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- Oral History Project
Interviewee: Pierre Allaire
Interviewer: James Crooks
Date: May 23, 2008

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Jim Crooks

JC: Today is May 23, 2008. I am James Crooks with the UNF Oral History Project and we are interviewing Vice President Dr. Pierre Allaire with Institutional Advancement.

Pierre, start off with a little bit of background.

PA: Okay. I will give you the very short version. I grew up in Rhode Island and went to college at St. Edwards University in Austin, TX, earned a degree, double major Biology and Chemistry with a minor in education. I went on to get a MS in Biology. I started teaching at a small college in Kentucky and over a number of years began seeing what the president was doing. I became a faculty representative to the Board of Trustees then finished up a Ph.D. at the University of Louisville and went back to school at Lees College and started doing development work.

JC: And so the Ph.D. is in what area?

PA: Biology

JC: Still in Biology?

PA: Right. I narrowed my vertebrate ecology background into Ornithology, study of birds. But through my grant writing and then running a program where I had to work with a volunteer board I raised a little money for that program, soliciting of internships to summer positions and so on. I really began to enjoy the development side, promoting the university. In 1985 I went to the University of Florida as a full-time fundraiser, left my academic discipline and went into the administrative role. I was there for almost nine years and did some major campaigning. Went to Clemson University, was there for

two years and then Adam Herbert hired me in 1995 to be Vice President which at that time was University Relations and Development and within three or four months we changed the name to Institutional Advancement.

JC: Why would you leave Clemson to come to UNF?

PA: That's a long story but let me just say that life has this path that you go on and sometimes you don't know what the bends in the road are going to be, and this is one that I didn't expect. A position came open and a head hunter that I knew said "Pierre you ought to look at this job" and that's what happened.

JC: And UNF offered more opportunity than Clemson?

PA: At that time, yes. I was in charge of all fund raising for Clemson and the Associate Vice President for Development, but this was a full VP job and I'd already been in the state of Florida which I enjoyed. So coming back to the state had some appeal.

JC: What were your perceptions of UNF when you arrived here, particularly in your area of expertise?

PA: Well, there were a couple of perceptions. First of all, there seemed to be a lot of volunteer support for this very young university which at that time was 23 years old. And when I worked at places like Florida and Clemson where I had been, those schools had been around for well over 100 years and had a big alumni base. But there were a lot of people in this town that truly felt that this was their university.

JC: Why do you think this? I have heard this from many people, and I never quite understood why this is. It may be Gators, or Seminoles, or from Duke, or wherever but they seem to adopt UNF. Why do you think that is?

PA: It's because of proximity. And when you look at how people get involved and how they develop their passion, many times, most of the time, it's because they're engaged. It's something they believe in. They wake up every day and they say this is important to me. I want to volunteer for this particular non-profit or this school whatever it might be. And UNF is the major public university in this region, and one that historically has opened its arms to the community. Not all schools have a great town-gown relationship like we have today and we have had all along. You look at Tom Carpenter, the first President, he was very open. He recruited people, the first group of the foundation which started in 1971. They came up with the idea of volunteer alumni and that was led by Thad Mosley who was the first Foundation Board President. And I thought, you know, what a great way to start. You are really getting these people to feel like this is something important. This is something they want to be a part of. Curt McCray I've heard was very out in the community. Adam Herbert certainly was, in a number of different ways, including serving as a Chair of the Chamber of Commerce. Anne Hopkins did her role and certainly with John Delaney. So there have been five presidents who have all engaged the community and have realized that as they grow the community grows and vice versa. It continues to get better and better in terms of the relationship between the two.

JC: So, when you got here, how much development had been done?

PA: Well I was the fifth Vice President in seven years.

JC: [Laughter]

PA: And I often joke about that because Adam Herbert had really wanted to bring the development operation along. And one of the things that was appealing to me was that

alumni and public relations were all part of the same division and there were a lot of good things we could do. A lot of synergy when they're under one vice president. And he asked me, he said "Pierre, I want to do a campaign and what do I need?" And actually on the interview, when he came up to Clemson, Adam had this habit of going to the institution where you worked when you were a candidate, he asked me the first night, he said what would you do? And I said, "let me work a few ideas and we'll get together the next morning and I will show you." And literally that morning I put together on a sheet of paper an organizational chart that represented what I thought we needed to do in the next three years to grow the organization and get our first campaign started.

JC: Growth organization towards the University or Institutional Advancement?

PA: Institutional Advancement. Yeah we had twelve people, two vacancies and he understood what needed to be done. And he was ready to provide the positions, the space, the operating budget, and in tandem, with that came the foundation. At that point, the foundation's assets were seven million dollars in endowments and then we had housing and parking bonds which was maybe thirty or forty million. But the foundation wasn't generating a lot of revenue in terms of the annual unrestricted support and total giving was averaging one, maybe two million on a good year.

JC: And so you started out with a capital campaign first thing?

PA: Pretty much, we laid out the organization. We started filling the positions in anticipation of that. We had a plan and it was interesting, when I interviewed in August of 1995, people were asking me, "well can we do twenty-five million for a campaign?" and my response was, you know I think so, but we need to do a feasibility study. We're not there yet to say this is doable. But after several months here I thought we could do

twenty-five million. Then our campaign consultant who did the study came back and said well we think you could do at least forty. And then we went to fifty-five and eventually announced publicly about four years later a goal of sixty-five million.

JC: Did you in advance have some large donations before you went public? Often you build a cushion first in terms of something like that?

PA: Okay, I have never heard the word cushion but we will take that.

JC: Foundation?

PA: Very good. Campaigns are structured to where you have a quiet or dormant phase and that's what we did and so at the time we had about fifty million or so raised in the quiet phase.

JC: Out of the sixty five.

PA: Yes. We were well along and part of that was because when Adam left we continued the campaign. We had to wait about a year and a half to go public until the new president was hired because we brought in E.K. Fretwell as interim president who stayed for twelve months and then Anne Hopkins came on board. We had to get her into the community so it took us a little longer.

JC: How do you identify the people, I mean you are not from here originally, how do you identify the people that create the cushion, the foundation?

PA: Well one of the fundamentals is you really want to go and talk to the people who you know are engaged and believe in your mission, and so that's what we did. Adam had been here at that point seven or eight years so he had built up some very strong relationships and that was the time to go ask them for support. So we came up with a

list of names and they were part of the feasibility study interviews so they knew what was going to happen and we went out and solicited and started building up those gifts.

JC: So they, the donors, knew in advance that a) they liked the place, b) they may or may not have volunteered but c) that they probably were going to be asked. It wasn't the cold sell or the hard sell when the time came.

PA: That's correct. And many people think or say, "oh Pierre, I could never do what you do, go ask people for money." But what we do is really sit down and have conversations with people about investing in the institution. That's the truthful answer to you; it's really investing in that organization that you believe in. And so by the time that we get to those conversations they know a lot about us, we know a lot about them and it's one that, for the most part, it is a very friendly and positive conversation.

JC: And so has this been the only capital fund campaign you have run since you have been here.

PA: Yes, that was the university's first. We started counting out gifts in 1997 and concluded in 2003 after about 6 years and raised a hundred and three million.

JC: Oh, so you well over shot your sixty five million dollar goal.

PA: Right. And we have collected roughly ninety percent of those pledges .

JC: What did that in turn lead to a greater amount of annual giving?

PA: Yes, so just think about it in terms of growing an organization. You develop a new product line which expands your base which means you will have more annual revenue coming in. Well the same is true with annual giving as our alumni become more numerous, as they get further along in their careers, they are able to support us and incrementally increase those gifts over time. We were able to put a fundraiser in each of

the five colleges and athletics and so all of a sudden we have five deans and an athletic director reaching out into their various constituent groups. It wasn't only the president and my office going out and asking for gifts and major gifts but it was lots of other people on campus.

JC: And how do you avoid the College of Business going after the same business leader that you were going after?

PA: We manage that. We have what's called a prospect tracking system to where people identify individuals, corporations and foundations that they want to approach or are in the process of working towards that and so we work it out among ourselves.

JC: So when Earl Traynham went after Luther Coggin, was that on your radar screen?

PA: Luther was someone that we had identified for a major gift in the campaign. He had already made a gift, a significant gift, to the Coggin College of Business before the campaign. But then during the campaign it became known to us that there was an interest in naming the college and so at that point people would not have been given the green light to go approach Luther about some other kind of gift because that was in a negotiation stage.

JC: Having completed the first capital campaign, I believe you said in 2003?

PA: Yes.

JC: What sort of things have you been doing since then in terms of fundraising and donations, philanthropy, however you want to call it?

PA: Sure. Well when you conclude a campaign, there are several things you need to do. One is you need to give your donors and volunteers a rest. They work hard; they

make generous contributions, for many of them, they are stretch gifts, above and beyond what they normally would do.

JC: Oh really?

PA: Yes. Stewardship is really important. Think about the word I used earlier, investing. They want to see what their gift is doing. So, for example, with scholarships, we have lunches with our donors and their scholarship students on a regular basis throughout the year. Some of the units do receptions for multiple students with multiple donors and we want them to see their dollars at work, the young people that are coming here being supported. Those who establish professorships, the same thing. They are meeting with their professors once a year or getting a report. They spend a lot of time working through a lot of that so that those who did make gifts feel good and confident that their gifts are being used wisely.

JC: Of the hundred plus million, did it go to any particular use? Was it used for scholarships or for faculty or what? What does the money go for? Who decides that?

PA: Oh, well let me answer that last one first. Who decides that? The donor decides it because 97% of our gifts are restricted.

JC: Oh.

PA: Yes only about 3%, most of those are gifts to be raised through our foundation board and some alumni and friends annual giving. So a donor would say I am interested in a scholarship and we explain what the naming opportunities are. There are certain dollar thresholds with the State of Florida's Matching dollar Gift Program that can leverage their gifts and then we write a gift agreement. If the donor says I want to support an inner-city school, that's written into the agreement. Or if they say I want to

support students who have been in the military, whatever the criteria are, then that dictates how the gift is going to be used.

JC: How would a donor support an inner-city school?

PA: Oh, the graduates coming out of that school would get scholarships coming to UNF.

JC: So like Delores Kessler did that?

PA: Yes. Her students coming out of Raines High School are the ones who get her scholarship plus they have to meet our standards. Or they could go to FCCJ and when they transfer we identify, we will know where they come from and then we can award them the scholarship for the last two years.

JC: At one point Adam Herbert wanted to have every inner-city school in a situation like Raines or Paxon with the Pacjic money. Has this been accomplished?

PA: Not totally. We have had a few donors that have adopted some schools.

JC: Jackson.

PA: Right that was Ernie Farrell. Jim Cobb has adopted Lee High School. That's where he went to school. So there are a handful of those. But we have such a variety of scholarships that every student in this community can benefit.

JC: Is that why the university could make the commitment it made two weeks ago?

PA: In part we know that The Jacksonville Commitment that you are referring to, that as that program grows and we raise money for commitment students that we already have dollars coming in through our endowments primarily. That can cover the first few waves of commitment students. We'll distribute close to two million dollars this year from our

endowment just for scholarships. And most of those are need-based for Duval County, Northeast Florida.

JC: What proportion and this may be a guess, of UNF students are on scholarships? And the Ivy leagues boasts about having about 60% or something like that on scholarships and so forth. Is it anything like that for UNF students?

PA: I don't know. That would be a question for Deb Kaye.

JC: Okay.

PA: With the foundation, we are going to award let's say close to two million dollars and it'll probably be around seven hundred students that will get private support. But remember that they also have many other financial aid opportunities. They have the Pell Grant, Bright Futures, and institutional scholarships.

JC: Has the work of the foundation shifted at all as other foundations, university foundations are changing strategies? Is UNF part of such changes or is it pretty much the same process that started here, started at Florida let's say and grew here?

PA: Yeah. From a foundation standpoint, they're created to support the university and there's a spectrum of ways that can be done. We're pretty basic. Our foundation board members serve as ambassadors, serve as donors, and then serve a fiduciary responsibility to manage the assets in an appropriate manner. Those are basic sets of common threads with all university foundations across the country. Then when it comes to how foundations operate there's three different kinds: there's dependent, inter-dependent and then independent. We are what is called an inter-dependent foundation which means we have state dollars in the budget which we call E&G dollars to help support what I do, and then we have private dollars for the foundation. So it's a blending

of those two major revenue streams. A school like Florida State is an independent foundation. They are basically totally separate from the university. And then you have some that are one hundred percent funded by E&G dollars and foundation does not really provide much dollar support. So, we are in that in-between category.

JC: Who invests the money?

PA: The Foundation invests the money. We have an endowment now in the ninety million dollar range and we have an investment committee. That committee is made up of about a dozen board members that are involved in it. They have various financial backgrounds that complement each other. And our current strategy in the past two years has been to shift to an investment model that really reflects what we find at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.

JC: Hedge funds?

PA: Yes.

JC: Really.

PA: Yes.

JC: Oh.

PA: And when you say hedge funds I need to explain this. We are in a variety of what's called asset classes. Stocks, bonds, private equity, alternative investments; which include hedge funds. But when you look at how those dollars are spread out, we are in over ninety different funds. So, with any one of those funds the probability of more than just a few going in the wrong direction is really quite slim.

JC: Yeah.

PA: And the private equity side is really where the much larger endowments have made their money. And we are just now beginning our third year in the private equity portion of our investment strategy. Once that gets to be fully implemented, which will be in the next seven or eight years, then we will look just like a Harvard or Yale endowment.

JC: And you say private equity, does that mean buying Exxon or buying mutual funds or?

PA: It means having access to business opportunities.

JC: Oh, Okay.

PA: In which you can't buy stock, it's not publicly traded.

JC: Got you.

PA: So it could be a housing development in India where they're experiencing growth. Or it could be putting up cell towers around the country. They have actually put together private equity groups that buy the towers and lease them out. So there's lots of different ways that private equity can work.

JC: Now the foundation also built the parking garages and the dormitories?

PA: Yes.

JC: Are they profitable?

PA: They meet their obligations. And that's because we do a pro-forma which means we do a model of what it's going to take in terms of percent of occupancy and what the rates need to do to rise. And I have to say that you use the word profitable. The bonding companies are not going to lend you the money unless you think you are going to be able to meet that obligation.

JC: Yeah, sure.

PA: Yeah. Now we just moved all the housing and parking out of the foundations assets into a new DSO.

JC: DSO?

PA: DSO. DSO is a Direct Support Organization

JC: Okay.

PA: That's a legislative designation. You have a 501 (C) (3) at the Federal level that tells you you're a charity. But then at the state level, they've created this DSO language that says you're solely for the support of the university that you represent. And the university can create different DSO's. Some universities create research DSO's where all the research dollars and profits from whatever they license and market goes into that. That 501 (C) (3). So we just created a new one called the UNF Financing Corporation which holds all the housing and parking bonds. And we did that as we were building the new residence halls called Osprey Fountains right off of Kernan. And there were some advantages to moving those out of the foundation; reduce our liability or exposure and create this new DSO.

JC: Let's shift focus for a minute to the other areas of institutional advancement. Alumni Affairs, for a long time of course the number of alumni was very small and creating alumni for a commuter institution is a tough challenge. Can you talk for a little bit about how Alumni Affairs has developed?

PA: Yes. When you look at the history of UNF, the first graduating class of 1974 had about 200 students. Today it's close to three thousand. So over time, we've been building this base. But I believe the real connection with UNF for many of our students

occurred starting from 1984 and moving forward because that's when we built our residence halls. First one was Osprey Village. And I think that's a real important moment in UNF's history because it was then that students were becoming part of the fabric of this campus on a twenty-four hour a day seven day a week basis. Now that's not to say that those prior to that don't have an affection to UNF. There's some that have great affection. But, in terms of percentages, I think now we're going to see a lot more students feeling connected. Graduates from the 90's and then this decade. Because prior to that there was this tremendous commuter traffic out here.

JC: Can you see in the, either in the numbers or in the participation, any sort of jump forward in alumni participation in your tenure?

PA: Yes, we're beginning to make some inroads with members of our alumni association and we have fifty five thousand alums. We can send letters to maybe forty eight thousand of those so.

JC: That many?

PA: We have not lost too many alums in our database. So we're keeping them updated. They get the Alumni Journal three times a year; we have an electronic news letter now as well.

JC: They pay for their Alumni Journal?

PA: No. We don't have a dues paying alumni association. We've talked about it but we've just not gone there yet. We really don't need to at this point. We just had a reception last night in our new building over on Kernan, Alumni Hall, and had about a hundred and twenty five alums. We're getting those types of turnouts for an after work

reception for alumni. Then we have a forty member alumni board and it's a, I don't want to say a slow process, but it's one that's very methodical and it's just gonna take time.

JC: How does the alumni development here compare with the other regional state universities that have a similar background whether its FAU or FIU or West Florida, they all start out as upper level and commuter schools?

PA: Yeah, I like to think we're a little bit ahead of them but I think there are similarities because of the similar history. I've heard that we are behind Florida and Florida State, in the state in the way of traditional type students.

JC: Oh really?

PA: So between your full-time students and your resident students, we're third in the state in terms of percentage of traditional students.

JC: Even more than South Florida?

PA: Yes.

JC: Wow.

PA: Yes. We're probably, I don't know what we're running these days, five to six thousand part time and the rest are full-time students.

JC: Public Relations. For a long time there was, in fact some of my interviewees have told me at the beginning um, because of the opposition of JU and then FCCJ, there was an effort to downplay public relations from UNF because the community might have opposed us. Have you seen any of that or has public relations been a thriving operation when you arrived here?

PA: Oh when I arrived it was small.

JC: Uh huh

PA: And I've not heard anything what you just said about downplaying publicity to keep a low profile because of the politics that were involved with the creation of UNF. Our objective has been to get the word out.

JC: Yes, yes.

PA: And currently, we're getting fifteen hits a day on average in the media. Both locally and nationally when you start looking at radio, television and print media. And that's up from eleven hits a day average just three, four years ago.

JC: What makes national media from here?

PA: Let me give you some examples. The semester that we had Archbishop Desmond Tutu, that made national media on a regular basis. The rugby teams, the teams from England and Australia, and the presence of Russell Crow making mention of UNF on late night television and Saturday Night Live, I mean that publicity is priceless.

JC: Priceless.

PA: Yes. It really is. So those are just a few examples. I remember one day, let's see, three or four years ago. I guess it was four years ago now, I was in San Diego at a meeting in the Summer and I picked up the newspaper and was looking at the Presidential election coverage, and they had statistics in a chart and I looked at the bottom and the print was University of North Florida, The Polling Center which was Matt Corrigan's survey on some Presidential issues.

JC: Interesting.

PA: Yeah.

JC: Sort of like the Quinnipiac College surveys one hears about all the time.

PA: Yeah, and they're out of Connecticut so you get to know that institution by that kind of publicity.

JC: What are the biggest challenges facing your office in the area of public relations or alumni affairs foundation?

PA: Now let me just pick a little bit, or one or two of each. On the development side, certainly finding talented professionals. We're in a business where you don't go to school to get a degree in fundraising. It's all on the job training. There's plenty of short courses. Other than some graduate programs in fundraising management, So that's a big challenge for us. Also, trying to identify new prospects. People moving into the area, we're always working at that.

JC: Uh huh.

PA: Obviously we have our alumni base and our corporate base, we know that pretty well but who else is around here?

JC: All the boomers coming down here from New York Metropolitan area in early retirement.

PA: Yes. The alumni side is continuing to work on how to make them feel engaged. Because as we talked earlier, those that were commuters, they just came out here to get a degree. They didn't stay after to get to know their professors and go to a sporting event or play intramurals. So, that, that's something that we struggle with and so do other schools. Public Relations, we have a tremendous amount of good PR so we just want to be able to continue that. And that is a result of the people that we have here. The faculty and what they're doing, and the kinds of students we recruit.

JC: You're recruiting nationally and internationally; you're not recruiting but the university is recruiting nationally and internationally now.

PA: Because it is good to have that mix of student population.

JC: Yeah. Has the internationalization of the campus, you know whether in business or elsewhere, affected your operation? You haven't set up alumni office in Paris?

PA: No, no we haven't. And that's a ways off. I mean we are still looking to set up a stronger alumni presence in major metropolitan areas in Florida as well as the Southeast like Charlotte, Atlanta. So we are working with that. You have to remember that these are long term strategies.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

PA: It may take twenty years for UNF to have over a thousand students in Atlanta. Excuse me, graduates in Atlanta, because at the moment we've probably got four hundred. So people have to move there or get relocated from having a job in Jacksonville. So, it's going to take a while.

JC: You've worked with four different presidents or interim presidents, are there any particular styles that stand out with each of the presidents?

PA: Yeah let me see, and first of all let me just say that was five. We had Herbert, Hopkins, and Delaney but then we also had Fretwell and David Kline.

JC: Kline, I forgot Fretwell.

PA: Yes. Adam certainly was a dynamic individual. He had a great style with the community. E.K. Fretwell brought an interesting perspective because he was President of UNC, Charlotte. He told me several times, "Pierre, UNF is about ten years behind where Charlotte is in its age but also in its growth and how it's evolving with its

institution,” and he said, “you’re gonna have a great run here at this institution because I can see where Charlotte’s been and I can see where you’re going on your same type of trajectory.”

Anne Hopkins I think brought some very good ideas in terms of her academic quality, having come from Miami University. David Kline in a similar way. And certainly John Delaney, his style, very great visionary. He really looks to the future. And he is great to work for.

JC: Yeah, how would you describe John’s style? I mean from the faculty point of view, they see him having wonderful political connections and also probably being a very good fundraiser, a very good community person. Uh, but from the inside, how would you describe it?

PA: He really cares about the many different aspects of the institution. And I know on the faculty side with budget cuts for example, he really wants to minimize those for the academic programs and so he thinks about that. He talks about it, how could we do this so we don’t have to cut here or there? He’s very engaging and has certain charisma. But he is very genuine and he can talk to any type of group and they will feel comfortable about it. That is part of his leadership skills. And you think about it, he went unopposed in his second term, one of the most popular mayors in the city’s history. And, that speaks to his personality. He certainly understands the political process but he also understands human behavior.

JC: And there’s a Gator who’s adopted UNF. As an example of what you were saying earlier on as a matter of fact.

PA: Right.

JC: Are there any particular achievements, other than the capital fund which is a major achievement that you are most proud of at UNF? Not necessarily in institutional advancement but across the board with the university?

PA: Let me start out with the purchase of the Auchter Building. We needed to have a permanent presence on this campus for the alumni association. It is something I am extremely happy about and proud of.

JC: Is your office over there now?

PA: Yes. We moved the whole division of I.A. to that building. The bottom floor left, as we call it, is where Faith Hall and the Alumni Staff are but it now has a board room so that the Alumni Association can have its board meetings. It's got a lot of usable space for what we need. Good parking and all the things you want to have for the alumni association. Ever since I got here in 1995, alums have been talking to me about wanting to build a building.

JC: And we can't find a place to park on the campus and it costs three bucks.

PA: Yes. I was in the room when the president and I heard that Auchter may be coming up for sale. We both looked at each other and had the same idea. We had been talking about it for the five years since he arrived.. We were like, how can we do this and what would it cost? I'm just extremely proud of that.

JC: Did the foundation buy it?

PA: It was a combination of alumni association dollars, foundation dollars and some university money. And so we purchased it, but it's university property. It's not a foundation building per say.

JC: Um, a question I ask everybody I've interviewed, and everybody in here says that UNF is a fine university, how do we know that? You've had, I'm sure, experiences with your counterparts and other regional campuses. And I am not comparing us with Florida and Florida State but with other regional schools, how do we know we're any better than they are? Or are we?

PA: Yes. Of course that's always subjective on how you rate universities.

JC: Unless you read US News and World Report.

PA: Right, well they try to quantify it.

JC: Yep.

PA: I think when you look at certain parameters, such as the pass rates on the various licensing exams, the fact that virtually every program or curriculum that we have that can be accredited is accredited. That we don't pay lip service to that but we really find accreditation to be extremely important because we want to have a quality institution. I will say that a few of us, including President Delaney, went up to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, which we would consider an aspirational university. Tremendous national reputation, high quality undergraduate students. We match up pretty well with them.

JC: Really?

PA: Yes, in a lot of ways, they have their problems. They certainly have their great successes. They are two hundred and nine years old I believe and a tremendous traditional, really beautiful campus. But when we came back, we felt we are on our way there. We are good. And that one comment you made, well I don't want to put you next to Florida, no one should try to compare us to Florida.

JC: No, they shouldn't.

PA: We are not Florida. We don't want to be a University of Florida in the sense of we are carving a niche out in this state. And our mission is to be this high quality undergraduate institution that everybody wants to go to for that kind of education. I used to run into similar things when I worked for UF. You think oh well they're at the top of the pile. But you go to New York City and say you're from the University of Florida and they say, "you know you're not like Harvard" and my response was always the same, that's right Harvard's a private college, University of Florida is a land grant university and have totally two different missions and so it's like comparing apples to oranges.

JC: So you could compare Florida to Michigan or Berkeley or Wisconsin or Texas.

PA: Yes, because that's in the same grouping, and so that's why we are looking at these aspirational schools like Miami, William and Mary, both excellent public universities.

JC: Right.

PA: We believe we can get there, that we are on our way.

JC: Adam Herbert used to have that aspiration of wanting to be the best undergraduate college in the state of Florida. I remember hearing him refer to Miami of Ohio as one of those aspirational types of schools.

PA: Yes and that's continued with Anne Hopkins and with John Delaney and that's certainly the feeling of our Board of Trustees.

JC: Um, what distinguishes us from other regional schools? Are we, I am losing my language here, are we similar to them or are we different? And how do we know we are different. Let me look at my questions here. The word I am looking for and I can't seem

to find is when you buy prescription medicine and you get either the medicine or its equivalent.

PA: The generic?

JC: Are we a generic university or are we unique? In your perception?

PA: Yes, my take on it is that as a regional, a comprehensive metropolitan, no matter where you go in the country there is some basics. You are going to be serving the population that is in your community and that's what we try to do here. But I think what we work extra hard to do is to be as relevant as we can to the community and not stray from that. We have had a lot of pressure to start Ph.D. programs and do more graduate research because that's going to bring fame and fortune to the university and to the community but I think that can still be accomplished in the mission that we have that we are taking on.

JC: Where does that kind of pressure come from?

PA: Oh just people in the community, who think that in order to be a first tier city we've got to have some major research university. And I think with UNF and what it's doing with Brooks College of Health for example, tying into the tremendous health care community with Mayo and all the hospital systems we have here. That over time, that will be a signature for us. Then you look at transportation and logistics, what we are doing with our curriculum and some of the endowments we have there and where Jacksonville's a hub for air, land and sea as with the expansion of the port. I think we are paying a lot of attention to our community and our constituencies and putting our resources there where it's really part of the relevance that we want to be for Northeast Florida.

JC: Are there any disappointments since you have been here and what the university has done here? It could be mistakes of commission or omission, anything that didn't quite work out like you wished they might have?

PA: You know I really don't think much about what could have been.

JC: Okay, okay.

PA: If I think of something before we are done I'll say it. I tend to be a really positive person and so,

JC: That is probably part of the qualifications for your job.

PA: Although as a scientist I can get very analytical.

JC: Uh huh.

PA: But with that we discover solutions to why something didn't work so let's try something else.

JC: Okay. I mean some people think of things and some people haven't had much experience and haven't dealt with it in my perspective and a faculty perspective, the office has functioned quite well in the years that you have been here and it didn't function particularly well in the years before that. In any of the three areas that you oversee.

PA: Well, we have been able to hire good people and as I said, we were given the tools by Adam to get us started. And within a year, year and a half we significantly increased fundraising because of that. We have been able to grow the organization and with that produce and bottom line return on our investment.

JC: Uh huh.

PA: Yeah and we have really done a good solid job here.

JC: Good.

PA: Yes.

JC: Is there anything that you want to add to basic expansion that I might not have mentioned in terms of your experiences?

PA: Can we just go back to where you had asked about any omissions. And that is because I have been in higher ed for thirty five years. I have been teaching and in administration and I have visited lots of campuses. The one thing that has struck me about UNF is we've made a lot of good decisions. And what you see on a number of campuses is a lot of bad decisions which create problems for them.

JC: Could you give me some examples please? Because we have made some bad decisions as well.

PA: Yes, but

JC: Hiring at certain times in the past.

PA: Yes, well hiring is always a challenge. But not buying the property, for example, that was to the north of us where we just put in a parking lot and expanded athletics on those hundred or so acres. And that was a good move for the future. I think the fact that the university, from the beginning, really looked at master planning in a serious way. If you talk to Tom Carpenter, he will tell you of all the exercises he went through about the master plan. Leerie Jenkins, whose the head of RS&H. was a planner in that company thirty five years ago when we started developing the master plan and he is still around. And there's a lot of institutional history and memory with people who stayed here for a long time. And I think that's been very beneficial.

And so that's where there is more opportunity to make this decision because you've got this history from people who can say we tried this or we looked at that and have you thought about this because we did way back then. And I think that's been extremely good for this institution.

JC: Okay.

PA: The last thing that I think that as I look to the future of this place, I see us expanding, continuing our endowment building. That's been a real priority for us. We want to get to a hundred million sometime next year which is quite possible. And then be up into the one twenty five and one fifty in the next decade. Which I think is also quite possible.

JC: And how does that compare with other regional universities?

PA: Regional's without a medical school?

JC: Yes.

PA: Pretty good. When you put a medical school in the mix of fundraising, those generate a lot of dollars because of grateful patients and there's a lot of foundations that support medical research which is on the private gift side versus the contract side. Our goal is to get to that hundred million by about thirty eight years old. If this occurs. we will be the youngest institution in the state to have accomplished that.

JC: Hmm.

PA: I look and I see what other young schools have done or some that are twice as old as us and they happen to have an endowment that is less than ours. The other part is really continuing to grow alumni associations.

JC: Yeah.

PA: I see that as really starting to take off now and into the next decade.

JC: And we have reunions like other universities have five year reunions or is this something on the horizon? How, you mentioned bringing alumni back here or having alumni clubs in Atlanta or Tampa.

PA: Uh huh.

JC: I come from a school that every five years brings the class of fifty seven back.

PA: Right.

JC: And do other things.

PA: Is it a private college?

JC: Yeah,

PA: See the private colleges and universities, that's part of their tradition and culture but it has not been the case for public universities.

JC: How so?

PA: We tried it, not a lot of success. The public schools, the public universities generally do a good job at the twenty fifth anniversary or the fiftieth. But everything in between is really difficult because of the type of student body. They are not residential usually, they are much bigger.

JC: You know when you have four graduations or three graduations a year which class are you a part of is another complicated thing I would imagine.

PA: Right and the whole class agent, class reunion structure is one for smaller groups. Where there is more say intimate friendships among classmates.

JC: Right. So ideally, in this public institution, what is the goal of alumni relations? Um, besides seeking contributions and maintaining some kind of informal ties.

PA: Informal or formal, there are certainly different things that alumni can do to the political agenda. In terms of their influence through their communities and then there's also the networking for job opportunities that alumni association can be instrumental.

JC: Right. Yeah.

PA: Student recruitment is another one. We have done some things where we have in Tampa several strong alums and they will host an evening for parents and new students coming to UNF. We do that in the spring since they are coming in the fall.

JC: Uh huh.

PA: And so, there's those sorts of things that we are doing.

JC: Good. Anything else you want to add?

PA: No that's it.

JC: Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]