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Interview with Zeida Rodriguez - Alumna and Associate Director of Enrollment Services

Zeida Rodriguez
Nova Southeastern University

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This is Julian Pleasants, and it is the 24th of October, 2011. I'm at Nova Southeastern University, and I'm speaking with Zeida Rodriguez. Tell me a little bit about your early knowledge of Nova University. Now, you grew up in this area?

ZR: Yes. I was born in Miami, but I moved to Hollywood, Florida, when I was three years old. So I’ve been living in that area of Hollywood and Pembroke Pines ever since. And the reason that I chose to go to Nova – my parents wanted me to get a private education and the school was very reputable at the time. And also, thank goodness that Dr. Ken [Gose] had come to my high school for recruiting, and because of my grade point average and being in the honors program at my high school I was able to come here with a scholarship.

JP: And what year did you enroll?
ZR: I enrolled in 1983.

JP: 1983? And you enrolled as an undergraduate?

ZR: Correct.

JP: And there were not many undergraduates.

ZR: No, there wasn’t. I would say that an estimate was close to 200 students that there were at that time.

JP: Two hundred students?

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: And you knew more about Nova partly because of where you live and partly because you’d been recruited.

ZR: Correct, mm-hm.

JP: What did your parents or the rest of the community think about Nova? Nova was still in its infancy, really.

ZR: It was. It was in its infancy, but it was developing a very good reputation because of the private university, because it was small and individualized. And so my family felt it would be of benefit for me to get that type of education.

JP: And so did you commute?
ZR: I did, mm-hm.

JP: So you never actually lived on campus?

ZR: I never lived on campus, but I did get very heavily involved. In high school, I was very shy, did not get involved with any clubs or organizations really, but here, because it was so small, I felt like I could become someone.

JP: Describe the campus when you first got here. The library was not here.

ZR: Oh, my goodness, okay.

JP: The business school —

ZR: The only three buildings that it had at the time... Let’s see. There was the Rosenthal Building. There was the Parker Building, which was where all my classes were located.

JP: And the Hollywood/Mailman?

ZR: And the Hollywood/Mailman Building, that is correct. That’s where the library was located at the time.

JP: Were you distributed that there was... Originally, Rosenthal was supposed to be a student center, but
obviously it wasn’t very much of a student center. Were you at all put off by that?

ZR: Not really. Like I said, I really wasn’t involved in too much activities and clubs and organizations in high school. I was more like a nerd [laughs], so being involved in clubs and organizations wasn’t very important. But then I was introduced to other students here and became a little more active and came out of my shell and I thank that for coming here, because, if not, I don't think I would be where I'm at, at this time in my career.

JP: And particularly since you are now into recruitment of students.

ZR: I am, mm-hm, exactly.

JP: So you started by being recruited and now you take that responsibility.

ZR: I feel like I'm giving back.

JP: Good! Now, when you started, you had - most of your classes were in Parker. What were the classrooms like at that time? Could you describe them?

ZR: They were kind of like high school classrooms at that time, so you would have the chair with the desk and it
would like fold over. If you were left-handed, there might’ve been two of them in the classroom. I think there was maybe about 20 or 16 desks like that in the classroom. You had your —

JP: No high tech?

ZR: No high tech at all, no.

JP: There wasn’t even a computer center, was there?

ZR: There was. There was a computer lab on the second floor, but those were for the students that were studying computer science, so it’s when they had those big disks that looked like 45 RMPs. [laughter]

JP: And really not much of a library at all?

ZR: Not at all, no. That was actually in the Mailman/Hollywood building and you had to go up the stairs of the third floor to get to like the fourth floor, where the library was actually. Due to the fact I guess they were getting more books, the weight was a problem, so eventually they had to move out and move to a different area.

JP: And when you came to Nova, what did you plan to study?
ZR: I always planned to study business administration and I stayed with it.

JP: Okay. What courses would you have taken your first year?

ZR: It was more my general education courses, so there were my English courses and my math. My first class I remember was Introduction to Psychology and it was Dr. Frank DePiano who was my instructor. [laughs]

JP: I’ll ask him about that.

ZR: I don't think he even knows who I am or remembers me, but, yes, it was him. And then I had also like a health science kind of class, too, with Dr. Santini, I think was his name – Barry Santini. So, yeah, it was most the general education courses were the ones I was taking first. And I think the second semester is when I was introduced to probably like a business course or accounting or something.

JP: So you would’ve started with something like accounting and general business courses and that sort of thing?

ZR: Mm-hm.
JR: What was your impression of the faculty?

ZR: I was very impressed because they were always there for you. It was full-time faculty. Their offices were located in the same facility, in the same building, so they were accessible for you to help you out. And, in fact, that was very small and individualized. They got to know you as a person versus in a large—

JP: How many would be in a class typically?

ZR: Typically, at that time, I would say we would have anywhere between a dozen to maybe 18. It would never get to 20, I would say, very small. As the weeks went by, some people would withdraw or drop and things like that.

JP: Sure. So over a period of four years, what kinds of courses would you take as you progressed in—

ZR: As it got to the latter years, then it would be more advanced courses. I would have the research methods, the quantitative methods classes. There was statistics.

JP: That’s always a tough on. [laughter]

ZR: I had to have it again for my master’s program, yes. Yeah, so when I got to the latter, I would say the latter two years, I was strictly more into my actual major.
JP: Yeah, okay. And when you look back at that program, do you feel like that your business background qualified you to go out and —

ZR: I do, absolutely.

JP: — take part in just about any job?

ZR: Absolutely.

JP: Obviously, you thought the program was good because you went on to get a master’s degree.

ZR: Yes, I did.

JP: When you came, what was the tuition? Do you remember?

ZR: Oh, that I don't. I really, really don't know.

JP: What kind of scholarship did you have?

ZR: It was academic. It was an academic scholarship based on my GPA.

JP: Did it pay for most of the tuition?

ZR: No. It was partial. It didn’t because, again, it was a private university and there was a difference from state school to here. And at that time, there was no such thing as Bright Futures or any of that stuff. But,
fortunately, we were eligible as a family through the FAFSA, the Free Application for Student Aid, to get some state aid, which was the Florida Resident Access Grant. I'm not sure if it was named the same thing at that time, but it was the same type of aid that the state would help out. And then there was a Pell Grant. I remember getting that.

    JP: Okay. That’s a federal grant.

    ZR: Yes. I think there was another supplemental grant. I know that my dad was really, really — the financial aid department was very, very helpful. I even got to work there as a work study student, they got to know me so much. I was always there. So I got a lot of state and federal aid, thank goodness, but there was a time, yes, that I did have to take out loans.

    JP: And then work study as well, yeah. And then you had to take out some loans as well, yeah.

    ZR: I did, mm-hm.

    JP: In retrospect, was it worth it?

    ZR: Yes. Education is, yeah.
JR: I notice that today the unpaid student loans are increasing dramatically because so many kids have had to borrow so much and now they can’t get jobs.

ZR: I know.

JP: And I’m sure you’re familiar with this as well.

ZR: Yeah, it’s very sad.

JP: Where did you eat on the campus? [laughter]

ZR: Well, even though I was commuting, the first two years I was actually commuting by bus. I did not have a vehicle. I didn’t get a car until I was 19, actually. So I developed friends here and with them we would go, a little group of us. We would call it… What was it called, what we would call that street where it’s Davie Road Extension? It was like Dining Gourmet Avenue or something like that. So Wendy’s was the hot place to go. [laughs] There was the Wendy’s. There was the McDonald’s. There was a Wings-N-Things.

JP: They had an IHOP at one time, didn’t they?

ZR: Yes. It was a Wings-N-Things and then became an IHOP, yeah. All that on Davie Road Extension is whatever we were able to...
JP: Okay. So there was nothing on campus. And there were no athletic teams, no —

ZR: There was. There was actually soccer. Now, it was more like an intermural kind of, but then it developed into... And then baseball became also a sport, because Coach Hensley...

JP: But when you first arrived soccer was more of an intramural thing and baseball was really the first organized, official sport for the university?

ZR: Yeah. And I think basketball, too. I think baseball and basketball were the ones that became — and then soccer after that. Because I remember my first year meeting a basketball student and he was recruited for basketball, so —

JP: Well, it’d be hard to recruit for these teams if there were only 200 undergraduates.

ZR: I know. [laughter]

JP: So you would — obviously, sports programs weren’t, I wouldn’t think, high on the list. Were you at all disturbed by the fact that... People talk to me about being on the campus at that time, and they say it looks like a wasteland. There was not the campus like it looks
today, with trees and grass. People, as you know better than I do, will come to campus and how the campus looks is a big factor in choosing a school.

ZR: Absolutely.

JP: Did that put you off at all?

ZR: Well, I really didn’t shop around too much in variety of different colleges and organizations. I think my choices, for me personally, was either to go to Broward College and then transfer over to a university or come here. But again, because I got the funding and it was a private education and my parents... And after I came here and went to orientation, I decided, yes, this was as better fit and everything like that. Even Broward wasn’t built up at the time as much either. So I really didn’t go out to see other colleges or universities.

JP: Did you consider FAU?

ZR: No.

JP: Of course, that was still not a very –

ZR: I never did. I never had siblings, so it’s not like I could say, “Oh, well, my brother and sister went to another college or university and that’s why I’d rather go
there.” Or choose something because there was more college life. That wasn’t really an issue at the time.

JP: When you were admitted, did you have to take the SAT?

ZR: Oh, yes.

JP: Mm-hm. And do you know how they organized the admission? You would know now, but then was it a combination of grade point average with SAT?

ZR: It was a combination of grade point average and your verbal and math of your SAT scores.

JP: Okay.

ZR: And I did have to take it quite a few times because I'm not very good at standardized tests. I had the GPA, but Dr. [Gose] had me take the test I think two times to get to —

JP: But you now have some degree of empathy with other students who go through these exams.

ZR: I do.

JP: When you look at the sort of evolution of the campus, from the time you started as a student until now, how important has been the Taft Center?
ZR: Oh, I think it’s amazing how it draws the students. And it draws all students, not just undergraduate students. You see students coming over from the medical school, crossing over to the campus so they get the exposure. So I think it’s amazing. That’s one part that I'm like, “Gosh, I wish we had that when I was here.” I didn’t have a cafeteria at least to eat and everything like that. And just, in fact, a place to relax and hang out and be with your peers instead of in the classroom, I think is very valuable.

JP: Because there was really no place to go on campus where you could hang out, really.

ZR: The second floor of the Parker Building was our little lounge area. That was it.

JP: Okay. Did you interact with the graduate — at this time, you really didn’t have the medical school yet.

ZR: No.

JP: And so did you interact with any of the graduate students?

ZR: No, not until I became myself a graduate student.
JP: Is there one professor that you studied under that had a particular impact on your career, somebody you would remember as pointing in the right direction or inspiring you to do better work?

ZR: There are a few. I would say Dr. Pedro Pellet, who is still around and is in the business school.

JP: What’s his name?

ZR: Dr. Pedro Pellet. He teaches – right now he teaches graduate programs. He taught me my micro and macro courses at the undergraduate level. I would say also Dr. Barbara Broadman. She teaches most of the – I have my minor in Latin American studies, Caribbean-American Studies, so she taught those courses. And she still teaches at the undergraduate level over at the Farquhar Center. Those two, I would say, would be.

JP: While you were an undergraduate – you finished in ‘87, right?

ZR: Yes.

JP: And then you started immediately on your master’s degree?
ZR: Yes. Since I worked various departments as a work study student, that was part of my financial aid, I was developing very good rapport with some of the people and an opportunity opened up with what was called the advising department. It was actually student services. It was advising. That’s where all the advisors were housed. Dr. Dan Sullivan told me there was an opportunity for me to become a clerical if I wanted to. And of course, at the time, tuition was completely free if I was a full-time employee, so there were no taxes taken out or anything like that. It was all free for my masters. And I was like, “You know what? I’ve got to take this and run with it.” So that’s what I did.

JP: So you were – were you working full time?

ZR: I was working full time and going for my master’s. My master’s was on the weekends, every other weekend. It’s kind of like what it is still here now.

JP: So it’s very much like the clusters that are off campus, except this happened to be on campus?

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: Were there a lot of courses like that for local people who... Was there a law class at night as well?
ZR: The law classes at night were developed, I think, a little later.

JP: A little later?

ZR: Yeah. It was still just the full-time law program.

JP: So you were getting an MBA?

ZR: I was doing actually a Master’s in International Business, MiBA.

JP: Oh, okay.

ZR: Yes.

JP: Why did you choose that?

ZR: Because when I was taking courses at the undergraduate level, I developed an interest in like export/import, those kinds of courses, international and global.

JP: Plus you were interested in Latin American studies.

ZR: Exactly. My father did a lot of sales and he did export and importing with companies, so I kind of developed a liking in that.
JR: And at this time there was — I guess there was some bus service, but there was nothing like the Shark system.

ZR: Oh, no.

JP: You probably didn’t need it anyway. You could walk between the three buildings.

ZR: No. When I was taking the bus, Broward County Transit, I had to be dropped off over at Broward College or BCC and that’s where I had to be picked up. So, yes, if it was raining or whatever, I had to get a ride. If not, I would walk all the way over there and then come all the way over here.

JP: That’s a pretty stiff hike.

ZR: Yeah, it was. [laughter] It was a hike. It was hard and that’s when finally, at 19, my dad’s like, “Okay, you need a car.” I’m like, “Yes, please.”

JP: What was the student housing like? I think there were three student housing buildings. I’m sure you must’ve gone in there and seen them. What were they like?

ZR: Yeah. I don’t know the names now — I can’t remember — but Building D was there. They were actually
four. It was A, B, C and D. So the old, old ones — I think those are now graduate housing over here, on this side and everything like that — were the ones that the upper-level students would live in. And then the new one was build I think my last year or so. That’s when that one was built, and that was like the freshman dorm. That was a more typical dorm because it was four people in the room. There was like a little — there was actually a little kitchen area.

JP: Well, that was actually a little ahead of the trend, wasn’t it?

ZR: It was, yeah.

JP: Because that became really popular in the ’90s primarily.

ZR: So it was really nice.

JP: So they were — I guess the first dorms were a little Spartan.

ZR: Yeah, they were. They had a little kitchen area. It was more of like an apartment with a little...but I think it was like two people to a room and stuff like that.

JP: But adequate?
ZR: I think so.

JP: Reasonably priced?

ZR: I think so. I don't remember. I don't know. I think —

JP: When you were here as an undergraduate, obviously most of the students being serviced by the university were graduate students.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: Did you feel like you were in any way neglected? In other words, that if you were going to financial aid, they were more concerned about the graduate students than the undergraduates?

ZR: No. Like I said, I was fortunate that as a works study student I worked in financial aid, I worked in admissions, and I worked in advising. Actually, my first year as a federal work study was in the Center of Advancement of Education, so it was the graduate section. And that was actually — that’s another building that was still there. Right next to the Rosenthal Building is the white building. What’s it called, where athletics is housed?
JP: Which is now part of the Taft Center?

ZR: I guess there are some people there that are located there. Oh, my goodness. What’s the name of the building right there that’s between Mailman and the University Center? It’s the white building.

JP: Yeah, I know what it is. The athletic people are in there.

ZR: The athletic people are in there. That one was there, that building, so it was actually four buildings that were here. And I worked on the third floor filing, as a federal work study student and everything like that, and it was for the Center of Advancement of Education, which is now Fischler. But I really never saw students, like graduate students. It was just where they kept all the records and I just filed and answered the phone kind of thing.

JP: Were you able to get the courses you wanted? Did you have enough choice of courses, that sort of thing?

ZR: I don't remember having any problems.

JP: If there were only 200 students, you still had—
ZR: Luckily, I really got... I was on track. I started in ’83 and I ended in ’87, so it was like the four-year plan.

JP: What was your requirement for a degree? You would’ve gotten a BS?

ZR: It was a Bachelor’s of Science, yes.

JP: Do you remember how many hours usually —

ZR: I think it was 120, still like it is now.

JP: Yeah, 120 or 124, something like that?

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: And how long did it take you to finish your graduate work?

ZR: My graduate work I did in two years.

JP: Two years?

ZR: Yes. I finished in ’89.

JP: That’s pretty fast, since you were working full time.

ZR: Right, because it was every other weekend, so it was on a Friday night and all day Saturday, with one
weekend break in between, which is what we have now for that program.

JP: So explain what you would do on that time. You would come in Friday?

ZR: Right. On Friday at six o'clock I’d take my first class and it would end at eight.

JP: Okay.

ZR: And then I had a 15-minute break, then my second class would start around 8:15 to end at 10:00. I'm back here the next day at eight o'clock in the morning to continue that first class from Friday, finish at noon, had an hour lunch break, and then the second class would start at one to finish around five. And then I'm done the following — for that weekend and it’s like every other weekend.

JP: So each class was six hours?

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: So it was really the same material, just crammed into a shorter period of time?

ZR: Mm-hm.
ZR: Zeida Rodriguez

JP: Was that difficult? If you think about being in class eight hours, that’s a long time.

ZR: It is. It was a long time, but I enjoyed it. I liked the subject matter. I liked the difference of the people. Some people were working out in the work field, so it was a good way of networking.

JP: You would’ve had some good contacts with people who were already –

ZR: Oh, yeah.

JP: Would that be the majority of the people? Almost everybody would be?

ZR: I would say the majority, yes.

JP: Would be working full time?

ZR: Yes, at that time, yes.

JP: How many students?

ZR: That was even smaller, actually, than my undergraduate for that program, because MBA was bigger than MIBA. That was like a newer program. So I would say my MIBA class might’ve had around 9 to 15 sometimes.
JP: Okay. Now, once you finished that, what did you plan to do?

ZR: When I finished that, Dad said, “Okay, time to get a real job.” [laughter] So I was looking at… I went through a headhunter and found like a little position in Downtown Miami. It was temporary, so it was more like an internship kind of program where I was a marketing assistant for a real estate company.

JP: That’s—

ZR: Yeah, so I had to commute all the way from Plantation, at the time I was living there, to Miami, so that was rough with the traffic on 95, but I did it. I did it and I got the exposure and the experience working there. And then when I finished doing that temporary position, they offered me to work full time, but as leasing, to lease and to show their office space. I did it for like two months, but I really wasn’t interested. It was my forte. So I left, which wasn’t smart without a job.

So for a couple of months, I was interviewing in different areas and then landed with transportation services.
JP: And at that point, when did you realize you wanted to get back into university administration?

ZR: I kept in touch with people that were still here. Some of my students that I had been in classes with, some of my actual professors and even with admissions, since I was a work study student, there were some colleagues there that had told me there were available openings. The director of admissions at the time, Jean Lewis, she called me and told me that there was an opening as an admissions counselor and if I would be interested in coming back, and so I did.

JP: So you think that you really wanted to do that all along?

ZR: Yeah, I think I did. I missed it. It was like I left home and then I came back.

JP: Yeah. Now, if you would, talk just a little bit — I know you were just as a records coordinator, but you had to have talked with the [unintelligible] and the class test and that sort of thing.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: And you’ve got now to supervise work study people and you used to do it yourself. Did you feel like that
that was a job that helped prepare you for your later work, or was it mainly clerical stuff?

ZR: It was mainly clerical stuff, to be honest with you, just to get some job experience. Yes, the degree is important, but also the experience, so you have to have a little bit of interacting with people and things like that. Learning those skills were very important. They go hand-in-hand with the degree.

JP: And at this point, what is the status? When you come to work in 1994, what’s the status of computers at this university?

ZR: In 1994, we had computers on our desk. We did, yes. We had computers on our desks. I was more familiar with a database that we used, which was called EMIS, which is where all the records were kept for all prospective students for the undergraduate program. So that’s where we maintained our communication, our contacts and things like that. If we met with a student, we just would document everything. Their emails were very popular. That’s when emails started.

JP: Yeah.
ZR: Yeah, so that was a way of communicating, through emails and things like that.

JP: Well, one of the problems — I know that at this university, because for years and years each tub on its own bottom, everything was sort of independent and there really weren’t a lot of central statistical information available. Is that the way you found it? Everybody sort of worked their own deal?

ZR: They worked their own deal and I think that’s just the way it is in most places, unfortunately. I guess it doesn’t come from the outside. It happens still today. There are still some areas of departments that don’t communicate well with another and everything like that. So hopefully with Dr. Hanbury on board these will be changes that will be made.

JP: Well, that’s one of the things he wants to change.

ZR: Absolutely.

JP: Now, there’s a downside to that. As you get more centralized control, there’s less independence and innovation at the individual centers. So there’s more efficiency because the recordkeeping theoretically is
better. But on the other hand, you all are on the same system, so if you find a better system it’s hard to just innovate at that level.

ZR: Mm-hm, true.

JP: So it’s good and bad, I guess.

ZR: True.

JP: Now, you are an alumnus of the university. How has been the university’s relationship with its alumni?

ZR: It’s improving. [laughter] It is improving. I see more information about events that are happening, communication through mail, through email, through phone calls and websites that are nice and clear, so yes.

JP: There’s an alumni magazine?

ZR: Yes, there is one that comes out, mm-hm, in the paper, like a bulletin, like a little flyer.

JP: Yeah, but it’s not what we would call a formal, polished magazine that most universities have?

ZR: No.

JP: The University of North Carolina’s is huge. It must be 200 pages. There are lots of articles.
ZR: Oh, no. This might be 12 pages, if lucky.

JP: Glossy cover, a lot of color photographs and things like that.

ZR: No. This is like 12 pages maybe.

JP: Well, and of course a lot of the students at this university, some of them probably never have been here.

ZR: Right, exactly.

JP: And they’re adults, so they don't have the same experience that you would have if you were a Gator or somebody who went to the football games and that sort of thing.

ZR: Exactly.

JP: It’s a little less than you would find at a typical state university, or even University of Miami, which is a private school.

ZR: Right.

JP: Did that bother you at all that there was not this sense that the university cared a lot about its alumni?
ZR: Not really, no. Not really. I feel like those that want to contribute will, and those that wanted to move on will move on.

JP: When you started here, why did you accept the position you accepted, which is admissions counselor? Now, you have to explain to me the difference between admissions counselor, assistant director of admissions, recruiter III and associate director.

ZR: Okay. Well, I started with what was called undergraduate admissions, which was housed under Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, as an admissions counselor. And I did that for seven years. What did was I had a population that I was responsible for, for recruiting. It was high school students primarily for the state of Florida.

JP: The entire state?

ZR: The entire state of Florida, [laughs] except for Broward County, actually, because there was one person in charge of the Broward County area. So at that time what I would do is... My charge was to go out and visit various high schools in the area and some community colleges.
There were two times of the year that primarily involved me traveling.

JP: So they have college days?

ZR: Exactly. There were college fairs and information sessions and things like that that were scheduled from various other colleges and universities and high schools around the state of Florida. So it was like a caravan of different schools that would be going and I would be part of that. I would be doing that. So I did that for like seven years.

JP: So what you would do, you’d set up your little table and you’d have information packets and you would answer questions and you would talk to students?

ZR: Correct, mm-hm. There were times I was allowed to actually go into some classrooms, maybe some English classes or something like that.

JP: and make a presentation?

ZR: Right and do a presentation. It was more like a general one, just to get them enticed about college. And of course I plugged Nova there at the end.
JP: And you would obviously be responsible for replying to anybody who asked questions or sent letters of inquiry?

ZR: Absolutely. I would do the follow up. I was in charge from inquiry to enrollment.

JP: And when you were doing this, what was the most difficult problem you had selling Nova? Was it the tuition because it wasn’t very well known?

ZR: It all depended on the area that I was at. Yes, cost was big, a number one fact. Second, I guess was – the location was never a problem because everybody wanted to come out this way. Maybe it was because we didn’t have the majors at the time. Now we have like over 60-something majors. There we were very limited of what we offered in courses. Medical wasn’t even involved at that time. People wanted to go in that field and we had to say –

JP: So it was mainly business and education and psychology?

ZR: Right, business, education and psychology. Those three were the biggest ones. And then there was Legal Studies for law, but that’s it. So there was –

JP: That’s a little separate.
ZR: Yeah.

JP: You were mainly looking at undergraduates, right?

ZR: Yes, I was primarily in undergraduate. I did not recruit for graduate, absolutely not, at that time. So those factors —

JP: And the lack of a student center —

ZR: Exactly. If they were involved in any type of activities, clubs, organizations or sports and we didn’t have those programs, then yes.

JP: Now, at that time were there — the fraternities hadn’t started until ’93, right?

ZR: No. I didn’t have any of that stuff.

JP: So there was not much social life at all.

ZR: No. Student government, which I was involved in, was part of it. We had cheerleading. It wasn’t really like now that it’s part of the sports program. There was like a key club that they had. There was a yearbook staff that I was in, too, for a little while. Let’s see what else.

JP: So yearbook would’ve been everybody?
ZR: The yearbook was undergraduate only.

JP: Undergraduate only?

ZR: Undergraduate, yeah.

JP: Because I guess graduates didn’t care about a yearbook. And nobody cares about them now.

ZR: No. That even died down because it was—people were saying at the end, “Oh, it’s like a high school. You don’t have a yearbook in college.” Again, we were so small. That’s what we were used to was the high school kind of thing. We were bringing it in.

JP: That makes sense. Now, you would have people come to campus. Would you be in charge of showing them around? How did you do that?

ZR: We did. There were times that we were assigned to work a campus visitation day. It’s like an open house. We would take turns, as admission counselors, who would be doing the presentation. And then we would have some work study students who actually did give the tours of the campus.

JP: Now, did you train them to do it?

ZR: When I became assistant director, that’s… Yes.
JP: One of the things I’ve discovered is that as people and parents go to choose universities that tour makes a lot of difference.

ZR: Oh, it does. It’s first impression.

JP: And if somebody on the tour is flip or doesn’t know anything or is arrogant or whatever, you can be turned off just at that point, regardless of the value of the education or the campus or anything like that. One little experience can make a huge difference. And if the person who gives it is very articulate and intelligent, you think, “Oh, this person’s a good student. This must be a good campus.”

ZR: Right, enthusiastic.

JP: Enthusiastic. If you can’t be enthusiastic, you shouldn’t be on the job.

ZR: Exactly.

JP: And as you proceeded… I remember one point – I don’t know whether this was before or after you – they’d put an ad in The New York Times, probably before you’re time, and they had a huge response to that ad, just an ad about Nova, because people didn’t know about it. It was
obviously a very expensive ad. Did you do a lot of that in local papers?

ZR: They did through the high school paper or the college, like at Broward County. We would do advertisements there and in Miami-Dade. I think also they had it up on Valencia and Hillsborough and like that, from Orlando down they did some advertisement. Local papers, I think it was just the tri-county area that they did that.

JP: Which are usually the Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel and The Miami Herald?

ZR: The Sun Sentinel and The Herald, mm-hm.

JP: But not elsewhere?

ZR: Not elsewhere during that time.

JP: No statewide or national publications?

ZR: They might’ve done it when... We did have one person actually in Boston who recruited for us, one admissions counselor who lived up there, and then there was one who did the New York/New Jersey area. So perhaps when there were big events, like maybe a national fair or something like that, they’d put on something that Nova was going to be there. Or if it was a feeder high school or
something, they might’ve done something like that. But since it wasn’t really my territory, I wasn’t –

JP: You would learn, obviously, pretty quickly. If you had a bunch of students from Hollywood High, then you would focus on that school because they had known about the school and sent several students.

ZR: Absolutely.

JP: And that’s what you mean by “feeder schools”?

ZR: Exactly. When you develop that relationship with a guidance counselor or what they call BRACE advisers or college assistant advisors and everything like that. We would work with them, mm-hm.

JP: They can be pretty critical in the choice of students, the local advisors at the high schools.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: Because they can steer them to various schools.

ZR: Absolutely. But I tell the students, “This is your choice. You have to decide where you want to be.” I definitely encourage them, even though they’re right here in Broward County, to come to the campus and see it for themselves, because if their brother and sister went here
or a friend is going, it may have been the school for them, but it may not be the school for him or her.

JP: What do you think is the biggest factor in a student picking a university?

ZR: Probably friends or parents, I would say.

JP: And second would be cost?

ZR: Cost, mm-hm.

JP: And third would be curriculum maybe?

ZR: Right, because nowadays I think they don’t want to commit. I was shocked that I stayed on the track that I did, but nowadays it’s more undecided students come in and that’s fine.

JP: Most of them have no idea.

ZR: And that’s the best thing to do for them, to shop around, to try different things and everything like that. But then you always have that parent saying, “Oh, but that means you’re going to be here for five or six years. You’ve got to decide because I don’t have that money.” [laughs] It’s the pressure. Unfortunately, it’s a pressure.
JP: And it is. It’s hard for kids at that age. You don't know what to do.

ZR: Even some of us are still figuring out what we want to do when we grow up. No, just kidding. [laughs]

JP: Now, when you started, describe what your — you don't have to give me a figure, but were your salary and benefits comparable to either the private sector or, say, University of Miami?

ZR: Well, honestly, I really never compared with Miami or anything when I started here. When I got the full-time job, it was really because of the benefit that I was going to be able to get my master’s for free.

JP: That was the crucial thing?

ZR: Yeah.

JP: But did you have healthcare?

ZR: I did.

JP: Anything else? Any other perk?

ZR: It was the healthcare, the vacations that you would get, so it was just health and vacation. Yeah, we did have that.
ZR= Zeida Rodriguez

JP: So it was a good package?

ZR: Absolutely. And I was living at home until then. After I left here then is when I moved out.

JP: Was your salary less than your previous job at the transportation company?

ZR: My salary was actually more.


ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: So the university was paying, at the very least, comparable salaries for people with your background. You had a master’s degree.

ZR: Yeah.

JP: What would your description be of your first work environment? Where was your office? How many people worked there? Who was your supervisor? What was your work like? What was a typical workday when you were starting out?

ZR: When I was a full-time employee here?

JP: Yeah, right.
ZR: My office was located on the second floor of the Parker Building. Again, it was —

JP: So you were an admissions counselor, right?

ZR: No, that’s when I was a clerical —

JP: Let’s go to admissions counselor.

ZR: Okay. So when I was an admissions counselor, I was actually on the first floor of the Parker Building. My office was located — I shared it with three other people, so I had a cubicle basically. Three other admissions counselors were there. I was in a cubicle. A typical day would be that I would come in, in the morning and turn on my computer or check my emails, check my [otics], follow up with physical files of applications or students and inquiries, depending on the time of the year. If I had to start setting up appointments so that I could go visit high schools, I would do that, and then to do the traveling to go see them.

JP: Was your per diem adequate when you traveled?

ZR: Mm-hm. At that time, I had no commitments personally and everything. It was just like, “Wow, I get to travel!” It did get old. That’s why I changed. [laughter]
ZR: Zeida Rodriguez

JP: It wasn’t as much fun.

ZR: Yeah. There was no Southwest Airlines when I was there. It was called driving.

JP: So in April 2001 you become assistant director of admissions.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: So one of the things you’re responsible about now is this dual admission program.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: Explain how that worked.

ZR: The dual admission program is a very unique program that was started. It’s for high school students who know what type of career they wanted to pursue. They would have the benefit, if they met the qualifications of the test scores of the SATs or ACTs or GPA, to have a reserve spot into the graduate school. So, for example, if there was a student that was interested in pursuing pharmacy — and it seems like most of the students that were in the dual admission program at the time wanted to go into one of our medical programs.

JP: Although there would be some law.
ZR: Yes. There was law, there was business, there was medical. It was open to PsyD, Ph.D. – all of those were. But the draw was mostly medical that we would get for this program. They would have to meet the admission requirements. They would have to go through an interview with HPD, Health Professions Division, submit letters of recommendations. And if they are selected – because it was always capped to about, I think they started off with 10 and then eventually grew to 12 or 15 students that they would pick a year – they would have a reserved spot into the pharmacy school. So they would start their undergraduate program with us, do all the prerequisite courses.

JP: It was in three years?

ZR: Right, do the prerequisites, which at the time was like 63 or 66 credits, so it was about two or three years, and then they would be reviewed again to make sure that they were still on track, and then just hand them over.

JP: You go to med school.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: That would be a four-year commitment usually.
ZR: Yes.

JP: Okay. Now, these individuals – are the numbers still limited or are there larger numbers now?

ZR: I think it has grown, but it is limited.

JP: Yeah, it would have to be.

ZR: Absolutely.

JP: Okay. And so once you make a commitment to this student, they have to end up with their academic work successful?

ZR: Absolutely.

JP: So if they falter they lose their place?

ZR: Exactly.

JP: And so the medical school evaluates whether they have qualified?

ZR: Right. There was the academic advisor of the undergraduate student with the advisor of the graduate student. They would do a reevaluation of that person to see if they could move on.
JP: What were the admission requirements for undergraduates, say in 2000? Do you remember generally what the SAT would be, what the GPA would be?

ZR: I want to say it probably was around maybe 860 maybe or 900, something like that. The GPA was always like around 2.5.

JP: But for the dual, it would have to be higher, wouldn’t it?

ZR: The dual was higher, yeah. It was different for each of the programs, for some reason. With the dual admissions —

JP: Well, it would be because different programs have different standards.

ZR: It was like a 1,040 or 1,000 or something like that on the SATs and —

JP: At least a B average.

ZR: Right, a 3.0 or 3.2.

JP: Now, as you understand, as a standard, these are pretty low admissions standards. Do you find that it is helpful, i.e. in getting more students because it’s a
little easier to get in? Or is a negative situation because the students were not as good?

ZR: I don't know. I think, personally, that it should be higher standards to get more serious, more qualified students into the programs. I don't work for that specific department anymore. I'm now at the Huizenga School, so it’s a little different. But I feel that a student nowadays, and even the parent, if they see that it’s just a minimum kind of to just get in, they wonder, “Is that school as reputable or not?” Since we’re so saturated with so many other colleges and universities nowadays...

JP: So if you wanted to get into UF, it would be a 3.8 with a 1,300 or 1,250, something like that.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: Now, do you find that in your point of view you need to expand the number of undergraduates on the campus?

ZR: That’s what the mission is from Dr. Hanbury and that’s what we’re going to do, exactly.

JP: But what you want is not numbers; you want quality as well, right?
ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: So you would like to get 3.0 or 1,100.

ZR: At minimum, yeah, a minimum of 3.0 and maybe 1,000.

JP: So if you raise the standards, is that going to impact the number of people who come here? Sometimes it improves it because people see it as a better institution.

ZR: A better institution.

JP: So parents say, “I'm not going to want my kid to go to school with C+ students. I want them to go with kids who are B+ students.”

ZR: Mm-hm, it's more challenging, I think. I think it's a win/win situation in the long run. The faculty will be happier. For the students and for the parents...

JP: I can tell you explicitly that it certainly benefits the faculty. I’ve taught low-level students and top-of-the-line students, and I can tell you which is easier. How many undergraduates would there be now?

ZR: I don't work very closely with them anymore. Like I said, I’ve kind of changed positions now. But I think now they have, for undergraduate in the day program,
the traditional program, I think it’s about 1,400 or something like that.

JP: I was talking to Hanbury and I think it’s a little more than that, but not a lot. They want to do 3,000 or 4,000.

ZR: Right, exactly.

JP: Because it’s too top heavy with graduates. You walk across the University of Florida campus and there are 50,000 students. When you walk on this campus it’s, “Where are the students?”

ZR: Well, there are more now than when I went here! [laughs]

JP: The only person you’d see in a day would be yourself.

ZR: I know! [laughs]

JP: Now, you changed in 2005 to a recruiter III. What is that?

ZR: I changed actually departments. I was working — when I was an admissions counselor and an assistant director, I was under the Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences.
ZR: Then I changed and moved over to the Huizenga School of Business, and I’ve been there since.

JP: So a recruiter III is you’re at Huizenga?

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: So you’re dealing just with business students?

ZR: I'm just dealing with business students, correct.

JP: And how has the business school evolved in the last, say, ten years? How different is it from when you...

ZR: Oh, it’s evolved.

JP: Obviously, you’ve got a new building and all of that.

ZR: Well, when I was going for my master’s program, I was actually in the Sonken Building, which was the high school, the University School at the time, and then they moved over to East Campus, which I never even had to go over there, and then they came over here. So yes, there has been a lot of growth, a lot of innovation. It’s just a different type of atmosphere.

JP: It’s a beautiful new building.
ZR: It is.

JP: Is that where your office is now?

ZR: Yes, on the first floor.

JP: And what’s your major focus? Are you still recruiting?

ZR: I still am in charge of the non-traditional undergraduate students. So those would be the students who would be attending classes in the evening and online.

JP: Okay. How much more is online than on campus?

ZR: It is growing more now. With the past two years, we’re getting more students going that path versus going to class, because of technology, because of personal reasons.

JP: Are we talking electronic classrooms, virtual classrooms, use of Skype, all of that?

ZR: Right. They’re using the WebCT and the Blackboard, mm-hm.

JP: And they have these people from everywhere, is that right?

ZR: Mm-hm. They can be anywhere. They can be in any other country.
JP: So they can plug in from Puerto Rico if they want to?

ZR: Mm-hm, yeah.

JP: How large are the on-campus classes and the online classes?

ZR: Well, the on-campus evening classes, I believe that the cap has to be no more than 28 students. Online, I believe there is a smaller cap. I believe it’s about 23.

JP: Twenty-three?

ZR: Yeah.

JP: Have you watched them do these online courses?

ZR: No. I’ve never taken one. I’m too scared to. [laughs]

JP: Well, for somebody like me who came through the traditional system and taught in a traditional system, it’s a little different.

ZR: Right.

JP: And I'm not sure how different and I'm not sure how... Maybe some disciplines it’s easier to do online than
sit and lecture to people in the classroom. Do the students seem to find the online easier, more flexible?

ZR: It depends on the subject and it depends on the professor.

JP: It always depends on the professor.

ZR: I know. For some people, I’ve heard that it’s double the work because, again, you have to be more disciplined on yourself and you have to be on top of logging on and doing the chat sessions at the designated times and turning in your assignments and things like that. So you have to be on top of that.

JP: So some students won’t function well under that scenario.

ZR: No. That’s the beauty about it. At least with our programs, we do offer the variety of courses so that if a student, for example, in a certain subject matter feels more comfortable interacting with the students –

JP: And some do, they want to see face to face.

ZR: Right, exactly, then they can choose to take that course that way. But if because of time and if their job
involves them traveling but they don't want to fall behind, then they can do the online format.

JP: Do you help them get jobs?

ZR: I don't. We do have a career center housed now there that works very closely with our students.

JP: So most of the students now are MBA?

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: Would that be, what, 75%?

ZR: I would say even higher, probably like 80%, yeah.

JP: If I were starting out on an MBA online, how long would it take to complete that degree?

ZR: It is doable within 18 months to two years to finish the program online.

JP: But it would take you two years if you went to Columbia on campus.

ZR: Mm-hm, on campus, right.

JP: On campus it would take you two years.

ZR: Right. So it depends on —
ZR: Almost all the MBA programs that I know about are two-year programs.

ZR: Right. We are now going through AACSB review for accreditation. So they’re hiring more professors and trying to get them on board. So it’s kind of slowed down a little bit on trying to get the classes being offered more often as they were before. So it was 18 months, but now we’ve been told to tell the student it could be two years, just in case something happens.

JP: And the other problem is with people who are working full time and people who are taking online, other things interfere. Mainly, if you’re a student at FAU, you’re a student at FAU. Most of these are 19-year-old kids who have nothing to worry about but where they’re going to get their beer on Friday night.

ZR: Right, exactly.

JP: And so you’re dealing with adults. You’re dealing with a different set of people, a different set of problems.

ZR: And we do have an MBA day program that is specifically catered mostly for the full-time students, so
most of those students are straight out of their undergraduate, going during the day.

JP: Okay. How many of those would you have?

ZR: I think the population right now is about 200-something.

JP: Oh, that’s quite a few. And how many would be in the other programs?

ZR: I don't have the specifics on that.

JP: Fewer?

ZR: Well, the MBA day is the smallest program.

JP: Oh, it is?

ZR: Yeah, the smallest program. The MBA weekend is the biggest, then online, and we just started in April with evening classes.

JP: Actually, what you’ve done here is you’ve offered an option for just about everybody.

ZR: Mm-hm.

JP: So if you can’t come weekends, you can —
ZR: We even tried morning, but that didn’t work out. We would’ve had it 24/7.

JP: You don’t need mornings.

ZR: No.

JP: People are not ready in the morning. Now, one of the things that have always intrigued me about this university is that people in the state don’t know anything about it. Often, the image they have is either skewed or incorrect. There are people—I was on a trip and told somebody I was working on this project. He said, “Oh yeah, Nova, that’s a diploma mill.” And I said, “Did you know they had a law school?” “No, I didn’t know that.” “Did you know they had a medical school?” “No, I didn’t know that.”

ZR: Right.

JP: I can tell you that people at the University of Florida know virtually nothing about Nova. They know about the law school, but I don’t think they know much else. Why is that?

ZR: Well, I think—

JP: What is this, the sixth-largest private school?
ZR: I know. I think, unfortunately, the student educational centers that are housed in very popular areas of Florida – we’ve got Orlando, we’ve got Tampa, we’ve got Jacksonville. They haven’t really done a lot of exposure out there. Again, that is something new that the mission is for Dr. Hanbury to have them out there to work out there and visit high schools and visit colleges and do corporate relationships, go to companies and organizations, and probably doing advertisement more like we do here, with newspapers or things like that. It’s sad because they have been there so long now and it was only just education.

JP: At this point, there’s no excuse for not knowing about the school because it’s almost 50 years old.

ZR: Yeah, exactly. It was just education. But even though we don't have – maybe they can still be our voice out there and promote our main campus, even though someone may be interested in something that they don’t offer at that site. I'm hoping that that will happen, that they will be our voice and be able to draw them down to here.

JP: And I guess the campuses in Palm Beach and Orlando and Jacksonville all have been pretty successful.

ZR: Right, the student education centers.
JP: And you offer business courses?

ZR: We do. We offer business courses, very limited again of what we offer. We don't offer all of the programs that we offer here.

JP: But you would always offer an MBA?

ZR: We had the MBA.

JP: At all of the campuses?

ZR: Right. We have the MBA and we have the Bachelor's in Business Administration.

JP: Okay.

ZR: Yeah, those are totally in all of the campuses.

JP: And almost all of these are evening?

ZR: Those would be evening, except for the MBA, which is every other weekend.

JP: Now, what has changed the most on this campus since you’ve been here?

ZR: The structure.

JP: The building?
ZR: The growth, the building. The administration has changed the most also.

JP: In what way? When you were talking about Ray Ferrero —

ZR: Right. I’ve gone from Abe Fischler to Ovid Lewis to — there was one there for a short period of time. I can’t even remember his name.


ZR: Right, Feldman and then Ferraro and now Hanbury.

JP: And the difference is more aggressive expansion under Ray Ferrero?

ZR: Mm-hm, right.


ZR: Right, exactly.

JP: I don’t know. What term would you use?

ZR: Yeah, expansion, visionary, more outsourced kind of community kind of interaction, which is important.

JP: How do you see the town-gown relationship between Nova and let’s just say Broward County? A lot of people in Broward County still don’t know a lot about Nova.
ZR: Yeah, but I think that that’s ignorance really, to be honest with you. We’ve developed. We’ve grown here in Broward. We’re exposed in a lot of community services that we do with different hospitals and we do with different companies and corporations.

JP: And right here with the library.

ZR: And right here with the library, exactly. So I just think that’s ignorance in a way for them. Now, again, maybe north of Orlando area and things like that, Palm Beach and everything, that’s something we do need to grow. We need to develop.

JP: Yeah. In working at any university, one of the systems that are always under criticism is transportation and parking.

ZR: Okay, mm-hm.

JP: How is that on this campus?

ZR: For me, there are times that, yes, I park over here at the garage and everything like that, and it does get a little hairy and stuff, but I kind of like know my times. If I get here before a certain time, I’ll find parking. If I don’t, then I’ve got Plan B. I’ve got the outside area to park and stuff. But as we are expanding
and as we’re growing and we want to see more students here at the campus, yes, they’re going to have to find a way of having another garage built out there for us for the students. I don't know if they’re happy or not, but the undergrad students that live in the dorms are not to move their cars and they’re supposed to walk over to us. Again, that could cause a problem because some of them don’t want to get wet or for whatever reason.

JP: And everybody nowadays –

ZR: But that’s the way it is.

JP: I don’t know where the money comes from, but all the students just about have cars now.

ZR: Yeah.

JP: A few have bikes, but most of them have cars.

ZR: Cars, exactly.

JP: So you have a campus, at least the center part of the campus, which was actually designed that way. I came across the actual master plan from 1964, and the idea was to get the center part of the campus – they didn’t even have any buildings at this point – free from automobile traffic, so it would be pedestrian traffic. All of that
would be around the perimeter. At the time, that was pretty unusual. Most campuses, cars went right through the middle of campus.

ZR: Right, exactly. And I think that’s great for safety reasons, too.

JP: Well, that was another thing because at the time pollution wasn’t an issue, but safety and the ability for students to walk to campus was. Hartley, the guy who was the architect, saw that. He said, “Plus, once you have that internal interaction that people can go to the dorms and go to their class…” He saw a student center, once it’s built out. You have to have that vision. You can’t say, “Well, we’ve got three buildings. What are we going to do with them?”

ZR: And now the shuttles. The shuttles have been great. You see people in the shuttles. You see people taking it. I take it to go to HPD for an appointment or something like that versus moving my car. They have been really successful.

JP: That’s the Shark Express, right?

ZR: Yes, mm-hm.
ZR: Personal experience? The opportunity for me to be able to grow and to give back to my colleagues, to future students — what I do, I adore, I love. I love to see students come up to me and they all have this dream and this vision and this idea. I try to feel that I can help them out to succeed and be able to find that dream. So it’s very rewarding.

JP: What’s been the biggest disappointment?

ZR: Hmm, I’ve never thought of that one. [laughter] I don't know. The disappointment, I guess, is again, when I came here, maybe not having all those amenities that I see now that other people have, and I feel I was a little cheated, for selfish reasons.

JP: That’s understandable.

ZR: I would have to say it’s that.

JP: Does it bother you at all that the university is expanding? As somebody told me the other day, they said, “This is no longer a mom-and-pop institution.” As it gets bigger and bigger and bigger, it becomes more top heavy with administration. You sort of lose the innovation that
you had when you had a small school and you had more independent researchers. Now you get into this huge conglomerate. Some people argue that it restricts—

ZR: I think it depends on the center that you work for. With some centers, they’re still trying to work that. They have the small classrooms and trying to offer the classes more often, and be able to give that opportunity of having—right now, I think the student undergraduate ratio is like 23 or 24 to 1, or something like that. So I'm hoping that it never goes close to 30 because then, yeah, you will... You’ll go into an auditorium setting. I know they do that at the medical school. Because then, again, we’re going to be another UF, another FAU, another FIU.

JP: I would’ve been thrilled to have a class of 30.

ZR: Yeah.

JP: For an undergraduate course, the smallest I ever had was 50 and I taught some of 300.

ZR: Yikes.

JP: And so you, having had the opportunity to have classes with the 11, 15, 17 or 20—it makes a lot of difference.
ZR: It does.

JP: And it would particularly online, I would think, because online you would have to communicate with everybody. Everybody has to be part of this, right? There’s an interaction.

ZR: Sometimes. Again, there are like some chat sessions that, yes. That’s when you would have to interact, but other than that you’re pretty much on your own with the professor and everything like that.

JP: But when you have a –

ZR: A chat?

JP: A guy I talked to earlier today said he would meet at seven o’clock and everybody would log on.

ZR: Would have to log on.

JP: And you would have an hour where he would ask questions and somebody would make an argument and somebody else would respond.

ZR: Correct.

JP: Give me some anecdotes, amusing things that happened. Were you here during the hurricane?
ZR: Was I here during Andrew? No, I was here when Wilma did. That was just recently and everything like that.

JP: What was it, ’94?

ZR: Andrew.

ZR: I was, wasn’t I? I was actually.

JP: All the palm trees came down.

ZR: Yeah. It was flooded. That whole front area of the Parker Building and everything was totally, totally flooded and everything and we were off for a while. I think personally it was more that in here it was being affected with what happened and stuff like that.

JP: What I'm kind of looking for are some anecdotes, experiences from your student life, when you were here as an undergraduate, maybe your work with the yearbook or something that would be just something that would sort ofhumanize the history of Nova. I can tell you when the buildings were built, but you don’t want statistical stuff; you’d like to see how did... And I think it was good you described what it was like being in the Parker Building. That’s the sort of thing. Do you have an incidents or characters or events?
ZR: Let’s see. Let me think.

JP: Did George W. Bush parachute in to the campus? [laughter]

ZR: Well, we really didn’t have much. Like now there are so many activities going on. We always have guest speakers here and everything like that. We really didn’t have that.

JP: You didn’t have any?

ZR: No. We really never had that. Whenever we had activities… Being a student, again, we didn’t have a center. So yeah, that could’ve been problematic because we would have to go off campus to do an event. So we would either go to a club and do something that way or it was… We didn’t even have a place to play. Basketball was over at Lutheran High School. That’s where they played the games, over there.

JP: Well, they didn’t have a baseball field either?

ZR: Uh-uh.

JP: They used the University School?

ZR: Yeah, exactly.
JP: And did you have much interaction with the University School at all?

ZR: No, not really, only when I was with graduates and I used their facility. That was it.

JP: Were you aware of what they were doing over there?

ZR: Well, it was the private high school and the elementary school. That was all we knew.

JP: But very, very innovative, very different, open classrooms.

ZR: Right and it was costly.

JP: Yeah.

ZR: That we knew, that it was very, very costly, yeah. And then we also had, I remember also the - what’s it called now for the retired professionals? We teach classes for senior citizens. I think they’re now over at University Park Plaza. They were in the Parker Building on the third floor. So they were there while we were in classes on the second floor.

JP: And that’s very interesting because part of the system – again, the old concept for this thing was cradle
to grave. They were starting with the elementary school through graduate school.

ZR: Exactly.

JP: But they also wanted, even from the beginning, to have senior education, which was not done other places.

ZR: At any other places, no.

JP: It was not done.

ZR: No, it wasn’t.

JP: You had no senior citizen center or anything like that, so it was kind of interesting that that was part of it.

ZR: And I think it was neat because there were a good handful of people that came.

JP: It was not designed to make money. It was not a money-making thing.

ZR: Right.

JP: How important has the development of athletics been on the campus? Do you think that ties people more to the university if they have a successful baseball —
ZR: I think so. With recruitment, it has helped a lot for various reasons and in different types of sport programs that we’ve had. Baseball and basketball usually are our biggest ones. I think they still are. But now it seems like we have the cross country, we have the golf, the women’s golf.

JP: The women’s golf won a golf championship.

ZR: Exactly. We’re starting swimming, so that must be a demand that the undergrad admissions department has seen, that people are asking if we have swim teams. So, yeah, I do really think it’s important out there to offer that.

JP: Are there sororities on this campus?

ZR: There are sororities. I don't think there’s a house, but there are sororities and fraternities, yeah.

JP: Do the fraternities have a house?

ZR: No.

JP: No houses?

ZR: No houses.

JP: How many fraternities and sororities would there be?
ZR: I don't know, but I can find out for you.

JP: That’s okay. Is it an important part of the social network?

ZR: Again, I don't work with that population as much anymore now, so I would think, yes. Nowadays, the high schools are more exposed to more clubs and organizations and things like that. So for them to be more... When you’re looking for jobs, I think nowadays it’s not just the résumé of where you went to school and your job experience, but also if you’ve been involved in any extracurricular activities to help you.

JP: That’s increased significantly and the student services have obviously increased. When they first started, there was nothing, literally nothing.

ZR: Our yearbook office was downstairs, on the first floor of the Parker Building, like where public safety is.

JP: Everything was in the Parker Building! [laughter]

ZR: Everything was in the Parker Building, yeah. And then we got a trailer. We were very excited when we got our trailer. So we got a trailer and the trailer because our student union.
JP: And do you see that there’s any demand for having a football team?

ZR: I personally don’t think so, no. We’ve got the Dolphins. And they’re not doing very well, unfortunately.

JP: I was going to say, I wouldn’t claim them.

ZR: But no. I don't know.

JP: What has that done for the university? It’s given the university some publicity because the training center is on campus. But other than that, people wouldn’t come here because the Dolphin training center is nearby.

ZR: It would be nice to be able to, but I understand for reasons that they can’t because then they’re favoring one school over others and everything like that. But to be able to feed them, if it was a major event, that after they go there to see them practice, then they can come over here for some festivities or something like that. Give them the opportunity to see that this library is theirs, too. It’s not just ours as a student.

JP: They’re not interested in coming to the library. They want to see the Dolphins training facility. You know how that works.
ZR: I know.

JP: The library —

ZR: It gets some exposure if they park in the garage and then they see some campus.

JP: Well, it should be the most critical part of any institution, but it’s not.

ZR: Exactly. I would say if we do get more parking available and we do get another garage, have the people that come see the Dolphins park on that side and then have them shuttled over so they get to see the whole campus and then go. That’d be some exposure.

JP: Nowadays, you have to take them to the campus. Nowadays, it’s a pretty campus so it’s an easier job than when you were first here.

ZR: Yeah, it is. It’s an easier selling point, absolutely, it is. So luckily we have our big open house now on Saturday, so that should be —

JP: This Saturday?

ZR: This Saturday, our campus-wide open house.

JP: How many people will you expect?
ZR: They’re expecting over 2,000 people to come, RSVPs.

JP: When they first started, they were lucky to get 20.

ZR: I know. But this is because it’s now a campus-wide –

JP: I understand, yeah.

ZR: Right. So this is going to have graduate, undergraduate, doctorate – all programs represented. I think it’s great. It’s a one-day event, too. It used to be a two-day event. Friday afternoon and evening –

JP: They don’t need two.

ZR: No. Friday afternoon nobody comes. So this, it will be packed, which is good.

JP: So you’ll have food and drinks?

ZR: They will have food there available. I think they get a meal ticket and so they get to go to the café and buy something there. I think it’s like a five- or six-dollar value meal ticket. They’ll be able to purchase stuff there. They’ll be giving tours continuously of the campus. There will be representations there from all of
the different programs, all the different services. So there’s going to be like an advising table. There’s going to be financial aid, the clubs and the organizations. And I think they’re also going to be doing financial aid presentation, which is important.

JP: Yeah, good. It’s very important in a private school.

ZR: Yeah.

JP: What are some of the other new opportunities for social activities? When you started, there was a key club and yearbook. There must be —

ZR: Well, now there are more clubs and organizations based on people’s majors. So for every major, they have all of these clubs and organizations. We also have the theater now available, too, with Broward County. We have over out in Las Olas that it’s also part of us and that we get to utilize that also. We have here Miniaci.

JP: And you would have — I don’t know — musical groups, poetry clubs, international club and those kinds of things.

ZR: Exactly. And now, like I said, there’s always something going on here, on campus, where at the time when
I went here, there wasn’t. So we have a lot of people coming on board. It could be actors. It could be very well-known people in politics that we’ve had here. We had one of the debates here one time for presidents.

JP: I didn’t know that.

ZR: Oh yeah.

JP: Who was that?

ZR: Or governor – it was governor. It was Governor Crist and whoever was running at the time for him.

JP: Charlie Crist?

ZR: Charlie Crist. I think it was here, at Miniaci.

JP: Yeah. That was Scott.

ZR: No, it was before, like his first term.

JP: Oh, Charlie, when he –

ZR: Yeah.

JP: Okay, I gotcha.

ZR: Yeah, because Crist was going in for senate.

JP: And then lost that.
ZR: Yeah. So we’ve had comedians come in. We’ve had the Dalai Lama.

JP: I saw the Dalai Lama was here.

ZR: Exactly, so yeah.

JP: That’s important because they bring publicity, but they also bring people on campus. People would come. One time I was here, George McGovern was here and I went to hear him. I think that creates an interest in the campus, plus it’s stimulating. They’re important people who have something to say.

ZR: Exactly, right.

JP: It’s not somebody out here just telling jokes. These are significant... I don't know who has been here, but Hilary Clinton or somebody.

ZR: We had John Walsh here one time.

JP: Okay.

ZR: We also had – it was just on the news today – a lady had passed away from cancer. Her daughter just got married. Oh my goodness.

JP: Anyway, the speaker program is important for the campus?
ZR: Yes, mm-hm.

JP: Okay.

ZR: Exposure, absolutely.

JP: Is there anything else you want to talk about or can think about or any stories?

ZR: No. It was a great experience, both as an employee and as a student.

JP: If you happen to think of something, email it. Maybe when you get back you’ll say, “Oh yeah! I remember the time that there was a four-car pileup in the middle of campus.” [laughter]

ZR: Okay, one of those types of stories, okay.

JP: I remember when I was in school somebody streaked a basketball —

ZR: Well, we used to have bonfires. We used to have our homecomings and everything like that. We used to have a bonfire right in front of the Parker Building. Of course, it was 80 degrees, so that’s a story [laughter]

JP: You didn’t need a bonfire.
ZR: You don’t need a bonfire. So we had that. That was part of our thing. But I’ll think of something.

JP: Okay. Well, on that note, we’ll end.

[End]