Interview with Dr. Frank DePiano - University Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs

Frank DePiano
Nova Southeastern University

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This is Julian Pleasants and I’m at Nova Southeastern. It is the 23rd of June, 2010, and I’m talking with Frank DePiano. Tell me when you first came to Nova and why you decided to come here.

FD: The first time I came to the campus was right about now 30 years ago. So June of 1980 and came for job interviews and certainly was not impressed with the physical plant. I was not impressed with the reputation. It was unknown. It wasn’t bad or good, it was just unknown. But went through job interview, and two things happened during the job interview that caught my attention. First was that I got to meet all the faculty in the University. That was pretty easy and that was a side part. But in the meeting I had with the faculty, toward the end of it, they had slipped a piece of paper over to me and said, would you mind just kind of off the record take a look at this? We went to get accreditation for our psych
program. It wasn’t accredited then. I took a look. I was junior faculty, but had had been at an APA accredited program, so I knew some things about the real basic requirements for accreditation, and said, “You won’t get accreditation with this.” Why not? Well you don’t have an internship built into the program. You need an internship. I made a couple of other small comments, slipped it back over there, and they were all happy to hear from me. It was, for a young kid, it was a positive thing to have made an impact.

Well, then I went back to my hotel and I got a call about an hour later from the guy that was the head of the unit that I was interviewing for, and he said, Can you stay over? I had planned to stay over anyhow. So I said, Sure. Can you come in tomorrow?

JP: Was this John Flynn?

FD: This was John Flynn. That’s correct. John Flynn. John Flynn asked me back for Saturday morning because he wanted to talk more specifically about a job offer, he told me. So in that meeting he had offered me the position, and he had said, Would you mind taking a look at this and slipped the piece of paper? I said, I just looked at that yesterday. So there were two things that happened that
turned me around from a not very impressive physical plant and not much of a reputation was that in a day they had made a decision that they were going to either hire me or not, which, you know, you’ve been in academics, Julian -- Academics places -- if they do it in two months they’re pretty tickled often times. So that they were able to come together and make a decision, and whether that was going to be for or against, they were able to do it, which impressed me. The paper that John slid across, as I said, no, no, I looked at that yesterday. He said, No, that’s the revised curriculum. They revised it. They stayed until about 6 last night after you left and redid the curriculum based on some of your input. So I was very -- I knew enough about curriculum development even as a junior faculty to know that takes sometimes months sometimes years to happen. The faculty was there as a whole. They had met with me. They just continued to meet. They made the revisions, and they had an accredited curriculum put together over night basically. And I said to myself that, those two things more than offset what’s not here physically. The potential is here to do some things. It may not be, but the potential is here. So that was my first experience with the University, and a couple of months later I started.
JP: Did you talk with Abe Fischler when you visited?

FD: Not when I visited for the interview, no. I think that they had wanted me to do that as I recall, but he was not here, he was away.

JP: Now this is obviously a beginning position for you, but it’s still a pretty big risk to join a faculty of an institution not well known, which is not accredited in your field.

FD: That’s correct.

JP: So you must have seen something, the challenge, or the opportunity --

FD: The opportunity. Just recently at our Trustee retreat, I was asked to talk about developments at the University and where we could go from an undergraduate in particular perspective. I said to them, the thing that I saw that was most attractive to me with all the down side, with fiscal problems that were known. I mean I picked those up during my interview with the lack of reputation, with the lack of a physical plant, was that there weren’t a lot of things to help you do things. There wasn’t a lot of things to go lobby to get resources from, but there was very little that was going to stand in your way. If you
had the ambition and you had the vision and the resourcefulness, there was virtually nothing that was going to stand in your way to go develop it. And that seemed to be to be worth coming in and being a part of it. That opportunity, as you framed it.

JP: Well what is important, I guess, here, and you’ve had 30 years to deal with this, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being a private, not-for-profit versus a public university?

FD: Well, the independence from the state, you don’t get quite as caught in the political issues that they state schools have to. I mean there are some things that buffer and insulate them some, but ultimately they’re influenced by those things to a greater extent than we are as a private school. But I’ve seen some private schools, Julian that are pretty bureaucratic on site visits I got to know. So it’s not automatic that they don’t become -- it’s not that the state schools are the bureaucracies and the private are not.

What Nova Southeastern has managed to do over the years is maintain a fairly streamlined approach to things and allow for -- we have more now, more hurdles to jump over to get things done just because there’s largeness that
requires more coordination, but we’ve had a culture of, what’s the least interference we can create to allow things to go forward. At some point in our development it was practically nothing. As we just grew in size, things began to interfere with each other. So in the very beginning I’d come up with a program and the chances of it having anything to do with any other program here was practically zero. Later it became, as things grew, the numbers of things grew it became a little more difficult to do that. You might propose a program that got on the toes of another program. So it started to take more coordination and approval. And our new program review process really originally was geared exclusively towards looking at redundancy or duplication. It wasn’t looking at quality in the very beginning that was assumed to take place at the Dean’s level and within the college or school. It was looking at duplication and making sure that you weren’t doing a program that I was doing and we’re going to compete against each other. So those things got added over time as we grew, and the size just required it.

JP: But still a little more flexible, a little speedier than what the public universities would have to do to get a new program.
FD: Even today, and the real challenge today I believe, and a real fundamental challenge for the University. I mean, there’s a lot of practical things that we’re struggling with and making decisions about like any institution, but the real fundamental challenge is finding that balance point between enough structure so that we’re not doing things counter to each other and running into each other and not so much though that we can’t allow a good idea to kind of move along and get actualized. You’re always struggling I think to find that balance point. It’s always hard to see it from within. It’s easier to see it afterwards or from without, but that’s a challenge for us.

JP: When you first took up residence, how many faculty members were in the psychology department, and what was the main focus of the department at that time?

FD: It had 12 I believe faculty members in psychology, in the Department of Psychology. It was a department at that time. I believe there were 12. Not all of those people, I’m going to say in those days nobody was dedicated to one role. So it’s easy to say not all of them were dedicated a role because none of them were. Ed Simco was somebody who had been here a few years, had multiple roles; computer science was building the computer center
for the University as well as being on the faculty. Mickey Segal was the roots of the Family Center and the University School were being put together by her while she was a faculty. Doyle Montgomery ran a biofeedback lab. So everybody had multiple roles, but if I take all of those people and combine them up -- it was probably about a dozen that we had all together.

JP: And did you feel like this was a qualified competent group of people you enjoy?

FD: Yeah. I felt good about the faculty from the early days. They weren’t traditional psychologists by training. They weren’t traditionally trained psychologists. They came out of nontraditional places, but had all had some impact on the field already that I knew of as a young psychologist. So yeah, I felt pretty good about the people that were here.

JP: But you came out of a traditional program in South Carolina.

FD: I did, yes.

JP: So did you find you had to adjust to the different attitudes on the part of a private school as opposed to your training in a public school?
FD: Not really. I had always been a bit of a trouble
maker I guess I’d say and bucked the system. So this was
kind of a perfect fit for me. I’d say I didn’t have a
problem with that at all. And there was a lot of acceptance
even though I was young, which I wouldn’t have gotten at
another institution, but given that they had had impact in
the field, they weren’t threatened by some kid coming in.
And given that they knew they didn’t know the traditional
routes and we were looking for accreditation, which brings
you into the traditional route, they were more than happy
to have my input and let me influence things on both those
counts. They weren’t threatened and they saw some knowledge
base that they didn’t have and knew they didn’t have.

JP: So you had opportunities as a young assistance
professor you might not have had at another school?

FD: Absolutely. Yeah, my sense is if I had gone to
some other places that I had opportunities to go to, ten
years later I’d be in the back saying, Can I talk? And
here, as things developed, again this is more about me than
the University, but as things developed within a few months
I was asked to be the assistant chair to the department,
and then had a big hand in preparing the accreditation
pieces and ultimately getting those out and getting us
through accreditation. That opportunity wouldn’t have been anywhere else that I could think of.

JP: Were you concerned about the fact there was no tenure for a faculty?

FD: No. That’s never bothered me. As a Dean that hired faculty, that never once was an issue. It seems to me that the security people feel, the true security is based on what they’ve done. I might make those comments in hiring. As I look to hire pretty good statured people, and the last thing in the world they felt like they needed is some system to give them the security. If they didn’t like what was going on here, they had opportunities and they could move.

JP: So when you came in you came in on a one-year contract?

FD: I came in on a series of one-year contracts that after three years in those days turned into what was called, and is called today, continuing contract.

JP: But it’s still on a year-to-year basis?

FD: It was less than a year notice I had in the first three years. I think the first year it was three months, and then six months, and then nine months, and if I passed
all of those, then from that point until today, as a faculty, I am required to get a peer review, and once there’s a decision made that the relationship is no longer can be maintained, a year’s notice.

JP: What were your first duties particularly in terms of teaching and research?

FD: One of the first studies I did hear was a study on recall. I did a series of studies before I got into administration I used to like doing that stuff. I did a recall study using hypnosis to try and offset what might be forgotten when a traumatic event occurred. So did a series of things to upset people basically, had them learn things while they were upset, and then look to see what memory loss there was, what recall loss there was, and could hypnosis help to draw that back. So culminating study, actually a student did a dissertation with me where we actually fired a gun off, a blank, during a key part of learning procedure. The idea was to try and simulate a crime situation. Somebody breaks into here right now and says, get up against the wall, it’s spontaneous usually. You’re not planning for those things. So we tried to simulate that. Again, see what was lost in terms of memory
and recall, and then see, because of the trauma, what could be regained by hypnosis.

And later I did a university-wide study, we were talking in those days. It’s funny, smoking -- we smoked everywhere; this building sometimes in the middle of day with students in here, it would look like it was fire if you opened the door you’d see smoke coming out of it. We were looking at trying to restrict the smoking, and we talked about no longer having it in the classrooms, just limiting it to non-classroom settings. So outside the halls and all you could do it. But people were upset about that. So I put a smoking cessation program together looking at different approaches to helping people stop smoking.

JP: In terms of teaching, were you teaching all graduate courses? Any undergraduate courses?

FD: There was very, very limited undergraduate activity going on. So all the courses I taught initially were graduate. I taught some group therapy actually in this room we would meet. I taught some personality theory. I taught some intellectual assessment early, early on.
JP:  What was the quality of your graduate students at that time?

FD:  Very variable.  At that time very variable.  We did not have accreditation.  Licensing laws around the country are not as restrictive as they are in some other professions.  They allow for non-accredited graduates to be considered.  The programs they come from need to be comparable and the burden is on the applicant to show the comparability.  If you are coming from an accredited program, that basically carries you through.  So it’s a disadvantage.  So without accreditation we had a good mix of local with a few outside the area, and it was variable; a weaker student body in some pockets.

JP:  Was your salary comparable and your fringe benefits decent?

FD:  No.  I was proud of myself.  I’ve never been a big negotiator for myself on salary.  When I came in and met with John Flynn, the person you named before on that Saturday morning, he had said, I’ll pay you $14,000, you know, we don’t have a lot of money but you’ll have an opportunity here.  I said, yeah, $14,000, as a high school graduate I worked on the railroad and made more money than that, and I got a PhD.  He said, well what would you want?
I think I told him $16,000, and he said, we’ll go to $14,500, and I said, okay. And that was the end of the negotiations. So I think I got about $14,500 when I started for my first appointment.

JP: Did you have health benefits?

FD: There was a retirement plan in those days, yes. And there was health, yeah, both.

JP: But obviously the salary and the benefits were not something that, in effect, attracted you to the job. It was more the challenge.

FD: No, it was opportunity. I mean, I had a license as a private practitioner. I could have made, even those days, double that easily, probably more than that. No, it was a chance to be able to be part of something, building and developing clearly in my mind. I didn’t have kids, so there was no real obligation. And it didn’t feel like much of a risk, Julian, to be honest with you. If it folded up, I’d redo what I did.

JP: You always had that private practice to fall back on.

FD: Had the private practice and just felt like there were other things that I could do. It wasn’t like
you’d be deeply, deeply rooted after two or three years. Now it would be a huge thing for me to think about uprooting and moving out. But then it just was an easy thing to consider.

JP: Talk a little bit about the accreditation process and what went on and how long it took to get officially accredited.

FD: We got accredited, and it was the first program in the university to receive full accreditation. The law school had gotten provisional accreditation already, and it was -- you’ll like this memory, October 31, 1981.

JP: The law school was accredited in 1982.

FD: Fully, fully.

JP: You beat us by one year.

FD: But the law school didn’t have already provision accreditation, the Ph.D. in psychology was the program that was up for accreditation, had none, but then went to full accreditation in October 1981.

JP: Before we get into the evolution of the school, let me just sort of briefly go through your career in psychology. Take me through, as you --
FD: It’s the least interesting part, but go ahead.

JP: As an assistant professor and as you worked your way up, eventually you became chair.

FD: Eventually I became chair. I started off as just an assistant professor early, then by the spring of my first year, by January of my first year, I was made assistant chair, and did a bunch of stuff for John Flynn. John served as the overall unit head, Behavioral Science it was called, as well as the chair of the department, so he was double-hatted, and there was a lot on his table. So, what that meant is as assistant chair, as soon as I kind of got some feet on the ground and built up a little bit of trust in John, John turned over a lot to me, and functionally I was managing the department under John as the department head. Then, in 1983 John named me chair, I became full chair of the Department of Psychology.

JP: Which is pretty unusual only being there three years.

FD: Yes, yes. Talking about the things that were going on developmentally as opposed to me, in late ‘82 the third biggest merger we had with the University, the first I would say, the first that had the biggest impact was the
NYIT, the second was the Southeastern -- and these are my judgments, I’m not saying they are hard and fast outcomes, but Southeastern University was the second largest impact, and the third was, for our size then, a large free-standing professional school had merged into the University.

JP: When did you develop the clinical psychology program?

FD: The program got developed in late ’80 and ’81, so they were thinking about it already when I got here, they were putting curriculum down, and then once I got here, we got the right faculty to do what had to be done, we built practicum, and late ’80 and early ’81 is when it got built and then we looked for the accreditation late in ’81, in October ’81.

JP: So through the 80s up until the 90s, this program was expanded fairly rapidly, then you hired more faculty, different courses, larger --

FD: Correct. And it wasn’t a slow linear growth. The jump was that merger. We probably had about 18 or so faculty, 15-18, so up from the 12 or so that I mentioned earlier, but then when the professional school merged in, in one bite we doubled, so we had in the 30s then.
JP: So, let me get this straight. This is the Florida School of Professional Psychology, which was an independent institution in Miami.

FD: That is correct.

JP: And, what brought about this merger? Who had made the first overture?

FD: Um, the first overture came from the Professional school, they were concerned in that they were getting near graduating students. They weren’t that old to have had any graduates yet, and there were some significant questions given their lack of regional accreditation, because they weren’t a university, about whether or now even without APA, they would be able to sit for licensure exam. So, they were starting to build up a number that were getting close to graduation, and they were looking to make sure they were housed under something that in fact would guarantee them the ability to sit. When they came to us, we were regionally accredited certainly, and we had already shown the ability to get the Ph.D. accredited, so we had that accredited, the Psy.D, Doctor of Psychology, moved in as part of that professional school move. It wasn’t APA accredited yet by being part of a regionally accredited
institution, they would at least be able to sit and, in a more difficult way, be able to get licensed.

JP: What was the advantage for Nova?

FD: One word, revenue. The Ph.D. programs tend to be small, conservative programs. Mine was large, where I graduated from. We took in about 10 students per year. The Doctor of Psychology programs around the country were taking somewhere between 5- and 10-fold that number, because they were being trained in a professional model, a la medical school or dental school, so the numbers were justifiable, and that was seen as a -- I am not going to pull punches with it -- that was seen as a major revenue source to be able to bring in that kind of student body.

JP: And, at this point in time, the financial situation was a bit shaky to say the least.

FD: It was a bit shaky and more, yes.

JP: So, part of what we see here is what I see all through the evolution of this school. There is this entrepreneurial spirit. There is this tendency to take, what I would call, calculated risk, and expand with an option of improving the bottom line. But again the problem is, does everything fit, and in the long run is it
beneficial to the institution? In this case it worked out favorably.

FD: I think it worked out real well. I think we wound up being the first school, well there was a rough year or two in there in that, I mentioned earlier, I was the department chair, and well sometimes Nova does things in strange ways. When the Professional School came in, it wasn’t put within the Department of Psychology, it was put parallel to the Department of Psychology, so you had inside of -- we called everything centers then -- inside a center you had Department of Psychology and you had a Professional School of Psychology sitting side by side. That got fairly dicey. If you were in this building, the second floor housed the department, the third floor housed the Professional School and, after about a year without getting into all the little name callings and battles they got on, after about a year, the students would report feeling a real response and reaction if they strayed from one floor to the other and got in the wrong camp’s field, would be asked, “What were you doing over there?” So there was a real tension between the two, and we battled that out for a significant period of time. Given 30 some faculty, probably
about 35 or so, then it’s not a big number when you think faculty.

JP: Well on this campus that was --

FD: That was probably a third of the university’s faculty, and here they were split, and my appeal to both groups was we have limited resources for us to be not together and working together is crazy. It’s just crazy. We have such limited resources, and we are wasting time in bickering and arguing. Worked hard to pull them together and still believe to this day, in 1984 I guess it was, I think it was 1984, a decision made by John Flynn again, after really a lot of struggling and being in the middle of what was a war that the whole university was aware of between these two feuding groups of psychologists, and I think he got some pressure from outside to pull them together and then asked me to head it up. There were a bunch of senior people around then, and still to this day I was convinced that I was asked to do that because I was viewed as expendable, and it wouldn’t be a disaster if somehow after six months it didn’t work. Because again, these groups were not talking at all. I think it was 1984, I’m not as clear on that date, we had our first full faculty meeting, where we all were forced into the room
together, had to sit, and I was still a pretty young guy. Actually, I think as John introduced me and then left, he said, “Frank is 33, which is the same year Jesus died.” Then left the room.

JP: Rather auspicious withdrawal huh? Talk about your relationship with President Abe Fischler, and we’ve discussed in other interviews that each tub on its own bottom and there is this sort of semi-autonomous view of how the University should be run. How did that work out for you and how did you interact with President Fischler?

FD: I think there was always a regard that Abe and I had for each other, and from my vantage point, we squabbled a lot, we argued a lot. None of it was about educational values. A good bit of it was over fiscal issues. We weren’t, in my opinion, careful enough about our money, and I was recruiting faculty from around the country by then, I was recruiting much more now national level students into the school. We had gotten accreditation, so we had that credibility, and the instability was a real concern of mine. I am bringing people from the west coast, from well out of state, and while it didn’t matter so much when everybody was local if somehow we didn’t survive, it became much more of a concern. I felt a real deep sense of
responsibility that if this thing collapsed, they came here because I talked them into it, and that fiscal concern was a big one and we weren’t fiscally careful oftentimes. We would take multiple risks, I mean it’s fine to take risks, but you can't have all your money on high risk stocks at the same time, you want to mix your portfolio a little bit, and most of the disagreements were over finances that Abe and I had.

JP: Did you agree with this concept of semi-autonomous centers and that everybody was sort of on their own, and each center had to contribute something to the running of the University?

FD: Overall, I was okay with it, because as a dean in particular, it allowed me to take things in a direction I wanted to take, and all I had to do, and it was a challenge sometimes, but all I had to do was figure out how to get the resources to do it.

JP: Because if you could get the money, you could do it.

FD: I could do it. I didn’t have to worry at all about then politically bringing it through a system. If I could find a way to pay for it, and I may have said this to
you before Julian, but the feedback session in that APA site visit, Abe sat in of course, because they were rare and these were important to the University, the committee chair that was doing the feedback session at one point said, as committees often do, they give a kind of plug and try to get something for the school for the program. He said, he needs a few more support people, he could use some help with that, and Abe gestured and “absolutely” with a gesture. A little bit later talked about the old dumb terminals in those days we had, not the PCs. Abe again said, “No problem.” Afterward, one of them said to me, “Is he always that easy? Is he just that easy to work with, or is he just kind of saying that for the sake of accreditation?” I said, “No, he means every word he said. If I can find a way to pay for it, he’ll get it.” I have to live within my budget. There was no expectation that a nickel would come, I would have to live within the budget.

JP: And if you got in trouble that would be your problem.

FD: That was my problem.

JP: He’s not going to bail you out.
FD: There was nothing to bail out with. There was nothing to bail out with. There wasn’t even a philosophical question, so it was on our bottom that we had to sit, and that was okay with me. We didn’t meet a lot as a University, where the nit-picking would occur and the disagreement is where the philosophies were different in the schools, when we did get together, I get accused to being an old man, I think I was 28-29 when I started this, but I would be an old man in my thinking, I would say, “You guys are doing things in crazy ways,” and we would disagree, so there was no sense of common flavor among the university, we were all very different. A few times, I called it a flea market, a tent-over top called Nova with independent business that ran as independent as you can imagine. The biggest disadvantage, Julian, was that it really allowed for very, very different kinds of activities from a value point of view to develop under the same roof.

JP: So, when we look at Fischler’s overview, that this is an innovative experimental university, the concept from time to time had to be modified as with the law school, where they had tenure, they had a pretty traditional program, and Ovid Lewis told me one time, he said, “In reality, what Nova was at that time was a hybrid
university. While there was this continued emphasis on being innovative and experimental, as we discussed earlier, the money came from the state legislator for liberal arts program, and the money turned out to be more important than maintaining this experimental concept, so this is part of what Fischler was having to deal with.

FD: I think Abe, I will say that the place would not have survived, except for Abe. Abe had an uncanny ability to remain optimistic and see opportunities. Opportunities drove our direction. So, if there was an opportunity, we became that, and he had an ability to allow us to move in those directions that frankly had we not done, had we been a little more rigid and said, nah, we don’t do that or we don’t do this, I think we were close enough to the edge where we may have fallen off a few times.

JP: Well what is the evolution of technology at this institution? When you started out obviously -- I talked to somebody yesterday who said they were lucky to get a typewriter when they started and yet today the change has been pretty monumental. You have Wi-Fi, you have a highly wired campus. How important has that been in terms of the fulfillment of your charge as an institution?
FD: I think the technology, as we began to grow early mid ’80s, distance requires technology. The technology might be a jet, but it requires technology when you start having distance become part of what you are doing. So, in that sense, we were always receptive and looking to bring whatever technology was available and what we could afford into the situation. So, we have always been open to that. If you are going to be doing some things that are pretty different, and you want to be doing some things that are economical, technology helps you do both of those things. So, I think it was almost automatic that we became attracted to technology. We were lucky also, and I will say to you, I think we had a couple of people here who were creative as hell around that stuff and knew about it. John Scigliano I would name, Ed Simco I would name as two early guys that were wild eyed for those days, about being able to talk on a computer and get mail, those kinds of things, but they were at the edge of those things and were both credible enough in a small university to influence that flavor. I, more than Abe on the technology part, would put some of the influence that Simco had and John Scigliano had. As an example, Julian, when I first -- I finished my dissertation at South Carolina 7-8 months before I actually got here, and the last I used a computer, so it was 7-8
months before I was here, I still put in cards and readers and was amazed to find that Simco had set up, with Scigliano, the two of them really had set up interactive system that didn’t require. I had never, I mean I was at the University of South Carolina, never seen that before. I am sure in some high level corners they had it, but as a user in the University, I didn’t see it. Well now I came here as an assistant professor in “a poor university” and was told, here you type on this thing and it goes downstairs. Now, there was no Windows or anything in those days, but I could do things this way instead of those old cards that I know you remember that I never once brought them in, that they didn’t shuffle and fall apart, and then I had to take three hours to get them all in the right order. Well, all of a sudden, I had something that live, I could submit in data, get a readout immediately back, not have to wait six hours for them to run through the computer reader and the card reader, so we were ahead with some of those people from my very first days here. It was limited and we were small, but that technology was already ahead of what I had been used to at South Carolina.

JP: Plus with the essence of the institution in the beginning, and certainly the biggest moneymaker, was
distance learning. So, by virtue of making that succeed, there was a great deal of impetus to keep up with the technology, and then over a period of time, you get to the virtual classroom and this sort of concept has been integral to this institution, really from the beginning.

FD: Yes, it has. The other part of it is, you know, you create a culture of acceptance of certain things in many places, and I hear a bit of this now out of more established professions, we don’t do that in our field. You didn’t hear much of that, so if there was a new way to try and teach your class, it wasn’t something that threatened people, it was, “Let me try that out.” I think John and Ed had an impact, because again they were credible forces in a small university. People were willing to jump in and give something a crack, and not say, “We’re educators, we don’t do that.” That kind of standoffish attitude wasn’t part of our culture, so things were tried, some were abandoned. We had a post put in, a dish put in one time that somebody had sold us on that the idea that we would be the connecting point between South America and here, and we had some guy who had some credential, he had gotten some kind of an academy award for tech in the industry. We tried, it didn’t take off, and it went away, and now we don’t talk about it
because it’s gone and it’s forgotten, but other things took
off, other things got rooted.

JP: One of the issues early on, is that when Nova’s
reputation depended to a large degree on this distance
learning, there were people around the country that thought
of this as diploma mail, that these courses were
threatening other states, that they didn’t have any strong
academic content. How did the University deal with those
issues at that time?

FD: Fought them. Fought.

JP: I know at one point they sued the Cincinnati
Enquirer, for example.

FD: And with a number of state institutions, we got
into battles there. There was what we viewed as protecting
turf, they presented as we don’t want this third tier,
fourth tier entity coming in and being parallel to us, and
we fought those things. None of the things came easy in the
very beginning, Julian, there were battles and there were
fights over a whole array of things and some occurred I
fields like education, business. My own experience in
psychology, when I had first asked APA, my organization, to
give me an application, the first response I got back from
a mid-level person was, we don’t accredit schools like yours. I said let’s talk about what that means, and we had a little debate on the phone, then it evolved until they got somebody higher up who then said the real problem is we don’t have any new -- we are just sending out now to printing the applications. So, I said, “You’ll get me one in a few weeks then?” They said, “Oh, don’t worry.” Then I didn’t get it. I wound up in Washington. I went into my office, my APA office, and said, I would like an application. They said the same thing, they are not here they are out to print, and a fellow named Paul Nelson, who I have become very good friends with, finally who was just the brand new director of the office, came over and said, “We don’t have it, so leave --.” I said, “I’ve been waiting long enough, if you don’t have any, go in the back, get one that is used, copy it, and type-white out the information, and I’ll take that back with me and I’ll wait.” I sat, and about an hour and a half later they gave me an application. So, the battles were not just court, they were acceptance battles as to what we were doing because we tried things in a different way. So even Psych with a traditional faculty, but doing some things differently, met with resistance.
JP: Are there vestiges of this early attitude about Nova as a diploma mill, are these issues you still have to deal with?

FD: Yes, I think we are looking for AACSB accreditation right now with business, and I think lingering reputational things. There is a general sense that I hear from the business people that AACSB are not being overt about it, but they just as soon us not get accredited overall, and it has to do with reputation, sure. Education, I think, also in some states there is a reluctance to be very hospitable, forthcoming over that same issue, yes.

JP: So, how do you overcome that?

FD: Piece by piece. I think it’s been overcome in some places and as you overcome enough for them, eventually the overall image changes.

JP: So that would be true perhaps with the law school?

FD: I think you’ve got three that have longer term strong reputations, part of the old Nova, and that’s oceanography, psych, and law. Those three, there is acceptance, the research that comes out of oceanography is
accepted nationally and internationally, they are viewed as genuine researchers, resources to be worked with, good people to collaborate with. In psych, there is acceptance for licensure everywhere. In law, I would say it’s more regional and local, but if you look around now, you will see judges and a whole array of people now that are a part of the structure, part of the system the infra-system that NSU people, and as that moves, eventually that all moves the whole university image, and that’s the way you do it. Why is business looking at AACSB, I mean it’s well populated with students, is exactly for that. That will be one more area that will move well past the question of credibility and into the credible arena with the AACSB behind it.

JP: One thing we found out with this semi-autonomous arrangement, one of the problems that everybody encountered is university services, so if students are applying and there is no central administrative center where all of these documents are being processed, that was something you had to face early on because people had different computer systems, they had different dates that the school was opened, and it was sort of a miss-mash of different
concepts and personnel activities. How did you eventually overcome that and get it a little more uniform?

FD: That was a tough bullet to bite, and really George Hanbury and Ray deserve most of the credit for moving some of the things into a little bit more efficient and genuine service. What we lived with for years, there was always a recognition that just on the surface to have business, education, psychology, law, all running their own admissions let’s say, was probably less efficient than having one office do it. The problem was that it wasn’t accidental. Abe wanted the dollars to pour back into the programs. There were limited dollars, and he is not an elitist kind of guy. He is very down to earth, plain, simple, humble in that regard. Didn’t see a lot of need for anything fancy at a central level, instead lived poor at a central level to dump the money back in to develop the programming. Well, the downside to that meant that occasionally when something would try to develop at a central level, it was terrible, because it didn’t have the money to support itself, and then we tend to go right back into our roots, which was we’ll run it, we are not going to let the central part of the University run it. When Ray and George came on board, they saw to it that, first of all
there was enough money to go around that the programs wouldn’t be starved if the dollars were pulled out, so that was crucial, and then secondly that if those dollars were pulled out, we could overall have savings by building things here that would take care of multiple centers instead of each one doing its own thing. So, we have moved to something central, and are continuing to look at what that balance again, what should be central, what is the healthy balance between central and de-central, like any business looks at, and we struggle with that have discussions about it, and I think those are important discussions for us to have now.

JP:  Well you told me a story earlier about trying to work through the process of dealing with applications for admission to Psychology. Tell me that story.

FD:  Sure. There was a point in time where there was a push to begin the centralized applications, the admissions process, and really in a personal persuading way, the registrar head, who was going to oversee this, had come to me and said, we need to get going someplace with this, can you help out with it, and I agreed to turn our doctoral admissions over in a pilot to see how it would work, and when it worked well, I would broadcast the news and then
others would want to do it. It wound up not working out and again it wasn’t the person’s competence, it was a lack of resources that sat around that office. They were pulled into doing other things, and the application process is a December 15th deadline nationally for psychology programs, Ph.D.’s in psychology, and we are getting applications this time of year, April, May, June, we are already seeing applications for the following year. Well, this got to be October and even November, and I wasn’t seeing any applications. I was asking where were they. We only got a couple, and were holding those. I finally just walked over to the Registrar because now we are a couple of weeks away from where we’ve got to make offers, and if we don’t, we’re not going to get the better students, they are going to commit elsewhere, and found all of our applications in a large box unopened with probably a few hundred, probably 300 applications there. Without permission, I grabbed the box, put it on my shoulder and walked it back over to here, to this building, and immediately got people working on opening the envelopes and making sure we took care of our lifeblood, our applicant pool.

   JP:  You also had an interesting story about student’s grades.
FD: Yes, we talked about that just recently, Julian. Just the growth and, we were such a small community of people, literally everyone knew everyone. The students knew the faculty. It was very informal. The students called faculty by first names and everybody was part of the family. I think I told you as a side of that story, that right down to this building had a hanger that was purposely put outside that when the building was locked, it was open for a lot of hours until 11 or so at night, when it got locked by the one security person we had, who would rotate shifts to make sure nobody could predict what shift the one person we had on the campus, the hanger was placed over there so that all the students knew of it, could use the hanger to open the little crash bar by pulling it from the outside and getting in. Abe knew about that, we all knew about that, we were family. One of the things that happened that you are asking about in particular, is that I had a student early on who, it was a different culture, and basically it said to be very early on in a supervisory role I had with him that, look I know you’re pretty busy and I’m real busy, I’m engaged in practice already even though I’ve not done my degree yet, so why don’t we just leave it that if we need each other, we will call, otherwise -- and I said, no I think we will meet weekly, we will talk, and go
through supervision that way. You will bring cases in and we will talk about them, and he agreed to do that but missed quite a bit, and there were holes in what had happened. I wasn’t going to give him a flat-out A, I was going to give him something less than an A, a C, and I told him that. He said, “I can't accept a C.” I said, “That’s really what you have earned, and it’s going to be that way.” Then I went over to our Registrar, who was in this building right across from my office and talked to the woman, the one woman who ran the Registrar in those days, about giving grades in, and she said for this class you got your grades in already. I said, “How could I have my grades in already?” She goes, “Well our culture is that the students tell us the grades, and we pretty much record them when they tell us, because we are all family.” I said, “Let’s not do that anymore, for my courses at least.” I changed his grades.

JP: His grade was an A?

FD: He had decided that he was worth an A. I had decided that he was worth a C, and I guess the question in his mind was whose opinion was going to prevail.

JP: Now, in the beginning one of the problems, as it is for any new university, is library facilities. Discuss a
little bit about how the libraries were and then obviously in 2001, culminating in this great new library.

FD: This beautiful facility. I don’t think we’ve talked about that before, Julian, and I have got anecdotes around that too, funny stories around that. The library was in this building originally when I came in, and in 301 up above, it’s a relatively small room, I would say a couple of thousand square feet of room, this building is about 58,000, so it’s a small percentage of that floor. There is a number of faculty offices up there, and then embedded in the core, was the University library, and it was sparse. Most of the Psych students that were also in this building, went to other libraries to use the facilities. At one point, early on, even as a system chair of a department, I began to just funnel money in. Again, it is very decentral. At the library, you would think would have a budget and would be able to buy and do its own thing. How funding occurred for the holdings in the library, now staff and stuff came out of a central budget, but that was pretty limited. The holdings came out of the academic unit, so I would budget how much I thought needed to be budgeted to purchase books, and that would be how many books psychology would have. What would happen, dynamic wise, I got
personnel, I got a couple of other critical things that I got to send people out to go teach, I can't cut into that when budgetary trouble hit, the easiest things to cut were the purchases in the library. So, invariably, we cut those down from $50,000 they might have had to $15,000. I tried really hard to boost up the library. At one point, it certainly has moved from this now, about 80% of the holdings were psychology for the University library. If we got time, a funny story around that that I think you will get a kick out of. The same accreditation I was talking about, that initial accreditation, I was holding my breath over the library because it was an inadequate library, Psych wasn’t bad, but it was an inadequate library. I am listening to the feedback, and I’m sure they are going to really click us off, you’ve got to do something about the library. They come to the library and just jump over it, and during their feedback session on the library, we had no real problems, we thought that was fine. So, I’m sitting there saying I’m sure not going to say are you sure or anything. At the end, it comes up again when they are asking questions, and it was clear that their assumption was now you have to remember, Psych is in this building, all our offices are around this core, the library is in the core. The library for the University was so woefully
inadequate, they were certain it was a little local psychology library, and for a little local psychology library, it wasn’t that bad. They actually gave us a little applause for having this little piece. To this day, I never corrected their misperception, because I don’t know if we would have gotten accreditation if I had.

JP: It seems remarkable that it took so long to get that new library, because they were oceanographic libraries, law school, etc.

FD: There was a philosophy in that, and Abe truly believed that it was wasting money to build into that. He foresaw what ultimately is happening now, that technology has taken over in libraries, and that I can sit anywhere and read full text for many, if not most, of journals. I can find books online now and read them electronically. Abe had adamantly said, “I do not want money poured into that, because not too far in the future, it’s all going to be obsolete.” The argument some of us brought back is, that’s fine but we are taking tuition today and what are we doing to provide for the students then. You’ve got to find some ways, and he did respond to that some. He did try to build some relationships with other libraries, so students could get access, but there was a philosophical resistance to
going forward and dumping a lot in a library facility. I don’t know if it was -- it was probably near the tail end of Abe when it moved out of this building into Parker. That was a substantial jump. The room was increased, so there were greater opportunities for holdings. There were some dollars put in. Ovid was academic VP at that time and had a much more book orientation, and we put more into purchasing books. It was about that time that an actual budget was put forward for holdings out of a central place, that then were taxed back down to the units, and it was less up to our discretion how much was going to be bought. So, there was an improvement there although, Julian, I will still say it had more of a feel of a well laid out high school library than a university library, and it really wasn’t until Ray had come on board and was able to pull together the cooperative effort with the county that a real library presence appeared on the University, and that’s 8 years ago or so.

JP: A lot of the impetus would have come from Don Riggs.

FD: I think the idea preceded Don. Then Don was the mechanic. It wouldn’t have happened without Don. Actually the first discussion I heard, and it never got off the
ground, was under Steve Feldman, of doing something jointly with the community. It was talk, and it didn’t get off the ground. It went through the transitional years of Ovid, which really Ovid was a transitional president, it went through those transitional years, and then it kind of stayed there as, wouldn’t that be a good idea. Then with Ray’s ability to bring the community together, the leadership he had in the community, with George as his right-hand man, then it was able to actually get on a table, get the right people to sit, get the right signatures on the dotted lines, and move it forward. So, it was an old idea.

JP: And, Sam Morrison who was head of the library in Fort Lauderdale, all of these people --

FD: He cooperated with it, sure. My own biased perception, the leadership that Ray provided was probably the most instrumental thing, he had the credibility to get those people at the table. Then, George had the technical ability, so that we didn’t get caught on anything that then was a deal-breaker, George had the technical ability to move it through.

JP: And in the long run, it has benefitted both the city and the county, and the University.
FD: I believe so. I don’t want to speak for the county, but I think it saved the county a good bit of money by having a joint effort. The community, the county, wanted to build a major library presence, and the population had shifted to a majority sitting on the west of the geographic line, instead of having store fronts, and to have done would have cost $10s maybe $100s of millions of dollars, instead they were able to come in and do something even better at a reduced cost. So, I think the community has benefitted. The community would have to speak for that. From a University point of view, I have not seen a downside of having the community there. It isn’t like there is a competitiveness for the space or anything like that. It works fine, and then from a marketing and visibility piece, we have not had major athletics to draw attention to us. Miami used that to help build their reputation, we’ve not done that, but we need things to build our image and visibility. Well, this brings people into the campus, and they get to see physically what we have. They get to see and experience the library, which you have been in, is a fine facility, both functional and aesthetically, and that has made us much more known to the community.

JP: It’s the largest library in the state.
FD: It is, yes.

JP: And 60% of the users are --

FD: The majority of the users are the community people, yes.

JP: So, in terms of evolution of this University, what we are seeing here is not only the essence of the academic portion, but also the expansion of the facilities and other buildings, the Student Center, and the Business School, DeSantis Building, all of that, so over a period of time as you have been on this campus, the central campus has really grown pretty dramatically.

FD: Tremendously. There were, I believe, three buildings here when I got here. Again, Abe’s philosophy was, pour the money back into the programs. Live with a leaky roof if you need to, and facilities that aren’t as good as they need to be, but put the money back into the programs. When the third president came, Steve Feldman, he had a short term here, he was only here about two years. He began, for the first time, to pay a bit of attention to the physical plant. There were some plantings done, we had built the Horvitz Building, finished off the Law School.

JP: That’s the Administration Building?
FD: That’s the Administration Building, yes. And, I could see a shift, because before then anytime we would talk about building, it was all functional. What’s the cheapest way to get what we need, so that we can get some seats for people to sit in, and nothing aesthetic? When Horvitz was built, aesthetics were considered, which may seem trivial, but it was a big developmental change that we could sit back and say, “Well this will look better.” Law was the first of the more modern building built on the campus, and Law began to talk aesthetically. It was out of culture though at that time, and the dean there got a lot of criticism for building up something in an environment that said bare-bones what you want. We were beginning to shift, and then Horvitz was the next that I recall, and there was a clear emphasis on it being functional, but being appealing, being something more than functional.

JP: In terms of how people view a university, if you come on campus, there was a lot of sand and decrepit buildings in the beginning, students don’t want to come, parents are not impressed, so as frivolous as it might seem, it really is pretty important to the image of a university.

FD: Psychologically.
JP: Plus the people that work here, they feel a lot better by working on an attractive campus.

FD: You got time for one more quick story about that?

JP: Yes.

FD: I could tell you, when I took the job here, going back to the very beginning, my mother and father were both very supportive of whatever I did. They came down a day or two after I got here to help me settle in, and I had to put some things in my office in this building, and my father came with me that day. Just he and I drove over with a couple of boxes. We put them up in my office, he said, “While I’m here, can I look at the campus?” and I said, “Sure.” Now he was used to other campuses that he knew in New Jersey, he had been to South Carolina, it has a major presence in Columbia, and I said sure. I walked him downstairs in front of the Mailman-Hollywood Building, and I said, “Well over there I’m not sure of the name of that building, but that’s one of them, and then over there is the Parker Building.” And I said, “Dad, that’s the tour of the campus.” He didn’t say much. We ran into another problem a little bit later, I was getting a bank account opened, and the bank person said if you deposit your checks, you’ll have immediate access to them, there will be
no wait. She came back a little bit later and said, “I’m sorry, I can't do that for you because there has been enough instability in Nova’s finances that, given its Nova payroll, we just can't do that right now.” Again, I didn’t think much of it, but he heard that too. Later that night, we went for a walk after dinner, and he said, “Whatever you do, I am there for you. Why did you come to this place?” Then I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Physically, there is nothing here at all.” So, that is the point you are making, Julian, that the physical appearance gives you a first impression, and if it looks like a first class operation, then you assume it is; if it looks like a fourth class operation, you assume it is. I don’t think my father’s unique in his reaction.

JP: One of the areas, while we are on that subject, is that this has been an upside-down pyramid to traditional universities, and what appears to be a focus on the future is to increase the undergraduate population, increase the qualifications of those, and so how do you go about attracting these students? Now you have got The Commons, you’ve got the Student Center, so the physical requirements seem to be in place. How do you attract these students when
you can go to FAU for $3000 a year, it’s a private school, how do you get them on campus?

FD: Two major objectives we have, as we identify ourselves to students outside. One is to get across to them that you will have a much more personalized education here. There will be attention paid to you as an individual. We work real hard to keep our class sizes down to around 19-20 for undergraduate, state schools you may see in the early classes 2200 in a state school, or at least 600 in some of the smaller state schools. There is nothing like that here. Everything is in that smaller mode. So, keep it tied tightly. We have some research and scholarly expectations for faculty, but we prioritize their relationship to the students, whether they are adjunct or full time, the students are important is the message we give faculty, and they have by and large bought into that because we select for it and encourage it. So, the student’s needs then take priority over “wait, you’re getting in the way of my research.” So that’s one part of it. Then, we have also worked very hard at trying to build an array of activities, co-curricular activities that have the essence of the total educated student. It’s not just what you have in the classroom. I would probably guess that half of what I learn
were the things in between the classes. So we try to build that whole extracurricular, co-curricular set of activities, and make those as rich as possible to, again, make it a total experience for the students.

JP: I have here a document that you prepared, “Where do we go from here?” and one element of this is develop endowment for student scholarships that could be $20 million scholarship endowment that would yield one hundred $10,000 scholarships, and then aggressively recruiting the top one-third of the senior class. Not only in the state, but around the country.

FD: And that was written a couple of years ago, and I think a lot has been implemented, not all on endowment but a $21 million dollar, approximately, scholarship pool for undergraduate students. The board now has clearly prioritized fund raising for both faculty endowment and for student scholarship, as the two major priorities for our campaign, our fundraising campaign.

JP: Because, if you developed an undergraduate curriculum, you are going to have to develop the curriculum, and you are going to have to hire more faculty -- faculty in the professional schools.
FD: No doubt, no doubt.

JP: So is this as a long-term goal, do you intend to double the size of undergraduate population. Do you have a goal, a specific goal in mind?

FD: What I would like to see is an increase initially in the quality of undergraduate, the quality of education measured by things like graduation rates, retention rates, measured by things like attainment to professional schools, which we can monitor those kinds of things, and then use that to parlay growths, so we grow because we are so good. Rather than have the growth as the primary objective. Now, what would I envision? Down the road, talking 12-15 years, if I looked at a more ideal balance, we would almost be sitting 50/50, which would require pretty good growth, and that doesn’t mean reducing graduate professional, putting kind of a hold on that and building this side of it to be about 50/50. That brings a good critical mass of the real users of the campus. The graduate students stay, as they should, they are learning to be a lawyer, to be a psychologist, to be a physician, they stay in their silos. The undergraduates are the ones that live the university campus. That balance, I think, would be a good myocardial infarction, a good critical mass of total users in the
University, so I don’t put that as a goal per se, but a secondary outcome.

JP: While we were talking about buildings, I also want to talk about something that I know is very important to you, and you are heavily involved in, and that would be the Maltz Building. So talk a little bit about how that evolved, and how you got him involved, and what that meant for Psychology.

FD: Maxwell Maltz had been the author of Psycho-Cybernetics, which was one of the earliest think positive, you’ll do well, kinds of books out of the 60s, and he had been a plastic surgeon. Changed images through the plastic surgery, and then realize the image change was more important than the physical change, and went into think right and you’ll be right. He had had a very minimal relationship to the University actually. He had been here on campus early, early, maybe visited a couple of times, would come down in the winter. He had a permanent residence up in New York. The real relationship with the family came after his sudden death, unexpected death. His wife, Ann Maltz, they had no children, there was little family, and her life really was supporting Max Maltz. She had very little, she remembered the relationship here, and began to
cultivate, and then we reciprocated that cultivation, a relationship where she would be invited to different events, had given some money for student scholarships, shown some interest in developing the University, and just over the years, became more and more involved with the University and with psychology. At one point, she turned over the royalties to the book, and it still was bringing in reasonable royalties, decade plus after the book first showed up. At some point, she had talked with me about, she was getting older and given that, she wanted to do something. She really didn’t have any family. She had sisters that were her age and didn’t see a lot of value to doing much for them financially, and really this was all the result of Max, and is there something that you need that would really recognize them. We were in this building, sharing it with the president, sharing with the computers, sharing with this lab that we are in today. We had already shared at the library, but we had really outgrown it, so we knew we needed some additional space, so without a lot of thought, I said really what we need is a facility and what better way to recognize someone like Max than with a building. So she liked that idea. She didn’t commit to it initially. At the same time Julian, just by fortune again, just by luck, nothing that I had done to plan it, somebody
else planned it, they get credit, not me. We had a fellow named Max Hutt who came on to campus through one of the faculty who had been kind of a pioneer in the field. There is a widely used Bender Gestalt psychomotor test, and it had never had a standardized scoring, you kind of looked at it, and you made some very loose interpretations about orgonicity brain function that there might be brain damage, might not. Never much of a quantified way, though Hutt had figured out a standardized way of reliably scoring it. He was old enough that he went through the field when there was no doctorate, so he never got his doctorate, even though he was statured. We gave him an honorary doctorate, thought nothing of it. He came in a little cheap T-shirt, scruffy pants, and some sneakers. Never thought of him as a person with money. Well, it turned out he had some money. He died suddenly, and his wife called and said he had asked to keep Nova in mind when he departed. So, I had the two, and we were talking significant sums on both sides, significant for us, on both sides, and I was trying to put them together. They didn’t know each other at all, they had never met each other, and they never did meet each other, but it turned out that both were named Max, both men, which is not that usual name, both were named Ann, a little more common name, both the women were exactly the same age, same
years, and in a phone conference I had with them, Ann Maltz said, “This is karma,” and I hesitated a minute or so and I said, “You know, you’re right.”

JP: Your scientific side backed off.

FD: If they believed it was karma, I was going to go with it, and who am I to say not. What wound up happening is the two women, with both husbands now departed, had said that they would commit their estate basically, the bulk of their estates to building a building. We worked out some language that called for a certain amount percentage-wise to come from both for that to happen, and they were about even at the time. As it turned out, the money in the Maltz estate just appreciated at a much higher rate than the Hutt estate did, and Hutt did pull out a couple of things that she wanted to do some other things with, which certainly was her right. Maltz really didn’t and, at the end of the day, the dollars were uneven. Then the other piece that just happened again by pure fortune and coincidence is within months of each other, the two women passed away, both in their late 80s. So, the money became available. Both had talked about doing things prior to their death, but we had never gotten around to doing that, so as it turned out, they died pretty close to each other, months
apart, and the two pools of money became available, and we went ahead and planned the building with that as the most substantial part of the payment. We certainly received other gifts, but those were the two big main gifts. Since they were different in amount, and it was a little bit more than I expected from both, we were able to do more of a building than we had first thought or hoped, and then secondly we were able to go ahead and do some naming based on the agreements we had reached earlier to name the entire building The Maltz Building, and a major wing, The Hutt Wing. So, if you go inside that building, you’ll see the Hutt Wing. That’s basically the only other piece in that building was the Mental Health center. We had organized and built the Mental Health Center, the library services were needed in the west as the population grew, as the Mental Health Center presence was needed. There wasn’t one, a very fine one on the east, but nothing west. Over years we had developed and got funding from state, county, some federal, for a mental health center. I used then the revenue, in effect had the mental health center that was state supported rent a portion of the building, and that rental then helped to pay for the building. That was a major contribution to the building. So, that’s how we went about building it. There were interesting people. They were
interesting. Both were very different people, and Hutt lived on the Arbor in Michigan. Her husband was the chair of a department and knew very well the architect chair, and the architect chair had built on the Arbor their home, a very unique home that they had built, and were just real creative people. Maltz was a very interesting person. I got from them basically their whole estate, and part of it was 10 original Salvador Dali paintings.

JP: What happened to those?

FD: Those are on display. One is in my office actually, and several are in the library right now. However, I think one might be in the board room. But these were unshown originals. I went to visit Ann in New York one time, and she is showing me things on the walls in her apartment, and some are posters, that just meant things to her, and then I see this kind of bizarre art over here, and I look over. They’re not in frames, they were personal friends. They were personal friends, Salvador Dali was friends with the Maltz’s, and he would do paintings and send them. They hung out. I have a bunch of doodles that Dali did that I keep, mine and your doodles don’t matter, but these doodles matter.
JP: Part of what the issue is today, as you well know, is increasing the endowment for the University and, over a period of time, it has been a major concern to stay afloat, and then to build a physical campus, now is the development of endowment a key part of the future?

FD: Sure, it is. I mean, as we look now, and the trustees have clearly taken their position that the next phase for this University, they want to see building, educational reputation, educational and academic stature, and they are pretty good about saying, “We don’t really know what that means, you all have to tell us that, but we want that to happen in the University.” Well, the answer back is that we can’t do that out of operations, I can’t keep, if I hire two faculty and have to take in 12 more students to do that, or 20 more students to do that, I have not raised the ship, I’ve just poured the water from one side to the other, and that something outside of operations has to come in to help bring it to that next level. The board understands that, I think the administrators certainly understand that, and that’s where you see this commitment now to a fund raising campaign.

JP: This is the $100 million fund raising campaign?
FD: That’s in the quiet phase, but yes. That’s what the $100 million is about, with a majority of those dollars being identified as building both the faculty and the student body through scholarships and through endowments for faculty.

JP: Now, if we could go back a little bit, and you mentioned two of the most significant mergers. First NYIT, talk a little bit about how that got started and as you were coming on board, it started to unravel, and it ends in 1985. Tell me what you know about the benefits and the problems.

FD: I know more about the unravelling than the beginnings of it. Abe told me stories, and you’ve talked to Abe and some other people about the beginnings, which basically started with a loan. We were in pretty bad shape, and the loan bridged us and kept us going, and then called for some things that I did see later on, the naming of trustees, the creation of a lot of the alternative education programs, that was a provision that Alex Schure had made in the loan agreement, so that part really was a push that Schure had given. And, interestingly, to show that everything isn’t driven by philosophy everywhere, he also demanded that a law school be established, which is
not alternative education, it’s very traditional education. So, he had come in doing that. There really wasn’t a richness of relationship. There was a sense that the NYIT system exploited us. Abe would defend it and say that without them, we wouldn’t be, so let’s not bite that hand, and the NYIT people saw us as something less than, and we were not helpful, we were a drain on them financially. They had known about the loan, so we were a drain financially. I was asked, and this is why I know more about the unravelling, I was asked to see if I could help make some sense out of the relationship and chaired a task force that was a combined group of NYIT faculty, and we got together a few times, and more or less decided there wasn’t much we could do together. Sometimes that happens, and really instead of anything concrete coming out that, like here are some joint efforts, it was really, we’d be better off without each other.

JP: Would I be correct in saying it was primarily an arrangement between two men?

FD: Largely I think that was, yes, I think that is the case. There wasn’t a sense of a broad connection. Alex did have an office and a presence here, but was here rarely, his office was right around the bend from mine, he
was not here very often, a couple of times a year, but we maintained that office for him. I think that is fair to say. At that point, it became pretty apparent that we were all in fund raising. We were viewed by this community as an out of state managed, because of the trustee arrangement, out of state managed institution.

JP: Because the trustees, NYIT had eight and seven, so they technically had --

FD: They had, by one, a majority, yes, and it just was difficult. Then the agreement also called for a pretty favorable to NYIT cost-share on any of the programs we had developed, so it was really crippling us. Then, from my vantage point, and this is a vantage point, not a factual representation, the relationship between Alex and Abe began to be strained and frayed, who was in charge, started to see some feathers ruffling over that. Alex was the chancellor, Abe was the president, but who was the CEO wasn’t so clear, was it a chancellor who was at a distance and had some oversight or was he really the operating, the executive officer, and I just saw that relationship beginning to slip.

JP: Abe told me, and you can comment on this, he said, “I saw myself as being employed by the trustees.
Schure saw himself as an employer." And therefore, saw Nova and Abe as his employees, so could that have been part of this tension?

FD: I think so. I think that there was a sense --

JP: Plus they are traditional school and Nova isn’t.

FD: But that was part of the rift. The faculty there really were rebelling against Alex, and he wasn’t able to get anything off the ground, and now he owned a University where he could do the stuff he wanted to do. I think he did view it that way, as a really mom and pop owner of this institution and had better do what he needed to do, he had gotten enough lip from the people up there and eventually parted as president of that institution because of it. So, yes, I think that was probably part of what was causing the deterioration, and then just the flat out recognition that with that, while there was acceptance that without it we would have not survived most likely, but then the consequence of the relationship was that we were not flourishing. We were just getting by, just holding our own. Using the task force in part, which was saying the best thing we could be doing is getting apart, nothing came out of that good, and in fact we had other meeting planned, we cancelled the additional meetings and then that was the end
of my role with it. I played no more role with it, but that bullied Abe to go and get into a debate, discussion, fight if you would, with Alex as to what was going to be the future, and Abe did prevail in that fight and Alex said, “I’ll be back.” Those were the last words he said in this institution. “I may be backing out of this now, but I am young enough, I will be back.” Then, it ended.

JP: Well, at that point, the University here was paying far greater proceeds back to NYIT, and much greater than when they started.

FD: Yes.

JP: So, it turned out to be a pretty significant drain, assets --

FD: Absolutely, absolutely was. Some of the alternative programs became profitable, those were the ones that had the cost, the revenue shares built into them. The law school, which in those days was losing money, psychology, which was holding its own not generating anything, those were no cost shares, there weren’t expense shares, it was only the more profitable alternative education ones that we were sharing the revenues on.
JP: Well, I understand that at one point the University had somebody down in the court waiting to file a law suit against NYIT. Do you know about that?

FD: I knew that there was threatened litigation. I didn’t know that somebody was literally down and ready to submit it. There were a lot of levels --

JP: The board was completely split on whether to go to --

FD: Of course, and there were pieces that would trickle down. I mean, it was a bit of a street fight as I recall it. That probably the facts are not known and are probably best kept unknown, but there was a bit of a street fight that somebody was going to get bounced out over.

JP: Was there any malfeasance, misfeasance, I have heard stories about Schure trying to force the University here to buy computers --

FD: I heard talk of that. I never saw documents that would verify it. I heard talk that there were some things imposed on the University that we wouldn’t have done, wouldn’t have saw as in our best interest, yes, I heard those things.
JP: The final agreement was, which I have seen, was certainly favorable to Schure, because he got salary for three years and got a sabbatical, and they had been paying half his salary anyway, so in some ways it worked out for Nova, and Nova paid off the debt as part of that agreement, so --

FD: I do recall that, yes.

JP: -- been free and clear, but again as Abe would say, he says they saved us twice, and he said, “I would never had approved a law school had not Schure demanded that --“ and he said in the long run, it turned out to be a good decision.

FD: I think that was true. And in those early days, pre-break up, the law school was losing money. It took some years to start up.

JP: Oh, sure, anytime you start up something like that, it is a very expensive --

FD: My point is not only were we giving money to NYIT in significant amounts, but then also being forced to maintain programs that were costing us money. It took about a year and, as I recall just the way you described it, there was a carrot stick approach to the ultimate breakup,
with the stick being threat of suits and whatever else might have been going on that only happened behind doors and probably will never be known, then on the other side, we will pay off the debt, you’ll have money, you’ll have cash, we will take care of you Alex, and the combination squeezed it out, and it ended. There was a very noticeable difference in the University when that ended.

   JP: It ties in, of course, with the Goodwin trust, and you can talk a little bit about that, this unitary trust, where Leo Goodwin left the money primarily, according to this document, to Nova, and then as you know, Della-donna, the attorney had Leo junior and his secretary as part of the trust, and he determined that Nova was not a local institution but was run by NYIT --

   FD: Because of the merger.

   JP: Therefore, he felt the money should go to the -- so you had this conflict in the courts for this period of time, which was quite harmful to the University, because that money was needed.

   FD: Sure, and as I recall about 1981 or so, it finally was resolved in our favor in the courts, and the money became, it was a significant, as I recall, it was
about $17 million or so, and that was not significant, that was huge to us at that point in time.

JP: It was also critical because the money was needed for the library and expansion of the law school. The law school was not going to be accredited unless they got that money, so a year after they got the money, they got accredited. So, it was a pivotal period to get that funding for the law school and for the general financial stability of the institution.

FD: As I recall, the whole big part of the question that the accrediting body had around law, as they gave it provisional and let it get started, was the stability, the endowment, as you have described, clearly gave that alone with tenure, clearly began to get them at least enough of a comfort level that there was stability there. We are not going to credit something that flies away and disappears in a year or two.

JP: The liability, the building, they were all on the east campus. I mean it was not financially --

FD: I don’t think they were then, I think they were in the Parker Building then actually.

JP: At that point.
FD: They moved around, but not at the point of accreditation, at the pre-Goodwin money, I think they were in the Parker Building.

JP: Okay, but they moved to the east campus --

FD: Absolutely, and were there for several years.

JP: Until they got the new building.

FD: Correct. Ovid’s whole deanship was there, was at the east campus.

JP: Let’s go to the other important merger, and that’s with Southeastern and, from what I understand, this was something that initially came from Mort Terry, and it may have started with Feldman, when Feldman became president, there is this old story that they -- the inauguration booklet that this is something we can work out.

FD: The napkin story.

JP: What’s your recollection of those events?

FD: Both Mort and Steve did say a note was passed, so I tend to believe that Steve Feldman and Mort Terry. We had had a linkage to Southeastern, and they were just worried about how we handled money to be honest. They were just the
opposite. Abe poured any nickel into program development and probably a few nickels he didn’t have at times, went even beyond budget, sticking it back into the program, the culture in Southeastern University was very, very fiscally conservative. They had squirreled away, they did get endowments, they had squirreled away millions of dollars and allowed them to build the west end of the campus.

JP: Probably around $90 million.

FD: Yes, they were very good at that. I had, and there were other branches I wasn’t the only one, but I had oh say three years preceding the merger, a relationship with health professions, with Southeastern University. We were doing two things primarily, the biggest thing was that they had decided they needed some counseling for their students, and we provided that counseling for them out of psychology. We were doing that from the main campus here, and then even though that wasn’t our institution, and I was real proud of myself, because I got some money out of them to do it, which most, you may have heard, very few people got paid even that started off in Southeastern. They all did it --

JP: Because you all were volunteers.
FD: Yes, Mort was very persuasive and had a lot of long term friendships, and said, Julian you have made enough money in your life here, come on, do something that adds to the whole medical field here.

JP: Stanley Cohen said he wasn’t paid for three years.

FD: I would not doubt that. I don’t know that for a fact, but I wouldn’t doubt it for a minute. So I got a few thousand dollars out of them to provide the counseling services, they like it, we built a little more of a relationship, we had some faculty connect up together. We were running the mental health center with an inpatient unit, their students in particular, their medical students in particular, who had limited experience with outpatient populations, we did rotations with some of their medical students through the mental health center, getting them exposed, and built up some beginnings of trust I would say. Mort and Arnold both were friends, would talk about wanting to link up, and I would say have you ever talked -- no we don’t talk to Nova, they were talking elsewhere, Miami, I know that they had talked to Miami. They were uneasy with the alternatives, but were very uneasy coming forward into a place that had been so fiscally unstable, and just
wouldn’t do it. Other places didn’t capture them because they were worried about being dominated by a medical school, an MD, they were DO, they would be the second fiddle. Finally, when Feldman came and actually the alleged slipping of the note was at the celebration of Feldman’s installment. We had put together a big party, probably 5-6 months after Feldman was here, had brought in dignitaries to acknowledge his presidency, and in that Mort was invited, and it was in that setting where Mort had felt enough confidence in what he saw in Feldman, I think that the relationship between Psych, which was a big presence in the University, and the medical school, had built up enough confidence that there were reasonable people that Mort then went ahead and said, “Let’s link together and see what we could do as a combined entity.”

JP: Well once you get to the point where they are starting to discuss the possibility, and I know Ovid Lewis was involved --

FD: Ovid was.

JP: A lot of people, they managed to come together --

FD: Instantly.
JP: Very quickly, demonstrated once again this entrepreneurial spirit and the advantage of having a private University. What were the advantages and disadvantages of this merger?

FD: From my vantage point, very few disadvantages. Getting used to things different, which I guess you could label that a disadvantage.

JP: You had to redo the bylaws, fees, fringe benefits, there were a lot of issues.

FD: Those were administrative activities that I -- there were very few disadvantages to coming together. I think from Southeastern’s perspective, they now were part of a university, a broad-based university, which added immediate credibility to Southeastern. I think from the old Nova’s point of view, the fact that some vital health profession areas that hadn’t been represented, psych is health but it was the closest we had to the general health, well now all of a sudden we had a presence and it clearly, Julian, in my opinion was one of those situations where one and one winds up to adding up to a lot more than two. I really, except for people having to get out of their regular clothes and get used to things, saw no downside whatsoever to the coming together of the two entities. I
think it was all up. I think that everybody gained. I think the students in both groups gained. I think it added another element of potential research, because now you had this health identity attached in. If there was anything that was a challenge around that, besides just people having to change their clothes, was that we had not really formulated an identity yet. We talked before about being opportunistic as a university, well now we had one more piece that we were. It wasn’t like now we were a health university, so we had distance, we had international, we had traditional, well now we have one more, health. So now we became even a more diverse creature, more like a very, very --


FD: I think that’s not unfair to say. But downside, I didn’t see it. And I will also just say that the merger itself, there is work at HR, and if you talk to HR, they had to go crazy with forms and all, but in terms of it actually sticking, it really happened overnight. It really happened quickly, smoothly, efficiently.

JP: And it would have worked out, a serendipity kind of situation where they want to expand, didn’t have any land, needed the university that was accredited. Nova was
looking for more money, broader expansion, I mean it just dovetailed. Fortunately, I am not sure who is responsible, but several people immediately realized the benefits of this merger, and I don’t know whether it was Ray, or Feldman, or Ovid -- my guess is from who I have talked to, Mort Terry was really a key mover with all of this.

FD: Well, there were several that could have killed the deal. Mort would have been one of them. If I put, again I’m expressing my bias and I don’t know who would agree with me, Ray played a part, he was the chair of the board at the time, Feldman played an important part of this, and Feldman is kind of forgotten. Feldman, I was close enough in the organization to see what happened, Feldman was a critical part, they felt comfortable with Feldman. He came out of a business background that was real important to them, we didn’t have that business sense. Here was a guy who knew what a balance sheet was. They felt very comfortable with that, and there was a good relationship there. The key person thought, and I don’t know if you had a chance to interview him or not, is David Rush.

JP: No, but everybody does mention his name.
FD: David was on both boards. I believe he was the chair of the Southeastern board, if not, he was a significant member.

JP: And he was an attorney?

FD: Nope, David was a businessman and inventor, a product developer. David was a key in his own understated way, he has just recently, maybe it’s a year ago now, would say the real reason he did it is that he was on so many boards, it would save one board by bringing these two together. But I think David was, again David’s style was never to be the guy out there. He was not a flamboyant guy, wasn’t a great presenter, but was a tenacious behind-the-scenes kind of guy, and my read on it is that David had a huge hand in actually bringing the people together around the table. Ray could have killed it, so certainly had the power to do that, Feldman could have stopped it, Mort Terry could have stopped it, and Arnold Melnick had enough influence in there that any of those four played a part, and they could have stopped part, probably shaped the actual form of the agreement, but that David was the instigator that actually got people thinking maybe we could do this.
JP: And once it got to a certain point, all of the people you just mentioned supported it.

FD: Yes.

JP: Melnick, they were all onboard at the end, and a big advantage I guess for Nova was that they built the building, built a garage, paid for the move, they had the funds to build a building and Nova had the land so --

FD: It took about two years from when the merger took place, but we reacquired land that we had lost, that Abe had to sell at one point because we weren’t in good shape financially, out on the west side. Bought it back for, don’t hold me to numbers, but about three times what we had sold it for as I recall, but we did get it back, and then on that west land, with cash in hand, the health professions people came and built it.

JP: Still, Abe of course was upset about having to do that, as you can imagine, but he said at the time, they didn’t have any choice, they had to sell the land, they needed the money. Yet, when he bought it back, he --

FD: He didn’t buy it back, it got bought back after Abe. It was purchased back after Abe.
JP: Okay, well the University, I should say, bought it back, but at that point he would say, “Still got a good deal.”

FD: That might be true, because land did appreciate well after, maybe now it might have come back down again, I don’t know, but this part of the county in particular just skyrocketed. But, then they did come down just as you said, and with cash in pocket, planned and built the facilities in about 20 months I would say, from on the blueprints to actually having doors that opened.

JP: Discuss oceanographics, and that was part of the original Nova. It has been here the whole time, recently they have got this huge grant to expand, build a new building, and so they were on pretty hard times in the 70s and early 80s, and now it looks like they have an opportunity to expand quite significantly.

FD: Clearly with the money that has come in, that is going to be a stimulant for us to go expand them. Those dollars require a match. They require about a $22 million match, so we got $15 million, now we have to find $22 million, so financially I don’t know that this has taken them out of the woods. They have never been, while schools like Psych that had the research history and tradition,
were able to figure out another way to bring in the revenue line, so a Psy.D program comes in, now that compensates for -- you’re an academic, you don’t make money off the scholarly work, that’s because it is part of your identity. You are doing it not because it’s going to bring in lots of wealth. You might break even if you are good at getting grants, but it’s not going to do that. The student tuitions balance that in psych. Oceanography never figured a way to do that, so they stayed as good strong researchers. I would say over the years, even as a dean I would say, this back in a competitive “school” that the best research in the University, Fred and the HPD people would disagree with me, but I would say throughout the best research has come out of Oceanography. They are good, recognized, appreciated nationally and internationally researchers, and their history has been to stay close to that research, small degree programs, but solid and substantial research.

JP: George Hanbury mentioned that he would like to see as you developed the undergraduate that perhaps some biology students and others, environmental students, would be attracted to some of the programs they have out there that, as they expand, then they can hopefully attract good undergraduate student.
FD: Would be foolish not to do that, absolutely.

JP: Now, one of the things that has developed here, which is also sort of unusual, is the University School. So, Nova has all these different parts. How did that evolve and what is the status of the University School today, vis-à-vis the University.

FD: A whole different identity. It was really established by Mickey Segal, I mentioned her name before, who to show how diverse our programming was, you met with Ed Simco who came from a physics/math background, Mickey Segal a social work kind of background, both graduated from the same program. I mean, if you know those two characters, both are competent good people, did a lot in their lives, but they are completely different from each other in terms of how they would come out looking at the world and adding back to the world. Mickey, as part of her program requirement, did a project. The project was the beginning of really daycare that was the start of the University School, then off the daycare center, it spun into a small school, a University based grammar and then later high school, and had not much of a reputation, was very local and almost tied to Mickey and her family and her friends. It’s a prominent family, so that’s a big sphere of people,
but not much more than that. Then, it stayed that way for quite a bit, it wasn’t making money, it lost money, and I would say about 15 or 16 years ago, with some changes in leadership, began to look to change its identity, and that transition was moving it in a direction of an elite prep school, where our kids would come out and get into the better schools, and that transition began about 15-16 years ago and then has really accelerated under Jerry, the current schoolmaster, and I think that transition has been completed under Jerry, it now is a school that if you want your son or daughter to be able to be competitive at the finest institutions, they are not going to go to BC or Nova even, but to really reach out into Ivy League, North Carolina, Duke, those kinds of schools, it’s a good place to do that, and I think it’s viewed that way now, and then the facilities there, again, in the last year, have moved from acceptable to second to none.

JP: So the University in effect pays for the operation of that school?

FD: It covers its own expenses, it uses its tuition to cover its own expenses. At one point, as with a lot of the startup activities, it was subsidized, other schools made up the difference, but at some point that switched. I
cannot put a date on when that turn occurred, but at some point it began to be a contributor to overhead as opposed to a drain.

JP: Let me give you an overview, and I can't remember where I got this, but someone said that Nova’s three different universities. The first university was the one that was chartered in 1964, it lasted to 1970 then 1970 to 1985, was a sort of period of stabilization, and then finally, 1985 to the present. Would you agree with that?

FD: More or less, yes. I would say that there were some start-up period, there was a real groping and seeking an identity period, and I would say that the last 10 years or so have been facilities oriented and stabilizing, and then it leads you to a fourth, what is going to be that next piece, which would be truly finding a niche. This is what this university is about, whether that is teaching, whether that is research, whether it is alternative education, traditional, I think we are at that point right now where we are struggling with that question.

JP: Because there are so many alternative and somewhat different history, and it’s hard to meld it all together.
FD: From that decentralized beginning, all these pockets grew up and now were saying it’s not just opportunity and it’s a hard question, the psychology part of me will show from a developmental point of view, it’s fine for the 12 year old to say, “I want to be a cop, I want to be a police officer, I want to be a fireman, I want to be a doctor,” but it’s a difficult thing for that young person to transition into this is what I am going to be, so now I have to put my efforts into that and focus. A 30-year-old that says a cop, fireman, every week, you have some issues with, and we are getting to be that kind of 30-year-old comparable from a development point of view, and it’s a hard issue for us to say, well let’s say that we’re not these things, but we are these things over here. We are realizing that’s a question that we have to answer. We’ve not answered it yet, I don’t believe, but we are beginning to realize we have to answer it.

JP: One of the questions that we have discussed before is that Nova is still not as well known, even in the state of Florida or nationally, as you would like for it to be, so how do you go about making sure that the rest of the country knows what is going on here?
FD: Two ways, Julian. One, it’s a misstatement to say we’re not known. We are known within certain spheres and in certain disciplines, in osteopathic medicine. Anybody in osteopathic medicine knows about us, we’re a prominent school, in psych there is prominence, in the oceanographic fields there is prominence, in law I would say, but all of those are specific areas. They are not the general kind of areas and as we look that might not be a problem if we weren’t looking to develop undergraduate. The undergraduates aren’t going to know the depth that oceanography is going to bring in terms of reputation, or psych, or law, they are going to know generally, and it is what it is. Athletics tends to be a big part of that identity. People, the sports pages are the most read portion of the paper, and people know that Miami won four national titles in a 12-year period, it’s just what we relate to. Other athletic accomplishments are recognized, the Butler phenomenon from this past winter, being so well recognized for a tiny school. So there is that lack of recognition. We are looking at that now, do we want to bite the bullet on athletics and take our shot at relatively short period of time, relatively short ten years or so, building some athletic programs that can bring recognition into the University that way, or do we want to take --
JP: Excuse me, are you talking specifically about football here?

FD: Not just football, probably the two that are the most readily identifiable are football and basketball. I would probably think basketball would be more feasible for us than football, for a variety of reasons.

JP: Football, to develop a stadium and program is hugely expensive.

FD: Right, and you’re sitting in a state that, even if we did a fabulous job with that, you are sitting in a state where we probably would still be a fourth or fifth most known program because you have had so much success over the last couple of decades in Florida, so you might spend $30 million and be the fifth best known football program. Basketball might be a more feasible -- and it’s less expensive to manage. So, there is that talk going on. What I have tried to do is take two things, and I asked the trustees at the retreat to consider an alternative to that. We have our dual admit program, which is a prized program, it’s our closest thing to a national title, if you would. The dual admit allows 18 year olds to come in and, with some level of legitimacy, say I am in medical school. They are still undergraduates, but they get linked in to that
seat, they get on the mailing list, they get to participate in activities and become part of a culture of graduate school of psychology or medical school or dental school. The thing that we have had here that many places don’t have is that the professional schools have been on the front end of pushing for that, they are fine with that. There is resistance in many places to have that happen, so we have a pretty unique opportunity here to take something and really put it out there as this is a special feature, so that is another part. The other is, we could look at moving ourselves into, if you go on the athletic one, a division three kind of mentality, and say we are fully committed, we are devoting ourselves to becoming a fine, fine educational institute. You want to come for sports, wrong place. You want to come to a place that is going to get you positioned to be able to be at the next level of profession, which these days the majority of students are coming in at least thinking about advanced degrees, we will position you to do that, both by our dual admit and preparing you do that outside. So, that’s another way to begin the build attention. The trustees are right, the quickest hit is always the score run is a home run, I mean a home run is a division one athletic program that is successful. That will get on the front page of the newspaper, forget the front of
the sports page, if you are successful enough. There are few things I see competing with that --

JP: Again, you look at, what 10% of the athletic programs in the country are on the plus side.

FD: From a dollar point of view.

JP: Yes. It’s very difficult for an institution, as young as this institution, although we have seen South Florida and Central Florida they are trying to do that. In terms of where you are going and what kind of institution this is, it would seem like that would a high risk. You guys have taken, with the dental school that was something of a risk but a measured risk, it would seem to me that go to division one football would be a big risk.

FD: It’s an issue that I think we are struggling with and I struggle with, I agree with you, it needs to be thought out. Everybody is looking for that quick fix, so we would be one of many wannabes out there, and again it would not be inexpensive, it would be an expensive piece, and to spend $25 million to $30 million over a couple of years to be only perceived to be one of the many wannabes, that would be money spent foolishly if that were to be what
happened. So I agree, I would be uncomfortable with us jumping to conclusions about that. We have to study it.

JP: It would be a long-term concept I think. Because it seems to me you have been rather successful division two women’s golf team has won a couple of national championships, and you had a certain esprit de corps on campus. You are starting to develop a central part of campus with a library and a student center, and people are around, and so it’s less everybody is either off in distance learning or in graduate programs. So you are starting to build some sense of place.

FD: I would agree with that. The problem with it is that most people, the general public, know Alabama won division one football, and two years some school up the road one it, and that’s known. In division two we won the golf championship, and that does build a spirit, but who won division two national football last year. You are not going to know that, so that visibility part, it depends on what your objectives are. We have been very successful if it’s to draw students in and to begin to build esprit de corps, as you described it, if the objective is outside recognition, division two probably is never going to do that. I mean we could win three or four next year division
two national championships in the same year, and probably
not get much attention for that.

JP: I think you mentioned, somebody mentioned to me,
University of Chicago does pretty well with their academic
programs and they have no athletic programs, so that is a
rather bold example, but nonetheless, there are
institutions that have succeeded without having to depend
on that.

FD: And, Ivy League does well without being
competitive in the athletic arena, so there are those ways,
sure.

JP: If you look at the impact that Nova has on
Broward County and the community today, explain a little
bit about how that has changed from a time when they
couldn’t make payroll to today.

FD: You know leave the education reputation, do you
have in your back yard a Duke or something, less than a
Duke, leave that aside for the minute. The impact the
University has in that if you are not working for Nova, you
certainly know somebody that is working for Nova. I think
it’s the third largest employer in Broward County, so it
has a significant presence. It’s not unknown in the county
in that regard, so it is viewed as a long ways away. I remember having the saddest look on some kids face when athletics started up, I was asked, and we all wore different hats, to coach. So, I coached the cross country team, NCA cross country team, NAIA at that time actually Intercollegiate Cross Country Team, sent the kids out. They wanted to do an extra trip, sent them to newly developed Pine Island Ridge, where those shops are, and the kids came back completely demoralized, because as they ran over there and went to the different retailers we’re talking half mile off campus, most didn’t know who we were. We were small, we didn’t have an impact. Now those retailers would know who we were. They market to the University you see, the Knights or now the Sharks up in the stores, trying to make the student body and the faculty feel a part of that community. So, in that regard, it’s a day and night difference, Julian, the impact, again putting reputation aside, is not underestimated at all, I don’t think, in the county. It is realized that this is a big impact on this community.

JP: And it seems to me that now Broward County sees Nova as their university?

FD: I’m not as positive about that. I don’t know. I don’t know about that. If you take it that, as I grow up,
if you grow up 15 miles from University of Florida as a kid, unless you have a father that hates Florida and came from Florida State or something odd like that, you grow up a Gator, and you want to be that. I don’t know, as you grow up in Broward, automatically you think, “When I get to be big, I want to be a Nova guy.” I don’t think it has that kind of identity, and maybe that’s athletics.

JP: You think it does eventually?

FD: Of course, I would like it to be like having a Duke in your back yard, I have this right here, this resource that I can get services from, I can get educated from. How lucky we are to have this in our back yard, and none of it is second rate. It’s all top rate. Of course, yes.

JP: And that is part of what Nova does. I look at the dental services, mental health, all kinds of programs, physicians assistants, all in all the University provides a lot of services and a lot of free services to the community, which I think are pretty important.

FD: Very important, and I don’t want to lose that identity, but there is another identity that I would like to cultivate, and that’s what I was trying to say before,
yes there is indigent care that we are doing out there that a bunch of people would not get if it wasn’t for -- you brought up dental school, that’s absolutely the case, in dental, in psychology there is mental health care that is going on. What’s not there though is that I can go anywhere I want to go, and aren’t I lucky that NSU is there because I have this cardiac problem, and it’s right here, I’m going there to get it. I don’t think we have created that identity yet. If I were living three miles off Duke’s campus, I would feel so lucky that if I started to have some cardiac problem, I have a medical facility near that I am probably going to get the best minds of anywhere, at least among them, to take a look at my problem. I would like to begin that identity shift and look at not only, I think it is our responsibility to do that indigent part, but I think we are more exclusively, thank God they are here, they are taking care of a need, rather than thank God they are here, I couldn’t get better care, I ain’t going anywhere, I’m going right there to dental, medical, psych, all those areas.

JP: Now, I have exhausted pretty much all of my questions. Is there anything you would like to talk about that we haven’t discussed?
FD: No, Julian, I think you have given me my say in a lot of areas. I have gone on and on. No, I think it’s an interesting story. I think Nova, the characteristic of Nova that has kept me here and not wanting to go anywhere else, is that, and I’ve had my fights and disagreements, and not always gotten my way, those things have all happened, but I have never been bored here. It has been an interesting, the essence of it is interesting. There is always something, there has always been something that was worth getting up and coming in to talk about that day, always. In my first days here, they are different, and these days here and the days in between, if there was a characteristic of this institution, it is dynamic, alive, and it keeps you interested, it keeps you from being bored.

JP: Before we finish, I wanted to bring everybody up to date on your official status. You are now Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. In some campuses that is divided. Some campuses have a separate office for Academic Affairs, separate office for Provost. Does that mean you are taking on extra responsibilities?

FD: I don’t think so. If you read at least what some people write about, the meanings of those titles, and they differ depending, but oftentimes the VP for Academic
Affairs is the academic chief officer, the idealist for academics, the one who builds those lofty goals. The Provost is oftentimes more the politician, the one that makes sure --

JP: -- that runs the university.

FD: Yes, that makes sure that these things are feeding these things, and that when there is a disagreement between Registrar and an academic unit, gets in between and figures it out. As I look at it is rather than separate idealism from pragmatics, it kind of puts that all together, so there is an idealistic perspective but then a realization that, okay, but now we have got to figure out what we are going to do with that idealism driving you, and there are many places that they are together, and I never did an analysis of whether there were more or not, but there are many places, larger places in particular, where those are combined offices, and I think that makes sense from that point of view. No it doesn’t add more, in fact, I think it would be more work for me to have an academic VP reporting to me, who then I had to bring over because we cannot do ideally what you would like to do now academically, we have to live with this. That probably
would take me more work than having that all sitting within one office.

JP: Okay, well on that note, we’ll end the discussion. Thanks very much, appreciate it.

FD: Thank you.

[End]