at one time? How do you deal with that problem? I mean, if you have an application for a graduate student for psychology who is from Iran, and they've applied here, they're credentialed but the federal government has restriction on any Iranian students studying in the United States. Do you get a list from the government as to who's eligible or ineligible?

EP: No, we would apply for their I-20 on the SEVIS system.

JP: Oh I see, okay.

EP: They would either approve it or deny it.

JP: They would deny the I-20.

EP: As far as I know, I don't think they've ever denied an I-20.

JP: Now, when you look at your current status, what do you see as the changes in registration over a period of time? How is going to evolve?

EP: Well, one thing they say, we're supposed to be paperless now, but I don't know if we'll ever be paperless.

JP: Somebody has to have some way of sitting down and looking at all of the statistics. So therefore, paper.

EP: Yes, at least we don't have as many paper registration forms. A lot of students register through the Web now. We're still having a little bit of problem convincing some programs that that's the way they need to have their students register. They are still holding back and not wanting their students to register that way.

JP: But don't most school now, if you're applying to graduate school, you do it --

EP: You do it yourself on the Web, yeah.

JP: Almost all of it. Everything's there. Nowadays even for us, we send letters of recommendation, we don't send a letter we --

EP: Yeah, it's all computerized, right.

JP: And so you get your site. You log on, and you write your letter, and send it off. And that's going to be more and more the future.

EP: Yeah, that's how letters are done for undergraduate through -- it's called the Hobsons System.

JP: Is that what it is? Okay.

EP: It's an undergraduate admissions; it does things like that. I don't think we're there yet with the graduate programs.

JP: Okay. Well now, for a long time I can remember sitting in the gym, history department people lined up, you know, signing up for courses. At this point everything is really on the computer so they can go online and determine if the class is full, and if there's a wait list. And all of this is fairly simple, is it not for registration?

EP: Yes it is. It's just coding the system. Once you have the system coded it basically runs itself.

JP: What are the problems? What can be the problems?

EP: The problem is getting some of the program offices to accept the fact that things are changing.

JP: Still?

EP: Still. I brought this for you to see this. This is how the schedule used to look like for all the different start and end dates we had. They were all over the place.

Back in 2008 we had a project that we were going to try to streamline registration. We've done pretty good. We've got three calendars now in there.

JP: That's a lot better. Still a little confusing.

EP: Still a little confusing, yes. So we are -- we're trying to do things to improve the University. Because before when the student called in, a parent called in --

JP: Well, how would you know? You'd have to --

EP: It's like you had to question them for five minutes to figure out where they had to go to get the right answer. Now when we get Web registration dates all to be the same, all the start and end dates to be the same, they can call into our call center and get information without having to be transferred all over the place. And a lot of centers are still -- don't want to go this route. They want to have -- they want to do things --

JP: We always registered on August 12<sup>th</sup>. We don't want to go to campus-wide August 15<sup>th</sup> or whatever.

EP: Right, right.

JP: Well, that's going to change I can tell you. I can tell you having talked with Ray Ferrero or George Hanbury.

EP: Well yeah, I'm working for them. I'm trying to get to that.

JP: That's what they told me. They said that sometimes it's not only inconvenient it's so confusing that it's just not something that has to be allowed. They are just going to have to come in and say, "You're going to have to change it - period. You know, I don't care whether you like it or not." It's just not good for the University. And I had earlier on had looked at some of these things. I said, everybody has different dates of vacations and exams.

EP: Different spring breaks, different winter breaks.

JP: The whole thing is --

EP: Different, yeah.

JP: Yeah, and is said -- this is of course how the University started with these semi-autonomous centers. Everybody was doing their own thing.

EP: When I started it was like, I was told it's like 15 different colleges under one umbrella, and that's exactly what it was. Yeah, the umbrella only stops so much leakage. But when we moved into one registrar's office it's just nearly impossible to manage 15 different rules and regulations.

JP: Of course. And so that's your biggest issue I guess now.

EP: Yes.

JP: And if you can simplify that it'll be a lot better.

EP: Yeah, we created a University grade policy, and there's still --

JP: That's right there was no University grade policy was there?

EP: They are still rebelling about that. We give them 20 days after the end of the term to turn in grades and some programs want their faculty to have three months to turn in grades. You just can't do that with financial aid. You have to show the students are making progress and all this kind of stuff.

JP: See, I've been in programs where you have to have them within 24 hours.

EP: Yes, some schools are like that.

JP: And again, University of Florida is my experience, particularly with graduating seniors. You had to have them in ahead of time otherwise they wouldn't know whether they were going to graduate and go get their job or whatever. So the timing is crucial. Now when you're registering your students, a lot of universities have these programs where they determine if the person is a liberal arts major, that they know what required courses they have to take, and there's a tracking system that will let them know, you're a junior and you still haven't taken your required courses, languages.

EP: Yeah, we have something that's called CAPP, curriculum advising and planning or something like that. A student can go online and pull up their CAPP report, and it will tell them what they've taken and what they're still missing.

JP: Okay, and does that work pretty well?



EP: We've been live with undergraduate probably two years ago. And I think it's worked very well. We just opened it up to graduate back in March.

JP: Well, it seems to me that's pretty critical, but again students are known sometimes to not pay complete attention to what's required for some degrees. And then they come to graduate and they say, but you can't graduate because you don't have this required course. Well, I didn't know I needed that. Well, it seems to me it saves time, i.e. from counselors who don't have to sit down and talk to them and explain it to them. They can look it up.

EP: Yeah, and we've also been told that some students can wait up to six weeks to see their counselor. So they can log on and get it within seconds.

JP: And, I know true of every center, is your budget personnel, are they adequate? I know what you were going to say, no?

EP: Are they ever? We do pretty well. I mean, I've got a good staff. They work very hard. But of course we could always use more people especially now that we're taking over the transfer credit function that we're going to be taking that from the advisors.

JP: Do you have a lot of that? Transfer of credits?

EP: Yes.

JP: Probably more than, more than most universities?

EP: We have a big population of transfer credits. I mean the nursing program alone we probably get 300-400 a year just from the nursing program.

JP: So particularly with the medical center and all of that, new dental school, you're going to get a lot more of those than you would have had in the past. So that's something you need more help with?

EP: Yes, we're in the middle of creating a system, an articulation system, where we're putting in all of the catalogues from the other schools and articulating them so that all we'll have to do is enter the courses in and the system will articulate. But we still need somebody that can run the report and see what's wrong and talk to a student about their transferred credit. We're not to the point that we have that advising function yet. We're just getting to the point that --

JP: Are you going to get that? Do you want that?

EP: Yes, we have to have that. I think Dr. Hanbury knows it. Those are a couple of positions we still need, but right now we're just trying to get the system built and then up and running, and once we have it up and running then we'll go and say, now we'll need the advisors. So we'll have our own center.

JP: You do understand, you know, that everything's in the eye of the beholder because there are other institutions in this state that are losing people and having pretty severe budget cuts. So you know, everything's relative.

EP: Right.

JP: You never have, I've never been in any institution in any department, or any center that has enough money.

EP: Yes, that's true, yes.

JP: There's always that desire for one more position or whatever. And the tendency is instead of getting a new position you get more responsibility, right?

EP: Right. Well, I don't think there will be a new position to the school. I think what will happen is some

of the advising positions that are out there will have a position transferred or something.

JP: Now are you responsible for scheduling the courses and classrooms and all that?

EP: No.

JP: No, you don't have to do that. Thank God for that, huh?

EP: No, each program schedules their own.

JP: They do their own?

EP: They do their own schedule.

JP: How do they do it? There's no central?

EP: No.

JP: Ooh.

EP: Yeah.

JP: You're going to have to have that eventually.

EP: Yeah, that's something that Dr. Brown wants us to take over, but we're just not ready to do it yet.

JP: You're going to have to have that because you've already mentioned, and I've heard this from other people,

that classroom space can be a real problem, and sometimes you get overlapping courses and it can get --

EP: Well, that's another thing with the schedule we had. You know, you'd have classrooms sitting empty for weeks.

JP: That's right, because they were already out on spring break or something.

EP: Right, right. So we do have a scheduling system that's handled by someone within ESS. We are putting rules into place that each program has to have their schedule built 90 days before the beginning of the term. And that's so that they can run the classroom optimizer and make sure all the classrooms are used to their fullest extent. So we're moving towards that.

JP: I had to work at that one time, and that can be just scary. And when you get conflicts between groups, this is my classroom, we've had it for three years. I mean just -- it's not something --

EP: You get a faculty member that wants a specific room because he likes it.

JP: Tell me about that. Now you would deal I guess with NCAA eligibility?

EP: The athletic department runs reports, and I sign off on. I'm one of the signatures that go on the report.

JP: What kind of reports are there?

EP: It lists the athletes and how many credits they've earned, their GPA, and whether they're currently registered and how many credits they are registered for.

JP: And you take that and sign that, and where does that go?

EP: It goes back to the athletic department. They have to get like five or six different signatures; I'm just one of them.

JP: And then at that point then they send it to the NCAA?

EP: Yes.

JP: So what you have done, in effect, is verified that they've taken these courses?

EP: Well, I'm verifying that they've earned the credits they say and that they're registered for the credits they say.

JP: Has there been any attempt, as in other institutions, to change it around. I mean, this is not big time football, so you probably don't have that here.

EP: No, I've never seen any discrepancies.

JP: But they do all the time.

EP: Well, I know back before we were really computerized, and they were pulling the data from our current system, they had their own system; there were some discrepancies that had to be worked out. But now that they're actually pulling the data from the system, there's not much chance for them to finagle the data.

JP: Well, you never know.

EP: Yeah, that's true.

JP: And I understand that from time to time there have been some falsifying of diplomas or transcripts. How do you deal with that difficulty? Now this is not your problem per se because they are taking a Nova transcript and changing it sending it their new employer or whatever.

EP: Yeah, but all we do is, they send us the documentation that they've received. They call us and want to verify the information. We tell them to send us the

information, and then we verify whether it's valid or not. If it's not valid, we just let them know it's not valid, and we keep a file of those nice people.

JP: And you'd mentioned that, what, a month ago you had two or three occasions where this was taking place.

EP: Yeah, just recently that -- I guess it's just hard to get a job out there and there's a lot of people falsifying documentation right now.

JP: What do you charge for transcripts?

EP: \$5.00.

JP: That's very reasonable.

EP: Yes.

JP: A lot of schools --

EP: They're up to about \$10.00 now.

JP: More of them, Ivy leagues and other schools are charging \$25 and \$50.

EP: Oh wow.

JP: Well, it's a way to --

EP: Subsidize, yeah.



JP: State schools in particular are getting huge cuts. And so they're looking for ways to increase money and parking tickets and transcripts and the use of you know, athletic fees, all that stuff, for universities are going up for state schools because tuition is fairly low anyway. So that's another way to make money. They don't, or have not, come to you and say, we could raise these costs of transcripts \$5.

EP: Well, I've asked Dr. Brown.

JP: It's an easy way to go because they've got to have it.

EP: Right, right exactly. They can't get away from it.

JP: So if you charge them \$1,000, they would have to pay it.

EP: Well, there's a couple of fees that I've gone to Dr. Brown. I've said, we haven't raised these fees in probably 15 years; it's probably time we start looking at them.

JP: Yeah, so that's going to be something that's going to have to come. Every school is going to have to come with that. Well now, talk a little bit about how you

have reacted to the changing campus. We see today with the beautiful library and the law building, DeSantis Building, and student center, landscaping and all that. It must be, first and foremost, a better place to work and a nicer place to work, but it also must impact some degree you're feeling about the campus, which is now a real campus, and it wasn't at the --

EP: Yeah, it makes you feel proud to work here. They have events and bring people on campus, and you're proud to show people where you work and what it looks like. When I bring people here it's a shock to them to know something like this exists. Still a lot of people are in an area that don't know that we even exist, which is really surprising to me because Nova is my life.

JP: Well, it's something I've discovered. And I've asked everybody that very question: Why isn't Nova better known, not just in Broward County, but even in the State of Florida. I can tell you University of Florida, two thirds of the people never heard of Nova; if they do, they don't know anything about it. So now, what would you suggest to the administrators to get the word out or help people understand what goes out here?

EP: I don't know. I mean, we're on TV, we're on the radio. But you're right, you go to conferences, and you say, Nova Southeaster, and they go, "What?" And I don't know how to get the word out more. I think we're doing what we can, it's just a slow process.

JP: Well, it's a young school still.

EP: Yeah, 50 years isn't much for a school.

JP: No, no, and the name changed from Nova to Nova Southeastern. So you're involved in rapid change particularly since 1985. So it's a very different school than it was 20-25 years ago. So part of that is trying to keep the public updated with what's going on. It's not easy.

EP: It probably took about five years before the news started calling us Nova Southeastern. They kept calling us Nova University. And even they weren't getting it that we had changed.

JP: Well, listen if you can't get the information out to the media, you're not doing your job. How much help did getting the Dolphins training facility help? That gave some recognition, I guess.

EP: And that's what I'm talking about. That's where they kept referring to us as Nova University; not Nova Southeastern University. And every time I'd hear it on the news I'm thinking, "That's not right."

JP: Well, maybe they've got to start working at NSU. Maybe that's easier.

EP: Well, there is another NSU in the United States, though. There is another NSU.

JP: Is there? Uh oh. Okay, well maybe not.

EP: Yeah, because that's why our email address is NSU.Nova.edu because NSU.edu takes you to another school out west. I found that out by accident.

JP: You're probably not the first one then. Now you've worked under several presidents. Give me sort of a thumbnail sketch of what you've thought of them and their time as president. Start with Abe Fischler.

EP: Abe Fischler was a very down-to-earth person. He would stop to talk to anybody. I mean, I still see him at commencements. He was just at a commencement on June 12<sup>th</sup>. He would go out and play golf with Rob Gablesen, the associate registrar. He was just a very friendly person. I don't think he thought of himself as a president. He

thought of himself as just as somebody that was out there working for the University.

JP: What about, did you have much to do with Feldman who came after?

EP: Not a whole lot. He was more of the "I'm a president," and you know those lines don't get crossed a lot. But I didn't have a lot to do with him.

JP: Ovid Lewis?

EP: I loved Ovid Lewis. He was -- just to sit and have a conversation with him was --

JP: Very bright man.

EP: That would take you off somewhere that you never knew you were coming back. Yeah, because I knew Ovid before he took over. He worked at a law school.

JP: When he was the Dean of the law school?

EP: Yes.

JP: Yeah, you could end up in the Canterbury Tales; not sure where you were going.

EP: Exactly. His name was very apropos.

JP: The general consensus of people I've talked to is that wonderful academician, not quite as effective in administration, which I know that he didn't like to do too much.

EP: Right, and he was only doing it as a favor to the University.

JP: He really didn't want to do that. And so he's in some ways a transitional president. Ray Ferrero?

EP: Ray, I think he's a lot stronger than any of the other presidents we've had. He's done a lot of good for the University. He has definite goals in his mind so we know where he's going, and that's always very good to know.

JP: And he knows how to get there.

EP: Yes, he does. And you either play with his rules or you leave. And I appreciate that.

JP: Well there's a difference sense of how people react to that, and I think most people again I've talked to say, Well look, he knows what he wants and he's done a good job. The University has expanded, a lot of good decisions: Go ahead. You know, as long as you know what you're doing and it's turning out well we don't care so much how you get

it done as long as it gets done. So there's that image of him as a doer.

EP: Right, definitely.

JP: And that's I think probably again, I'm quoting people I've interviewed, say that's what the University needed when Ray came along, that they needed a physical plan. They needed to get better known. They needed Southeastern. You know, these are the things that had to be expanded if Nova was going to be successful.

EP: Well, plus he has a lot of connections out in the world. I mean, with the ICUF schools and the Florida Bar. I mean, he knows a lot of people.

JP: That's right. If he can bring people like Huizenga out on the campus. So he's a very persuasive guy, very powerful personality. What do you see for the future of Nova? How would you like to see it expand or stay the same?

EP: I think I would like to see it expand, but I would like to see us all playing on the same board, not fighting over students, not fighting over rules and regulations. You know, we need to get rules and regulations that are good for the school, not for each

little center. That might not be popular, but in order to run it like a good business to make it better for students I feel we have to go that route.

JP: Now there are some people who don't like that because they say, now we're getting back to a traditional school, and that this started as innovative, experimental, and we don't want to lose that. So, as Frank DePiano was saying yesterday, there's this balance. You want to keep that flexibility, keep that experimental concept alive, but there are areas that need to be tightened up, and the bureaucracy needs to have better control. So you don't want to make it too top heavy, but on the other than you have to make sure that it runs efficiently.

EP: Yeah, and I think we can do that. I mean, it's not like we're asking anybody to offer a program a different way. It's just that, like we have the CJI, Criminal Justice Institute, that offers their program with other schools. But because other schools are on different calendars, we're constantly having to manipulate the way CJI does things to fit the other schools. If everybody was on one calendar everything would work great. And then you've got schools that have different grade schemes like School of Business. A "B" is different than a "B" at



undergraduate. A "B" should be a "B" across so that when students take courses across, everything's calculated the same. You know it's not like we're asking for too much, we're just asking to make things work better for the students.

JP: It's interesting that all of these centers talk about how innovative they are, but they don't want to change. When it comes to those things, all of a sudden they're very traditional. We've done it this way for 45 --

EP: Exactly.

JP: Where is your entrepreneurial innovative spirit now? We need to work through the University.

EP: I think I'll use that. Thank you.

JP: So that's part of what this school needs to develop a sense of unity belonging to the same institution, sense of place. There's not a lot of that yet.

EP: No. I mean, some people talk it, but they don't lock it.

JP: And so you do now have a standard grade system?

EP: No we don't.

JP: Or it's on the way?

EP: It's something that I've asked Dr. DePiano to look at, but we haven't gotten to that yet.

JP: Okay, but that's on the drawing board for some time down the line.

EP: Yes. And like the way we have the system set up, we want to change some of the coding so that there will be one undergraduate, what we call levels, so students can take courses across all undergraduate programs and one graduate level. So they can take courses across all. Right now business wants their courses on their transcript. And Psychology wants their courses on their transcript. So we had to build the system so there's all these different levels, and that's another problem we have.

JP: Doesn't make sense.

EP: No. So we have to start bringing things together.

JP: A good example of that is when I was talking to George Hanbury. As Oceanographic Center gets this huge grant, they're going to expand a new building. One of the things he would really like to do is get undergraduate biology majors or environmental studies to hook up with Ocean, but then they have a whole different grading system

and a whole different schedule. He understands that it's not -- you don't plug them in, you have to make the adjustments in the bureaucracy, and that's where, as you are saying, the difficulty comes. People are unwilling, even though they know in the long run it's probably beneficial for the University.

EP: And for the students.

JP: And for the students, yes.

EP: It's so confusing for them.

JP: It would be. If I were a student in environmental studies or something, boy I'd love to be out at the Oceanographic Center and study global warming or whatever they're working on out there.

EP: And psychology over with the psychology students. You're in your environment. That's what you want to do.

JP: But is this going to take somebody like Ray Ferrero. Now Ray has been more interested in physical development. That's one thing, somebody's going to have to come in here and take that same kind of firm stance and say okay, we're going to change these bureaucratic --

EP: I think Dr. Hanbury is working toward that.

JP: Well, you know he was a county city manager, so he --

EP: Right, he knows how to manage, yes.

JP: So he can, that's why I bring that up is because that's one thing he did talk about. He said that's something from a management point of view, not academic, just management, I can see doesn't make sense. That this is too inefficient, too unstructured. He says that sometimes he gets chaotic and somebody has got to settle down the system from the central administration and make sure it functions as a university and not just a center.

EP: And under his leadership we've been able to do a lot of that stuff.

JP: He said he's making progress, but that's exactly what he said, there's still a long way to go. If you look back on your time here, what would be your most positive experience?

EP: I think it was getting my degree, my Bachelor's degree. I mean, it took me 13 years.

JP: But you stayed with it.

EP: I finally got it, yes.

JP: You see, that's a good example of what Nova has made available, is that you're full-time working, but you're still able to get your degree. So that's really the beginning of what they were trying to do is provide access for professional types who were working who couldn't take two years off and get a degree. They could get it at night and weekends and that sort of thing. So you're a perfect example of how that worked. What would be your most disappointing negative experience?

EP: I can't think of anything right now.

JP: Well that's good.

EP: So that's must be good.

JP: Usually something jumps out.

EP: Yeah, no. I mean I did have a boss for a while that was a little difficult to work for, but I think everybody that worked --

JP: In a career you're going to have those things.

EP: Yes, but other than that, I mean, the last few years have been very good, so it's kind of overshadowed the bad part.

JP: Well I interviewed Dick Dodge, and I said, "What was your most negative experience?" He said, "Well the second year I was here I got fired." And he wasn't fired, it was just that they had no money. So Abe Fischler went out to Oceanographic Center and said, "I'm very sorry, we don't have any money. If you guys can get grants you can stay on, otherwise you have to leave." I mean, he wasn't fired in the sense. But he was able to have grants and was able to stay on, but some people were not. It was pretty iffy at that stage at the University development. So a lot of people also looked at that ultimately as a positive thing that he was able to stay and now look how far they've progressed. So the overcoming of difficult times, you learn a lot, you learn skills, and they help you in the long run sometimes.

EP: But you know for such a little program I think they are known throughout the country more than a lot of our other programs.

JP: And they were when they started with Dr. Richardson, but they went to, when he died, they went through some really bad times where they just didn't have any money and a lot of people left. They had to overcome

four, five, six years of really no money. Everything was on a houseboat.

EP: I remember that, yes.

JP: As Dick Dodge said, "You'd be amazed at how much you can put on a houseboat."

EP: Well one of our VP lived on a houseboat down there.

JP: Really? That sounds like a good idea to me.

EP: He was a really funny guy and he lived on one of the houseboats.

JP: Are there any memorable events during your time here either speakers or hurricane Andrew or anything that sort of stands out, interesting stories that you can recall? Sort of personalize the history.

EP: I was really impressed with when Andrew did hit how the University became a family, and took in some of the kids. Because the parents had just dropped their kids off for the fall term, and then the hurricane hit like the next week. So people took some of the kids in that were over in the dorms and everything. So it was like the University

stepped up and became a family to those students, and that was really nice.

JP: And all the new trees that had just been put in.

EP: The palm trees, yes.

JP: They all got dumped. And, in fact, somebody was talking from the law school that the law school had opened a new building and here comes Andrew. They really had not even moved -- they were thinking, maybe I don't want to move all my books in there until we find out -- of course it didn't hit here as badly as it could -- well not as bad as Homestead, but still bad. So any other events like that or the Dalai Lama coming? Or any other people or characters you might recall?

EP: I was really impressed when the Dalai Lama came, but I couldn't understand a lot of what he was saying, so.

JP: He speaks very softly.

EP: I deal with commencements, and they are always -- it's a lot of work building up to it, but it's always so nice when one of the students you've worked with through the years walks across the stage. And over my years I've seen a lot of students walk across the stage. So commencement to me is a very special time of the year. I



just wish I wasn't so tired by the time the ceremony starts. It's really nice to build up to that.

JP: Is that a responsibility of the registrar's office?

EP: Yes.

JP: Yet again another thing for you to take care of, right?

EP: Well, it's not just one, but I handle -- but yeah.

JP: I know, but I mean there's a tendency to add on things here.

EP: Well, when Stan Cross left and Rob Gablesen left, Stan was the registrar, Rob was associate, I was assistant. It all bundled into one, and I became the registrar. So it was like, here's all these responsibilities, go with it.

JP: And I know how administrators work. If you do good in one thing, they'll say, "Well let's let her try this, and see if she can do it." Would you like to be in charge of commencements?

EP: I just got two more commencement ceremonies. And now I'm going to be handling the HBD commencements. I've never done there's before, so that will be interesting.

JP: Yeah, that's a little bit since it's a health-related profession. So a little bit different, isn't it? These people are actually going to go out and make money, aren't they?

EP: We kind of hope so. They want it to be really nice for them to remember. The last thing at the University they want it to be nice.

JP: Well you should think so. If people have worked that hard for four years or whatever, they "earned" a diploma; some institution ought to be able to give them a nice send off. Although again, with the cost of universities, these commencement exercises are doing away with a lot of the frills. It's very expensive, and so they're starting to cut back some, which seems to be that's such a pivotal experience in people's lives that they ought to make it nice.

EP: We haven't cut back any so far. I haven't been asked to cut back. We did cut down on some of the expenses like with the programs and stuff like that, doing them a

different way. But as far as the actual ceremony, we want to keep it nice for the student and graduates.

JP: Well, it should be. They have paid a considerable amount of money for their degree, so that seems only fair. Now that's most of the questions I had, Elaine. Are there things that you would like to discuss and talk about that we have not talked about? Or are there any other issues that you would like to bring up and talk about?

EP: Not that I can think of.

JP: Well, on that note I thank you for your time, and we'll end the interview.

[End]