Interview with President Ray Ferrero, Jr. - President and Chancellor

Ray Ferrero Jr.
Nova Southeastern University

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P: This is Julian Pleasants and I’m at Nova Southeastern University, it is June 12, 2009. I’m speaking with Ray Ferrero Jr. as part of this history of the university. Give me a little bit about your background. When and where you were born and early schooling?

F: I was born in New York City. I lived there until I went into the military in 1955. I attended the public school system through high school in New York, in Queens. The Jackson Heights, which is near La Guardia Airport and went to Bryant High School in Long Island City. Then, I went to St. Johns University for my undergraduate degree, which was a bachelors’ in business administration. That was just at the start of the Korean War [1950-1953] and I signed up for the Marine Corps platoon leaders class, which allowed me to finish my schooling while I was at St. Johns. I had to do some military time during the summers with the Marine Corps at Quantico. And then, went on active duty in September of 1955. I’d graduated and received a commission as a Second Lieutenant. After finishing basic school at Quantico I was shipped to Korea. By that time the truce had been signed and I served in the Far East until I was released in the summer of [19]57. And then, decided to go back to Florida because during that time my
family had moved to Florida, and went to law school, and graduated from the
University of Florida in 1960 from the College of Law at the University of Florida.

P: That’s very interesting that three of the presidents of this university have been
New Yorkers; two from Brooklyn and one from Queens. [Laughter]

F: That’s correct.

P: What is the ultimate goal once you finish law school? You go to Miami and begin
practice. What kind of law do you expect to practice?

F: I knew all the time in law school that I wanted to be a litigator, there was no
question about that. I didn’t first practice in Miami. I first practiced in Tampa, with
then Governor Carlton Firm. Back then it was Mayberry, Reeves, Carlton,
Fields, and Ward. The interesting thing about it—I was the thirteenth lawyer in
that firm and now it’s got hundreds and hundreds of lawyers. Governor Carlton
was one of the senior partners. Another senior partner, in fact the one who hired
me, one of the two lawyers who hired me was William Reeves-Smith who later
became President of the American Bar Association and Joe McClain who had
been the Dean of Duke Law School for many years. I practice in Tampa for about
a year and half—two years, and then I was offered an opportunity to go with the
Perrinickles Firm in Miami, which was at that time, essentially, all they did was
plaintiff’s personal injury work. I went with them. A number of years later, they
opened offices in several cities and they asked me to be the managing partner in
Ft. Lauderdale. I came full circle, and ended in Ft. Lauderdale in 1963.

P: It’s interesting, the State of Florida has had a lot of Presidents of the American
Bar Association— Chesterfield Smith—
F: Chesterfield Smith, a dear friend. Reeves Smith, Cody Fowler as I recall. Martha Barnett from—right

P: And Sandy Delamberte

F: And Sandy Delamberte, right.

P: That’s a rather large contingent.

F: Of those, I handled the campaigns for both Martha and Sandy because I was the elected state delegate to the ABA [American Bar Association] from the State of Florida.

P: While we’re on that subject, you later became President of the Florida Bar Association.

F: No, I really became President before that. I became President of Florida Bar in 1987. I had been President of the Florida Trial Lawyers for a number of years before that.

P: What was your major duty as President of the Bar Association?

F: Clearly, the president of any organization is the public spokesperson during their term. So, clearly that was one of the major roles. But, during that particular time was a very interesting contentious time where Florida was going through a lot—I think we had the regular session and maybe four or five special sessions. I can’t even remember what they were all about, but it was a very busy time.

P: What was your first unofficial contact with Nova?

F: As you know from our chat here—obviously, this was not a school I graduated from. The first contact was from Abe Fischler. Having been very active in the Bar over a number of years, of course I’d met Abe, I knew him. It was during that
period of time that he was looking for some assistance with respect to the Board of Governors of the law school. One might logically ask, why would I support NSU’s law school when I was a graduate of the College of Law at the University of Florida? But, my thinking was that here was a college of law that was new, relatively new. They were having some issues, it was in my community. And, contrary to a lot of my friends who say there are too many lawyers and things—I’m talking about lawyers about people in the profession—there aren’t too many good lawyers. So, what you want to do is if you have an asset in the community, you want to improve it. So, I agreed serve and see if I could help them.

P: What was your overall view of the university at that time?

F: Not very much. I didn’t know very much about the university. I didn’t know about Abe. I thought they were doing some really interesting things. More significantly, I had some friends who were on the board, who I greatly admired and respected. Augie Paoli, who’s passed away. Bob Steele, who recently passed away. Bill Horvitz, to name a few. Again, I thought that if Abe thought that I could help that I would try to do that.

P: Were you involved at all in the negotiations at the beginnings, the opening of the law school?

F: No. But I was fairly involved when we were seeking accreditation from the ABA. In fact, Sandy Delamberte happened to be the Chairman of that committee of the ABA and he recused himself because: number one, it was a Florida school and number two, of our past relationship. But, I was there and they made a presentation to the accrediting team.
P: The school opens in 1977, you are a member of the governing board in 1978. At this point, it really is a fledgling law school, and you really don’t have the library or the physical facilities that you need to be accredited.

F: I don’t remember the year I became involved as a member of the Board of Governors of the law school.

P: I have 1978.

F: Okay, your records are probably better than mine. [Laughter] At any rate, yes, the answer was. That was one of the main issues for us to get provisional accreditation, was that we did not have a facility. I can remember vividly a meeting that Bob Steele and I had with, I think his first was Jim, Walden was his second name. He was the head of the operating engineers and they had a building which is now our East Campus. We negotiated the purchase of that for the law school because one of the things that were holding up provisional accreditation, which was essential. You had to get provisional accreditation so our students could sit for the bar examination. One other thing was we did not have a dedicated facility. In fact, we purchased the building and then there is a whole history of how we later financed it and did some other things. But, Bob Steele and I were involved in negotiations to acquire that building.

P: I want to talk a little bit about the evolution of the law school and talking with Dr. Fischler. The concept for him, at that time was something that he didn’t think the university could take on. It was a huge debt. It was a major commitment. The university was sort of struggling to stay alive. And all of a sudden, people saying, we really need a law school.
F: Right.

P: It seems to me that that's part of the history of this university that there is this entrepreneurial spirit that there is flexibility, and when Alexander Schure of NYIT comes up and says, we'll guarantee the building, go ahead and open a law school. We'll take care of that part of it. The Board of Trustees decided to go ahead. It was what I would call a measured risk at that time.

F: I was really not involved at that point, so I can't comment on those things. All I knew was we had a law school. It needed support. The ABA, to their credit I will say this, they push accreditation to the extent to do those things that will encourage a university to do things that are right for the long range survivability of a particular law school. One of those was to get a facility, and we did. The bottom line to that I would say, Julian, is that that was probably one of the best investments the university made because from that time we had the law school there until we moved it onto the central campus here in Davie. We then had the business school there. Later, moved the school of computer science in that building, until we built the DeSantos building and the ________ school then moved to the central campus. The computer school moved to a building that we had acquired over on Griffin Road, until we moved them into the DeSantos building. Now, because of some future plans, we’ve moved the entire accounting function and some other functions back to that East Campus. That building certainly served its purposes.

P: And the law school is a huge development for this university. Part of what I’ve learned is that most of the early development of the university is off campus.
And, people in Broward [County] didn’t know a lot about the university and this gives them a stake in the community. Local people can go to the law school. There is a great deal of interaction between the university and Broward County and Ft. Lauderdale. Tuition money comes in—in retrospect, it was a significant decision in the history of this university.

**F:** It certainly was, but not without some miscuings, I alluded to it before. A lot of people in the community didn’t feel that we needed another law school. Obviously, it was a private school. But even among the Bar there wasn’t an overall acceptance, I would say, there was acceptance, but not overall. And yes, it afforded opportunities for students here in the community. But you already had the University of Miami to the south of us, and clearly, my college, the College of Law at the University of Florida already. But clearly, it was a major step in the history of this university.

**P:** One of the other problems I had talked to Tinsley Ellis and he was saying that there was no library and that a lot of the local lawyers gave books and support to help build up that library. Here again there is a strong commitment from the community to make sure this law school succeeds.

**F:** There certainly was that. My only comment was it wasn’t universal. But clearly, there were a lot of people that helped and they had a very good advisor board as well.

**P:** And another element that’s significant is the **Goodwin** Trust.

**F:** Yes.

**P:** I don’t know if you had any dealings with that.
F: No.

P: I think you had at least some legal interaction with Alphonse Della-Donna?

F: That was in my law practice. I represented the *Sun Sentinel* and Della-Donna had sued the *Sun Sentinel*. And I defended that case. He sued the *Sun Sentinel* for libel and we were successful in defeating his claims.

P: Well it was certainly, again, critical for the university, the decision was made—I won’t get into all the details—but the decision was made that they had to go to court to get this Goodwin money—it had originally been given to the university on an unrestricted basis, and then Della-Donna and the board rescinded that gift. And so, it goes into court for two years, and this is in the middle of the ABA accreditation process. And Fischler kept saying, well look, as soon as we get this money, we’ll be able to get our library and build our building.

F: Yeah, and as I say, though I was involved at that time, I think Terry Russell was the lead lawyer in representing the university on that. But clearly, it was a significant issue and there was some schisms developed over that over the years.

P: As the law school evolves, you get the Sheppard Broad Law Center. Talk a little bit, did you have anything to do with Mr. Broad and his gift.

F: No, primarily it came—I’m trying to think who was the primary one—but Sheppard Broad and I were long time friends. Matter of fact, I was asked by his family to speak at his funeral service. And he, in another life, he was the one who loaned me the money to build my first office building. So, he and I were dear friends. And I can remember to this day him saying, I’m gonna make this loan to
you Ray, but I’m gonna do you a favor—and I said, oh here it comes—and he said, I’m gonna make you put more money into it. So we had to put a little more in the way of a deposit. But in the long run it was a good decision.

I just had lunch with Morris’s son and his nephew John—I mean grandson John and they still have an abiding interest in the university and the law school. Morris was our board for a number of years, Morris Braun.

P: And then, when the new law school building opens on the main campus that’s a significant addition.

F: Yeah, absolutely and it was necessary. And as I said, that enabled us to do some other things with that facility on the East Campus.

P: And how has the law school changed from its inception [1977] to the present?

F: Clearly, there has been a greater acceptance and acknowledgement throughout the legal community about the fact that students—and I hear this, I still keep fairly active with friends in the BAR and I see people regularly—our students are among the best of the law schools. We were having some problems with BAR passage. But, the dean and I sat down and talked about some enhancement programs that we could change that around.

We have another program that I’m very proud of that’s the ample program, which allows us to give students and people who probably wouldn’t get into any law school in the country an opportunity to prove themselves, and they would take two courses in the summer, and if they get a C+ in those two courses, then they are admitted unconditionally to the law school.
Well, you know as well as I do, Julian, that there are a lot of people that don’t do well on standardized testing like the LSAT [Law School Admission Test] or they are coming back, they might have been away from education for a while. This gives them an opportunity, just as when we started the night program. It gives opportunity for people who can’t take three years off to go to law school. So, a combination of those things, I’m very proud of about the law school. And as it turned out, number one, our reputation is much, much better than it was. Our students coming out are technologically advanced, I’d put them up against any students. Justice [Arthur] Goldberg, when he was here teaching from the Supreme Court, when he was here talking, teaching one of our seminars, his students, obviously they were very good students, but he said, they were among the best he’d ever been around. Including some of the clerks he had when he was a Justice of the Supreme Court. So we’re doing all of these things, but most importantly, we’re not only teaching them law, which is obviously important, but we’re also teaching them how to practice law. And use the modern technologies and things of that nature. And prepare them for the other role, which I talked to the faculty about, it’s not only getting them through law school, but also, lets have them pass the bar. And so, the last three or four years we have had a program on how we improve the Bar passage rate, and that has been extremely successful.

P: Well, I had asked about the law program and I have heard that one of the things that this program does: when they leave here, they can actually practice law.

F: That’s correct.
P: [Laughter] Which is not always the case.

F: That's correct.

P: Another thing that was developed at the law school I thought was rather fascinating—

F: I hope we don't talk this whole time about the law school because there were a lot of good programs here other than the law school. [Laughter]

P: No, no, we'll get to those. But, the disability program that was offered at the law school, I thought disability, that was an interesting niche.

F: Yeah, and I'm not as familiar with that. But, we've developed several non-lawyers now; a health law program, a masters program in health law and another one in education law. So, a lot of those things have occurred because the school has to be relevant. It has to be relevant to its community. And, I think you have to look at the things we can work on.

P: One of the changes that comes about with advent of the law school—this is a traditional law school as it had to be, to be accredited by the ABA—and I was talking to Dr. Fischler, this very different from the more innovative open-ended curriculum for the rest of the university. So—

F: Well, I would take a little exception to him about that. He and I do disagree from time to time. I think this is a very innovative law school. Particularly, with the use of technology, as I said, these students coming out of this law school, in fact, the law school was name for a number of years, the most—this is the term—most "wired" law school in the country. This doesn't mean we just had the bells and whistles. It meant that the product, our students, were technologically advanced
over schools all over the country. So, a lot of innovative things going on with that and also the ability to use technology when students are out in clinics and things of that nature. So, I think that the law school is a traditional law school, with the exception it has a night program, which not all law schools have. But in addition to that, the students coming out of here are very proficient in the use of technology and I’m telling you to a person when I talk to people, our students know how to practice law, they have been exposed to a number of clinics, they have done internships, and they know how to use technology. And I think that those are things—make them more desirable young lawyer for any firm.

P: I think that one thing that Fischler was referring to was the fact that the law school had tenure and the other faculty did not.

F: Well, that’s a requirement unfortunately that the ABA has and if I have anything to do with it, we would do away with that. As a matter of fact, in my conversations with Dean Harbough, I told him that I expected him to institute a program of post-tenure review, which I think is important for any school that has tenure, but you are right, that is the only school in the university that does have tenure. All the rest of our programs are on continuing contract. However, the law school does have a cadre of faculty who are also on continuing contract. That doesn’t mean doomed to that or destined to that forever. They can switch to a tenure track if they care to.

P: While were on that subject, currently most of the faculty would be on one, or two, or three year contracts with an evaluation at the end of the contract.
F: No, we have had continuing contracts for a number of years. And continuing contracts require five years of—you have to be with the university for five years and then you’re eligible for a continuing contract. I thought there was a disparity, again, because of the law school. Remember, I told you there’s two different cadres: tenure and tenure track faculty, and also continuing track—continuing contract faculty in the law school, they have a five year cycle for their continuing contracts. The rest of the university, once you achieve continuing contract, were on a three year cycle. Two years ago or three years ago I said that’s inequitable. So, I changed the entire university to a five year continuing contract so it matches their colleagues in the law school—still have continuing contracts—allows us the flexibility that we need as a private independent, not-for-profit university, but makes the contract terms similar to the ones in the law school. I thought that was fair.

P: Talk about the concept of tenure. I think maybe five percent of the major universities don’t have tenure. But it appears to me that that is a trend. Why is there an advantage to not having tenure for faculty?

F: Well, let’s put it in a historical reference. Back when tenure was instituted in higher education and the academy. There was a feeling then, you needed job security. People were giving up more “lucrative” positions outside teaching to devote themselves to education and a variety of other things. The first statement I would make is that though your statement is that it’s only five percent or ten percent or whatever it is, there is an increasing trend away from tenure. And as a matter of fact, when they created Florida Gulf Coast University there was no
tenure there. But there clearly is a trend around the country away from that.
That’s one trend, the other trend is that they are using more participating faculty.
They are less, and I just got those numbers from Viva Chee or one of the
national organizations that there is more use of what you used to call adjunct
faculty, but these are more than people who just come in and come out and
teach. They are participating faculty. So there more a trend toward that. Number
one, I think it gives you much more flexibility. You don’t have people feel there is
an entitlement to a lifelong job. People—some people, not all people who are on
tenure—tend to get very comfortable there, they don’t keep up with the literature,
they don’t do the scholarship they need, and after a while, I think an institution
has a tendency to stagnate. And so, all of those reasons why I’ve never been in
favor, and I’m not in favor now.

P: Well, it’s definitely true. I know that the University of Florida has moved to adjunct
or one year contracts. And they are renewable and you have to demonstrate
every year that you can continue in that position.

F: Well, ours is the same thing for the first five years, they are renewable one year
contracts. And then, you’re eligible for continuing contracts.

P: But, some of these positions are not tenure accruing. I mean they are just, you
know, adjunct year to year.

F: Sure, or just a yearly faculty, right.

P: Now, there has always been the issue and I think one of the reasons for tenure
too came about partly because of the McCarthy era and there were these
charges that people were left wing or communist. Is there any difficulty maintaining freedom of teaching and freedom of the academic classroom?

F: You asked the right question of the right guy. In this day and age, if any university president in the United States tried to do something that would inhibit the ability of a faculty member to teach or impose their own views on things you would be immediately in court. And so, that’s an argument whose time has passed. There is no validity to that whatsoever.

P: So you don’t have a faculty senate?

F: No, we don’t have a faculty senate. [We have] A faculty advisor committee.

P: But, in the long-term in the evolution of this university, several individuals I’ve talked to said that was a great asset because, if for example, later we talk about the merger with Southeastern [University], if you had had to deal with the faculty senate and deal with internal issues, it would have taken much longer to get that deal through.

F: People—or if it ever would have been done because that was a very time sensitive issue. What it enables you to do is, this university’s been described very many times as being very agile. From the time the first discussion was on Southeastern, until the time we in fact merged was twelve months. In a more traditional university, you might have still been trying to figure out who was going to play a role in this and trying to figure out what size table you were going to sit at and what the shape of the table was going to be. So, not that you don’t want—and I’ll give an example later on when we talk about my coming in as President— the, not that you don’t want input from everybody, you do want input because any
move can’t be—I’m using my name—it can’t be Ray Ferrero’s vision of the university. It has to be a shared vision. So, you have to build consensus. The only way you can do that is to go around talking to people and trying to find out what they think about critical issues for the university. And we do that through our advisory committee; both the Dean’s Advisory Council and the Faculty Advisory Council.

P: Well, I want to go into a little more detail with that later—let me go back to 1984, which was when you first became a member of the Nova University Board of Trustees. And here again, your commitment is very much like many other board members. I remember talking to Dr. Fischler and at times when the university was in trouble, the Board of Trustees would literally pass the hat and they would raise enough money to make the next payroll. So, I noticed that you not only gave many years of your time, but I understand you also gave some property as well. So, that’s a pretty strong commitment at that level to the university.

F: Yes. Well, I thought it was important then. You know, I think that before [19]84 I probably an ex-officio member of the board because of my position as the Board of Governor of the Law School, until I was asked to become a regular member.

P: One of the major issues that comes up in 1985, so this comes up immediately as you come on the Board, is the end of the federation with the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), which had been in place since 1970, for fifteen years. And would you give me a little bit of the background about that and make a comment about Alexander Schure and why this federation needed to come to an end.
F: First of all, I think that the contribution of Dr. Schure and NYIT, at the time that occurred, that was before the time I was really involved. Obviously, in retrospect, was critical. The university might not have been here had not Dr. Fischler been able to convince them to participate with us. Over the years it became more and more apparent that for the long range survivability and growth of the university it might not have been in the best interest. And so, clearly, shortly after I came on the Board, there was a feeling that if the university was going to grow, it had to grow on its own and that we had eliminate the affiliation. Having said that, obviously there were some strong feelings on both sides, I’m sure but, the end result, NYIT prospered, and clearly, NSU has prospered.

P: Part of the problem was over a period of time NYIT was taking out profits from Nova—a half a million a year—at a time when Nova was still on somewhat precarious grounds financially.

F: Yeah, and I don’t remember the dollar amount. But clearly, when you looked at it—not that they hadn’t been essential earlier on, but what the university, NSU—Nova back then—was contributing back to NYIT was disproportionate to what they were—I think that is the nicest way to say it.

P: And I think Dr. Fischler was in a difficult situation because he understood the value of NYIT and Dr. Schure, but on the other hand, he thought that it was time to end.

F: That’s correct.

P: And my understanding was that the Board instructed him that you need to make some sort of accommodation at this point.
F: Right.

P: And the information that I have is that Dr. Schure in particular was given a generous package and that ultimately, all the money owed to NYIT was paid off.

F: And I don’t remember that, the details of that, as you pointed out, I was a relatively new voting member on the Board. So I don’t remember all that. I do remember that I was involved in at least the decision making and making some of the motions that were made to accommodate that.

P: Well at one point as I also understand there was some difficulty in coming to a final conclusion and there was discussion among the Board of Trustees as whether or not to file a law suit. Do you remember that discussion?

F: No, I don’t. As a matter of fact, over the years, subsequently to that I had a number occasion where Dr. Schure would visit my office and would chat—this was after I became president. Though I don’t remember that fact, though but, I don’t think Dr. Fischler and probably, Mr. Ellis would be able to discuss that.

P: They both discussed that. So you became chair of the Board from 1988 to 1995. And, also during that time, you were chairman of the executive committee.

F: But, I’m not sure that was the exact time frame. Go back to using your date, [19]84 I was on the board. I think it was in 1987 that Mary McCahill and Abe Fischler came to me and asked me whether or not I would consider becoming chairman of the Board. And, at that time, I told them, it probably would have been [19]88.

Okay, well so it was somewhere in [19]87 and I said, no, I couldn’t do that. Because I had run a contested race for President of Florida Bar. I was president-elect, and then I was president. And, I was essentially out of my office for a year and a half or two years. And so, I needed to get back in the swing of things. And, I can remember Mary and Abe saying, well if I—Mary was the chair and she always used to say, chairman, and call me chairman, and we did, wonderful lady—if I stay on another year, will you consider it then. I said, yes. So that would have been in [19]88 when I agreed to become chair. So, I remained as chair for a number years and then at some point, they asked me to take on some more responsibilities that would entail being here at the university a bit more and so I stepped down as chair and became chairman of the executive committee and I think simultaneously, chair of the finance committee.

Bob Steele was the one who suggested that. He became the chair and obviously having done that I was on the campus much more looking at some of the internal organizations and fundraising and things of that nature.

How powerful can a chair of the Board of Trustees be?

It really isn't how powerful can they be, it's how powerful should they be.

Okay.

And, you even know from the accrediting agencies that you can’t be a chair of a board and still be receiving compensation from the university and things of that nature. That’s my recollection back then. But, having said that, I felt then, and I feel now that any board member and particularly the chair has to understand
their role. There a policy making body and they should not be involved in the day to day operations of a university. As a matter of fact, I can remember a number of times when I was chair of the board where we would go into executive session and I would say, this is for informational purposes only, the president has made these decisions, but these are decisions that have some implications and we don’t want you to be blindsided when you hear it in the community. So, we would do that. But, I made it clear that the board is a policy making board, and not an operational board. And, I think some schools, that gets blurred, and that’s not good.

Having said that, picking up on your last comment, a board member can be as influential as they are, if number one, they have the best interest of the university and they devote their time and energy to it and people respect them for their views. So I think you become more influential by what you put into a particular organization.

P: And when you were on the Board of Trustees, did you try to set general policy or goals.

F: Yes.

P: But, you didn’t worry about hiring and tuition and that sort of thing?

F: No, and—well of course it would be yes on the tuition because we would have to approve the budget each year, and obviously part of that would be, what is the revenue side of it. But, yes, clearly I felt that we needed to enhance the use of technology here on the campus. We were one of the first schools, as you well know, Julian, that was a leader in distance education. Well, distance education,
when we first started it was flying a professor to a—it could be a hotel, it could be a community college—and delivering lectures face-to-face. That was distance education. Over the years, that’s transpired to where now, we have completely online programs. We have online programs were people have to attend institutes. We have blended programs, where part of its face-to-face and part of its online. And clearly, I felt that at that time—and encouraged the board—to say that we needed to do more in the way of technology. And I can remember having meetings in David Rush’s office—who unfortunately is another one of my colleagues and friends who passed away recently. That was the whole subject of our meetings—was how do we enhance the university’s technology and use of technology. And it was the right decision then, and clearly, the rest of the country has been emulating us.

P: Now, you have virtual classrooms, you have Southstar, you have satellites.

F: That’s right, we have programs in which we have compressed interactive video from here at the central campus, West Palm Beach, and Ponce, Puerto Rico for our Pharmacy school, which is the only school in the country that’s allowed to do that as a pilot program.

P: Well it’s interesting because one of the issues for Nova when they first started and these cluster programs, is that everybody said this was a diploma mill.

F: Correct.

P: Now, it is standard. Even Cornell, you know, Ivy League schools are offering long-distance programs.
I can remember going to a SACS meeting where the then chancellor—I can’t remember his name, he’s since passed away—of the University of North Carolina system said, for those of you who have not, are not involved in distance education and online education, that train has left the station. That train has left the station. And clearly, it was, you can see it in your children, your grandchildren. They are so technologically advanced. And, I don’t know how we would do it. Just recently, I’m holding town hall meetings with individual staff groups like finance and institution advancement in our education centers around the state. We had a meeting here, and I had satellite cameras in each of the others where I could—and I didn’t have to get in a plane and fly to five places, six places. We did it all in one day.

And that’s been an emphasis since you’ve been president, as well.

Well, clearly. Yes. And I think it’s—and also the education centers—I thought that was—we can talk about that a little later if you want.

Okay, well I noticed just walking around campus there are Sharp TV, there are computers where you can pick out what the courses are, and check in with departments. So there is an information agency from the university to the students and the community.

Right, and the thing we’re looking at—a number of different software packages now with respect to the application process, but more importantly, the advisement, so that a student can go online and see if they are a biology major and they want to switch to something else, what courses will they be able to transfer and things of that nature. I know John Lombardi at the University of
Florida he started that. At least in his book he talks about that. Some people say that maybe he didn’t start it. [Laughter] But, I believe John; I thought John was a great president.

P: Well, let me put this way, John took credit for it. [Laughter] Since you know John, you would understand that.

F: That’s okay, nothing wrong with that.

P: No, and he’s the one who made it work. So obviously, he needed some technical skill that he didn’t have, but that doesn’t matter.

F: Right.

P: Talk about the Board and the hiring and the firing of Dr. Steven Feldman. There were 178 candidates, and they narrowed it down to five, and they came on campus and you interviewed them.

F: Right.

P: What were the major factors in choosing Dr. Feldman—because he had come from Western Connecticut State University, which is a public school?

F: Right and I had a concern about that—and expressed those to Dr. Fischler—and clearly, when he came here, I think, to be fair to him, this was a different culture. I know he tried to embrace that culture, but, it became apparent to, I think, many people that where this university was, the way it operated and things, was much different than the public system. And, at the end of the day, it was a mutual agreement to part ways.

P: Well, I notice it here—it’s from the minutes of the Board of Trustees—Mr. Ferrero added his recommendation that a ________ Dr. Feldman be offered the
presidency. You noted that Feldman, with the more traditional background, recognizes that distance learning is a major component at Nova and has been researching this field. So, what you’re saying [is] that he came understanding in general what was going on, but once he got here, he had difficulty translating his former experience into the present—

F: I think very obviously, you’ve talked to him, so you get his take on it. But clearly, remember I talked about—you were asking about the role of the board. That is why we were having meetings on this technology issue. Because many of us on the board felt that we needed to devote more resources toward technology and that’s the reason we were having those meetings, particularly at David Rush’s business and things of that nature. So, there was concern about that. You have to put this in context. Dr. Fischler had said he wanted to resign, and we went through a search, and there were some good candidates. And so, at that point with Fischler driving this, in essence saying, I really want to retire; and a very significant thing was, we were going to be coming up for reaffirmation. And so, as Abe [Fischler] told me, here is a president who has been there 25 years, they are gonna want to know what’s happening after. And so, it was important, that’s why he wanted step down, do the search, and have someone aboard, so that question was eliminated. So there was an urgency for us to, in fact find a new president, and at the time, there was a feeling that Steven was the best person.

P: Transition is critical here, particularly for SACS.

F: Sure, absolutely.
P: Some of the things he did that I would sort of like to get you to comment on—one of the things he seems to be very proud of, for the first time he decided that the university needed landscaping and needed to look like a real university, and he put quite a bit of time and effort into that.

F: Certainly did, and as you drive around the campus, particularly, if you look at these royal palms.

P: He’s the one who put those in?

F: There is no question about it. And I’m trying to think of the fellow who was with our vitae at the time who worked with him. Clearly, the campus was a much more beautiful place after he had that vision of his.

P: And the trustees supported?

F: Absolutely.

P: I noticed that it makes a difference when people are coming on campus trying to decide what school to attend. It probably gives a certain amount of pride to the people who are on the campus who are walking around.

F: Well, there is no question about it. There isn’t a person who comes on here—and now we have a program called academic review, where we bring in a reviewer from outside a particular program, and we probably had about 50, 60, maybe almost 70 of those people. They are amazed when come here and see the facilities that we have and the campus atmosphere we have and things of that nature. All of those things are extremely important. And clearly, when you trying to recruit undergraduates—you know probably better than I that—I often say this: when you talk to parents, the parents want to know where the library is and what
are the living accommodations for resident students. The students want to know, where’s the university center. But the old student union at the University of Florida. So clearly, the ambience of a campus is extremely important. And we’re very proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish here.

P: And, the decision to site the Miami Dolphins’ training facility on campus, were you involved in those negotiations?

F: Only peripherally, that really was Abe Fischler and Jack LaBonte and Joel Burhman, who was the vice-president for legal affairs. I think they were the primary ones on that. I will say this that I did have something to do with agreeing that we would also let them put the bubble on the campus now.

P: And this didn’t cost the university anything—

F: Correct.

P: And the benefit would be the prestige. Both Fischler and Feldman told me that they wanted, when they talked about the Miami Dolphins’ training facility, it on the Nova campus.

F: Correct.

P: So it was designed that both institutions would be institutions of excellence and they would complement one another.

F: I think that’s true, and I think that over the years it has proven to be that because we do get some recognition with respect to the Dolphins’ when there are announcements. And, we further enhanced that when we did put the bubble up, because now, we get some trailers in the stadium about the university, and we have some signage down there, were in the game book, each month or each
game. So all of those things bring more awareness to the South Florida
community about NSU and our relationship and then as a consequence, brings
some benefit to the university from the standpoint of attracting students and
letting people know the great things that are happening here.

P: There might be another perk, I’m not sure this still exists, do you get to use the
Dolphins’ box at the games?

F: No, but as part of the negotiations on the bubble that they put up, they have
assigned us a box for our own use.

P: Perhaps one of the most critical changes in this university is going to be the
merger with Southeastern.

F: Correct.

P: And this is something, having talked with other individuals at the university, was
not anticipated; the health care segment was not something the university was
really planning to do.

F: Correct.

P: But, take the story from the time Morton Terry of Southeastern contacts Nova
and says, look, we would really like to have a merger. And obviously, there are a
lot people involved. Ovid Lewis is involved, Feldman is involved, Fischler’s
involved. What was your involvement and how much influence did the Board of
Trustees have over this arrangement?

F: Well, I was the Chairman of the Board at the time. I came about really at some
type of university event where Dr. Terry—

P: It was Feldman’s inauguration.
F: Okay, that’s where it was. Dr. Terry and Steven Feldman, President Feldman’s inauguration—and as the story goes, and I’ve only heard this second hand—is that Dr. Terry put down 8 or 10 points and handed it to him on the back of the program, which in essence was the start of the merger. When you think about it, we did have one board member who was on both boards, and that was David Rush. So he was on the board of Southeastern and he was on the board of the University. So—

P: And coincidentally he was the Chair of the search for Feldman.

F: I thought Bill Horvitz was the Chair.

P: I think David Rush, but he might have been? That’s okay, never mind.

F: Okay, he might have been, but at any rate. So, the bottom line to it was, is that then as a board we discussed it. It clearly made some sense to me, and so we then attempted to expedite it as much as we could. And I will say this that for a variety of reasons Dr. Terry was very foresighted in that whole idea. He, I think—though he never said this to me—but, I think he recognized that his institution was not going to be able to grow the way it could unless it had an affiliation with a university. I think that at one time they had had some conversations with the University of Miami—

P: They did.

F: That didn’t pan out.

P: Miami wasn’t interested.

F: Yeah, and so, clearly with us it was an opportunity for them. And I can tell you, anytime I talk, that merger defies modern math. One plus one doesn’t equal two,
it equals ten. It’s been great for both schools. But he had the foresight to know that he was getting on in years. Thankfully, he had quite a few years left. But, to have Southeastern grow to where it could—and he’d already accomplished a lot by creating so many schools within that—that he thought that the affiliation with the university would have been good. And then, plus the fact that he would get onto this campus, and then we kept that other facility, which again was a great thing for us as well. So, it was a great move and a lot of foresight.

P: Certainly adventatgeous economically, they had a $35 million dollar endowment—

F: It was more than that. It was $50 something odd million.

P: And they had, they were making profits, something like $3 million a year. And they were willing to build, which they did. They built a building, built a parking lot, staffed it, did the whole thing.

F: Yeah, correct.

P: And so, in this context the University here supplied the land and they supplied the building.

F: Correct.

P: So it was a win-win situation.

F: Absolutely, and then from the time that we announced the merger, until the time they were on campus—let’s see, we merged in [19]94—


F: By [19]97 they were physically on the campus.
P: Yeah, just the process of merging these two very different institutions must have been a nightmare because you’ve got—they didn’t have a pension for their employees, there were trustees that had to be dealt with, there were by-laws, accounting techniques, all kinds of legal issues. Fortunately, they didn’t have any liens. They were pretty well established in their field. So, their medicine school had already been accredited—osteopathy school. So it came to you without a lot of necessary changes.

F: But there were obviously a lot of—

P: A lot of internal issues.

F: A lot of internal issues and my recollection is that I recommended to the president that we have, I think it was—I can’t remember the firm, whether it was Scott McCarthy or Steel Hector, it was probably Steel Hector.

P: Steel Hector.

F: Steel Hector were the lawyers and I think Pat Sykes who was the, who’s now a federal judge, was the lawyer who was, who gave us advice on that. That was Sandy Delamberte’s old firm. So the answer to it is, is yes there were a lot of those issues, but we sat down and really it was—the board had to be very involved and the chair who, at that time was me, had to be very involved because there were a lot of those issues that involved the board and the continuant. And that worked out fine over the years.

P: And here again is example of the flexibility.

F: Yes.

P: And particularly from their side as well.
F: That’s true.
P: Had Mort Terry not been willing to make some accommodations.
F: Correct.
P: And this was really the, as I understand it, the actual negotiations took only nine months. If this had been a state school or any other circumstances—
F: Well as I say from—if you’re pinning the date where they first wrote these things on the program, Feldman’s inauguration to in fact when we merged, it was about 12 months. So everything got done in 12 months, which is remarkable.
P: And since that time. Obviously it has expanded significantly.
F: Correct.
P: And another development that comes about later which is again one of these measured risks. There is a decision to build a dental school. At the time—
F: I can tell you about that chapter in verse.
P: Well do, because at this time Northwestern University in Illinois was closing down their dental school.
F: Correct.
P: There had not been a major dental school built for several years.
F: For at least 26 years.
P: Yeah, what was the thinking behind the dental school?
F: Well, I think—my recollection is Ovid Lewis was the president at that time and he asked me to serve on that committee. And I think at that time I was chair of the finance committee and probably chair of the executive committee. So in a joking way, I used to say as I went into those meetings: when is the last day I can pull
the plug on this thing? Because there were a number of schools, Northwestern was in the process of closing, but there were a number of schools that in fact closed. And I was very concerned. But they did the right kind of due diligence and clearly, I voted for it and recommended it to the board at the time that we do go forward with it. And as it turned out, it was a great decision. That school now gets roughly gets 3000 applications for about 125-130 seats. So clearly it was the right decision at the right time. First dental school in the United States in 26 years.

P: Plus it’s a state of the art facility.

F: Absolutely.

P: And the money that initially people were thinking they were going to have to spend, that it might not be returned, obviously the tuition and the prestige has been well worth that commitment.

F: I think there are a variety of things with the whole health profession division. Number one it’s another way we can serve our community and I think I said that in [19]98 at my inauguration that we have to be, we have to have an outreach to our community, we have to collaborate and clearly by having these various schools and the clinics that we have here. Clearly, we are an added value to our entire community.

P: Well there is pharmacy; there is optometry; mental health—

F: And most recently allied health with a nursing program with—

P: That is relatively new is it not?
F: That’s another whole story I got. Governor Jeb Bush asked me to consider starting a nursing school. I told him, Governor, when I became president in [19]98 I had people suggesting that we start a nursing program. I said how can I do that with two state schools within 25 miles of North and South of me that have nursing programs. You have Miami that has a great nursing program. You have Barry. You show me a non-traditional nursing program and we’ll do it. He said I’ll get you some seed money. We started a non-traditional RN to BSN program, nights and weekends, following the agility of this university. Came up with a different kind of a program. We were only offering it to those people who had RN degrees, so we could have faculty aboard. Didn’t have to start the accreditation process and start teaching. Later we then, and this was in the last 5 or 6 years, we then started an entry level nursing program in conjunction with Barry. A Masters program for nurse educators and then last year and Barry taught the Ph.D. Then we started our own Ph.D. And in that 5 or 6 year we probably have 750-800 students in all of those different programs and have probably graduated another 200. I can tell you that’s a remarkable educational story.

P: And a huge need for nursing.

F: Absolutely. What we’ve done now. And I know we probably want to talk about more history. But we now have those programs in some of our educational sites so we are servicing people in different communities including Miami and Fort Myers; Miami with Baptist Hospital and Fort Myers with Lee Memorial. And we have now started PA [Physician’s Assistant] programs in Fort Myers, Orlando, and Jacksonville all out of this merger that we’ve been talking about.
P: Now once Dr. Steven Feldman resigns the Board of Trustees has to hire a new president.

F: Correct.

P: Explain what the board went through and the conclusions you came to at the hiring of Ovid Lewis.

F: Well, you know, at that point we really didn’t have too much of an alternative from the standpoint of where we were headed and where we were going. Obviously we need a president. Dr. Lewis was Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Though in the past, my recollection, he had expressed some feeling that he wanted to retire and that was relatively short term rather than long term. The decision I think was an easy one for us. He was a proven commodity. We know Dr. Lewis, he was well respected and the bottom line to it is he was offered the position as president of the university.

P: Plus, he had been dean of the law school.

F: He’d been dean of the law school. In fact, I was on the search committee when he was hired as the dean of the law school.

P: In fact, he actually handed in his resignation to Dr. Feldman in April of that year wanting to retire in December.

F: See I didn’t remember that, but I knew there was, clearly that was his feeling.

P: So you offered the position to him, but as interim?

F: No, we had some discussion about that and my recollection is his comment was if I’m going to do this really the interim will make me less effective and at the final
analysis he was made president. I don’t think he was ever interim. I don’t think the term interim was ever used.

P: What was his general overview of the presidency when he took office, what did he want to accomplish?

F: I think you have to ask him that. I don’t know, I don’t know the answer to that.

P: Well one of the things that’s come up, several people have indicated to me that once he became president it turned out that he really didn’t want to be president that he wanted to retire and he had some reluctance to pursue some of the goals that he might have otherwise desired.

F: Well, you know, I think that that’s a fair analysis from the standpoint of here’s a person who really had—was at the end of a very distinguished career in the law and in the academy. And again I say you have to ask him about this, but therefore your horizon is relatively short term and you don’t have the time to set long range goals or the vision, the overall vision of the university. So for those people who have said that, I think that is a fair analysis that he wanted to make sure—well part of it though, was that he knew that we were coming up on reaccredidation which was a major thing. I remember talking to him about that. He asked me to get very involved in that whole issue. Again, I was chairman of the executive committee or something at that time. So clearly, those were issues that needed to be addressed and going through reaffirmation this last time in 2007—

P: It’s hard work. [Laughter]
F: It was a huge undertaking here at the university. That’s the second one I’ve been through. I’m not going to be going through another one, I can tell you that. And the other side of the coin is back then, back then when we were talking about leading up to [19]97-98 this university—the university then is not what it is today. So there were a number of issues. As a matter of fact, that was one of my first charges when I became president. I made the presentation before the committee, the SACS committee. We had a war room for a day and a half [to] two days before. Bob Steele came, who was then chair of the board. Ovid was there. I was there and we made the presentation. So he had a lot on his plate during that period of time, about making sure the university got through reaffirmation. You know as well as I do, probably better, if you don’t have accreditation—

P: You’re done.

F: Or you’re on probation, you’ve got some real serious problems.

P: There was some discussion that Ovid Lewis would be really a temporary president because the board really had hoped that you would become president and there was some, I think, problem on your part to deal with your law firm and other issues before you would be willing to be a candidate.

F: That is not my recollection. There were some members of the board who approached me, but that wasn’t until 1997 about becoming the president. There was no question that Ovid was saying that he wanted to retire, so that’s a fact over here. I think that also a driving force is they had gone through a national search that had not been successful at the end of the day. Then put in context
the fact that from the standpoint of the university—I put if facetiously sometimes—when the discussion started it was over the fact that better the devil they know than the one they don’t know. I’m being a little depreciating of myself at that point. In about [19]97 a number of the board members came to me and asked me whether I would consider it. But, prior to that time there had been no in fact discussion that I was part of about my becoming the president.

Would people say, you know you ought to think about it and things of that nature; I have no recollection of that. That could have occurred. But it wasn’t until [19]97 that there was any serious conversation about that and I can remember very vividly when I said there are two or three conditions on this. Number one, before I talk to my wife or talk to my partners, my law partners and things of that nature, I want to know that the board wants me to do this, not just a group of the board. That’s number one. And number two is that we arrive at an agreement under what circumstances because I have to shut down my law practice and things of that nature. We can do that within a week. So they appointed a small committee, we worked out all of those terms and then at that time I talked to my wife about it and I talked to my law partner and I said let’s go forward. Then it was at a retreat that we had with the board where the board voted that they wanted me to become president.

P: Prior to 1997 had you entertained any idea of becoming president?

F: Yes, the answer in fairness is yes. From this standpoint: I thought that the university had enormous potential. I thought that because of what had transpired, we’re now talking about a period of five years, we perhaps had lost direction and
that we were kind of drifting, and that I didn’t think that from the standpoint of the well-being of the university that we could continue on that route and that there was enormous amount of potential. And the other side of the coin is that I’d been involved in education in all my life in one form or another and I’d been talking about it and espousing about it. And then one of the motivating reasons was the opportunities to try some of the things I thought were important. So had it entered my mind? Yes, but not seriously until a number of the board came to me.

P: Plus, you’d been on the board for fourteen years. You had been involved at the university; you know what was going on. Therefore, they were picking somebody who understood the university and had some sense of where they wanted the university to go.

F: Everything you said is correct, but I will tell you, from day one when you go inside full-time you don’t realize the things you don’t know until you are there.

P: What kind of contract did they offer you?

F: Three years, and that’s all I wanted.

P: And has that been the case since that time, every three years?

F: Yes, correct.

P: Do you have a yearly evaluation with the board of trustees?

F: Yes, yes I do. And that’s a SACS requirement as well.

P: Do you write a formal summary?

F: What I do, and it might be of interest to you, you might want a copy of it; my assistant will get you one. I started what we first called a report card. And now about every institution in effect does it. And it’s about that thick now. And we take
all of our strategic plan and all of the things the university is charged in doing and there may be ten or fifteen items under each one of these. And we use [19]98 as the base year. Not because that's the year I became president but that was the year we became reaccredited. So [19]98 is the base year and then we compare it to the last year in which we have IPED reports, for example—and those are two years behind—so this one goes from [19]98 to 2007, but to have a comparison year-to-year we do 2006 and 2007. That book is about that think now; I'll get you a copy of it. And I submit that to the board retreat, which is always in May and then I meet with a committee of the board, we go over it and that’s when they do their evaluation.

P: And they have a compensation committee?

F: Yes they do.

P: What was the most daunting process you encountered when you first became president?

F: It was a combination of things. The first thing is that I thought there were elements within the university that I thought were malfunctioning or non-functioning. I also felt that there was no vision for the university. I thought that there were people who were in positions that they had not grown to the university as it was in 1998. I felt that there was a lack of communication among the various schools and among the various departments. I felt that there was no collaboration among our schools. And I felt very strongly that we weren't taking our rightful place as far as a resource for our community. And in that I really felt local South Florida, Florida, the country, not as much emphasis internationally,
though I did mention it. I thought a combination of those things were extremely
important and had to be addressed very quickly. And I knew going in what the
changes had to be, but you’re old enough to remember that had I done
everything in the first month or the first weekend it would have been similar to
the—you remember the term “Saturday night massacre?”

P: Yes.

F: Well clearly that was not the way to do it. Had I been in my own law practice I
would have done it that way. But this was different and so we had to do this over
a period of a year, particularly, as I was talking about vision. I knew where I
thought the university should go. But, we had a series of charities for nine or ten
months. And out of that came a sense of where the university would go and how
we should get there. And obviously I had some effect in steering where that
conversation was going. But at the end of the day, we had a vision of all of the
things I’ve mentioned that we needed to collaborate more internally that we had
to collaborate more externally both with our sister private institutions, the public
situation and public corporations. We needed to branch out in the state and take
our rightful role. We needed to be more visible in the state from the standpoint of
being a valuable asset for education of Floridians, all of those things. But that’s a
vision. And one of the essential parts of that vision was that we would remain as
a private, not-for-profit university.

P: And over a period of time, where you able to put in your own administrative
team?

F: Yes.
P: And then did you change the directors of any of the institutes or centers?

F: Over the period of time I’ve probably appointed virtually every one of the deans. But that’s been more by attrition rather than having to fire anybody. People have moved on and things of that nature. But yes, with respect to several of the depart vice-presidents we had to make some accommodations and several people left.

P: And as the institution grows, you’re going to have to beef up the administrative staff.

F: No, I don’t think so. What we’re trying to do is be more effective and yes you have to add staff. But if you find ways that you can be more effective, more economical you can do those things. And I think by combining resources you can do that. I’ll give you an example: it was clear early on that what was beginning to happen, in each of our schools we were developing our own IT potential, you know information technology. Well, I put it together with one; we call it the IZONE now where we have a group of people who will help faculty devise their curriculum. Not that they put the content matter in but put it online and do things like that, and then brought some specialists around that. Well, there is a way where you end up with one department servicing all of the fifteen colleges and schools, rather than having fifteen outposts. We do the same thing over in the medical school, they have one basic science faculty instead of five basic faculty. As a private university you have to look at ways you can be economical and efficient.
P: As you take over as president is the essential element of this institution still that all of these schools and centers are semi-autonomous?

F: Clearly, that was the old Harvard model that every tub has its own bottom. But I said vocally at that time to the deans that that has to change. We were somewhere around 14,000 students then, where now at around 28 [thousand]. As we grew there had to be where it made some sense, centralization of services. And that was difficult because at the university some of the central services didn’t have a good track record. So that’s why you had all of these shadow functions.

P: You mean things like advising?

F: Well no, advising always would have been within the center, but some of the support things weren’t there. So one of the things you have to do is gain the trust of people and over the period of time we have had some centralization. Clearly, the entire budgetary function had to be improved. I felt very strongly that our students who were in the clusters around the state, back then we had about fifty or so clusters around the state, that they weren’t getting the service that the other students where; that’s when in [19]99 I started these education centers. We’re now in every major city east of Tallahassee starting in Miami.

P: The big one in Orlando, right?

F: Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Orlando, West Palm Beach, Tampa, and Jacksonville.

P: So those are administrative centers for these clusters?
F: No, they are fully staffed buildings; essentially the entire building is ours. The one in Orlando we own, the rest are leased. In fact, last Thursday I was in Tampa where we just doubled our space there, we have 83,000 square feet. And so we've collapsed those clusters and utilized fully staffed, we have a director, an assistant director, we have advisors, we have student aid people there, we have IT people, we have financial aid people. So they can go in either face-to-face, blended models, or online. But they have a service center there for them and computer labs and things of that nature. And that is where we have now these health units as well. Physician's assistants and the one we just started in Tampa was anesthesiologist's assistants and the nursing program that I talked about. So all of those things were necessary and we started those in [19]99. They have been a great success.

P: Now, internally in the centers do they still set their own tuition, make their own hires?

F: Within reason because now that's part of—when I brought George Handberry he came in ten months after I offered him the position and spent ten months.

P: He had been the city manager of Fort Lauderdale.

F: The city manager of Fort Lauderdale. At the time when I became president, I had all the deans reporting to me and all of the vice-presidents. So I had about thirty some-odd direct reports, and so the long story about George we can talk about some other time, but I told him that I needed to have him come aboard. He said, I don't know anything about the academy. I said, George, you are running a city, I'm running a big city. I want you because of your expertise in that area to come
aboard and clearly we had facilities management, not armed police but security, we had HR, we had all those issues. Finance, all the things he would deal with as a city manager. So I was able to shift responsibility of all of those to him. So clearly there were a lot of things on the plate at that time.

P: That may have been your best hire.

F: No question, he’s a great guy.

P: Well because, in academia sometimes we tend to forget all of these business aspects of running a university.

F: Yeah and your question really was the first reason why I said it that way. Because, I charged him with starting a budgetary process that made sense. So we in essence now have a zero base budgeting process that is very involved and I don’t have to get involved into the budget until much later in the process and then with respect to new faculty, new hires and things of that nature, I have a separate meeting on that along with Dr. DiPiano, who is the provost and also Dr. Hamburg, we go through all of those things. But, the recommendations really are from the deans through their faculty on what are the tuition rates and things of that nature. With the one overriding thing that I try and have them know my feelings that to the extent that we can we limit tuition increase to the extent we can. Recognizing that we are a private not-for-profit and at the end of the day we have to at least to break even. Clearly, those are concerns.

P: Do the centers still have different academic schedules?

F: We have changed that most recently. We are now essentially on the same start dates. That was a major undertaking over the last three or four years, because I
think we had about 130-150 different start dates. We have some outliers, but those are based upon good academic reasons, mostly twenty-seven month programs.

P: Talk a little bit about the Oral school and how that’s evolved over the years.

F: I think that’s one of the jewels for the university. It really came about with Dr. Fischler and Dr. Sigel, Marilynn Sigel, Mickey Sigel. As you know, it’s essentially two parts: one is early-childhood development, and the other is special needs children, particularly in the autism spectrum; one of the best centers that we’ve got in the university when you talk about community outreach. I can’t tell you how many people who talk to me about the university and talk to me about the fact that their children at age the three months started in the program, the parent and child program there.

Just the other day in one of my staff meetings, a women came up and she said, you were able, for us, to get our daughter into the Bowdwin school, which is a special needs, and I want you to know that she’s been very successful and know she’s mainstreamed into a school. Those things make you feel very proud. But I thought then and felt throughout our deans, including our most recent, that that was a gem that wasn’t being utilized and we are going to build on that to create a center of excellence, particularly in early-childhood development and special needs as it pertains to autism. So I’m trying to get three of our centers together around that: psychology, humanities and social sciences, and the Marilynn Sigel Institute.

P: And Jim Merande gave a nice gift.
F: Yes, Jim and Jan Merande made a major contribution, and of course, the family center over there is the Jim and Jan Mernande Family Center.

P: And that’s relatively new right?

F: Yes, relatively new.

P: Talk about how the university school has evolved.

F: The University School is another gem. I am very proud; I go to all of their commencements. It’s a great K through twelve program and I will say that, without talking about other schools, there is a different culture there, it’s a very nurturing culture. I think that’s important. It’s a fine prep school and when you go to the graduations and see that the students are going to the best Ivy League schools, the best schools in the mid-west, the University of Michigan, Ohio, you know, all of those, and some of the smaller liberal arts colleges. And in the last several years, one young man to the Military Academy at West Point and this year a young man to the Coast Guard Academy. Those are the kinds of things you can be very proud of, and it’s a great school, and they’re coming along great.

P: Is it still as experimental, as innovative as when it began?

F: I can’t really speak to when it began but I think it still is willing to try new ideas and utilize technology. In addition to that over the last number of years we’re seeing more and more of an interrelationship between the University School and the College of Arts and Science and some of our Graduate Programs like the Oceanography Center, and things of that nature. So, I think clearly those are the kinds of things that we want to try and develop so that it can be a premier K
through twelve, pre-K through twelve program. And really live out the name that we placed on that whole concept. A university school within a university.

P: This is really the fruition of what the original founders wanted to do. They saw this cradle to the grave. You had Broward, you had the University School, then you started graduate students, and now undergraduates, and now medical. And obviously, programs for geriatric programs and that sort of thing. So you’ve now run the gamut of educational opportunities.

F: Well, that’s true but meanwhile when you think back to 1964, I think it was, the first class was seventeen students, they were all PhD students or doctoral students.

P: And their tuition was paid. [Laughter]

F: I didn’t remember that part, I wasn’t around.

P: Everything was paid. And I’ve asked, I said well how do you expect to sustain the university if you’ve got seventeen students and no one is paying any tuition? And they said well we made a mistake there. [Laughter] So that was a little shortsighted.

F: Right.

P: But the idea was so grandiose to be the MIT of the South and it didn’t come to fruition as they originally set it up.

F: Correct.

P: But that shows again this flexibility we’re talking about.

F: Well but to some extent it has because as opposed to most universities in the country were upside-down. By that I mean we’re eighty percent graduate and first
professional and twenty percent undergraduate, where most schools are the exact reverse.

P: And you mentioned the Oceanography Center. That’s been from the very beginning a cornerstone of this university.

F: There is no question about it. They do cutting edge research on a number of areas: the coral reef, they have an institute for that. They also more recently, the Guy Harvey Institute, which talks about the fisheries of the world, doing great research on a variety of things, they’ve done DNA testing now where they can identify shark species. They came up with this shark that can repopulate itself, I don’t know the scientific term to it, but those kinds of things. They are doing great work. Clearly been recognized for it.

P: And therefore the mascot of the school.

F: I don’t think it came that way. [Laughter] That was a funny story.

P: Ok.

F: The story really came from the students, mostly the undergraduate students. Our mascot at that point was the knight. They did a survey; nobody knew what the mascot was. So, they conducted a contest first as to what the mascot should be and they had great representation. Brad Williams is the person who really oversaw that, the Dean of Students. Then they came down to some finalists, and it came down to two. One was the rays, the stingrays, and the other was the sharks.

P: But Tampa had the stingrays.

F: I don’t remember that.
P: They were originally called the stingrays.

F: Yeah, I don’t remember that. At any rate, they came in to me and said, well here are the two choices, it’s up to you. What are we going to do? I said well what other choices. And he told me. And I said, well what was the vote, not that that’s going to make a difference. He said well, eighty percent for the sharks and twenty percent for the rays. And I said, well, and I thought about it. Well, I’m afraid we’re going to have to go with the rays. And you could see their faces drop. And I let that go on for a minute or two. And I said let me tell you the reason. I said, my wife went to Miami High and if I go back and tell her that I chose the sharks over the stingrays, Miami High was the stingrays, she’ll divorce me and I can’t afford it. [Laughter] So I let that go for a few minutes. And then I said no, I’m kidding. And of course she would tell you if she was sitting here that that would have been the last thing on her mind. So we went with the sharks and it’s been great.

P: But the shark is a predator.

F: Well, I’d say it in a different way. It’s an essential part of the food chain as far as sea life is concerned. The biggest problem in this day and age is that they are not the predator, they are the victim. I don’t know whether it’s five million or “X” number of sharks that are being slaughtered every year merely for their fins.

P: Another central element that I think your pursuing over your tenure as president is to expand the undergraduate number here and also to continue what had been called liberal studies is now Farquhar School, and to raise the standard of admission and performance for undergraduates.
F: Right.

P: How have you organized that goal?

F: First of all, to give you a little bit of history on that. Five or six years ago I went to the board and I said we needed to concentrate on increasing our undergraduate enrollment. Part of it was because of our upside down nature that I already described. In addition to that I saw what was on the horizon as far as the state is concerned, the State of Florida, and some of our sister institutions, and the board subscribed to that at that time. But, having said that, we needed the type of facilities that would attract the undergraduate students. And there were a variety of things. First, of all you needed the right facilities and clearly with the new library, the new university center, the new classroom buildings, that was a major motivating factor for all of that. But in addition to that you needed to broaden the array of offerings in the College of Arts and Science, and we’ve done that over a number of years. The last part of that was that we needed to, and we did this with the concurrence of the deans involved; centralize to some extent some of our programs. First, with the two deans’ concurrence, transfer the undergraduate business program to the business school the [Wayne] Huizenga School. A year later, I did the same with the education school. Education was really driven by the fact—well, both of them to some extent—we could not seek national accreditation with either of those schools with part of the program being in one school and part in another school. So at least that was my feeling, it would certainly be a hindrance to it.
We went ahead and transferred the undergrad. You’d enter the business school as a freshman. The general education part would still be in the College of Arts and Science. So, that if they had a history course, you would have taught it in the College of Arts and Science. So all of those things were factors that needed to be put into place. Now, for the last year or two, because we've had some changes on our board, I've had to educate them about the future and what I thought about back six years ago has now transpired. For a variety of reasons you see the state university system, for their own reasons, which I won’t go into, curtailing enrollment at the undergraduate level. Some of them because of capacity, they just don't have the physical capacity. Others because, as you know, you can set tuitions at a graduate or professional, you're not going to get much concern from the legislature and parents. You start messing with tuition at the undergraduate level, $5 and it’s a maelstrom that’s gonna come up. Even if anyone was paying tuition at the University of Florida.

P: Which they are not. [Laughter]

F: It doesn’t make any difference. So that’s why there’s been a move away, a decoupling if you will from Bright Futures [state funded scholarships]. They did it the year before last, or last year with the four research institutions and this year, completely for all fifteen so that tuition are decoupled from Bright Futures with some grandfathering built into it. That was essential, because, as you know, the income from the lottery was kind of like this and the demand was going like this, so there have been some changes. All of those things I saw coming and this last recession that we’re in now, I never envisioned it would be that bad. But, I saw
these other things coming and I felt that we were not producing enough bachelors [B.A. degrees].

So I felt that for a variety of reasons this university really needed to be involved more in undergraduate education. Facilities first, programming at the same time, and the last thing that I would say to you is growth and increasing quality are not mutually exclusive. You can do both, but you have to do it judiciously. So we look at the bottom tier of students that we’re looking at and take a look at them a year later. Are there any things that you’d been able to predict on day one that would say that they would probably not have been successful. And if then you could nudge up your entrance requires some, you ought to do that. Because not wasting a year, perhaps they’d gone to a community college, in addition, they are not saddled with debt. So you can do that with one caveat, you have to be very mindful, there are people that the numbers will belie, and that is they will succeed even though there numbers don’t show it. So you have to have an ability to make exceptions and provide access. I think you can do both of those.

And the bottom line is that when I started this a number of years ago, we were probably in the full-time day-time cohort we were probably about 1,300 students, we’re now at 2,600. And at this last board retreat, it’s taken me two or three years to educate our board, they now have said that our recommendation is that we double the size of our full-time—that cohort.

P: To 5,000.

F: Double it. In the next three to five years.
P: What percentage of your income is tuition, about eighty-five percent?

F: Yeah, eighty-five, maybe as much as ninety.

P: So if you’re going to grow tuition it’s going to be a little hard at the graduate level. You really need to grow it—

F: No, if you look at any one of our schools you’ll see that we’re well below the median, in any one of our schools as far as our tuition rates. So as you increase the perception of—I know we have quality in all of our programs—but as you increase the perception of the quality, I think that we can gradually increase tuition. With the one caveat again that I’m trying to hold tuition down as much as I can and still at the end of the day at least break even and have a little surplus. But I don’t think those are mutually exclusive. I think we can still grow tuition and find out innovative ways that we can make it better for students to come here.

P: Undergraduate tuition, as I understand it is about $19,000.

F: $20,000 this year.

P: Just yesterday we saw that FAU [Florida Atlantic University] is gonna have a fifteen percent increase, so they are going to be $4,300. So you are sort of positioned between FAU and the University of Miami, which I guess is $30,000.

F: $35,000 or better.

P: You’re sort of in between and you can offer smaller classes. What you’re trying to do is have more classes to offer.

F: What we’re doing is differentiating ourselves from the state university system and some of our sister institutions in the private sector. But, if you go the reverse way—that’s what I was talking about—growth and quality are not mutually
exclusive. If you take a $20,000 tuition and from that you say we’re gonna try to attract top students, so let’s use 3.5 grade point averages, or 1250 SATs. Those would be fairly good students at anywhere perhaps than at the University of Florida which we could talk about a whole lot about, at any rate I won’t go into my alma mater there. Anyhow, you start with $20,000, they are eligible for the Florida Resident Access Grant which is roughly—it was $3,000, it’s down to about $2,500. You take Bright Futures, which will be somewhere between $3,000 and $4,000. Then you look at Pell Grants, which has been increased by the Federal Government. And then for those students the university gives a scholarship. You can get almost to where it would be almost the same amount as going to a state university if anyone was paying tuition at the University of Florida. Ninety-five percent of the students up there are paying no tuition. So we can approximate that and have the benefit of having very small classrooms. You get out in four years, I think our number is 3.9 on average, whereas at the state university system its five or better; clearly five at least.

P: At least.

F: I’ll go back to posing a question to you. What was the size of the “C” classes at the University of Florida when you were there: 500 to 2,000?

P: I’ve taught classes of 300.

F: Ok 300 as opposed to twenty.

P: No, not always.

F: No, I understand that, but I’m just saying that a lot of students like those small classes, and our average class size is about twenty.
P: What is the standard now for admission to the undergraduate school, the SAT and GPA?

F: I can’t give you that number off hand right now, but I don’t think we have a bright line. I wouldn’t call it an open admissions policy, because we’ve been increasing that. We do have a safety valve for the career students, who are not the full-time day-time “pal” students. So you have a blend of that.

P: What this ultimately does, now that you have your NCAA division II athletics, which gives students some emotional connection to the university and you’ve built the campus here to where it’s a lovely campus. And what you need to have this become a university is a larger proportion of undergraduates.

F: Well yeah, I think so. Without abandoning the fact that we have great first professional and graduate programs. But, I think strategically, this university needs to have a strong undergraduate presence. Part of that is driven by societal needs. This state’s not producing enough bachelor’s degrees and we need to be playing our part. And we can do it, and we will do it. On top of that we have the facilities, we have the capacity to do it, and I think it’s the right thing to do.

P: You’ve increased the dorms on campus.

F: Correct.

P: You go back to the Goodwin Dorm and now you’ve got the Commons, which is a major accomplishment.

F: Correct.

P: You’ve purchased Rolling Hills Golf Club for graduate students so there are more students—
F: Not the entire golf course for students, that was—

P: Just the golf “club.”

F: Well no, we bought the golf club for a variety of reasons, but we bought the hotel that was next to it. That’s the old Rolling Hills Hotel. We transformed that into I think 267 graduate efficiency apartments in essence.

P: And as part of that you now have a very good transportation on campus to get people around; that you now have more entrances into the campus.

F: Correct.

P: But is this still a commuter campus essentially?

F: Well, clearly a lot of our students are living elsewhere, but there are a lot of them living within walking distance of the university. And on campus every day, I would say we have 7,500 to 10,000 students. And we only have about 1,500 that are living in dormitories on campus, but a lot of them are living in the surrounding area. So I wouldn’t call it a traditional commuter school because so many of our professional students and graduate students live right around here.

P: Is there ever any desire for a football team?

F: Not on my watch. That’s an easy answer, I’ll tell you why. Seventy percent of our population is female and under title nine it would be virtually impossible for me to find another, in Division II, another fifty scholarships. In Division II you don’t get one scholarship for each player, there is a percentage. You get a certain number of scholarships and you have to portion them out. But, title nine requires gender equity and that would be fifty more men and I’d have to find fifty more women slots. There is no way I could do it. In fact, that is the reason I authorized the start
of women’s crew. Immediately, I picked up forty women. The thing I'm most
proud of is that for the last seven years, the entire student athletes on campus
have had better than a 3.1 average and that includes all sports and they
graduate. That’s why we chose NCAA Division II student athletes.

P: And the women won the National Golf Championship.

F: And one of the crew’s won the national championship as well; one of the boats
just last week. And several of our teams went to the regionals. So, we’re doing
extremely well.

P: But you don’t have any desire to expand to division I?

F: I don’t at this point. Obviously, as we go forward you never say never, but I think
Division II is exactly where we ought to be. Because think about it, if we succeed
in what I would like to do of traditional on-campus students, 5000. That would be
a very nice College of Arts and Sciences almost anywhere. I don’t know what the
present undergraduate population is at the University of Florida, but I would think
the undergraduate population has to be north of 35,000. So we’re not in that
category. And you’ll remember, the President of Harvard, Bok, who wrote a book
about college athletics, and I think I read it a number of years ago that at that
time there were only maybe ten programs in the country with football that really
threw off any money to other sports or to the university. It’s a huge undertaking.
Does it help as far as school spirit? No question about it. Does it help with
recruiting undergraduates? Probably. But, if you look at it as being some
contribution to the overall university, very few of them are able to do that.
P: I think that there are only four athletic programs in the country now that are in the black.

F: And I would think that the University of Florida has got to be one of them.

P: It is one of them. Talk about some of the major gifts to this university. One of the important ones you mentioned a little bit earlier is Wayne Huizenga gave money for the business school. I think he gave something like $4,000,000?

F: Well I'm not going to go into the actual dollars, but it's north of there. Over the years he's given substantially more than that to the university. Clearly, there were substantial pluses to this university in addition to the dollar contribution, which obviously was important. But, having his name, who started a number of Fortune 500 companies, who was named entrepreneur of the world by one of the leading accounting firms of the world. And a person who believes in this community and has been a friend not only to the university, but a personal friend of mine for many years, that says a lot. And that was part of what I said when I became President. We needed to make NSU Broward County's university. And that meant we had to reach into the East side of this community. We really needed to.

P: Another very nice building, Carl DeSantos gave money as well.

F: Clearly.

P: All of that makes a difference when you come on campus you see these beautiful buildings for the business school, for the law school.

F: Let me interrupt there, what I said to you earlier was, and I really got this from my dad, he always said you need the tools to do the job. My dad was a very modest person. He was in sales all of his life. But he always used to say you have to
have the tools. And I said to our board. You could raise money for endowment, but as you know, you are limited in what you can do with endowment, and we needed to have the facilities in which to house the great programs that we’re doing. That’s what’s more important to me. Great looking buildings, we needed them. I don’t depreciate them one bit. But they house the world class programs that are happening inside. And we’re creating some—

P: One of the criticisms I’ve heard is that this university doesn’t have a large enough endowment.

F: No question about that. But put that in perspective. Let’s assume that you were able to get $10,000,000 in cash, which would be wonderful. If you followed the rule that we have as part of our policy, only five percent of the income could be used, so that’s $500,000. In the past eleven years, in which we’ve been able to build almost 2,000,000 square feet of facilities, the best bond market that has been available, by utilizing those gifts, putting them into the structures, we now have the facilities to take us, for the foreseeable future, the next fifty years, not that we wouldn’t perhaps have to build another building or two, but we have the capacity. But I say look at the increase in the value of the assets on this community. And we built them at a time that was right to build them. And so, yes, would I like a larger endowment, obviously yes. But now that we have the facilities, our next challenge and my charge to our development folks are: scholarships, professorships, endowed chairs. That is the next natural progression and that’s were endowment will be important.

P: You’re a growing developing university; Harvard has been around for a long time.
F: Correct.

P: They have such a huge endowment that—

F: They had a huge endowment. [Laughter] It’s still a huge endowment, but its substantially less.

P: About thirty percent less.

F: More than that I think. And I think, the unfortunate part about it, for a lot of schools, they use the endowment for operating expenses, which we never have.

P: Another gift that was important that you know is the Horvitz building. Clearly, that was another significant development, sort of the capstone of the campus.

F: Right.

P: Mr. Horvitz was a great friend of this university.

F: And a great personal friend of mine, a great loss. Luckily, after a number of years I was able convince his son to David to come on our board. David is on our board now.

P: Perhaps one of the most important developments was the building of the library, which is the largest library in the state of Florida. Talk a little bit about how that came about, and why that’s so significant.

F: Well, when I became President there had been an idea kicking around, and it really came from Sam Morrison who was the director of the Broward County Library System. And also, Don Riggs, who was our Vice-President for Libraries. That was to create some kind of joint use facility. And it hadn’t gone anywhere. So I kind of dusted it off and started talking to people and it looked like it would be viable. So we worked that through and in essence the county gave us one half
of the funds. That got passed by the county on unanimous vote when we finally did it. It goes back to what I said about outreach to the community, being part of the community, etc. What a huge asset. We now have our “shark card.” Every Broward County resident has complete access to that library. When they are in the library they can use all of the books and 200—[Tape stops]—from their homes they can access somewhere around 175 databases, the others are restricted because of licensing agreements. But there are 48,000 to 50,000 Broward County residents who have that card. In addition, to those who just come on; every Broward County resident can come into the library. What a huge opportunity for our community. In a time when the county has had to—because of their own budgetary problems—curtail hours in some of their libraries or shutting down libraries. We’re increasing the number of hours that the library is open.

P: That is a pretty amazing achievement for an independent university to make this sort of agreement.

F: At the time, and I think ‘till today, we think it’s the only one in the country that’s between a private non-for-profit institution and a county government.

P: And I think the key that you just pointed out, again offers access to the university by the community.

F: Correct, and that’s what’s wonderful about it. Now is the time to look at it. These summer programs where they have children in there, these youngsters many of whom are more adept at the technology than I am, I’m a dinosaur. They have all these summer programs for the kids and for older adults as well.
P: And there is a performing arts center as part of it.

F: That’s correct.

P: And that is to some degree connecting also to the community, to the downtown.

F: Very much so, and another one of our board members, but most importantly, his mother, the Miniachies were the ones that I talked to about that and they made a major contribution to that.

P: And the library is another example of the “wired” university.

F: Absolutely.

P: And then Alvin Sherman gave again a very nice gift.

F: Wonderful man and he and I and my wife usually have dinner at least once a month. He is so proud of this community where he was so successful.

P: And then if you look at the physical structure of the university as it stands now. What new additions would you think you need to make? You have a swimming area now, you have your student area, you have your student center; what else do you need? Do you need more classroom buildings?

F: Not at the present time, with one exception. First of all, we have to finish what we have on our plate, the campus within a campus, which is the University School’s program. That will be finished by August, on-time and I’m told under budget. So that’s a plus. We’re also finishing up a major chiller component that will in essence insulate us from power losses in the event that we have a major storm and things of that nature. Because of the economic times, I’m not planning on starting any new projects until I see what the future is, and we’ll probably have a better feel for that in the next nine to twelve months. But we already have plans
for a research building that I think will be necessary. We have plans for an in-fill building over at the medical school. The health profession division which will create some more classrooms. If, depending upon the growth of undergraduate program, even though we still have space in the DeSantos building and also in the library that we could create some additional classrooms.

P: There is a fifth floor in the library.

F: Yes, correct. So all of those we have, correct. Might we need another classroom building at some point? The answer is yes, depending upon the growth. But the biggest one really is what where gonna do with the University Park Plaza. That’s a project that we have a fifty percent interest in. That will transform that 170,000 square foot shopping center into somewhere and 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 square feet of mixed use facilities. Some of it public like retail, restaurants, things of that nature. But it will also have classroom, some type of medical facility, medical office building, residential—

P: Bookstore?

F: Bookstore, Barnes and Noble will put one of their major campus book stores there. Those are things that will come. Right now we’re taking a breath.

P: Yeah, I talked to George Hanberry about his “academic village.” He’s very excited about that.

F: That’s correct, and he should be.

P: And the only other thing that I was surprised about when they developed the campus, they never built a central power plant. That’s been something you’ve had to do.
F: That’s part of this new chiller plant that we put in.

P: You mentioned that you’re not going to start any new projects. What impact has the recession had on Nova Southeastern?

F: Right now, for this fiscal year we’re on budget. We’ll make the budget for this year. Both our student headcount is up for the year. And also our credit hours are up. Back in the winter term we were short on a number of hours. And I think people where concerned at that point for a variety of reason. So we were a little lower on credit hours taken. We’ve made that up cumulatively for the year. So we’ll be up on both.

My projections for next year are that we will increase our budget to the largest budget we’ve had in university’s history and that our enrollment will be up. Having said that, when I sent the budget message to the trustees, I said reviewing what’s happening in the state university system and some of our private people are curtailing programs, eliminating programs, announcing job cuts, freeze hiring, they where announcing there would be no raises, et cetera, et cetera, a whole parade of horrible. I said that I didn’t think that any of those would be necessary at NSU. And that we were going to have a larger budget and more enrollment, but an abundance of caution. I was going to delay anything until I saw how our projections were late summer, early fall of [20]09.

P: One of the things you mentioned earlier, is to talk about more cooperation and collaboration with Florida Atlantic—at least one aspect is that it’s right across the street—and Florida International, and Miami, and UF, and FSU. What programs would you want to collaborate with them?
F: Well first of all, collaboration with a state universities go slower. We do have some programs with FAU [Florida Atlantic University], particularly in the oceanography, and we’re doing some with the University of Miami, particularly in the area of autism. But the collaboration that we try and do is a reach out to the community colleges, is now a state college system, where we have articulation agreements with them around the state. That I think is extremely important. We’re doing more and more of that with some of our sister institutions within the independent colleges. For example, over in Naples we had an agreement with Hodges, now International University, where they did the first number of years for the physician’s assistant and then we picked up on it. So we’re trying to do those things as we go forward. So a lot of that is happening.

P: I’d like to talk about the articulation agreements. Certainly, when you’re trying to attract undergraduate students, the fact that you have a law school, a medical school, a pharmacy school is a major enticement for students.

F: Yes, and clearly we’re trying to build on that so we’re offering for the better students some substantial scholarships for transfer students. Transfer students are extremely important. And in many instances, unfortunately with the state university system, even though historically it was supposed to be a two plus two system, they don’t have the capacity, and so we’ve seen more and more of those students as well.

P: One of the things I’ve noticed in the history of this university has been a commitment to diversity.

F: Yes.
One of the first seventeen graduate students was an African-American. At a very early time when Davie was still having remnants of the Ku Klux Klan, Shirley Chisholm was invited to speak. And now this institution produces a very high percentage of African-American and Hispanic M.A.’s and Ph.D.’s.

And we’re now designated as a minority-majority institution and a Hispanic serving institution. And obviously, with the changing demographics, here in South Florida that will continue. And over the years, we’ve been highly rated in a number of doctoral and now masters degree for African-American and Hispanic-Americans and increasingly Asian-Americans. So clearly that’s something that is extremely important, particularly as the demographics of this country change.

And one of the things you’ve also obviously been committed to, we talked about this earlier, is the interaction and commitment to the community. One good example of this is the relationship with the art museum.

Discuss how that came about.

Well, again go back in history. This goes back eight or nine years ago. At that time the museum was looking to create some type of affiliation. And several of their board members approached me about it. And I said, I didn’t think we were ready for it. I did say, however, that I thought that we could form a consortium: the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, NSU, and the University of Florida. So I went to the President at that time [Charles Young], he was the one from California; I forget his name right now. He was from the University of California; he was one of the interim presidents at the University of Florida. And he came down with his
provost and we talked to him about that. They had the expertise obviously in the arts and we could deliver the distance education for arts administration and some of those other things.

That board and its wisdom decided it would rather affiliate with FAU. Without going into a lot of details about it, nothing happened out of that. So about two years ago, several members of their board, including Mike Jackson, who is the CEO of AutoNation, came to me and said, we would like affiliate with you. And I said to Mike, I’ve been invited to that dance before and I was left at the door. He said that won’t happen again. So again, I think a university, if it has the capacity, should be part of its community, have outreach and support important community assets. I think we bring a lot to it and that’s what I told my board when I presented it to them. Number one it will stabilize the museum and allow them to grow.

P: They were having some financial problems.

F: I think they were stabilized, but they weren’t going to be able to grow. So I think we’ll leave it at that. But, I thought that they had the potential of growing and that fact that the university would be willing to take them into its fold, because they merged into us, would give the public and the museum supporters’ confidence for the long run. That has proven to be the case. And what we’re seeing now is we’ve improved their facilities, we’re going forward, we’re planning ‘friend building’ at this time, and out of that will come development and I think we’ll be able to do the kind of things to make it a world class, certainly a state university of note. And it will be an asset to our community.
P: Students are involved obviously.

F: Yes and the important thing about that again is that we’re not just in the real estate business. We’ve already started planning for a variety of different educational programs that we can do. In addition to that they have a great program for youngsters and older adults during the summer times and on weekends. And we can move it, leave it operating in the east part of town, but replicate it somewhere out here west to have a broader reach as far as our community is concerned.

P: And what plans do you have for expanding your international programs or international commitments?

F: Judiciously, I think that clearly we’re getting more and more attention internationally. In fact, just within the last thirty days I had a lunch and a dinner with twenty students from the Far East who where here. And that was as a result of a trip that I took five years ago. And these are all college professors who are now taking doctoral degrees here. So I think that’s an example of what we can do. We have programs in Barcelona now. There will always be a small program where students there from their law school can come here, take a sufficient number of hours here and be admitted to the Florida Bar. Our students can go there, be admitted to the Bar of Barcelona, which allows them to practice transactionally in the European community, which allows them also to practice in Central and South America. We have a similar program in Italy in two cities. So I think we are in thirteen different countries now.

P: And the initial ones were Panama and you developed quite a bit from there.
F: Yeah, and we’ve been in the Bahamas for twenty, almost thirty years, Panama unfortunately we had to curtail that. The Dominican Republic, a huge program, I’ve met with the President of the Dominican Republic twice now. We probably have graduated 50 to 100 students. All of these are educators in that country, in a relatively small country. Just think of what the impact is on all of those tens of thousands of kids in the Dominican Republic.

P: One issue that came up in 2007, the maintenance workers had a rally for higher wages. How did you deal with that issue?

F: Well, the first thing you have to remember is, and it’s important for this history is, they were never our employees. They were employees of an independent contractor who we contracted with. Irrespective of what you read, we were in the bid process for over a year, reevaluating as we do with all of our contracts, as to whether or not we were going to continue the contract with that vendor or go out with others. At the end of the day, for a variety of reasons, it would be better for us to contract with locally owned companies. And that is what we in fact did. At the end of the day, we have more people working for the independent five companies than they did before. There still, the vast majority, almost eighty or ninety percent of them are minority employees of those various companies. And most importantly the campus is in better shape than it was then.

One quick example is at the time we made the change there was about 2,500 work orders backlogged, within three months all of those work orders were finished and they were doing preventive maintenance. It was a difficult time; it’s still a difficult time because they painted us with a black hat. Unfortunately, that is
something we have to deal with. In my fiduciary capacity, as the President of the university, we analyzed it and we made the best decision for the university. The employees of these various contractors ended up with higher wages and a health plan that they don’t have to pay for. So all of those things happened and I sleep well at night with that decision.

P: So the vendors would be cleaning—

F: Yes, maintenance and grounds keeping, also air conditioning.

P: So they never joined this Service Employees International Union [SEIU]? There was some talk about that at one time.

F: Oh, the UNICO employees voted to join SEIU, but that meant that UNICO had to negotiate with them, not us. And the answer is, yes they did. During that period of time we had made the decision to go with different contractors, local contractors and the bottom line to it is, as a matter of fact, one of the sub-parts that we contracted with were the bus drivers; and because under the NLRB rules, if fifty percent of the workers who were there before are employed by the new contractor then automatically, SEIU is their bargaining agency. So, the buses that go around here, those employees are SEIU employees. But that’s an issue between the employees, the company, and SEIU.

P: Not you.

F: Not me. We just enter into contracts.

P: What about the faculty. Did the faculty ever join the Faculty Union of the State of Florida?
F: No, and when I became President, because some people, number one felt that I was not an academic, and number two is at least I’d been very vocal about some of my feelings, as we’ve discussed about tenure and other things. There was an attempt to unionize the faculty and the first nine months of my presidency we had a union fight and we were able to do, which I think is the American way, they discussed their issues, we were able to discuss it and there was a secret ballot, which I think is the right way to do it, and my recollection is that the union was rejected two to one.

P: One of their complaints was there were too many part-time faculty and not enough full-time faculty.

F: I don’t recall that being a primary issue. But having said that, I think we’ve already discussed that the question of part-time and full-time is not the only issue. For a private university we have to be very conscious of the costs of providing education and if your faculty, many of our faculty our participating faculty, which you could call part-time, have been with us fifteen, twenty years, teach at some the most prestigious universities around the country. They are involved in curriculum discussions, they regularly meet. They don’t just walk in and walk out. They are as much faculty as anyone else. So, clearly that might have been an issue, but the trend in the United States is more towards non-full-time faculty if you look at all the literature.

P: Another aspect of your presidency has obviously been very important to you is community service. A good example would be United Way and the Broward
Alliance. Talk a little bit about this Broward Alliance because that seems to be a rather innovative concept.

F: Well, it really shouldn’t be. Every university should have as one of its mission’s economic development for whatever community they are in. When I became President I was inundated with “serve on this board sir,” I limited it to a number. One of which was the Broward Alliance because that’s the private economic development arm for Broward County and I thought that was important. I happen to be chairman of that this year. Part of it, in these difficult economic times, is for us to have private sector involvement to assist the county in their role of attracting new business to Broward County. To encouraging our local business to stay and to grow here and to retain our businesses; that’s why I agreed to become the chair of that board.

P: And you tried to spend a certain amount of your time with social events and meeting with the people of the community.

F: Well, clearly that’s part of the role of any President that you have to be out in the community, particularly at events that are very visible.

P: Could you give me sort of a typical day, what time you come in, how much time you spend on fundraising, how much time with directors?

F: I’m usually up about five o’clock in the morning; I work at home for an hour or two. I usually try and leave the house about seven-thirty, it only takes me twenty minutes. But, a lot of times I’ll have meetings. Yesterday morning I had a meeting at seven o’clock. I try to do meetings on the way in or on the way home because I live on the east side of town. I’m always in the office between eight and nine,
unless I have a downtown meeting. Clearly, the day is filled with meetings or strategic plans or meeting with faculty, meeting with the groups of staff. Probably leave here at five or six. Usually have meetings, if I have a meeting it will be late in the afternoon on the way home. And then several nights a week we’re out at university related things and clearly over the weekends we usually are and or with donors, potential donors and things of that nature. And fundraising is clearly part of it. But a president has to be almost thinking about fundraising and “friendraising” almost twenty-four seven. Having said that you can’t just throw yourself at everything. The president needs to be there when it’s getting close to a decision, and the donor, potential donor wants to look the president wants to look the president in the eye and understand the gift is going to be meaningful and going to be appreciated and to be, so to speak, at the closing.

P: So you are the closer then?

F: Well, I'm one of the closers. [Laughter] You have to have the deans there; you have to have the other people that are involved.

P: How has your legal background influenced and helped your time as a president?

F: I think the whole process of a legal education has helped me in my career. It’s a way you analyze things, you listen, you sort through things, you come to a reasoned decisions, you want to make sure that your willing to hear both the pros and cons of any issue and then make the best decision that you can. And I think the analytical skills that a law school training gives you has helped immensely. I think that my undergraduate degree was in business, a bachelor’s in business
administration with an emphasis on accounting has also helped me. And I might also say that one of the things I talk about today is the time that I served in the Marine Corps stands me in stead today. Back then I was taught that you know what you mission is, you pick good people or you have good people, you give them the responsibility, you let them do the job, and then you hold them accountable. You don't overly interfere. I use that today.

P: And you get it done.

F: You have to get it done. "You hold them accountable," that’s implicit in that phrase.

P: [Laughter] As you come up on you fiftieth anniversary, what do you see as the future of this university?

F: To be immodest about it, and I’ve been using this, I’ll take you through the progression. I don’t know if you’ve seen the PowerPoint that I do: excellence is our standard, preeminence is our goal. That’s one thing. A number of years ago, I started saying that NSU will be Florida’s university and why, because we have such a great outreach. Now, I know the University of Florida has a presence in probably twenty-eight counties in the state because of the IFAS program, but meanwhile we have major presence in every major city east of Tallahassee. And we’re providing education, particularly targeted education that’s necessary for that community in those cities, and I went through them before. So in essence, we’re almost living that now. We have a presence throughout the state and we’re providing a huge number of degrees and most of our students stay in the state. Particularly, our graduate and professional students; medical students,
dental students the majority of them stay here. That’s contrasted to some of the other universities here in this state. I think that makes a huge impact. I’m in the middle of our commencement season now. By the time we finish, we will have graduated 7,500 to 8,000 students this year; many of them in critical shortage areas. That’s something to be proud of.

P: Why is Nova not better known in the State of Florida?

F: I think that part of it is the history that we talked about earlier on. But I think that that has significantly changed, I think not immodestly about it because some of the things that I thought were increasingly important. That’s why I said that the president of this university has to be involved and clearly, because of my history, I’ve been involved in the state at a state level for my entire career as the President of the Bar, as president of the Florida Trial Lawyers. I lobbied, I did all that, I’ve served on various commissions for governors; those kinds of things. We needed to be known and the president needs to be out there, so I became President of the Florida Association of the College and Universities, which is the only organization that represents the three sectors: the state university system, the independent colleges, and the community colleges. Became President or Chair of the Independent College and Universities and a variety of those things. The president needs to be out and we need to be doing these kinds of things. The other thing is getting into the communities and letting them know of the various educational programs. So that is changing substantially, we are much better known that we were before. Part of it is that we are spending a little money
on letting people know who are, what we are, and we have the resources to do that now.

P: And this is the new term “branding?”

F: Yes, clearly branding is a term.

P: And I talked to Dave Dosellyne and he indicated that they saw on I-595 the big billboard, there are T.V. ads, there is radio, he said not so much in print because you’re really looking to attract younger people to enroll at the university, but you still need to let the community know what you’re doing.

F: Sure, and that’s really, though at first blush, you and I might not understand it, the branding is your future, your terms. And then you see the spikes going off in the various schools. But does what does “your terms” mean? It means that you can do it daytime, you can nighttime, you can do online, you can do it weekends. So, the flexibility of getting education, which really goes back to the history of this university, probably when, not so much me, but perhaps you and your colleagues, the progression was then, you go to undergraduate school, then you go full-time for a masters or a doctoral degree. In this society, many people cannot do that. Particularly in the field of education now, and so that’s when the history of this university, those cluster programs allowing people to continue their jobs, keep with their families and pursue higher education and get quality master’s and doctoral degrees really is the watchword for this university. Our mission to provide quality education at times and places convenient to students, and we’ve continued that on, and we will continue to carry that on.
P: And I mentioned to Dave Dosellyne, one of the things that fascinating to an outsider who studied this university, it’s just a fascinating history as to how this university has evolved and expanded. And I think, again, people in the State of Florida are not aware of that.

F: Well, more and more they are. It’s a long job.

P: How much longer do you think you want to be President?

F: Well, right now I’ve told the board this very candidly that I’m seventy-five, other than having a little problem with two knee replacements, and they’ve gone well, a little bit of a back problem, and a little bit of a foot problem, I’m in great health. But meanwhile, I think any organization needs to start discussion succession, and so I’ve asked the board to do that. And I think starting in the fall; they are going to be talking about that. Right now, I still have several more years left on my contract.

P: Usually the concept of being a university president, the average time is seven to ten years, and even the physical and mental strain causes people to get out a little bit earlier, but you seem to thrive on this.

F: Let me tell you, I just love coming to work every day. And more importantly, I have a lot yet to do. But as my good friend Rita Bornstein in a conversation I had over a year or so ago, you know who Rita was, she was the former president of Rollins—

P: Yeah, Rollins, she organized the business school—
F: She told me Ray, you’ll always have something you want to accomplish. So the answer is, is I think any organization needs to have a succession plan and I’ve encouraged the board to talk about that.

P: Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to discuss.

F: No, but based upon the fact that DiPiano is going to put me through another one of these sessions at sometime in the future, I’m sure we’ll pick up on anything we haven’t discussed. [Laughter] I will say this, I have told the board this, I tell all of the faculties that I meet with and our staffs, this is a huge time of opportunity for NSU. Why? Because we have the capacity, we have the agility, and we have the flexibility to do some great things. And there are great needs out there and we can do them, we can do them right. So this is not the cliché of a glass half empty or full, this is a huge time of opportunity because the other institutions, both at the state level and also some of the independents are under a lot of financial stress, and right now we’re able to handle it. So do your due diligence, be cautiously optimistic, make your decisions and move forward with vigor, as they would say in Boston. [Laughter]

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

[End of Interview]