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Interview with Dr. Jerome Chermak - University School Headmaster

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JC= Dr. Jerome Chermak

Nova Southeastern University

History of Presidents

Dr. Jerome Chermak

JP= Dr. Julian Pleasants

JC= Dr. Jerome Chermak

JP: This is Julian Pleasants. It is October 26, 2011. I'm at Nova Southeastern University and I'm with Dr. Jerry Chermak, and we're going to talk about the University School.

First of all, clarify for me the difference between Nova High School, Nova Elementary, and the University School. I know Nova High School started in '64.

JC: Correct.

JP: Explain a little bit the differences. Nova is a public high school. Yours is an independent, private school. Is that right?

JC: That's exactly right. Yes, the Nova schools, I guess their history goes back to 1964. There are four Nova public schools and it's a feeder pattern. There's Nova Eisenhower and Nova Blanche Forman, which are the two elementary schools, Nova Middle and Nova High School. They

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are considered magnet schools for Broward County, meaning that they do bus students from all over the county, but it's a public school. By law now, they need to be representative of the demographics of the county.

We are University School. We are on the NSU campus and we are actually part of NSU. We're not affiliated with NSU; that's the wrong term because we are actually part of the university in the same manner as the undergraduate college, the medical school, law school, etc.

My role as the head of the school is to be the center head, so I am on the council of deans at the university, representing University School as one of the 16 centers of NSU. Unfortunately, it is complicated and a little confusing with the Nova public schools, because sometimes if people just use the term "Nova" they don't really express which Nova. Sometimes people call us Nova. We try to make it different by calling ourselves University School so that they don't get confused. We are a private school with tuition, part of Nova Southeastern University.

JP: You have on your board of trustees people from the NSU Board of Trustees?

JC: No. I'll clarify that for you.

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JP: At one time, that was the case.

JC: Well, I'll explain. There's really one board of trustees here on this campus. It's the Nova Southeastern University Board of Trustees. Many of the other centers have boards, but they're not trustees and they are advisory boards. So we have an advisory board for the University School. It's called the Headmasters' Advisory Board. I have about 15 current parents who are on that board. The chair of my advisory board sits at an ex officio member, a non-voting member of the board of trustees of NSU and attends their meetings. I also have some former parents and former board members who are now part of what we call the big board, the board of trustees, but it's different.

So I don't know that we ever had any different configuration than we have now – that's before my time – but I think this is the way it is and probably the way it has been.

JP: So what authority/supervision does the university have over your school?

JC: Okay. We are part of the university, so in terms of hierarchy there was a time a few years ago when all the deans – myself including – reported to the president, Ray

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Ferrero. As the school grew, they decided to change and now all the deans, including myself, report to Frank DePiano, vice president for academic affairs.

In terms of my board, they are advisory. Going back to your question, the university has really full responsibility over the University School. Again, I report to the vice president, but we have a central budget, central facility and central human resources, so, in essence, the university is the parent group for the University School and all the other centers in the same manner.

JP: But like many of the other centers, you're essentially autonomous, in that you run your school.

JC: That's right. We are autonomous in the sense that we run our school.

JP: You have your own budget.

JD: We have our own budget, but it's a part of the university's budgetary process and has to be approved by the university.

JP: Of course. But by and large, you feel like you're allowed to hire and fire, make decisions. You're

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getting ready to expand. That's your decision in consulting with the advisory board?

JC: Yes. There's really not much involvement at all with hiring and firing, with programmatic decisions.

JP: I'd imagine they would have to approve the choice of the headmaster?

JC: My position, yes, they would approve that. In terms of the people that I hire who work with me, they would not be involved with that.

JP: Well, can we talk a little bit about the beginning of this? I realize it was before your time, but I'd like to get your input.

JC: Sure.

JP: From what I have here, this really was started by Mickey Segal, who was trained at NSU and had this sense that she could help disadvantaged students.

JC: Yes.

JP: I noticed at one point it was called the Preschool Private School. [laughter]

JC: Those were the early days. Well, actually, I came here in 1982.

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JP: Yeah, so you've been here a while.

JC: I've been here a long time. I missed the beginning, but I know the story. Yeah, Mickey Segal did her doctoral work here at NSU and I guess was part of the first cohort. She started a nursery school program in a temple in Hollywood. Her relationship with Abe Fischler led to a conversation where they brought that school to the NSU campus around 1971.

JP: That's correct. Yeah, that's what I heard.

JC: Yeah, at the beginning... There are different terms that were used. It wasn't really in any sense of what it is now, an independent school. It was a demonstration school for the university. Yes, they had a number of students who paid tuition and a number of students who were disadvantaged who didn't pay tuition.

There's another term. It's often demonstration school or lab school. A lot of the universities around the country have lab schools, which means they do some teacher training there. They have some experimental programs. Abe, even to this day and in those days, too, was always trying to try new things for education. He certainly had his philosophy of looking at individual students which he

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always – it was his stamp on the university school. We don't look at the group. We look at the individual.

So in the early days there was a preschool program and then it began to grow. Part of the story, which you may or may not have, was that Mickey has several children. One of them, Debbie, has cerebral palsy, so part of what I have heard is that there was no school in Broward County that would educate Debbie with her special needs. So part of Mickey's incentive, aside from helping the community – she's a very giving and philanthropic and caring person – is she needed a place to educate her daughter. So as Debbie went through the grades, the school expanded, maybe adding a grade a year. I believe we graduated our first class in 1974.

The school was very small in those days. It maybe had 10 or 15 students in a grade. We soon grew from a preschool/nursery school program on this campus to a pre-K to 12 in the '70s.

JP: By that time, you were all grades? In '74 you were K-12?

JC: I assume so. I know in 1975 the Lower School building, which was the first University Nursery School

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building, was opened. I would say that if we're saying – and I know it's true – that 1974 was the first graduating class, I think it's safe to assume that in the years before '71 and '74 they brought students in from all the grades.

JP: Okay. Well, let me read you a little bit from the interview I did with Abe Fischler. Obviously, his research interests were one reason he came here. He knew in this case – we're talking about now Nova High School, but we knew that he could use those students as training for his graduate students and for his work.

JC: That's right.

JP: Then he got interested with Mickey Segal. He says that, "I had moved the University School here..." which was a problem because they were not making much money, so he was in the position were now we've got... At that time, they were barely above water.

JC: Well, the whole university and I guess the school as well.

JP: So it's very interesting. They're in desperate financial straits, but nonetheless he takes on this additional responsibility. Mickey Segal, who came with the University School, created the 0-5 University. She was

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taking care of 0-18. Do you know what the 0-5 University was?

JC: She's an early childhood expert and specialist. Zero to five is birth to five. That's what they have now. There's a family center today.

JP: Is this the Mailman Segal Institute?

JC: Yes, aka the Family Center. What was started and called the Family Center in most of the history is now call the Mailman Segal Institute. They call themselves birth to five, so that's what zero to five means.

JP: Okay. And what do they do? They deal with autistic children?

JC: They have a large cluster of autistic children that they contract with Broward County. These autistic children are primarily three- and four-year-olds, as far as I know. Then they have what they call "Mommy and Me" classes, where the mothers come with their infants. They go through four-year-olds, in terms of preschool. In essence, it's a preschool, but they have infants and mothers and they actually have two-year-olds there now, too, and three-year-olds.

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JP: That's why it's now called the Family Center because it's a little more expanded with the parents?

JC: Well, it was called the Family Center. Still people who've been here a long time call it the Family Center, but I think it's technically the Mailman Segal Institute. When they built that new building that they have now, they got a big grant from the Morans, so it's the Jim & Jan Moran Family Center Village, which is the facility, and the Mailman Segal Institute, which is housed within that facility.

JP: All of this is part of NSU?

JC: They are part of NSU, as we are.

JP: So they're one of the 16?

JC: Well, they were but now three of the centers have combined, but they are part.

JP: And all of this is different from the Oral School?

JC: The Oral School is no longer.

JP: That's when you were talking about, they've -

JC: Well, okay. Gee, I want to make it as clear as possible, but all the history is complicated. From 1988 to

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1999, there was an entity called the Family & School Center and that entity was comprised of three separate programs: the Family Center, the Baudhuin Oral School and the University School.

JP: Okay.

JC: So Baudhuin Oral School has its own history. You could write a book about that. It started on the east side of town. It was primarily for students with hearing impairments. Then it was moved to the main campus here, maybe in 1987 or '87, around there, maybe '88. It was part of the Family Center. That school, the Baudhuin Oral School, used to have a preschool through grade eight. It no longer does. It really just has the preschools.

When we talk about Baudhuin School in 2011, that's the autistic part, the cluster of the Mailman Segal Institute. The Mailman Segal Institute now has two parts really: the Family Center, which is the preschool program, and the Baudhuin program, which is for the autistic children. The University School, in 1999 – when I became the head of the school, President Ferrero separated us from Baudhuin and the Family Center.

JP: Do they still do hearing impaired?

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JC: I don't think that they do.

JP: Okay. At one point, that was a fairly big part of what the Oral School did.

JC: That is correct.

JP: All right, let me get back to your school. He talks a little bit about this. He said, "When we were starting the University School, we had scholarship money for African-American children and we wanted to keep it to make sure that it was a way to create an environment where we could study cognitive psychology, social psychology and grouping." So from the very beginning, would you say until today that you're still within the sort of theoretical context that Abe Fischler started with?

JC: I would say no.

JP: No? Okay.

JC: What happened over the years is that.. He had I guess a bimodal population there. He had students who weren't paying, who were disadvantaged students, and students who were paying. That model is no longer.

JP: Because they're totally different socioeconomic backgrounds.

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JC: It was in those days, yeah. We have a diverse population now because Broward County is a very diverse county. But we have become, in the last 40 years, an independent school, a private school. We're in the marketplace. We charge a very high tuition. We compete with Pine Crest School, which is in East Fort Lauderdale; American Heritage, which is in West Broward County; Miami Country Day, which is in Miami, and we overlap in terms of our demographics in North Miami Beach.

So we're competing with independent schools, so it's a different model now. We've morphed into a different model. The trappings of the past are still there because we are what I would call a campus-based school, so we are on the campus of NSU. We have collaborative programs with many of the other centers. We have some professors' children in the school.

JP: That was an original part of the school.

JC: I'm sure it was, yeah, and it still is. There is a tuition waiver, a partial fee waiver to enable professors and deans and others to have their children in our school. We also have children of our own teachers in the school and they get a discount, so to speak, or a waiver, but they are a small part of the school.

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Going back to one of your earlier points, we are now one of the profit centers of NSU because we generate a lot of money, a lot of income. We charge a high tuition.

JP: What is it, by the way?

JC: What is the tuition?

JP: Yeah.

JC: Tuition now, this year, is a sliding scale. It goes between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per student, per year.

JP: Based on income?

JC: Based on age. Well, that's the fee structure. It's less for the lower grades. For example, high school is \$19,845 and the middle school is \$17,000-something. We have that. Now, in addition to the published fee structure, we have certain students received tuition waivers. The waiver formula was changed on July 1, 2010, so now all of our teachers – our teachers used to get a 50% waiver. They're grandfathered in, but all new hires and everyone at the university gets a 35% waiver. It used to be 50% for our teachers and 20% for NSU professors. Now it's 35% for everybody.

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In addition to the waivers, there is a financial aid budget. Now, most, if not all, independent schools throughout the country have financial aid because they want to have some economic diversity and now, especially in these times, it's very difficult for people to pay the full tuition. So we have a certain budget that we have to balance. In some sense, maybe it's a little bit like it was when it started because we need full-paying students and we have some students who are on full paying, but it's not exactly what Abe started with his disadvantaged population and his advantaged population. It's not the kind of mix that he wanted for his research; it's a different type of school now.

JP: Right. But there is a goal that you would have in terms of diversity?

JC: Yes.

JP: So you would provide the necessary funds for someone who could not afford to come at all? Now, they have to qualify?

JC: They have to qualify. We do it, obviously, in a legitimate manner. We have an outside agency. It's a company that screens and looks at the data. Of course, now

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everything's on the computer and we look at that. It's what we call need-based, as you say. So we have a budget and we try to use that budget to bring in qualified students and certainly to make sure that students of different backgrounds are represented here.

JP: What is your standard for qualifying?

JC: Well, the standard for qualifying – basically, the academic profile we're looking for in this school is the same as it always was. Interestingly, as we have morphed into a different kind of school, there are certain philosophical tenants or things that we do that are similar to what Abe was thinking of and what he did at the beginning. It was always a school for average, above average and gifted students. We didn't want to be an elite school in the sense that we were only going to look at the top 10 or 20% of the population, like some other schools do. We wanted to have a broader mix. But I would say that students here are grade level and above. That's always been the case in terms of the academic mix to qualify for the school.

JP: In the beginning, one of the things that they talked about is that because it was sort of an open classroom, independent study, you had to get kids who were

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self-starters, self-reliant, that some kids needed the structure that you couldn't find in the schools. So is that something you still look for?

JC: Yes.

JP: That would be true probably of any school. You would prefer –

JC: Right, but our school is... I think there a connection there. We built a new Lower School building. That building I mentioned, the first University School building, which was opened in 1975, actually had pre-K through 12 in one building because it was a very small school, but it was a very open building.

When we built our new lower school two or three years ago, we kept some elements of that openness but it's not fully as open geographically as it used to be. However, the teaching and learning is different in this school. That has remained a constant in the last 40 years. This is a school where students are not learning the same thing at the same time, which is what Abe was very interested in. We have students who are working at their own pace. Students are not waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do next, so they are self-starters and you do need a

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certain amount of self-discipline to be able to go through the program. Many schools are very lockstep, where they're doing science and the teacher –

JP: If you pass these courses, you go to the next one.

JC: Right. And even beyond that, the day to day is lockstep. We have our English and everybody's doing the same short story, then we're in math, chapter three. We have students working at different levels, in different materials, and that has always been the case here. So if you walk up to a third grader in our school and you say, "What are you doing right now?" They'll tell you what they're doing, they'll tell you why they're doing it, and they'll tell you what they have to do afterward. They know these things. They're not waiting for the teacher to tell them what to do here.

JP: But the teacher has to guide them, support them, and encourage them.

JC: Of course.

JP: Let's take an example. The Lower School is one through eight?

JC: No, the Lower School is pre-K through grade five.

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JP: Through five?

JC: Yes, because we have a middle school and an upper school, three divisions.

JP: All right. Then the Upper School is...?

JC: It's nine through twelve, six through eight for middle.

JP: Okay. Let's take a ninth grader who would come for a normal day. What time do they come?

JC: Well, the high school looks more like other high schools. It looks more traditional. We still do a lot more individualization than other schools do and we try to use more progressive teaching methods, but in terms of looking like and acting like other schools, yes, they come in at 8:00 and they finish at 3:10. They have a six-period or seven-period day, time for lunch in the middle. You'd recognize it to be similar to other schools.

Still, the core of our pedagogy is to look at individual differences, to differentiate instruction based on the student's learning needs and the student's learning style and ability. Abe was talking about that in the '60s, and he was ahead of his time.

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JP: So in the lower grades, if you have a kid who's a slow learner who has ADD, how do you proceed with them?

JC: Okay. Well, there are a lot of small groups that we work with in the Lower School, so that there are students in kindergarten that are doing first and second-grade work and some of them are just trying to keep up with what the kindergarten curriculum would expect. So there would be more repetition for certain learners. There are teachers who are trained to deal with special needs students who are working with them. One of the things that I think is a nice feature is that we do have the resources of NSU here. NSU has learning specialists. In HPD they have occupational therapists and they have speech therapists.

JP: That's a huge advantage.

JC: It is and we make use of that, so we have a lot of these experts and some of their students – again, like the old model – who are working in our Lower School, helping out some of these kids.

JP: Do you give periodic exams, particularly in the lower and upper grades?

JC: Yes. We have testing like other schools do.

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JP: Now, I'm talking about whether you have what one might call quizzes and exams that check progress?

JC: Yes.

JP: Then at the end of the fifth grade, you have something similar to the state exams?

JC: No.

JP: You don't have that kind of testing?

JC: No. Right now – and I hope it continues – in the state of Florida private schools do not have to take the FCATs. Because we are an accredited schools, just like NSU is a SACS-accredited school –

JP: You're a SACS-accredited –

JC: We're also SACS, in a different commission because we're K-12.

JP: Isn't there a Florida Independent School Association?

JC: Yes. I've been very involved personally. I've been the president of one of those groups. But yes, we have accreditation from the Florida Council of Independent Schools, from the Association of Independent Schools of Florida, from SACS. We have all of those accreditations

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and they tell us that they want us to have standardized testing once a year, but we can pick our own test. We don't use the Florida testing system.

As an independent school, we have a lot of freedom to choose our own curriculum, to develop our own goals and make sure that we meet them.

JP: Well, I can tell you, very carefully, that I'm glad you don't use the FCAT because I've seen it.

JC: This so maybe a little off topic, but it does speak to the issue of who we are. My wife just retired. She was a guidance counselor in the Broward County schools. It's become FCAT camp. It's such a high-stakes test that it skews the whole program.

JP: And people cheat and one and on and on.

JC: But we don't have that. What happens, though – to make it very specific, when you have that kind of high-stakes testing – and there's a lot wrong with it and we could talk about that for a long time – it narrows the curriculum to that which is on the test.

JP: Well, you study what's on the test. It's very simple. That's where you lose –

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JC: That's right. So there's no arts, there's no focus on the other things.

JP: Well, you lose the process of understanding thinking and rational thought if all you have to do is memorize what's on the test, which is a shame.

JC: It's a shame. We become an alternative to that type of education and we're well rounded.

JP: That's really where your niche is.

JC: That's one of the draws.

JP: I hope you don't take this as a negative, but in some ways you have some of the benefits of a charter school, although the charter schools in this state are still under state regulations, but you do have more of an independent entity. You're not part of the Broward County school system.

JC: Exactly. Well, that's why we're called an independent school. It's the same thing all over the country. Independent schools can chart their own course. Now, they have to be accountable and it has to be credible and they can't be accredited unless they do the right thing, but there's a lot of independence in how we meet the

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goals. We choose our texts. We don't have to use a state-approved list, etc.

JP: It's almost worth \$20,000 just for that.

[laughs]

JC: Look, I could go into a lot of things with you.

JP: Yeah. I don't want to get into that. You would hate to be teaching in the state of Texas, for example.

JC: Oh, that's the last place I'd want to be.

JP: The concept that some of these legislators have about how the students ought to be educated is a little scary.

JC: That's right.

JP: Now, let me look at some of these statements. These are sort of... Initially, I think this study was done in 1972 or something like that. It may well be. I'm just curious as to which of these concepts and values have been retained. The day is divided into large blocks of time in which children, with a teacher's help, determine their own routine. They work individually and in small groups at various activities.

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JC: Yes. I would say that there are trappings of that in all three divisions, more in the Lower School than the others, but we're still interested in different types of organizing time and so forth.

JP: Children are involved in solving problems of both an academic and interpersonal nature, individually and in groups.

JC: That's 100% what we think and what we do.

JP: Also, it seems to me that based on what I've read here that part of what they're about is development of the individual beyond just academics. There is an interpersonal relationship with the teachers and the school and that that has a viable component in the curriculum, as it were.

JC: Yes. A lot of these tenants – and of course you're going through them – are very much a part of our program today. You would read some of those things in our current literature, yeah.

JP: That's why I was curious about how much of this has been retained. The teacher groups [unintelligible] for lessons directed at specific needs. This is something we sort of alluded to. If the kid's a little slower or has a

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problem with reading you would focus this child – if it's a third-grade kid, rather than some base curriculum, you would take this kid who is very good in art, but can't read well, and focus on that issue that needs to be resolved?

JC: Right, exactly. That's part of our niche today.

JP: The teacher keeps notes and writes an individual history of each child's intellectual, emotional and physical development.

JC: Yes. Well, I would say that that is still part of what we do because we're looking at the whole child, as they did in those days. I don't know what their report cards looked like and whether they were fully anecdotal or what they were in the '70s, but we're still interested in doing those things and we're focus on them.

JP: Is your advisory board the equivalent of a PTA?

JC: No.

JP: I'm sure there are other parental groups.

JC: Yes, there are. No, our advisory board is what it says. It's a group of parents that I have selected. I want them to be representative of the school, so we have parents of children in the different age groups. They are

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a diverse group in terms of their own ethnicity and background. We meet six or seven times a year. We have committees that look at certain issues and so forth. Their role is to be ambassadors for the school, to work on task forces, to help me look at some issues that we're trying to resolve. Also, we're an independent school and they help me with fundraising.

We have a PTA but it's called the UFO, the University Family Organization. When I first heard UFO when I came here, I couldn't believe they used that term, but somehow it sticks.

JP: It works.

JC: It works, the UFO.

JP: Probably not as much as you might in a public school, but do you have parents coming in and helping?

JC: Actually, I would say more.

JP: Really?

JC: We're very open in terms of what we do. We're very confident in who we are and what we do and we have nothing to hide. Some of our parents, particularly the

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moms, have law degrees, MBAs, and some of them aren't working now so they have time and they're very bright.

JP: Why not use them?

JC: We have a robust volunteer program.

JP: The reason I brought that up, usually in the public schools they've taken out all the teacher's aides and they've cut back on the... So the parents have sort of pitched in.

JC: We're fully staffed and we don't need them for that purpose, but we have a lot of parents who volunteer in the art program. We have parents who do things in the middle school for the... I can't think of the program right now, but it's a business program where they come in and they talk about – there's a curriculum that they use to talk about how capitalism works. But, in essence, we have many, many parent volunteers. We welcome them. They don't substitute for professional staff, but they –

JP: They're not teachers.

JC: They're not teachers in any sense, but they do help us a lot.

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JP: Then and now, I notice with your new expansion you're going to have sort of a performing arts center.

JC: We have it now, yes.

JP: Art, music, all of that has been an integral part of this from the beginning.

JC: That's correct. Now it's at a national level. We have fantastic facilities in the arts. We have a nationally ranked speech and debate program called forensics. We have a theater program that's one of the best in the county each year.

JP: And the public schools are cutting out these programs.

JC: Yeah, which is a shame and of course that's part of the attraction.

JP: What's the first place they come?

JC: Our arts program is amazing. One of the things that has changed over the years... I'll give you just a quick note. We've always had a very strong academic program. The issue of relationships between students and teachers, always wonderful – still is – and it's a major plus. We've always had a good arts program. Now we have

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amazing facilities, but we've always had that part. What's changed in the last five or six years is our athletic program has risen to the level of the other two, and that's been very exciting.

JP: Do you compete with private schools or public schools?

JC: Primarily private schools.

JP: So you do Country Day and that type of thing?

JC: Yes. It's primarily private schools, although the governing body for athletics in Florida is called the FHSAA and they're a force to be reckoned with. They set the divisions. We will play sometimes small public schools. We play Marathon in the Keys because they're small.

JP: They can't have too many people, right?

JC: No, they're a small school and so we play them in some sports.

JP: While we're on that, what is your Lower School population and what is your Upper School population?

JC: Okay, we have 1,900 students total. I don't know if these numbers will add up to 1,900, but we have: about

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750 pre-K through five students; 450 middle school students, six through eight; and 700 high school students, 9 through 12. We're going to grow to about 2,000 students and that's going to be the cap.

JP: I was going to say at some point – either to maintain a good student/teacher ratio or have proper facilities, if you go to 3,000, then you're going to be like these overcrowded public schools.

JC: That is a problem, you're right.

JP: But at some point you have to have the income from the tuition, so –

JC: Well, it's always been a balance. If you were looking at independent schools throughout the nation, what you would find is that Florida has a lot of big, private schools. It's not typical of other states. The typical independent school has 750 students throughout this country. We're very large. Some of our competitors are very large.

JP: I just talked to a woman who got her degree at NSU. She teaches – I've already forgotten the school. There's this art school in West Palm Beach.

JC: Yeah, the Dreyfoos School.

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JP: The Dreyfoos School. She was talking about using some of the very same context that you do, that art where kids are comfortable, are good, who are express themselves, that enhances their learning process.

JC: Yes. We believe it. I think you'll find a lot of integration within our program in terms of interdisciplinary integration, using the arts. This week, coincidentally, we are doing theater as social issues involvement. We're doing the Laramie Project, which is an amazing thing for a high school to be doing.

JP: Well, it's something they need to know about and deal with. It's a pretty traumatic process, so it gives them a sense of what happens with discrimination.

JC: Exactly and that's the focus. Matthew Shepard is the student who was killed. His mother, Judy Shepard, spoke to our students yesterday.

JP: Oh really? Good.

JC: Yes. So we're bringing speakers. Then the other part is when Don Rosenblum, who was the dean of the college of arts and sciences, brings in speakers, we go to see them. We had Cornell West on campus a couple weeks ago. We brought students to see him. So we try to take

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advantage of being on this campus in terms of all the resources here. This library that we're sitting in is the largest library in the state of Florida. Our high school students come in here and they're trained by the reference libraries to use the databases here. So that's part of the advantage of being on this campus. It's a give and take, but we do collaborate and we use the resources.

JP: Before I forget about this, explain to me the process of how you acquired the land on which your campus sits now.

JC: Okay. Well, again, that's a university issue. For example, we've built some new facilities in the last few years.

JP: When you say "we" you're talking about the school as opposed to NSU?

JC: No, I'm talking about... The school couldn't build its own facilities. The school is part of NSU and there's a master plan for facilities. That's something that - there's a buildings and grounds committee, the board of trustees, and of course the financing. John Santulli is the vice president for facilities management. All of these people are involved in new facilities and the acquisition

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of land. That's not what I do. I don't have those decisions. I'm not involved in those processes.

What I am involved in is when we decided to build new facilities I came up with a financial plan with George Hanbury, who was then the COO and vice president, and we worked out a plan for how these facilities can be paid for over a period of time. Then, my role as the head of the school would be to have my team work with the architects because I'm the end user of these buildings. So we worked with the architects. That was a wonderful process. "What do you need in the buildings?" "This is what we need." Then the buildings begin to take shape.

JP: And how much is it going to cost -

JC: What it's going to cost, then you have to do some value engineering to get down to the price. But then after that, when they hire the contractors, it's their job.

JP: But the land you are on now, the acreage, has it always been the same since you've been here? To expand, did you have to get new land?

JC: We are on acreage right now that the university has always owned. In other words, the university has its

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boundaries. We are within the university's boundaries. We are within the university's boundaries.

JP: So you're part of the original 300 acres?

JC: Yes and we still are. We may have expanded our footprint within those 300 acres within these new buildings, but we didn't acquire land. We don't do that as a division or center of the university.

JP: But they could have purchased land for your development, sure.

JC: Of course. They have purchased land over the years.

JP: Because when they started this school, the whole thing was in a trailer.

JC: That's right.

JP: It was on the campus, but there was no physical -

JC: That's right. They have expanded the footprint of the whole NSU campus over time toward University Drive and so on and so forth.

JP: Just to get your place, as you come in past the Dolphins facility, the university is off to the right off 30th?

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JC: Yes. To come into our campus, you make the turn off University, you come down 30th, you pass the Dolphins facility, and right at the edge of that facility is a street that's called 75th. You make a right turn there and that enters the University School area.

The project that we completed three years ago was called a campus within a campus, because what we had until a few years ago was a series of buildings without any sense of place. So now, if you come to take a look at where we are right now, we have our buildings somewhat in a circle, which was very interesting because some buildings were already there. We added others in and did a lot of site work. So now it looks like we have our own campus within the larger campus of NSU.

JP: So you have a Roman amphitheater in the middle where people interact?

JC: We do.

JP: It's the old Greek concept in a way.

JC: In a way it is. It's nice because we have our sense of place. We have young children.

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JP: Well, it seems to me that is very important. Kids want to know their environment and want to feel comfortable in their environment. If they get lost or...

JC: Right, that's exactly right.

JP: It makes it comfortable for younger kids.

JC: So one of our great accomplishments as a university school was to have the university have enough confidence in us to invest in us and give us this campus within the broader construct.

JP: Well, I can tell you from other interviews with all the presidents, Frank and everybody else, that you guys earned that because in the beginning it was Abe Fischler.

JC: Yes.

JP: Abe wanted it. A lot of people, as he mentioned, "Why should we take on a school that's not making any money? We're just dealing with disadvantaged kids. We're never going to get any tuition."

JC: Exactly.

JP: So for a while it was sort of a stepchild that had not fully been supported by the university. So over a period of time... I think everybody is now...I'll say pleased.

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I don't want to go further than that because I can't determine individual emotions.

JC: But I'll tell you, too, that we feel very supported. One of the reasons why I'm able to fundraise is because the parents of our school, who are here every day – they're dropping their kids off, they're here every day, and they see what's going on and they're very astute – they sense, as I do, that we are supported by the university.

JP: If you want somebody to have your back, that's a good proposition.

JC: I have studied university schools throughout the country. I was just in New York last week and I spoke to a man who's the head of the university labs. It's called the Lab Schools, the University of Chicago. That's where Obama's children were.

JP: That's big-time, yeah.

JC: It was begun by John Dewey in the 1890s. They've been there a long time.

JP: That's where it all started.

JC: That's where it all started. What I've gotten from... First of all, there are very few schools like ours.

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A lot of them have gone by the wayside. They were small teacher-training institutions and they were pushed off campus over the years, so there are very few schools like ours. We're rather unique. The key is the relationship, in part, that I have with the central administration of the university. I am able to express what our needs are. They're able to help us. We understand each other. I think they believe in us, as you've noticed. That's why it's working.

JP: Let me give you an example. I was at the University of Florida for many years and they had a lab school.

JC: P.K. Yonge.

JP: P.K. Yonge.

JC: I spent a few days there.

JP: Over a period of time, when I first came there, it was quite good. Over a period of time, it has really deteriorated. Now, East Side High School with the baccalaureate program, if you had a kid, that's where you would send your kid. You wouldn't send them to P.K.

JC: It's an interesting point that you bring up.

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JP: Part of it was that the university did not give enough support.

JC: I think that's right. I spent a few days there. Both of my sons, who are adults now, went to UF. I spent a lot of time up there. One time when I was visiting, I spent two days at P.K. Yonge. One thing is it was never really like us because it was never a tuition-based school. Maybe they pay \$300 in fees or something like that, but it was never an independent school. So if you dig deeply into these schools, they were all different, but most of them in this country are P.K. Yonge-like and not like us.

JP: And which started as lab schools. That's exactly what they were called.

JC: That's what it is. Now, Chicago... I know all about these things. I know it's not part of the book, but they are more like us because they charge tuition. I think the best way to say this and maybe to help you capture this is that every university-based school has its own raison d'être. In Chicago, it is that we want to place for professors' children. It's on the South Side of Chicago. It's not a great neighborhood. We have a world-class university. We don't care if we make money or lose money – in fact, they lose money because most of the students are

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not paying full tuition there. They can afford it and it's not a problem.

Part of our success has been that we have grown. We have kept a lot of philosophical underpinnings that Abe started with. We have grown. We've kept the pedagogy, but we have become a full-blown, independent school with a very strong academic program, a strong arts program and a strong athletic program, so we are able to compete in the marketplace with the other prep schools that charge tuition.

JP: That's in essence what you are, in a way.

JC: And that's in essence what we are today. We are a college preparatory school. We are part of a university. It is very confusing because people confuse us with the Nova public schools. People even confuse us with the university itself. If I were to ask our parents – if I gave them a multiple choice question and I said, "Is the University School: A) affiliated with NSU, B) part of NSU, or C) has nothing to do with NSU, just is near NSU geographically?"

JP: One third, one third and one third.

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JC: Probably. They don't know. It's just one of those things.

JP: Let me ask you about your graduates. You would obviously prep them for SATs and the other exams.

JC: Right.

JP: What schools normally do you try to place your students?

JC: That's a very important piece. We have very good counseling.

JP: Its College prep.

JC: Its College prep. Part of what students get, what families get, what they pay for here is a real directed guidance process. Now, in the public schools, there may be one counselor for every 500 kids. They have no help. Here, our process starts really in eighth and ninth grade. We give them a lot of support and a lot of personal attention.

Our students are going to the best schools in the country. They are going to schools in the Northeast. The brand-name schools are important to some of our families and they themselves are from the Northeast. So aside from

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the ivies, they're interested in Tufts, they're interested in NYU, they're interested in Brandeis, Williams and Amherst and some of those fine schools in Massachusetts and so forth, Northwestern. The hottest schools for our graduates really are Emory, Washington University in St. Louis, Northwestern, Tufts, Vanderbilt, University of Chicago, and then the ivies. Duke is a very big goal for our kids.

JP: Not many of them in the south.

JC: There aren't too many, Duke and Vanderbilt, yeah. Then UF, we have a lot of kids who go to UF. In the last ten years, UCF has surpassed FSU as the second-most popular state school for our kids. So they go all over.

JP: And of course part of the issue is where you can afford to go. Tufts is, what, \$45,000? If you go four years, you're talking a pretty heavy commitment on the part of a parent who may or may not – or have two or three kids that they have to educate. They've already paid for private school, then they have to go to private university, it becomes... In Florida you've got, in essence, free university.

JC: Well, it's changed a little bit.

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JP: Yeah, I noticed that they've just -

JC: You've noticed what they've done?

JP: Yeah.

JC: I was very lucky to have the prepaid program and Bright Futures at its pinnacle about ten years ago for my children. That was perfect.

JP: Yeah, they did -

JC: Yeah, out of the checkbook. It was easy.

JP: One of the things that were an early part of the concept is that the teacher promotes openness and trust. Fear of failure is absent. Do you still promote that idea?

JC: We do. It's tied together in the pedagogy. If you're looking to do a lot of problem solving, your first solution may not work. So we do focus on the fact that if you have a fear of failure, you're not going to really realize your potential. I think that's in our DNA. That's another way of saying it. Some of these things that you have from '72, they're in our DNA. They really are. So this notion of taking risks in learning is something that we promote. There's a lot of problem solving, there's a lot of group process.

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So now, when I go to conferences, as I did last week, people now – the buzzword is “21st century skills.” That’s the buzzword in secondary education. What are 21st century skills? Really, the principles upon which University School was founded.

JP: Plus technology.

JC: Plus technology. Its problem solving, its group process, its risk taking. It’s higher-level thinking.

JP: You can ask anybody who is in the business of learning. Almost everybody learns as much from failure. If you ask Steve Jobs, if you ask anybody who has gone through the process – trying this, but that didn’t work; let’s start something else. What it teaches them is persistence and commitment. In other words, if you’ve got a problem to solve, you might try four or five different approaches. Every time you do one, you sort of develop your own sense. “This doesn’t work, but maybe if we put this with this...” So you’re teaching critical thinking, in essence.

JC: Exactly. To bring that to a basic level, let’s talk about math. There are multiple ways to solve problems. In the old school, or in a more rigid

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environment, the teacher would say, "This is the way we do it."

JP: You might have the right answer, but if you didn't have the right process, it was wrong.

JC: Exactly. That's never been the case in our school. We promote different paths.

JP: Obviously, grades are still important for entrance into these special schools. Is there an inordinate amount of pressure? I know that from my experience in prep schools and that sort of thing, there's this drive - you've got to get to Harvard. Do you find that is a problem that kids in the ninth grade are worried about whether they're going to be able to get into Princeton?

JC: I'll tell you, it's harder than ever. It sounds like, from the way you talk, you know a lot about what's going on in the collegiate world. These schools still have the same number of seats in their freshman class, but the applicant pools has doubled or tripled in the last 20 years. We have always focused on cooperation, not competition. There is a lot of drive to get into first-tier schools.

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JP: Sure.

JC: We try to make that the best way we can. What we do is a lot of emphasis on formative and summative assessment now. I'm not sure if you know those terms.

JP: Mm-hm.

JC: Well, we want kids to practice and work on mastery. We don't want to give them zeroes for quizzes while they're learning. These are formative assessments. Some of them may count. Some of them may not count. It's getting them ready for the summative assessments.

JP: It's lets them know where they are. The teacher says, "Okay, you're not to the level you need to be, so..."

JC: We self-consciously try to temper this stress and competition in the way we approach the students. We're not taking the top ten percent of the population and saying, "All right, let's see whose left standing."

JP: That's true in a lot of prep schools and a lot of private schools. Even at UF, these kids are knocking each other down trying to get ahead.

JC: I know and it leads to a lot of bad things. I know. I can't say we're immune to it, because it's part of

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the society we live in, but we're aware of it and we try to downplay it the best we can.

JP: That's different because most schools do just the opposite. They see the competitive process as ultimately rewarding, both in learning and in advancement.

JC: Right. Yes, the colleges will sort through our students and decide who fits, but we're looking to make them all successful.

JP: Are you aware – I'm sure you are – of the benefits of having extracurricular activities as you apply to these schools, so that teaching reading to the fifth grade at a poor school, or somebody who's worked on athletics or student body or whatever?

JC: Yes.

JP: You encourage these sorts of extracurricular activities?

JC: Very much so. Again, going back to the DNA of the school, when I think of Mickey Segal, I think of someone with a big pocketbook, but a bigger heart. I think this notion of community service is in our DNA. As you know, almost every school requires it, but our kids so far

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exceed the number of hours that are required. It really is something that is part of us.

JP: But you don't require it?

JC: We do require it. What I'm saying is that our students far exceed the amount of service we require.

JP: So much of what they do is voluntary beyond what's required?

JC: That's right. Yes, certainly our college counselors are savvy enough and they attend all their own conferences and they know what the trends are and what the colleges are looking for. But our students are very involved in community service. I can say that as a generalization. I don't know if you're from South Florida, but *The Miami Herald* has had the Silver Knight Awards for the last 40 years. We've had a lot of Silver Knight Awards.

JP: Yeah, John Knight started it many years ago.

JC: Yeah, we have a lot of Silver Knight Awards.

JP: That's a good idea. In fact, the Daytona paper did that as well. They would reward not just for the academics, but for kids who has really made a commitment.

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JC: A combination to service, more service oriented.

JP: Yeah. In terms of extracurricular activities, your sense is that the kid has to develop – let's say in sports – the fairness and honesty and integrity.

JC: Right.

JP: In other words, a lot of schools, people cheat. They get their papers off the internet and they do all this stuff. It seems to me your focus is a little more toward the development of individual character.

JC: Very much so.

JP: The values.

JC: Our coaches say that athletics are really just a tool for those things.

JP: So these kids do not want to play football at Alabama, right? They might, but –

JC: Typically not. They'll play at Princeton and Harvard. We have some kids doing that now. Just going to your question, one of the benefits of being in a prep school is that our students are participants; they're not spectators. You go to a big high school down here, Friday night is exciting, but you're in the stands. Our kids may

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not be in the stands because they have a debate tournament in Gainesville that they have to go to.

People use a big term now, engagement. Our students are really engaged. A very high percentage of them play a sport.

JP: If they went to a debate, would you pay for the transportation?

JC: It's a combination.

JP: Parents pay some and you pay some?

JC: Parents pay some because our kids travel all over the country. We're one of the top teams in the country. But yeah, there's a combination of that. We try not to have kids excluded because they can't pay; we'll help.

When you talk about extracurriculars, the percentage of our kids who play sports, the percentage of our kids who are in the theater program, the percentage of our kids who do both, who are in clubs – very, very high, 80%, very high. Everybody does things here. No one sits and watches.

JP: By the way, just for your information, Abe Fischler told me that when they start University School he

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paid Mickey Segal \$60,000 and she put it right back into school.

JC: I'm not surprised.

JP: The concept for her was to get this thing up and going. Of course, her family had some money anyway, but nonetheless -

JC: I have her portrait in a very prominent place because I honor her. I believe that part of what we are today, especially on the community service part, goes back to her.

JP: Let me talk about the teachers. Initially in this report all of the teachers were in their 20s or their 30s. Nobody was older. All of them were hired not so much just for their academic background, but because they were patient, flexible, outgoing, supportive, had some sense of understanding the whole child. From my reading, that's what you're talking about, the whole child - it's academic, its arts, its character. It's all of that.

JC: That's right. Yeah, we have a more diverse population now in terms of age.

JP: I'm sure. Well, it would be.

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JC: It's not a startup anymore. I would say that there's a lot to be said about this. Some of it is just part of the independence and some of it is part of the University School. At University School, yes, we're looking for people with these personal characteristics. We're also looking for teachers who get excited about students being successful. Education in this country has often been just a sorting process. We're really invested in every child's success, and we're willing to go the extra mile to help kids who learn in different ways, have learning differences and so forth, to make the grade. So you have to have teachers who are patient and are willing to go above and beyond. That's also part of the ethos of private schools in general, but here it's more of compassion and understanding, which were Mickey's traits, that we're looking for. So it's similar.

JP: So it's not just trying to get a kid to improve the SAT score.

JC: Right.

JP: You would like to have that as a result, but some of these kids need the kind of support that's not just academic.

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JC: That's exactly right. To use a phrase from Thomas Lacona, who is a very big name in character education, we want our students to become smart and we want them to become good. So it's character education really embedded in the program. If you don't have teachers with good character, you can't really teach it.

JP: I hate the term "role model," but nonetheless, that has a factor. Kids know. I can guarantee you teachers know if they're good teachers and the kids damn well know whether they're good or not.

JC: They do. Yeah, we are looking for the role model type of human being who really is invested in the kids' success, as I've said, who will care about them as individuals.

JP: What's the teacher/student ratio at the Lower School and the Upper School?

JC: When you read about teacher/student ratio, it's very misleading, because what they do is they take the number of students and they divide it by the number of faculty, but that includes the librarian and the guidance counselors and everything. I would say that we've always ranged – between 15 and 24 is our average class size

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throughout the school. We really don't go over 24 in a class.

JP: What do you pay teachers?

JC: It's interesting. Our salary scale is slightly below the public schools, but very close. There are no unions here. We are not wedded to the scale. If I need a physics teacher in the high school, I have to pay. So I would say the salaries are competitive. We've had raises in the last few years; the county hasn't. In fact, this year they took a pay cut because they not have to help fund their pension at three percent.

JP: So you haven't had any cuts in terms of the facilities?

JC: No.

JP: The school teachers have to bring their own chalk and so forth.

JC: No, we don't have that.

JP: One of the reasons someone would want to teach at the school is partly because of the concept of the school, but also because you don't have to worry about those issues.

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JC: Right. We've been fortunate. We've been growing. There are several factors for why you'd want to teach in this school. Number one, the salaries are competitive. Number two, we have a wonderful student body and we're able to accept the students we want to accept, which is one of the blessings of independent schools. A very big piece goes back to one of our earlier questions. There is really no such thing as a University School employee. They are NSU employees. Everybody – myself and all the teachers, they're all NSU employees. They have the full benefit package.

JP: They get retirement. They get healthcare.

JC: They have a very good retirement plan. They have a healthcare plan. They have a tuition waiver for their own children to come to this school. One of my associates now has her daughter taking a doctoral program in psychology. Because she is a NSU employee, she gets a small – maybe a 25% waiver there. There are a lot of perks. They can take masters and doctoral degrees right here. The charges have varied over the years. It's gone back and forth. It's been free. It's been a percentage. Now I think it's back to a small percentage, but it's a perk.

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JP: Do you keep your faculty? Do they stay for long periods?

JC: Yes, we do.

JP: Of course, as you mentioned earlier, it was startup and when they first started there was this huge turnover.

JC: A big turnover, yeah.

JP: Because the funding was -

JC: I would say we keep about 85% of our people each year. A lot of them who leave are because we don't hire them back. Everybody in our school is on a one-year contract.

JP: Everybody? No tenure?

JC: No tenure. I don't think they have it at the university either, maybe the law school.

JP: They had to have it for the law school. They couldn't get accredited if they didn't.

JC: Other than that, I think there's no tenure.

JP: Are you happy with that?

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JC: Very happy with it. It gives me tremendous flexibility. If people aren't... We can't have mediocre people here.

JP: In a school like this, if people are paying that kind of money, if you have somebody who's incompetent –

JC: That's right. Well, there's incompetence and there's mediocrity. Incompetence is obviously not acceptable and they often don't last a year if we make a bad hire.

JP: Nor is mediocrity.

JC: Mediocrity is not acceptable either. So it is incumbent upon us to use the contract in a fair and due process manner.

JP: How do you evaluate your teachers?

JC: Like most schools do, classroom observations.

JP: Do you do that?

JC: No. We have a whole infrastructure here, which you may or may not be interested in, but, no, I don't do that. I evaluate the people who report directly to me, some of the top administrators at the school. We now use portfolios. Teachers have goals. So at the end of the

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year it's, "Yes, I've seen you teach three times, but now you had some goals at the beginning of the year. Show me evidence that you did integrate technology in the classroom."

JP: So you require them to start the year, "This is what I need to accomplish this year."

JC: That's right, yes.

JP: Do you have student evaluations?

JC: No, we don't. Some teachers do it on their own, just to find out, to calibrate their own progress.

JP: Well, you could certainly do that in terms of the mechanics of teaching and the books that are chosen and the exams. Not so much, "What do you think about my teaching?" But more, "What do you think about what I'm requiring you to read? Is it boring? Do you like it?"

JC: We survey students, but not about their specific teachers.

JP: Do you do any video?

JC: Yes.

JP: So you let teachers look at themselves?

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JC: Yes.

JP: That's scary. [laughs]

JC: That's good. I did that in 1969 when I got started. It was the best thing I've ever done to see what I look like.

JP: I know. I almost quit seeing it the first time. Let me go back to your experience. Why'd you first come in 1982?

JC: I finished my doctorate -

JP: You're a Binghamton, New York, person.

JC: Right. I was living in Boston. I got my doctorate at Boston University. Boston and the Massachusetts South Shore were having reductions in force. People were getting RIF'd, reductions in force, in the early '80s. I had enough tenure that I wasn't going to lose my job, but I had a newly minted doctorate and there was really no opportunity there.

JP: I have you teaching American history and government in Braintree. When I think of Braintree, I think of Sacco and Vanzetti and the shoe factory.

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JC: That's exactly right. Also, Braintree preceded Quincy, so the Adams family – Quincy was part of Braintree in the 18th century. It was great to teach American history up there.

JP: That's why I brought that up.

JC: Yeah, it was great. I got a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from BU.

JP: How has that helped you as headmaster, that background?

JC: I think it's interesting because if you look at headmasters in other schools around the country, most of them don't have doctorates.

JP: That's what I was thinking.

JC: They don't. It's helped me in a lot of ways. First of all, it's given me standing here. We're a very academic school. I have to be able to have equal gravitas to the dean of the medical school and the dean of the college, and I believe I do. I can hold my own with these people and they respect me. So it's helped me in the sense that not only the background and experience to understand how to create programs – and especially in a sense that we are a school that can develop our own programs. I have to

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have a keen sense of what makes sense to us because we have a lot of discretion.

JP: Plus, you have to educate – people at the medical school probably have no idea what you do. You have to educate the rest of the university.

JC: That's right. The fact that I have a seat at the table now is very important. I feel like it's given me the standing to represent the school with the other centers and with the central administration.

You made an astute point earlier. One of the reasons why a lot of these university schools haven't survived is because there was a ground swell of, "Why do we need six-year-olds on this campus? What's the purpose?" So I have to be an ambassador for University School and I have to be a liaison to the central administration to get our needs met. I have to be a player here.

Part of it is we can do things for other centers. We can bring in their interns when they need support. I'll get a call from the dean of optometry. He'll say, "Jerry, I want to hire this professor to come in from Texas. She's fabulous. She has a six-year-old and an eight-year-old, and she really wants them to be in the University School.

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Do you have room for them?" "Of course I have room for them." So we help each other that way. Or somebody from the business school says, "I have a big donor who wants their kid to come into your school." I pray that they're qualified.

JP: That's where you say it depends on how much money they're going to give. [laughs] The more money the more qualified they become.

JC: Well, we have a broad framework.

JP: I know you don't do that, but I know universities make allowances.

JC: So whatever I can do to help other centers - I want people to think of us in a good way. I want them to see us as a partner. I want to help them meet their own goals. I want to be there for them when they need me.

JP: I hate to interrupt your thought, but it just occurred to me. Do you interact much with, say, Nova schools or the rest of the public schools?

JC: Not really. There was a time in the '80s when I was involved in a reform movement and I actually taught a course at Nova public to those teachers through NSU. It was a complicated arrangement. But I really don't.

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JP: So at one point Nova High School was one of the most innovative schools in the country, when it started.

JC: That's correct.

JP: And it is no longer.

JC: I really think it is no longer. Again, part of the confusion is - I'll go back to the initial thing. There's confusion with name - Nova, University School of Nova. There's confusion with place; they're across the street. We both have a similar progressive image, so that makes it very tough. I would say that from my knowledge and I know people who are... We just pulled a couple teachers from Nova Middle this year. There's nothing going on there anymore. They are a public school like any other. The reason -

JP: Well, they're hurt by cuts and all of that.

JC: Again, this is a political statement, but, to me, it's a travesty that they still have the Nova public schools. The reason I say that is because it's very, very expensive to bus kids from all over the county to go there.

JP: That's right. It's still a magnet school.

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JC: It is. And what are they selling? It's no different from any place else. They're experiencing the same problems. They've lost their innovative edge.

JP: It's very interesting. Looking at the beginning of their school and the beginning of this school, it's very similar. The ideas, concept, open classroom – all of that stuff.

JC: That's right.

JP: But then, over a period of time, you have in essence diverged.

JC: We have diverged. Although I think that, if I were to just make a statement, we have kept more of the founding principles and the spirit of innovation and progressive education as part of us more so than what they have over there.

JP: I'm sorry. I got you off... I was originally pursuing your decision to come to Nova. [laughs]

JC: Again, I came to Florida with a three-month-old and a three-year-old. The three-month-old went into the family center for the Mommy & Me. The school used to have a three-year-old program. It doesn't anymore. Now the Family Center has that program. It was a place for my

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whole family. I really felt that I was in tune with the progressive nature of the institution, and I liked the family atmosphere that I saw here.

JP: So you started as the chair of social studies and then sort of over a period of time –

JC: Right. Really almost every job here.

JP: Then you were head of the middle school and –

JC: Right. So, in addition to having a doctorate, having had almost every job in the school has prepared me for what I'm doing now.

JP: And it was interesting that having been all of the middle school, lower school, teaching and associate headmaster, by the time you got to your present job, you had a wealth of experience that would enable you to step into that job with not the kind of trepidation that other people would have.

JC: Yes. And quite frankly, it's very hard – my direct predecessor, it's very hard to find the right person to come here and take over this school. People who come here from other independent schools, they're not used to being part of the university. They find that as a disturbance and in the way. The trick here is to be able

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to use the university as a benefit for the school and to feel not put upon but empowered by all the relationships and the resources.

JP: You could see where some people would be intimidated by it and feel they were in an inferior position.

JC: Perhaps.

JP: Now, one of the things that I've noticed in the studying the university – and I don't know whether it's good or bad. In your case, there seems to be hiring of people who've been here. I've noticed – if you look at Frank DePiano – they hire from within. There's only been one president in the last years who was hired from the outside, and it didn't turn out well.

JC: That's correct.

JP: That's both a benefit and a problem. In being here, you're aware and you have contacts. On the other hand, you lack the dearth of new ideas of people who are coming in from different backgrounds and that sort of thing.

JC: Right.

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JP: I'm not making that a condition in your case.

JC: It's a political thing for me to answer that question. Let me say it in a positive sense. For example, they just hired Jacqui Trivisano to be the new COO. She was at St. John's. I think that she will be very helpful in bringing new ideas into the school. It is a double-edged sword. It's difficult.

I hired a new Upper School principal who came from a Jesuit school background, which is really very different from here. He was at Canisius High School in Buffalo. He's fabulous. Thank goodness. We're very fortunate because you don't always know what you're getting when you hire. He's a great fit. I hired three new associate directors – one for the lower, one for the middle and one for the upper this year – based on vacancies, all from within. That's very good.

You have to be very, very cautious when you bring in somebody from the outside. There is a tremendous benefit in bringing in new ideas and fresh blood, but you have to make sure that they are a good fit.

JP: You have a SACS accreditation every five years?

JC: Correct.

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JP: Are you coming up on that now?

JC: Yes, we are. I'll probably get a team visiting in the spring of '13.

JP: That's always a headache. Less so for you than, say, for NSU.

JC: Yes. I won't speak to NSU's issues there. For us, last time they were here, we knocked the ball out of the park. They were very impressed with what we've done. They're looking at fiscal soundness, academic integrity, teacher certification and teach qualifications, and we meet all those criteria. Plus, we do so many interesting things.

JP: But it is a bureaucratic headache.

JC: A little bit. They've tried to streamline it over the years at my level, where now -

JP: Well, they should. But if you've got NSU with 16 centers, it's a nightmare.

JC: It is. For us, not so bad. In fact, what they're doing now is they've gone to a strategy where if you... The last visit we had, they had about 30 people coming here because we're a very big school, but, because

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we had all pluses and no standards violations, when they come in 13, they're bringing a very small committee.

JP: They don't need to do it.

JC: Right.

JP: How many days a year are you in school?

JC: The SACS requirement is 175.

JP: How many do you have?

JC: About 176 or 177, in that range.

JP: I noticed that when Nova High School started they had like 225 days.

JC: Really? That's interesting.

JP: They had nine and ten-hour days. They came at eight and stayed until five. Part of the innovative process – of course, over a period of time, they realized that was not going to hold.

JC: No, it doesn't.

JP: It was interesting because, as you know, you have to try some of these things. Is there a benefit to having another two weeks of school? Asian countries think there is.

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JC: They just cited me statistics in New York when I was at the conference. Singapore is number one on the list. They have a much longer school day and a much longer school year and time on task. But we do a lot of things in the summer. We have programs for kids. Some have the resources to travel and do very interesting things.

JP: I won't take much more. I know you're busy. Just give me a little bit of a sense – I've got this document about how you're now expanding. This is an expansion partly of renovated space, partly of new space, but you're not going to increase the student population that much, right?

JC: No.

JP: So this is expanding for your current student body. Is that correct?

JC: That's correct. We wanted to catch up a little bit with resources. We have one building that we're working now on with architects and that's a second gymnasium. Really, having one gym for 1,900 students is not enough, so we're going to build a new gym.

JP: I noticed you've got them sort of cantilevered and two floors. Is that architectural or pragmatic design?

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JC: Well, I think it's a combination. Everything that they've built at NSU has been done in a first-class manor. They have an architectural firm that does the site plan. We're working with two architectural firms now, the ones that do the site plan and the ones that are designing the building. We're very pleased. If you were to see what we look like in person, I think you'd be very impressed.

JP: Obviously, the dining situation has been a problem in the past, that there's not either been enough space -

JC: We have enough space now. Each of the three divisions has its own dining room. We're fine.

JP: But this is for the Upper School, the new commons?

JC: What are you reading there?

JP: The new dining commons, the new cafeteria addition at the existing Upper School.

JC: Okay. We're not doing that part of the project. That was on the original project. We decided that what we needed more was a new gym and that we had sufficient dining area.

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JP: Okay. Is there anything that we've talked about that you want to add to, or anything that I haven't asked that you'd like to discuss?

JC: No. I think you've done a very good job in eliciting some of the significant milestones.

We're not going year by year, but obviously it's been an evolution of a school that started as a small demonstration school with some high research objectives, really shaped by Abe Fischler and Mickey Segal. What I've enjoyed is being part of the growth of the school so that we have growth to a point where we are a major college preparatory school with resources and a well-rounded program, but still true to the founding principles. I think that's it.

JP: That's a good way to end. I want to thank you very much for your time.

JC: Thank you.

[End]