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Interview with Dr. Paul Sallarulo - Alumnus and Trustee

Paul Sallarulo
Nova Southeastern University

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This is Julian Pleasants. This is October 25, 2011. I am with Paul Sallarulo. Tell me a little bit about how you first came in contact with Nova. You grew up in New York, I believe.

PS: I grew up in New York, yes. I moved here in 1979. I finished college at Baruch. Actually, I wasn’t finished with Baruch at the time. I’m not really quite sure when I graduated from Baruch. I was watching some of the things that Nova University was doing for the community. I had to make a decision as to where I wanted to go for my master’s degree, because I think it’s important. When I decided to go for my undergraduate work, I always admired Bernard Baruch as a businessman, always admired what he’d done for New York City.

JP: Pretty successful.
PS: A pretty successful guy. So I decided to go to Baruch College in Manhattan.

JP: For business?

PS: For business and finance. When I was going for my master’s degree, I thought I was going to go back to New York City and go to an Ivy League school and go to work on Wall Street. So when I moved here I was watching all the things that Nova was doing, giving back to the community.

JP: Excuse me. What enticed you to Fort Lauderdale?

PS: Well, we were coming here every year when we were children. My family would come here every summer. My favorite uncle passed away, and I came here to spend some time with my aunt to make sure that she was okay. I really didn’t have any plans on moving here until that time. I was working as an accountant. I never went back. I didn’t wake up one day and say, “I’m going to move to New York City.” My whole life was geared to working on Wall Street. Actually, I'm glad I didn’t do that because I wouldn’t be able to get into Wall Street today with all the protestors out there. [laughter]

JP: Either that or you’d end up arrested for something.
PS: Exactly. So my association with the university was just things that I had read in the newspaper. I was always impressed that, whatever it is that I was reading, they were doing things differently than a traditional university. They were working with students with autism.

JP: The Oral School?

PS: Yes. When I was 16 years old, I started working with children with disabilities. That was probably one of the most meaningful things that I’ve ever done with my life. So when it was time to go to a function at Nova, I was always impressed with talking to professors.

JP: What years are we talking about?

PS: This was in probably the mid ’80s, early ’80s.

JP: At that time, there was virtually no campus.

PS: No. There really wasn’t much going on here.

JP: It must’ve been pretty grim working here.

PS: Even when I decided to get my MBA here, there really wasn’t much of a campus. There were just a couple of buildings here. I had to take one course, I remember —
a couple of courses in Coral Springs when I got my MBA here.

JP: That’s right. They had sort of an adjunct school in Coral Springs, did they not?

PS: Yeah, in Coral Springs. They had another one up in — I had to go to FIU to take a couple classes there. Of course, I had a couple of trailers that I had to go to. So I didn’t select NSU because of its looks. I selected NSU because of what was on the inside, not what I was looking at. I liked the fact that I could be able to work with a professor, work with a teacher or instructor who’s done it. Sometimes, I hate to say it, but I’ve watched people who’ve taught. The old expression is: If you can, you can. If you don’t, you teach. Ninety-nine percent of the teachers are great out there, but there are some that just don’t know how to live outside that structure.

JP: And there are some of us that lived in an ivory tower and wouldn’t know what went on outside the university.

PS: Exactly. But here they had people who owned businesses. They were part of business life and people you could learn from. That’s what I admired.
JP: One of the things I’ve noticed is that from the very beginning this has been a school where entrepreneurship has been a focus from the very beginning. I don't know if you know this, but when they were trying to raise money in the beginning, Winstead persuaded seven people to give their yachts.

PS: My uncle was one of them.

JP: Is that right? And so they sold the yachts. How many universities do you know that would do that to raise money?

PS: Exactly. It’s just another easy way of thinking outside of the box in nontraditional ways. That’s what I admired about it. There were people saying, “These long-distance schools are paper mills.” But what’s so amazing about is everybody is doing it now, all of the big schools – Princeton, Harvard – all the so-called “great” schools are now doing exactly what NSU did 25 years ago. I had a great experience here getting my MBA.

As a matter of fact, it basically helped me – I was always in banking and investment banking – gain the confidence to become an entrepreneur. About five or six years ago, I got out of corporate life and opened up my own
company, a couple of companies, and we started our own investment banking firm. As a result, I'm the president of a company called Nextera Medical. We just invented… We’ve been working on this project for five years. We just got FDA approval for the first antimicrobial/antiviral mask in the world.

JP: Oh good!

PS: It blocks bird flu and many other things. I can attribute that to the opportunity of getting my MBA here at NSU.

JP: That’s great. Well, that’s a great achievement. We could use it.

PS: We need it. Not only that, but we have all the other ancillary products that go along with it.

JP: I don't want to get off the Nova subject, but how did you get from banking to medical research?

PS: Well, I was a commissioner at the North Broward Hospital District for eight years. I was appointed by Governor Bush. I realized at that particular time that if there was a pandemic — and we have 1.8 million people in Broward County — how many masks would we need? We were
told 16 million because the masks can only be used two or three hours at a time. So when I got involved with this other company, they asked me to be a part of it. That’s when I realized how important that product was if we can get it approved by the FDA.

JP: That’s the hard part, yeah.

PS: That was the hard part. So anyway, that’s how that happened.

JP: When you were at Nova, were you on campus much at all?

PS: Yes.

JP: So you did come. You were in Coral Springs, you were at FIU, but you weren’t at that time —

PS: I didn’t do online.

JP: You didn’t do any of it online.

PS: I can’t do online. I’m an old dinosaur. I’ve got to hear it, I’ve got to see it, I’ve got to feel it. I just can’t —
JP: I’ve talked to a lot of people about qualitative differences. There are some people who are online and are fine and some people like you can’t do it.

PS: Not me.

JP: Who were your professors then? Can you give me some —

PS: I can tell you who my favorite was.

JP: Yeah, good.

PS: Dr. Bob Preziosi. He is the best, my favorite guy. He just wrote a book.

JP: Why was he such a good teacher?

PS: Why? Because he got it all and he really, really cared about his students, to the point where he’s tell us what to eat for breakfast. “Don’t eat carbs. Eat protein. Make sure you eat in the morning so you can pass the test.” He really cared about us and he still does. You never forget someone like that. You never forget someone that really loves his craft and really loves the students.

JP: Well, he’s a role model in a way. It doesn’t matter what profession it is.
PS: He is a role model. You could talk to him about anything. After class, if you wanted to talk about politics or whatever it was – he’s got a great intellect and he made you become the best you can be, putting you in group settings and so forth.

JP: What size classes for the most part?

PS: They were relatively small. I would say 12 to 18 at that time.

JP: Would meet on Saturday, all day Saturday?

PS: Mm-hm.

JP: So at the time you were doing your MBA, you were working full time, right?

PS: Yes.

JP: How did you manage the school work and your business responsibilities?

PS: Very carefully. I stayed up late a lot.

JP: Saturdays would be like eight hours, four hours and then a break?
PS: I think it was more like a total of – it seems like I was taking a couple of classes at a time. It might’ve been a full day.

JP: Those eight hours in a classroom is a long time.

PS: Correct.

JP: But your motivation was strong enough that you realized the long-term benefits.

PS: Sure. I knew what my goal was. My goal was to get a 4.0 and doing something perfect in my life, and it worked because every time I struggle... I’ve got to tell you a very quick, funny story. In my statistics class, the professor decided to give me a B+ and I didn’t accept that because I deserved an A. I'm not even going to mention his name, but we had mediation and I forgot to attend. He had to fly back from Texas and I missed the meeting. I don't know what happened. Don’t you know, I asked for another meeting? I brought my papers in. He had to fly back in from Texas. I brought my papers in. I showed him my tests. I got an A, an A, an A and an A. He said, “You know, not many people can get a 4.0.” I said, “Do I deserve it?” And he said yes and I got it.
I was just so pleased that I was tenacious enough to pursue it, even though I had made a mistake and missed the first meeting. It was a goal. Everyone I speak to about their MBA, I tell them, “You’ve got to beat me.” And they do. So far, three people have followed me with a 4.0. I tell them, “You’ve got to just take it one class at a time and you’ve got to do something perfect in your life.”

JP: So this guy who was flying in from Texas, was he an important person in the field?

PS: Yes, he was. He was the professor. I don't know if he retired or if he was just coming here just to teach that one class during that period.

JP: So this is almost like what Fischler had with education leadership. This is a cluster, as it were—

PS: Yes.

JP: So there were some outside people coming in and you did some off-campus work.

PS: No, that was all on campus. He must’ve come in for that period that I had him.

JP: Okay. But you went to FIU?
PS: Yeah.

JP: So you did some off campus, some on campus, and some outside professors as well?

PS: Correct. I thought you meant... No, he was actually a professor here.

JP: Was he?

PS: Well, an adjunct or something. I don't know what they would call him.

JP: Yeah, he would be an adjunct.

PS: I thought you meant did I do outside meaning online or anything from home.

JP: But that’s what the whole concept was in the beginning.

PS: Correct.

JP: Which was a brilliant thing for educational leadership — you didn’t have to hire these faculty and pay retirement and healthcare and everything. You made them adjunct and brought them in for the weekend, paid their costs, gave them a certain stipend —

PS: Right. And you learned something.
JP: And they got good people to bring in so you didn’t have to go out and hire 200 people to go and teach courses. They could just pick them from around the country and send them where they needed to send them.

PS: Exactly.

JP: In terms of the benefits financially – you’re an accountant – it seems to me that was what kept this university afloat.

PS: Absolutely.

JP: If they hadn’t had that money then, I don’t know if they could’ve made it.

PS: Probably not.

JP: That’s what Abe tells me. He said, “We were chugging along, barely above water, and trying to get to the next year and trying to pay our bills.”

When you finished your MBA, what has been – over a period of time – I know your circumstances today. What has been your relationship with Nova? Once you first graduated, how did you feel? Did you feel that you were proud of your degree and wanted to be involved in what was going on with Nova?
PS: Yeah, I did feel very proud of my degree and I always wanted to be a part of it. I always felt I had this special connection to the people of NSU. It’s really the people that made the university, because we really didn’t have much of a campus at that time, so we had nothing to brag about like we do today.

Of course, at that particular time, later on, my son was born with Down syndrome, my son, Patrick. That was in 1992 and I graduated in ’86. So, of course, we brought Patrick here with Dr. [Lonnie Neiderman], who was wonderful, who started the Mommy & Me program. My son was coming here for many years. I knew this was the best place for Patrick.

What I admired was the many different specialities that the university had and does still have, and they were very good at what they did. If anybody had a child with a disability, the first institution that anybody spoke about was Nova Southeastern University. So we were very fortunate to have NSU in our backyard to help us with Patrick.

JP: And this was even before the merger with Southeastern?
PS: Yeah, this was when we were just Nova University, absolutely.

JP: Did the University School do any work with disability?

PS: Oh, yeah. They were working very diligently.

JP: What is your interaction with the university, other than through your son?

PS: Just attending some of the functions that they would have, the business functions, Entrepreneur of the Year. I'm trying to think... I got involved with the alumni association. I'm not quite sure when that was, when the year was, because I'm old. Then a little while after I got involved with the alumni association, they made me the president of the international alumni association. So it was my job to try to go out there and raise money and let students know what’s going on with the university. I really enjoyed doing that.

JP: From talking with George Hanbury and some other people, one of the complaints about Nova has been that they have not done a very good job keeping up with their alumni.

PS: That’s correct.
JP: Obviously, it’s a different sort of alumni circumstance. Some people have never even been on the campus and you’re talking about adults. It’s a different cohort than you would find at a normal university. But, even so, the argument is that the university needs to do a better job.

PS: Well, we are under George. He’s working us all very hard, double-edged sword. I said, “George, I think the board made the wrong decision.” He goes, “Why?” I said, “Because you’re working us too hard.” It’s nice because now when I go on the road — we just went to an alumni association chapter meeting in Upstate New York and there were probably 40 people attending, and 90% of them had never seen the university. We brought a wonderful tape from Dr. Hanbury about the university. They were so proud. They had something to be proud of. They were actually able to visually see something.

JP: Particularly if you were on campus when you were on campus. If you came back today, it would be astonishing.

PS: Exactly. It made them feel good about the university. Now, when we tell our story, they’re giving
money and they want to be proud of it. Everybody wants to be proud of the university.

JP: I'm sure you are aware that the university needs a strong amount of basic funding as you go forward. Any university does. This is a private university, so having a strong amount of commitment from your alumni is pretty critical. Not just tying them to the university, but also in fundraising.

PS: Exactly.

JP: So I think what George was talking about at one time – you’ve seen these. I'm at the University of Carolina now, and they have the most incredible alumni magazine you’ve ever seen. Its 200 pages. It’s slick, color photographs and that sort of thing.

PS: We used to have that.

JP: Yeah. Well, at some point he thinks there needs to be something in between. There ought to be some alumni –

PS: It has to be something physical. Not everybody reads their emails.
JP: But that doesn’t seem like — anybody can send an email, but we’re going to take the time to put together —

PS: And we did. I’d like you to see some of those. They were very nicely done. I keep them all.

JP: Don’t you think that makes a difference?

PS: Absolutely. There’s no question about it. I asked the alumni about that.

JP: It reconnects you with the university and you become interested in what they’re doing. If you don’t know how rapidly this school has changed, in another five years there’s no telling what will happen. So the idea for you, the way this campus has grown, is clearly to make sure that the people who have graduated from here know what’s happening here.

PS: Right. What we’re doing is we’re building more chapters throughout the country. It’s working quickly because people are excited about where they graduated from.

JP: And the numbers are increasing now. When you started out, obviously, you didn’t have a lot of graduates. All the graduates at one point were pretty much graduate students, but now you’ve got the medical school and
pharmacy school and all of this stuff. What did you think about the merger with Southeastern? How important has that been for the university?

PS: I think it’s been very important, particularly—it happened when I was the commissioner of the North Broward Hospital District. We needed a teaching hospital in Broward County. We needed to have another facility, I thought, here because of the population out west, particularly in Davie and so forth. We’ve worked hard in trying to make that work with the North Broward Hospital District. It hasn’t happened yet.

JP: Yeah, last time it was not approved.

PS: It wasn’t approved. We’re still working on it.

JP: That’s something in the future, I understand.

PS: Hopefully. Even though I’m not a commissioner anymore, I just think that it’s a great opportunity for nurses to be here. I used to be Jeb Bush’s campaign manager in Broward County. Jeb thought it was very important for another facility, particularly here in South Florida, because we can get so many students from other countries and so forth, to have another nursing program. I know he worked diligently with Dr. Lippman in making that
happen and it worked. It’s a very good program. A lot of the students are going to – we have five hospitals in the North Broward Hospital District. All of the residents are all going to those hospitals.

JP: And when did the nursing program come online?

PS: I couldn’t give you the exact date. I’d just be guessing.

JP: But it’s been recent, the last two or three years?

PS: Oh, no, longer than that.

JP: Longer than that? Okay.

PS: Yeah, I would say in the last maybe eight years, seven or eight years.

JP: Which was critical?

PS: Critical. There’s a nursing shortage in the United States.

JP: Everywhere.

PS: Particularly with the demographics here of all the older folks coming, we need more nurses. What’s
happening is the other facilities are pulling the nurses out of the hospitals because they’re paying more money.

JP: Oh, sure. You can’t blame them for taking a better job, with better pay.

PS: Exactly.

JP: As the whole process has expanded with the medical center, you get pharmacy, optometry and of all things – as Dr. Melnick was saying, ”We decided to open a dental school when people around the country were closing them down.” It turns out that almost everything they’ve done, physician assistant, everything’s been successful.

PS: It’s been great. I think anywhere in the world if you say, ”What’s the best dental school in the world?” They’ll basically say NSU.

JP: Partly the technology, because it’s new and all the new – everything is up-to-date.

PS: Well, they’ve got a great dean. Dean Uchin is unbelievable. He knows I’m the chairman of the Special Olympics in town. We’re working on programs where you meet some of the – I always say “kids” but there are adults as well. Some of these kids they think are so mentally
challenged that they’re banging their heads against the walls. Well, we found out. They have tooth decay. The pain hurts. Dr. Uchin and his staff are going around the world and educating people, raising funds to take care of these kids.

JP: That’s great.

PS: Those are the types of things that make NSU great.

JP: This is something that I think particularly Ray Ferrero was concerned about. At some point, the energy was keeping the school afloat and trying to expand, once they became sort of stable and they could meet their bills. Ray says, “We’ve got to build infrastructure here.” Plus, I think his emphasis was — I think this is critical for this school — town/gown relationships. The art museum, the theater on campus, the library — I don't know of any other occasion where you have a county commission and a university sharing the responsibility for a “public” library.

It seems to me again that’s part of this entrepreneurship. Having talked with Ray, he sees an
opportunity and he’s going to figure out a way to make that happen.

PS: Correct.

JP: So he gets George, who knows all the people down in Broward, and he gets people like Hamilton Forman or whoever he needs, to go and make the contacts and get it done.

PS: Just another example of thinking outside the box.

JP: Yeah. Nobody would’ve started out with that concept. How would you assess Ray Ferrero’s term as president?

PS: A+++ – the best. Ray has it all. He’s got the charisma, he’s got the intelligence, and he’s got the compassion to get it done. He was the best. I don’t think anybody could’ve completed the goals that he set, because they were set pretty high.

JP: Plus he has great contacts.

PS: He has great contacts. He’s a leader. He’s a Marine. Who’s going to say no to a Marine? It’s pretty difficult to say no to Ray Ferrero.
JP: Well, having talked to him for about four or five hours, I would have to say that he is a strong person. [laughs]

PS: Nobody says no to Ray. You know what? He used all his energy. Once one task was completed, he moved on to the next. We’d sit in meetings and we watched the library go up. We watched another building go up. We watched this building and the one behind it go up. It’s just incredible how it has all worked together.

Then one day I came to him and I said, “I have a friend who wants to give some money, but one of the stipulations is he wants Special Olympics to be on campus.”

JP: Done.

PS: It took two years, but we are the only private institution in the world that has Special Olympics on its campus. What does that do for us?

JP: It does a huge amount.

PS: It makes all these kids – for the first time in their life, they’re on a campus. The other students, whether they’re sociology or psych students, they’re working with our athletes every day. It’s a win/win for
everybody. Everybody wins in it. That’s because of George and Ray negotiating with Mr. Taft and making it happen.

JP: So Don Taft was the one?

PS: Don Taft was my buddy, yeah.

JP: He gave a nice little gift.

PS: Yeah. Don wanted me to name that building the Paul Sallarulo Building. I said, “They’re charging you by the letter. If you call it Paul Sallarulo, you might have to give another ten million.” [laughter] He laughed. That’s how nice this man was. He made it very clear. He wanted Special Olympics on this campus.

JP: One of the things that is significant – I was just talking to Scott and when he was a student here there was nothing here, no social activities, there was a baseball team and no student center. If you’re going to ever expand a school, you’ve got to have a student center.

PS: I think it’s the nicest in the country. I’ve been to many of them and I’ve never seen anything like it before. Our athletes play basketball there all the time. I’m here all the time with our athletes. It’s really an incredible university center.
JP: It came a little late.

PS: Yes. I wish they’d had it when I was here.

JP: That’s what Scott said. He said, “There was no place to eat on campus when we were here.”

PS: Right. Now it’s incredible. Well, same thing when I went to Baruch College. We had no place to eat. We had to go on 22nd and Park Avenue to have a — [laughter] but now it really is —

JP: You guys are New Yorkers. You can handle that stuff.

PS: Yeah, but we were poor New Yorkers, though. Those hot dogs were pretty expensive back then.

JP: Well, the sense that I have, having talked with people at the university and some of the trustees, is that one of the goals is to increase the undergraduate population.

PS: Yes.

JP: Not only to increase it, but to increase the standards and the quality of the students.
PS: That’s a key. We don't want to be somebody’s second or third choice. We want to be people’s first choice and it’s real easy to do. What I'm doing now is when I'm going out and I'm visiting with an alumni association – let’s say in New York – I'm inviting the principals of the local schools. I'm also inviting the guidance counselors. I want them to see our university. I want them to see what we’re all about. Guess what? It’s working. People are going, “Wow, we had no idea about how wonderful your university is.”

JP: That’s been another failure of this institution is not – I don't know what – publicize –

PS: Well, they don’t tell their story well. The story has gotten better.

JP: It has. There’s a better story to tell.

PS: Maybe we’re two years behind because we had to wait for everything to be completed. We’ve got everything we need right now. Now we just have to tell our story better. I can’t do it alone. We have to send people out there, meeting with principals, meeting with guidance counselors, meeting with people from community colleges all
throughout the country and saying, “Do you want a wonderful place to go to?”

JP: That’s a strong development that needs to be pursued, communication. They do third and fourth year here. That’s important. The other thing where the university – from what I’ve learned – needs to improve is scholarships, financial aid, because it’s expensive here.

PS: Well, that’s what I’m trying to do when I’m going to meet with alumni, have alumni give more money so we can use it for scholarships. But we had to take care of everything else first. Now that we’ve done that, this is our goal. We have to work on scholarships right now.

JP: Having looked sort of broadly at the history of this university, it seems to me that when Warren Winstead came he was the right guy to start it off. Then Abe came in and they needed somebody to develop, then Ray comes in, and now George. I'm sort of skipping Feldman, but he was only here for two years.

PS: George is the right guy.

JP: It seems to me. I don't know that you knew this, but when Winstead was president, his first faculty was 17. Every single one had a PhD – three from Columbia, three
from Texas, Johns Hopkins, three from the University of Chicago — and it wasn’t even a school. It wasn’t even a building. It wasn’t even a campus. He persuaded 17 people — two from Berkeley — to come. Now that’s a hell of a thing.

PS: That’s a great accomplishment.

JP: I don't know how. There was nothing here. When you came, there was nothing here. Can you imagine these guys? There wasn’t even a building. These people are leaving high-level institutions to come here. He was a great salesman.

PS: I'm sure he was.

JP: Now, at some point, selling is not enough for running the institution. He was not a particularly good administrator. Then, when you get past Abe, then Ray comes in and he’s going to be dynamic and push the limits.

PS: Yes, he did.

JP: So you see sometimes institutions find their leader.

PS: Yeah.
JP: I guess in this sense it’s worked pretty well. It’s interesting also that if you throw out Winstead, everybody else has been internal.

PS: I don't have a problem with that.

JP: I know, but it worked out well.

PS: It worked out well.

JP: I think part of it is if you looked at Feldman and it didn’t work out well, people said, “Well, maybe we need to stay at home with the people we’ve got. We’ve got plenty of good people here, anyway.”

PS: Well, there’s a lot of passion. We had to make a choice, on the board, as to whether we were going to go outside or not. There’s no one in America better than George Hanbury right now. I wasn’t on the board when they selected Ray, but I can’t imagine where we’d be without Ray.

JP: When did you come on the board?

PS: Oh, God, it must be about... Well, see, being the president of the alumni association, I'm automatically on the board. That was maybe 10, 12 or 13 years ago. Then
they officially put me on the board maybe six or seven years ago.

   JP: Okay. How many on the board now?

   PS: I would say about 25 or 30.

   JP: Okay. It’s very interesting that —

   PS: I'm also the chairman on the Wayne Huizenga School of Business.

   JP: Okay. I want to get back to the school of business. It’s interesting. When Winstead first set up the board of trustees, he deliberately set it at 25. He didn’t want it to be bigger. The University of North Carolina Board of Trustees is 100 people and we can’t get anything done. If everybody has something, you can’t get anything done.

   PS: That’s true.

   JP: So he, from the very beginning, knew the advantage of having a lot of really committed people — not having people on the board because they gave money or they wanted to be on the board, thought it was prestigious for their law firm or whatever. From my sense, that’s the type of board you have today.
PS: Yes. We’ve got a strong board.

JP: Yeah. What’s the board’s sense for the future of Nova? If you had to sort of – I’ve looked at George 2020 –

PS: I think they’re very optimistic about our future. I think that some of the things that you alluded to, what we need to do is we need to build up the undergraduate program. We need to raise money for students who really need to be here. I think it’s less on the physical aspects of it. Now it’s really focusing on raising the level, as you said, particularly with the business school, and other schools are working on it as well, getting out there and just bringing in more undergraduate students and raising as much money as we can. I know they we have a capital campaign that we’re working on.

JP: One of the things – I talked with the director of international studies. Right before Ray quit, he started this brand-new commitment. I don't know, maybe 18 countries now, but there are a couple of thousand foreign students who are here. What they’re getting ready to start is that undergraduate students here can study abroad. They haven’t really had a study-abroad program. It looks like
to me there’s going to be a relationship with China. Everybody has to have a relationship with China.

PS: Absolutely.

JP: So it seems to me — and you can correct me if I'm wrong — that there is a push to expand international studies.

PS: Yes, absolutely.

JP: And there’s a commitment.

PS: Mm-hm, from the top. I might even do it, too. I may go back for a doctorate degree someday, when my teenagers don’t need me anymore.

JP: You’re too busy to do that. [laughs]

PS: Yes. Maybe when they’re off to college.

JP: I don't know what specifics you can divulge, but when you were looking at a successor for Ray, did you have a special committee that was designed to hire the new president, or was the whole board involved?

PS: No, I think there was a special committee. I don't recall who it was. I wasn’t on it, but there was a special committee.
JP: And do you have any sense of how they went about it? Did they hire a search firm?

PS: I'm not sure. I don't recall if they hired a search firm or not.

JP: But normally in those cases you would bring in a list of 50 possible — and I assume that they went through the process, as opposed to just saying, “Well, we’ve already got someone.”

PS: I don't recall whether or not I looked at any names. I know it just made sense to me. I personally wanted Dr. Hanbury. I thought he was perfect for the position. Whenever it was that Ray decided he wanted to retire, which we didn’t know. He was doing a darn good job. I know he had a contract for seven years. I think it was up this July.

JP: Two or three years ago, I asked him that question and he said, “I have no idea. There’s so much stuff I need to finish.” He said you can’t pick a time that’s appropriate for you to quit. You’re going to have to quit between goals and visions and things are not going to get completed. You just have to at some point say, “That’s it.” I think it was a very hard decision for him to quit.
PS: I'm sure.

JP: He’s so involved and so —

PS: Well, I don't think he has quit.

JP: I know he hasn’t.

PS: He hasn’t quit. That’s what he says, “Don't everybody give me a eulogy because I'm not dead.” I think he’s going to work just as hard. I think that his focus is going to be on raising money for scholarships.

JP: I didn’t ask George this, but there’s a big shadow still. [laughs]

PS: Oh, there’s no doubt, absolutely.

JP: And he understands that.

PS: And there will be for a long time. How could there not be?

JP: There has to be. That’s the hard part about George coming —

PS: That’s like somebody being president after Lincoln or Roosevelt. It’s pretty tough.

JP: You’re going to have to make —
PS: Obama’s going to be a little easy, but those two guys it was pretty tough.

JP: It might be a little easier to follow Jimmy Carter or somebody, huh?

PS: Actually, I liked him better than this one, but anyway...

JP: What’s the development now with the business school? The DeSantis Building comes online. That’s a high-tech, beautiful building. I don't care how you look at it; people who come, they want to see a nice campus. Parents want to see a student center. They want to see a nice campus, right?

PS: Right.

JP: If you come to look at the business school, you say, “Wow, this is nice.”

PS: It’s very impressive, yes.

JP: I don't know who... Is Ray the one who got Wayne Huizenga to give the money?

PS: I don't know. I don't know if it was specifically Ray or not. It wouldn’t surprise me if it
wasn’t him. I think Wayne has always had an affiliation with NSU, always admired it. He’s given more money. Most recently, he’s just given some more money for scholarships.

JP: Good. That’s where you really need it.

PS: Yeah.

JP: So how big is the business school now?

PS: As far as...?

JP: Numbers.

PS: Oh, I don't even know. I think they’re down a little bit from last year. I couldn’t give you the exact number, but they’re down a little bit.

JP: So now the main focus is still MBA?

PS: Yeah. Now they’re focusing on the sales leadership, too. I think that’s one of the reasons why Wayne gave the money for the leadership program.

JP: That’s a separate course?

PS: Correct.

JP: Is it a Ph.D.?
PS: It’s a separate specialty. In other words, if I wanted to get my degree in leadership, for instance, as opposed to finance or accounting, I could do that.

JP: Okay.

PS: I think it’s important for all students to take it because you can have all A’s, but you may not know how to interview well or negotiate well. Here, you still in a room like this and you’ve got a TV on you, and you’re able to look at it. You’re to talk to your professor and say, “How did I do? What did I do?” They teach you how to sell.

Now, a lot of the professors don’t like to use the word “sell,” so you have to say “negotiate.” Whenever you say sales in a leadership program, they’re thinking of a used-car salesman, so I think they might have to eliminate the sales part and just put leadership.


PS: Absolutely.

JP: It sounds common and cheap, but it’s the reality of the world. Nowadays — you know this better than I do —
just about every president of every university I know is a CEO.

PS: Right.

JP: Ray’s not an academic.

PS: Right.

JP: George is not an academic.

PS: Well, he’s a doctorate.

JP: I know, but he didn’t come up from the ranks.

PS: He didn’t come from the traditional ranks of being a dean and —

JP: That’s right. He was a county manager and that sort of thing, which serves better. I have some good friends who are historians and were university presidents. Some were pretty good and some were pretty lousy. They are intellectually smart, but don’t know how to run a corporation.

PS: Correct.

JP: What’s the relationship now between Nova and the state of Florida? Do you get any kind of scholarship
money? At one point, the state would give money to private schools.

PS: Yeah, they were getting some grants. I know that there was some difficulty most recently because of money issues, and I don't know whether or not they did.

JP: Okay. But in the past —

PS: Oh, in the past I think we’ve had good relationships with the lobbyists and the legislatures and so on, yeah.

JP: Even though it’s still a private school?

PS: Correct.

JP: Does most of the scholarship money come from, let’s say, Pell Grants and loans as opposed to scholarship money from the campus?

PS: I'm not sure percentage-wise, but unfortunately we’re getting less than two percent from our students, from alumni. That’s truly our fault. That’s basically our fault. We haven’t done a good job.
JP: How do you evaluate the purchase of Rolling Hills with the future? Is this going to be land that you might use?

PS: Well, I think it’s for two reasons. I think it’s good for land. I’ve watched us grow in the last 30 years. I think it’s good if we want to pursue specialties in hospitality, particularly being in South Florida in the tourist community, where we can train people to be managers of hotels, whether it’s with catering or things like that. I think it’s a plus for the university.

JP: Well, at one time they tried to start that — when Fischler was here — and it went bad, partly because the person they hired wasn’t very good. Have they started now?

PS: George is going to be pursuing that. I think it’s going to be important for people. If I’m going to learn how to be an accountant or a hospital administrator, why not get an MBA or get into hospitality management?

JP: Look how Cornell has done.

PS: Yeah, exactly.

JP: They’re probably as good as any in the country. They’ve been doing it for 100 years or so. If we look at
the future of Nova and if we look at George’s academic buildings, the idea is to take this shopping center and put in a bookstore or some retail offices?

PS: Put in some hotels.

JP: Put in a hotel?

PS: Make more room for our students. If we get what we wish for and we’re getting more undergraduate students, we have to house them. Also, not only do we have to house our students, but if we get our medical center, we have to house the nurses and we have to house all the residents that are going to go there. So we need —

JP: So this is all a piece — in other words, the hotel, the academic buildings and the hospital would be in this general area?

PS: Right.

JP: And the idea is that the hospital – you’ve got to put the nurses up, you’ve got to put the undergraduates up, all of that.

PS: Right.

JP: Is that feasible in the next five years?
PS: I think so, yeah. I would say the next five or ten years.

JP: But Rolling Hills would be further down the road?

PS: As far as utilizing it?

JP: Utilizing the land, yeah.

PS: I would think that’s 25 years.

JP: I’m sure you could start building dorms out there, but you’d — I'm sure the university doesn’t necessarily want to operate a golf course or country club.

PS: Listen, if you get the right people to train in the program, then you get the right people —

JP: Yeah, if you use that as a training ground. If you get the hospitality courses, that would be a very valuable asset. But basically universities don’t want to run private enterprises because they create more worries than normal.

PS: Right.

JP: What do you see are going to be the biggest problems for this school in the future?
PS: I think that just hiring the right people. I think development is...just hiring the right people to stop talking about it and do it. We just need to stop talking about what we need and just start doing it. Continue to develop our development department and get out there and bring the undergraduate students in and start asking the alumni for money. There are ways to do it.

JP: So you have a development officer and a department that essentially is a fundraising arm of the university?

PS: Correct.

JP: At one point, they were not doing much at all.

PS: Right.

JP: And I don't think there was much emphasis on it.

PS: Right. I think that we need to put as much emphasis on it as... It’s our goal. We have to raise X amount of money. We have to be able to go to each student and give them a reason as to why they should be proud of that piece of paper they have on their wall. We haven’t been very good at that. We’re getting better and we’re focusing more on that. Because we were able to take care
of the other needs that we were able to take care of, now we can satisfy this. I think it’s going to take a good team to get that done.

JP: Having talked with the people at Florida, one of the concepts that somebody said — and you’re a businessman — was, “I would hire 20 people at $50,000 a year, put them out to raise money. The people that could raise four times what we pay them, we’d keep. The ones that didn’t, we’d fire.” In other words, I'm willing to pay you $50,000 if you can raise $250,000 or a million or whatever. Let’s hire a bunch of them and put them out there.

PS: Yeah, but then you've got strangers asking for money and you’re not —

JP: You’d have to control it.

PS: What I’d like to do is — I think what we need to do is continue to build our chapters and make people feel important about what they’re doing and their capabilities. We have chapters all over this country. The weakest one we have is in Broward County. What I want to do is — and everybody must see their name. When people see their names on a piece of paper and they’re part of a committee, they know that if they don’t do a good job, the people around
them are going to see that. We can put 50 people together in this community and raise millions of dollars, but we’ve got to do it. We’ve got to stop talking about it. That’s what we need to do. Whether it’s New York City and they have 50, you double it to 100 and you keep these people in their chapter. You make them feel like they’re loved and part of the community. Ask everybody to come back once a year.

JP: That takes a lot of year.

PS: Well, yeah, but we’ve got to start. That’s what we have to do, but we’ve got to start at home. We have to be —

JP: This has to be the best chapter.

PS: This has to be the biggest and the best, in Broward County, so everybody can emulate us. That’s been a problem. George gets it. George knows how important it is to have a good program here at home.

JP: I think George is must more attuned to public relations.

PS: Yes, he is. Well, Ray is, too, but —

JP: He had so many things to do.
PS: He had a big task and he did it. Now, we couldn’t do what we’re doing today if it wasn’t for what Ray did yesterday.

JP: Exactly, yeah. So George can concentrate on things Ray didn’t have time to do.

PS: Absolutely, no question about that.

JP: What’s the future of the business school? Is it going to get bigger? Is it going to expand? Do they offer a PhD now over there?

PS: Yes. I think it’s going to get better because we’re doing everything we can to get to the next level now. That means making some changes. Changes sometimes get some people upset. So if you’re now a teacher and you’re not accredited — so in other words we have to have a certain number of full-time professors, and that means that there’s not as much room as some others.

JP: But there’s still — I was talking to Scott, who got his MBA, and I was talking to somebody else who not long ago had an MBA. One of the things they thought was really good about this MBA program was they had people who came in here who ran businesses.
PS: Exactly. That’s very important to have.

JP: “Look here – let me tell you how I do this. I run a business and it’s a $40 million business. These are the problems I encounter. This is how I deal with them. This is what kind of leadership you need. This is how to deal with the accounting part of it.” You know, hands-on, practical, pragmatic sort of give and take so the kids can say, “Well, what happens if...?”

PS: Exactly. But I think what we need now is a blend.

JP: But you need both elements.

PS: We need a blend. We can still continue with what made us different and good. Then, if we want to get to the next level, we’re just going to have to add a few more professors – I think the number is 33 – which we’re working on. Then once that happens and we’ve fulfilled those obligations that we need to do, then we can be on the students’ first tier list. “I want to go to NYU. I want to go to Baruch. I want to go to NSU.” That’s our ultimate goal.

JP: Well, you’re going to have to get the academic community’s support. You’re going to have to have that
infrastructure of top-level academics who have national reputations, have been published, who have been involved in all kinds of national activities and international activities.

PS: Right.

JP: Is international business becoming more important?

PS: Yes, absolutely.

JP: It has to, right?

PS: Absolutely. Politically it is. Especially having our campus here in South Florida, South America and all the other countries.

JP: Yeah. I talked with a guy yesterday and he said that for the first time they were beginning to open up and that the best relationship they had – they were starting in Brazil and Argentina, but the best international rapport they had was Latin American countries.

PS: Yeah.

JP: That’s the future. They want to come to here, Miami and Fort Lauderdale. It seems to me that the focus
for the business school, as well as international studies, should be in Latin America. How much longer do you think you’ll stay on the board?

PS: Oh, I don't know – until they throw me off.

JP: So you’re committed for the long term?

PS: I’m committed for as long as they need me.

JP: That’s another thing that I’ve discovered about this school – amazing in a way – is that the people who founded it were committed to the point where they gave not only huge amounts of time, but in some cases a substantial portion of their personal wealth – a lot. [laughs]

PS: Right, exactly.

JP: We’re not talking about Bill Gates here who has unlimited funds.

PS: Right.

JP: They were committed to it, even though everybody else said it was a stupid idea.

PS: Right.

JP: As it progressed, even along the way, when it was going to go under several time, people stayed with it.
That seems to be almost a flat line commitment all the way to the present. There have always been some people who were in it. I was going to talk with Dr. Melnick this afternoon. Looking at Dr. Terry, he started Southeastern when he had no money, had no land, had nothing. He just started it. Melnick goes to work for him – he retired. He stayed committed to that for 16 years.

PS: I'm sure he did.

JP: Somehow, the love or the sense of importance or the future – these people are really kind of visionaries. They say, “Look, I know what this can be like.” If you started where they started, you would have a lot of faith that you were going to end up –

PS: Exactly. I think this board feels like we’re just not rubber-stamping anything.

JP: That’s a good way to put it.

PS: It’s just not staff-driven and all of a sudden we stamp it. George and Ray came to the board for ideas. We have the talent. The board has the talent. I'm one of the youngest guys on the board. When you look at that board, the talented group of men and women on that board is pretty incredible. George and Ray –
JP: That’s a real commitment.

PS: It’s a commitment. It’s unbelievable.

JP: You’ve got to be committed if you really want to do something for the university. There’s not a lot in it for you.

PS: No.

JP: Obviously —

PS: Actually, less because we can’t do business with the university. We can’t have friends do business with the university and so forth.

JP: Would I be correct to say that that it seems like the entrepreneurship and the commitment has been there all along and continues to be?

PS: Yes.

JP: That’ll —

PS: There are a lot of people that care very much for this university.

JP: They’ve overcome a lot of adversity.
PS: Well, when you’re passionate about something, you’re going to find ways to find a solution.

JP: To get it done, yeah.

PS: You’re going to find a way to get it done. I know that everybody on the board is committed and they’ve all given money to the university and made a nice commitment. They will continue.

JP: I noticed that when they first opened the doors in 1967, the original people had a hard time raising $75,000. So when they finally opened it, they got a larger board and they gave $4.4 million. This was 1967. That was a lot of money from the board.

PS: Especially looking at what wasn’t here.

JP: Right. That’s what I mean. There were no buildings – nothing. You get $4.4 million in 1967, that’s a lot of money. So that commitment would be almost unheard of. Why would you give all that money to something that doesn’t even exist?

PS: It was a dream.
JP: It’s remarkable to me. That’s how I see it from the outside looking in, to see all these people who were going to stay with it regardless.

PS: I'm hoping my daughter comes here to the oceanography school.

JP: Oh, that’s a great school, isn’t it?

PS: Yeah, it is. It’s a great school.

JP: There again, they got Dr. Richards. [laughs] I don't know how they got him down here. They had him in a houseboat. He came down here. Abe Fischler came from Berkeley. He comes down here from Woods Hole. He believes this is going to work. They’ve got him in a houseboat. Of course, he knew the location was fabulous, but it doesn’t matter where you are unless you have facilities. He didn’t have much of a lab.

PS: Have you seen it recently, the oceanography –

JP: No, I haven’t. I’ve got to go out there.

PS: It really is pretty amazing.

JP: Are they working on finishing that building?

PS: It’s going to be beautiful.
JP: Again, when he came, he’s the only one that had any grants or any money or anything. He was the only person that was sort of on his own. He could maintain his lab and his experiments on his own, without money from the university. Fischler thought that was a really good thing. He didn’t have to pay him anything.

PS: He’s a great guy, too. He’s my favorite democrat and I’m his favorite republican.

JP: Is there anything you’d like to talk about or cover that we haven’t covered?

PS: Other than the fact that I'm really excited about being part of NSU’s history at an early age. We’re a young university. I think that we’re going to continue to do great things, not only for the future, but for our students today. We’re really having a great impact on the students. NSU had a great impact on my life. It changed my life for the better. I think that we’re going to continue to do that for our students, and I'm excited about that.

JP: One quick question before you leave – are you interested in the football team?

PS: Yeah, I think I am now. I believe that we’re getting close. Everything’s the Malthusian theory. We
took care of all these needs and we’re about right here on a triangle. Ray always said we had the Miami Dolphins. Well, I was just at their last game and they lost the game. I think when I say “soon,” it’s maybe in the next five or ten years.

JP: That’s an expensive proposition.

PS: And it’s a very expensive proposition. We’ve got to be careful what we wish for. If we’re going to focus on the graduates, who cares if it’s expensive? If we had that attitude 25 or 40 years ago, we wouldn’t be anywhere today.

JP: Again, that seems to me to be part of the system. “Let’s go for it.”

PS: Not yet. It’s something I won’t bring up right now to the board.

JP: No, no, it’s not the right time.

PS: But in my lifetime will I see it? I hope so.

JP: Okay. [laughs] If you start them up, they might be able to beat the Dolphins.

PS: That’s right.

JP: Well, on that note, let’s end the interview.