

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH HAN REICHGELT

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Interview with Han Reichgelt
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott, Laura Beth Daws, and Kathleen Harper
Edited and Indexed by Thomas A. Scott
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TS: Han Reichgelt is the dean of the School of Computing and Software Engineering at Southern Poly, and he's in his last days before he moves on to another position as regional vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. Han, why don't you begin by talking about your background? I know you've got a European background and attended colleges and universities either in the Netherlands or Scotland. So why don't you talk about your educational background? Your degrees are not exactly computer science, so talk about how you got in the field that you're in.

HR: My first degrees are from the University of Nijmegen in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. I have a master's in philosophy and a bachelor's in psychology [1981]. Afterwards, I went to Edinburgh to do a PhD in cognitive science [earned in 1985]. The reason was as a philosopher I became interested in the philosophy of mind. I was brought up in the Anglo-Saxon tradition in philosophy which kind of says all you do as a philosopher is you think about the field so it gets ready for empirical study. That's the main reason that I did psychology at the bachelor's level as well. At that time the real problem was that psychology was in a behaviorist neurosis, so anything to do with theory building was out. I came to it as a philosopher, so I was interested in building theories. I couldn't do that in psychology, and that's why I went to the University of Edinburgh to do a PhD in cognitive science. The way that was run at Edinburgh was very much as a cognitive modeling type program. At the time it was one of the PhD programs in the U.K. that had a taught component to it, and in that taught component we had a number of courses we had to take. I had to take courses in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, a course in psycholinguistics, a course in formal logic, and a course in artificial intelligence and programming. That's how I got into computing.

TS: What's the science in cognitive science? What do you do?

HR: It is as much modeling as it is psychological experiments. What set it apart at the time from traditional cognitive psychology was that cognitive psychology would run the experiments and leave it at that. What you did in cognitive science was try to build computer models based on the data that you got. What I did in my thesis for example: One of my professors had run a bunch of discourse analysis experiments where she had one kid explaining a route on a map to another student, and the kick of course was that they didn't have quite the same map. There was a lot of data that came out of it. So we then tried to build a computer

program that came up with similar data, similar conversations as we saw between the students. It turned out that I really enjoyed programming. I was good at it.

TS: Were you self-taught?

HR: Oh, no, because one of the courses that we did was artificial intelligence. They gave us an introduction to Prolog. I think Prolog was easy because what you normally do in a programming language is you need to worry about how the machine is going to execute the commands that you've called up in the programming language. Prolog is what is called a declarative language. What you do is you describe the problem, and then the machine itself will use rudimentary mathematical proof techniques to come up with an answer to whatever you're interested in. I had the background in formal logic. So I thought, "This is great!" All I needed to do was take all these sentences, code them up in Prolog, and [wait to see what it] would do. So I never understood what the problem was with programming! Then as my post-doc I got a job at the University of Edinburgh. At that time there was a lot of money in the U.K. for what was then called fifth-generation computing. It was to compete with the Japanese really to build more intelligent computers. The project I was working on was building expert systems using theorem-proving techniques. Again, that brought back my knowledge of logic. In that project I learned LISP, the second programming language I learned, and that's how I got into computing. LISP (List Processing) is a standard programming language that is used in artificial intelligence, and it's still widely used. After I'd finished my post-doc, I went to the University of Nottingham in England to take on an assistant professorship position in cognitive science in the Psychology Department.

TS: By the way, before we get to that, what was your dissertation?

HR: It had something to do with language processing under the cognitive view of languages—something like that.

TS: Okay, that's good enough.

HR: One of the things that I'm still proud of is that I'm the first person from Edinburgh to graduate with a PhD in cognitive science. I'm not the first to graduate from that program, but my diploma is the first one that says cognitive science.

LD: Wonderful!

TS: I think it's interesting you got from the Netherlands to Scotland for your PhD.

HR: Yes, well, part of the reason was that the guy that I did most of my master's research with had good relationships with folks in Edinburgh, so that's how that came about.

TS: Two good Calvinist countries.

HR: Exactly. Except the bit I'm from in Holland is the Catholic bit. At the time the choice was between Edinburgh and San Diego, and I think I made a mistake [laughs].

TS: Well, weather wise!

HR: So then I ended up in Nottingham.

TS: With the sheriff of Nottingham.

HR: With the sheriff of Nottingham, yes, in the Psychology Department as one of three faculty members helping them to develop an undergraduate program in cognitive science. I was after about four or five years unhappy with my lot, so I started applying for positions elsewhere.

TS: Unhappy because they wouldn't let you do what you wanted to do?

HR: Yes, and I should be promoted and, you know, that type of thing.

TS: I understand.

HR: I applied to the University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston, Jamaica, for a professorship in computer science.

TS: You didn't make it to San Diego, but you made it to Jamaica.

HR: They offered me the position which was really unexpected because at that time I really wasn't a computer scientist. I could program, and I was a pretty good programmer.

TS: Oh, they hired you to teach computer science?

HR: Yes. They hired me to become a department chair as well. I really spent the summer between two jobs reading every book I could read on computer science. By the time I got there I knew about data structures and operating systems and databases and so on. That's the time that I did most of my self-education, so to speak in computer science.

TS: This is 1992 that you get there.

HR: Yes, and I spent nine years in Jamaica.

TS: And you managed to do some studying even though you may have been sitting on

the beach a lot.

HR: That's the thing, Tom, because the weather is always good, you don't feel the urge to run out on the beach.

TS: It gets boring after a while!

HR: In Edinburgh when the sun was shining everybody was out because that may be the last time this year you might see the sun, but in Jamaica that was never a problem. I did a lot of service work in Jamaica as well both for the Caribbean Examination Council, which is the Caribbean-wide equivalent of the Oxford and Cambridge Examination Councils in the U.K. They ran the equivalent of the O and A levels in the Caribbean.

TS: These are exams to get your undergraduate degree?

HR: No, these were for high schools so O level and A level equivalents. I also did quite a bit of work for the government of Jamaica in information technology and worked with Ken Abernethy [professor and chair of Computer Science] from Furman University on developing a number of non-traditional curricular programs because Jamaica wanted to establish itself, as the term went, as a destination on the information superhighway. At that time everybody was setting themselves up as a provider of offshore software engineering services, and I'd written a paper saying that couldn't happen because of sheer numbers. Software engineering is a very labor intensive activity. There is an almost perfect correlation between the GDP [gross domestic product] per capita in a country and the percentage of eligible population that goes into tertiary education. I had to do these calculations about seven or eight times because the correlation came out something like .98. I thought, I must have done something wrong, but it really is that high.

TS: So more wealth in a country and more likely you're going to college.

HR: Yes, and so what happened was that the percentage of the population going into tertiary education in Jamaica was low to start with while out of that population you need your teachers, your doctors, your accountants, your everything. So a very small number of computer scientists were being produced in Jamaica. If you're going to set up a software engineering industry for export you need more bodies than we were producing out of the universities. That's when I started working with Ken Abernathy from Furman University, funded by USAID [United States Agency for International Development] to develop a fast track program to develop programmers. So that kind of worked out. Now, Ken became a good friend of mine, and when I was ready to leave Jamaica, you know Furman always plays football with Georgia Southern. He says, "You ought to look at the IT program that they're setting up at Georgia Southern." That's how I ended up at Georgia Southern.

TS: So you spent nine years in the West Indies to 2001, and you weren't department chair at the end it looks like.

HR: No, I stepped down a year or a year and a half before I left.

TS: But you'd had enough of the sun by that time?

HR: Well, by that time I had married again. We had our first child who was born in Jamaica, and we thought it was time to move primarily because of the quality of education he'd be getting in Jamaica. Jamaican private schools are good, but they tend to instill a certain attitude in the kids that I don't like, let's put it like that. That was part of the reason we wanted to move. And we ended up in Statesboro!

TS: The center of civilization!

HR: I'll tell you this story as well. It's completely irrelevant to the oral history of SPSU, but the way they did interviews at Georgia Southern was a long drawn out process even for assistant and associate positions. It was about two and a half days or something, and they fed you all the way through. The last day during the interview I had breakfast with Dr. Uly Knotts [Ulysses S. Knotts Jr.] who was known as the curmudgeon of the College of Business Administration. So after a while he took me to the local hangout for the good old boys for breakfast. We sat there for a while, and I must have impressed him because toward the end of the breakfast he said, "Dr. Reichgelt, you know the best thing about Statesboro?" I said, "No, Dr. Knotts, please tell me." He said, "It's very easy to get out [laughter]." So it took me six years to take his advice. That's when I ended up at Southern Poly.

TS: Right. What were you doing when you're at Georgia Southern?

HR: Initially I just came as a faculty member. Then I became chair of the department of IT. Then I became associate dean in the College of Information Technology, and from that position I became dean here at SPSU.

TS: So six years was enough in Statesboro?

HR: Six years was enough, right.

TS: What attracted you to Southern Polytechnic?

HR: Well, I was made aware of the position by Dr. [Rebecca H.] Becky Rutherford. Becky and I had done some work together in the special interest group of the Association for Computing Machinery for IT Education, so we knew each other. She said, "Hey, there's this job; why don't you look at it?" By that time, we were ready to leave Statesboro as well and to move to a larger city in the South.

TS: And is Becky stepping into your position as the interim dean?

HR: Yes, she's becoming the interim dean, this position. So Becky and I are not only colleagues, but we've become god friends as well.

TS: She's one that we need to interview eventually as well.

HR: Yes, and that will take a while too. She's been here for a while [since 1983].

TS: She was Dan Papp's faculty representative when he was the interim president.

HR: Yes, she's been here for thirty years. We were looking to move to a large city. I was looking to move to a smaller university with a teaching focus.

TS: You didn't find that at Georgia Southern?

HR: Georgia Southern at that stage, like Kennesaw at this stage, wanted to become an R-I [Research I] or it had ambitions to become R-I. Georgia Southern had also grown a lot. When I got there it was around 12,000 students, but when I left it had grown to about 16,000 or 17,000 students. That was interesting as well. They had wanted to limit the enrollment to around 15,000, and what they'd done was to jack up the entry-level requirements, thinking that that would lead to lower number of applicants. It never works that way.

TS: No, it didn't work that way at Kennesaw either.

HR: You jack up the entry level requirements you get more students, you get better students.

TS: Because it's more prestigious?

HR: Yes. So anyway, I was also ready to move into a dean's position.

TS: At any rate, they're moving away from their focus on teaching to scholarship?

HR: Yes, and I have no objection to that, but...

TS: And you think that's where Kennesaw State is right now.

HR: That's where they would like to go, I think. That's the impression that I get.

TS: I don't think everybody at Kennesaw wants to, but, yes, you're exactly right.

HR: If you're going to do it, it requires a significant investment in building infrastructure for grant support and grant writing and doctoral students and all that kind of stuff. It's not something you do overnight, let's put it like that. Anyway,

so that's how I ended up at Southern Poly.

TS: So it's the fact that they're student focused, teaching focused that you wanted to come here.

HR: Yes. And I was also ready for a dean's position, and there aren't that many. I have to say, I wasn't really actively looking for a dean's position, and I probably would have waited for another year or so before I started looking if Becky hadn't told me about this possibility.

TS: There's a big difference between being an associate dean and a dean.

HR: Yes. Anyway, that's how I ended up here.

TS: Southern Poly had 4,000 students at that time?

HR: At the time, yes. We had about maybe 750 in computing. We've now grown as an institution to about 6,500 students and close to 1,800 in computing. The computing programs have really grown in terms of enrollment and more importantly to me in terms of the number graduates that we produce as well. We're finally seeing the increased enrollment translating into increased number of graduates.

TS: Is that number for your whole school [of Computing and Software Engineering]?

HR: Yes, 1,800 for the school. Of those, about 350 are master's students, and the rest are undergrads.

TS: That's tremendous growth, far more than the campus as a whole even though the campus has grown tremendously.

HR: Yes. You look at the enrollment patterns on this campus, and a lot of the enrollment growth recently has come in engineering and computing with engineering growing even faster than computing, although a lot of that...

TS: The software engineering?

HR: No, no, no, the campus as a whole. A lot of our growth in engineering has been at the expense of the enrollment in our engineering technology programs, so we're seeing a shift.

TS: I was noticing, those figures are pretty startling actually because of Southern Poly's history that the engineering majors far outnumber the engineering technology majors.

HR: Yes, but I think even before we had engineering a lot of the engineering

technology students wanted to be engineers, but there were very few engineering programs available in Georgia. The only one was Georgia Tech, and you know that Georgia Tech is very hard to get into, and they are making it harder to get into Georgia Tech if you're an in-state student.

TS: Really?

HR: Yes. You almost get the impression that they've made a strategic decision to enroll more out-of-state students, and I understand the financial reasons.

TS: Oh, to get the higher tuition?

HR: Yes. There are financial incentives behind that. The result of that is there is a large demand for engineering education. It changed last year, but at some stage we were the only alternative public institution with engineering programs.

TS: Let me just ask you while we're on that. Southern Poly is either third or fourth in the system in terms of SAT scores for entering freshman, right out of high school freshmen, but of course it's not as high an average for SAT as Georgia Tech. Would you say the students who are coming into engineering are more traditional students straight out of high school who maybe would have gone to Georgia Tech if they could have gotten in there or are they non-traditional students that are attracted to your programs?

HR: I think the majority of students who go to engineering are traditional students. That's not the case with engineering technology where we do see a lot of non-traditional students. In my own school we see a really interesting mix between the different programs. Our program in Computer Game Design and Development is primarily traditional students. Our IT programs are I guess about 60 to 65 percent non-traditional students. Some of those programs we've designed specifically for students who would count as non-traditional because they come to us with an associate of applied sciences from one of the technical colleges, so they don't come straight out of high school they've started at Chattahoochee Tech or Wiregrass Tech [Wiregrass Georgia Technical College] or...

TS: Oh, and they're the ones going into the IT programs?

HR: Yes. We designed that program specifically to make sure that students that have an associate of applied science in a computing-related discipline could get the bachelor's level degree without any loss of credit. That would be easier if you did it now. It was very hard at the time because the technological college system was on a quarter system, not the semester system. So we almost did the articulation of a course-by-course outcome rather than a course-by-course articulation basis. What happens is that students transfer in thirty-seven hours as a block rather than as thirty-seven hours-worth of courses. That's a successful program.

- TS: So by transferring the block hours there are certain courses they don't have to take?
- HR: Right. It's essentially that they've taken three or four courses at the technical colleges. These courses don't translate neatly one-on-one to our existing courses, but you look at the body of knowledge—the course outcomes that they get out of these three or four courses...
- TS: They've taken English, they've taken math, and they've taken history.
- HR: Well, the general education courses transfer on a course-by-course basis, so you're really talking about the technical courses.
- TS: Oh, the IT type courses?
- HR: Yes. At the time it was unusual to do it like that, but those students tend to be successful in our programs provided they can make it through the first semester. For them the first semester is a real hang up. I think there are two reasons for that: one is that many of them take the courses online, and for many of them this is the first time to take an online course, and that requires a certain level of adjustment; second I also think that, and there're different ways of putting it, but we're more rigorous or less humane in dealing with students than they're used to.
- TS: So it's almost like going from high school to college, the shock of having to study.
- HR: Yes. But once they're through that first semester, and they come out with a bachelor of applied science, I see no difference in their success rates in the market place in getting jobs. If they move into the MSIT, then they are as successful as the students who come through the traditional BSIT program. So we take them in at different points, but we put them out at the same points.
- TS: Right. MSIT—Master of Science in Information Technology.
- HR: Yes.
- TS: Okay, you come here because you want a teaching-focused institution. Do you think it has stayed that way in the seven years that you've been here?
- HR: Yes, it's still a primary teaching-focus institution. I was fortunate in that the faculty that I inherited was by and large very research active as well. I think that by and large they have found the right balance between teaching and research. I think that now that the university is consolidating, some of my faculty members may want to put much more emphasis on research than we've let them do over the last seven years or so.

- TS: Well, you know, last August I guess it was the Board of Regents classified Kennesaw State as a comprehensive university, and that put us in a category where we had to do more research.
- HR: Yes. That's one of the real opportunities I see for computing in the consolidation. We've been trying for the longest while to get a doctorate of professional studies [DPS] in applied computing information technology offered out of SPSU. It's in many ways not that dissimilar to an EdD where you take people who have made a career in the field and now want doctoral qualification for whatever reasons, whether it's career advancement or whether it's because they want to start teaching at a university in a regular faculty position. You get them to earn a doctoral qualification. Traditional PhD programs are not the appropriate way for them because you really want to leverage the professional expertise they've built up during their professional career. We've been trying to get a DPS from before I became dean, and every time we were turned back by the systems office. Well, now that we are becoming part of a comprehensive university we can revitalize this idea of the doctorate of professional studies. As it turns out the Department of Computer Science at KSU has been thinking about the similar program. I think that is something that will happen over the next couple of years.
- TS: By the way, what's going to happen to your school with the consolidation?
- HR: It will become a college. There will be a College of Computing and Software Engineering in the new KSU. What will change is that it will become a lot larger because KSU is bringing between 600 and 800 students in computing to the party so to speak.
- TS: So the computer science program at Kennesaw is really going to join your school or your college?
- HR: Yes, and we already have a program of computer science here. The one thing that we had to do in the consolidation was to work out how we combined the programs in computer science, which turned out to be fairly straight forward. Computer science programs are not that different between different universities.
- TS: Right. But all the computer science faculty at Kennesaw will no longer be in the College of Science and Mathematics and are instead going to be in the College of Computing and Software Engineering?
- HR: Yes. The new college will have three departments, like the current school has two departments—IT and Computer Science and Software Engineering. The new college will have three departments—Computer Science, IT, and then Software Engineering and Computer Games and Development.
- TS: Okay.

HR: So that works out in terms of numbers both of students and faculty as well.

TS: Was the computer game program in place before you got here?

HR: No.

TS: Could you talk a little bit about how that came about?

HR: What happened was Dr. [Zvi] Szafran had sent me I want to say an article out of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, but I don't know that for sure. Anyway, it was about how one of the Virginia community colleges had set up a gaming lab to help attract more students into computing. He said, "Why don't we do that here?" I then had a conversation with my department chairs about this. Andy [Ju An] Wang, who at the time was the chair of the department of IT, said, "Well, why not build a program in gaming?" That's how that whole idea came up. Andy had done some work in gaming; we had more faculty who could build and deliver one or two courses in computer gaming as well. At that time what happened as well was that the Georgia legislature passed the [Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act of 2008] under which you can get up to 30 percent tax credit on any digital content that you produce in Georgia. Most other states have similar legislation in place as well, but for most other states it's restricted to the movie industry. Georgia is one of the few states that also extended it to the gaming industry.

TS: How did that come about?

HR: I don't know. I wasn't involved in the whole process by which that happened, but I know some folks who I think were, and they are smooth political operators, let's put it like that. Once we saw that, now there is this tax incentive in place for gaming process, up to 30 percent. You get 20 percent no questions asked provided there is no porn in it—they don't give a tax credit for porn—and then you get another 10 percent if you have the Georgia on My Mind logo displayed, and I think it's ten seconds or something like that.

TS: Wow, so it's worth it for 10 percent.

HR: Yes. So now we have these factors coming together. We're starting a conversation about gaming as a program. We have a piece of legislation that has been passed by the legislature encouraging the emergence of a gaming industry in Georgia. At the time I also had a vacancy. As it turns out I was able to persuade Jon [A.] Preston to join us from Clayton, and Jon has a background in computer game design, animation, that type of thing. Jon and I started conversations with the gaming studios that had already established a presence in Atlanta, including an animation-type studio—Giant Studios—that had written motion-capture software for movies. What happens these days is that a lot of the animation is no

longer drawn. It is actors acting out. You capture that motion, and then you multiply by 400 if you need 400 attacking hobbits or something like that. Well, it turned out that Giant Studios—and the reason for bringing them up is that those guys had won an Oscar for technical innovation, and two out of the three winners were former students from SPSU. They also had stayed in touch with Lee Gramling who had become director of hair and fur tools at Pixar [Animation Studios]. He was another SPSU alum.

So we started to have conversation with whoever we knew about what was needed in the gaming industry because it turns out that there are roughly two different types of gaming programs. There are the ones that emphasize game design; they are more artistic; so they teach you how to create the characters and the backdrops and all that kind of stuff, the kind of program you get out of SCAD, Savannah College of Art and Design. Then you have the more computer game development programs where the emphasis is on programming. Well, it turned out that all of the gaming studios that we talked to said, “What we need is programmers. We can get those design skills left, right and center, but what we can’t find is the programming skills.” That suited us because that’s the type of institution we are at SPSU. We don’t do anything artistic; we do things technical. So now it all came together, right? We wanted a gaming program. There was support for the gaming industry out of the legislature. We have faculty in place that can develop that program. It turns out that the existing gaming industry wants the type of program that fits in very naturally with what we do at SPSU. That’s how the gaming program started.

TS: You go through the administration here and then go down to the Board of Regents?

HR: Yes, and the Board of Regents literally was a three-minute conversation about getting that program approved and most of it was, “That’s cool; glad you guys are doing that.”

TS: Georgia Tech didn’t raise any objections?

HR: No.

TS: They didn’t want to do this?

HR: Georgia Tech has never raised that many objections to what we do at SPSU.

TS: Is that right?

HR: Yes.

TS: So that’s been overblown?

HR: I think so. I mean, I don't know if I want this on the transcript, but let me tell you this anyway.

TS: We need it to get the record straight.

HR: Well, here's the thing. Georgia Tech obviously is casting a large shadow over technical higher education in the state of Georgia. Sometimes I get the impression that we've been too happy to run into the shadow because it is a risk avoidance strategy. Let's not talk about engineering because Georgia Tech will never allow us to do it anyway. It turns out that in many cases once you have a conversation with Georgia Tech, they don't care that much about us. Their main competition is UGA, University of Georgia. So I've never had any real problems getting anything accepted by Georgia Tech. Now, I don't know, that's probably just my perspective from computing. It may be different when you talk to the folks that have been trying to get engineering programs going like [former president] Dr. [Stephen R.] Cheshier.

TS: So you're saying that Georgia Tech would rather Southern Poly have these programs than UGA because UGA is a greater threat to their interests.

HR: Yes. That's part of the way in which we got the engineering programs as well. There was a study commissioned by Georgia Tech saying that there was space for exactly two public universities in the State of Georgia to offer engineering degrees, Georgia Tech, and since SPSU has all the technology programs already, why not give SPSU the other engineering degrees.

TS: Did the software engineering come before SPSU got civil engineering, mechanical engineering, and electrical engineering in 2009.

HR: Software engineering had been here since the early 2000s.

TS: Before you got here?

HR: Yes, before I got here. As had been mechatronics and construction engineering, so when we say we got engineering in 2009, what we really ought to say is that we get the big engineering programs like mechanical, electrical, and civil because we had construction, mechatronics, and software engineering before that.

TS: And Georgia Tech didn't object to those?

HR: No. They're kind of funky engineering programs.

TS: So the same thing with the game design? They didn't care?

HR: They didn't care. That was an easy program to market. We got a lot of press out of the gaming programming when it was approved.

TS: I know Rich Bennett in his update to the SPSU history has really told it from that point of view that UGA was the threat for Georgia Tech.

HR: Yes, and not SPSU.

TS: Now, Zvi gave us a different story when we interviewed him. He said there was more to it, but he didn't want to talk about it. Basically, he said we made the case that we were appealing to a different clientele.

HR: Yes, and so our engineering programs are officially started as evening engineering programs.

TS: But they're not?

HR: Well, we had a long discussion about when evening starts, right [laughter]?

TS: Oh, what the definition of evening is?

HR: In Jamaica evening starts at 12:00 noon.

TS: Wow, since you came from Jamaica, I guess that anything in the afternoon is evening.

HR: But Zvi is right. He did do a lot of talking to the provost at Georgia Tech.

TS: Were you involved in those discussions?

HR: No, I was kept on the sidelines probably for good reasons. Anyway that discussion was taking place as I joined SPSU. The only discussion I was involved in was what to do with software engineering, whether that should stay in the School of Computing or whether that should move to what was then the Division of Engineering and then grew into the School of Engineering.

TS: Oh, so you didn't originally have a school of engineering, but you had a division of civil, electrical, and mechanical?

HR: Yes.

TS: So you obviously made the case that it ought to stay here.

HR: Yes. It wasn't a hard case to make because there was overlap between our computer science programs and software engineering to the extent that if you graduate with a major in software engineering, you get a minor in computer science for free, and there's almost no overlap between civil, mechatronics, mechanical, electrical engineering, and software engineering. Cynics might say

that's because software engineering is not really engineering but...

TS: So what's the definition of engineering then?

HR: Well, there are certain things that you do in engineering practice that you don't really do in software engineering. One of the things that is very important in engineering practice is thinking about all kinds of tradeoffs. You can build certain features into your design but that's going to have an effect on the cost, and are those features worth the additional cost. You typically don't do that in software engineering. The other thing you don't do in software engineering practice is really do significant post mortems of any failures. When a plane crashes, the national transportation safety board comes in and does all kind of details analysis of what's gone wrong. Same with building codes. You name it, a bridge collapses. We don't really do that in software engineering. We keep putting out engineering artifacts with problems in it, and we don't learn as much from our failures in software engineering as we do in civil, mechanical or electrical engineering.

TS: Unless you can't get the Affordable Care Act to work?

HR: That's right, that's a good example. If you were to build a plane the way we build the Affordable Care Act...

TS: They wouldn't have gotten off the ground so it couldn't have crashed!

HR: That's right.

TS: All right. What year was it that the game design program comes in? Was it before the mechanical and civil and electrical which was 2009?

HR: It was [approved by the Board of Regents on May 12, 2009, exactly three months before the board approved the three major engineering degree programs].

LD: I know you've been involved with a lot of student initiatives here on campus in particular Game Jam. Could you talk a little bit about what that is? I think it comes through your game design program.

HR: Yes. Again, I can't take any credit for it. It's Jon Preston who took the initiative on that. Game jams are events where you almost literally lock up students for forty-eight hours. They come in Friday at 5:00, and they have forty-eight hours to develop prototype games. We're now running three every year. We used to run only two. We run one locally in September/October, and then there is an international one in late January/early February where folks get together all over the world and do these game jams. It is amazing how many prototype games get developed over that period. What they've been doing more recently is not only bringing our own students, but also bringing students from SCAD and students

via Skype from the Berklee College of Music in Boston. These guys have a program in scoring for movies and games.

The way it works is that students are given a theme—in fact this whole exercise happens three times. They are given a theme; you're supposed to get together with a group of four people, and then you brainstorm for about ten or fifteen minutes about how you would write games relevant to that theme. Then you repeat the exercise. Then the third time they get the real thing for the game jam. The reason they do it three times is to—a lot of our students are a bit introverted—get them used to talking to other people. The other thing that they do is as you come in and you register, you get a different color sticker depending on your skills. If you're a programmer, you get red; if you're more of an artistic type, you get green or whatever it is. The students go on their merry way, do their thing, and then typically by around 3:00 o'clock on Sunday afternoon they start presenting their games. They have exactly two minutes to do it—one minute to talk about the game, and then another minute to show a YouTube video about the game. As I say, it is just amazing what they come up with.

The one we had last fall was sponsored by CDC [Centers for Disease Control], and they wanted games to deal with what they called the battles in public health—smoking cessation and prevention of food-borne illnesses, HIV prevention, and so on. They had hoped for about a dozen prototype games, and students ended up with just over thirty. They're prototypes; they look rough; but at least you get the idea of what that game would involve. Yes, that certainly has helped with attracting in more students, but also really with student retention because it really does lead to higher student engagement, and it's fun. The only problem is you need to air out this building on Monday morning since they've been in there for forty-eight hours!

LD: They don't leave essentially, right? They're here.

HR: No, you come in here Sunday morning about 10:00 o'clock, and you see bodies everywhere!

LD: That's why the couches are out in the hallway. I've always wondered. Well, I taught a health communication class this semester, and actually in class I showed some of the games that the students designed. They are great; they are fantastic! It's amazing what they can do in such a short time.

HR: Yes. And what has happened as well is that it's the enormous growth in participation—I think the first one they ran they had around thirty-five or forty students. The last one we had 250 students or something like that. There's always a kind of minor competition going on in the international game jamming in January/February about which side has the most participants, and we're always second or third in the States. We're getting very close to being first in terms of size. New York and Orlando have very large game jams as well. We always get

- beaten by Scandinavians, but they play unfair because they have an open bar!
- LD: Wow. That won't ever happen here!
- HR: No, that won't happen here. They have only one game jam for Scandinavia. I don't know that Finland is involved, but certainly Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and they always have one location and an open bar!
- TS: What else can you do in those cold countries anyway?
- LD: Right.
- HR: Certainly in January and February.
- LD: I know one of the student's concerns about consolidation is that things like game jam and the student led events are going to just magically disappear somehow.
- HR: I don't think that is going to happen. I'm sure like you I've had a lot of conversations with students about the quality of the SPSU degrees. It's not the name; it's the degrees. It's not like Harvard. When you get a degree from Harvard, it really doesn't matter what you did. You have a degree from Harvard. Georgia Tech would like to think they are there. We are not. I mean, it's the quality of our programs, the hands on type of education we provide. I don't think that is going to change. That will survive consolidation. I also think that the size of this campus is attractive to a lot of our students. I've certainly talked to parents who know that their children are somewhere on the autism spectrum, and they like the smaller size. Again, most of the programs that we have on this campus will remain on this campus, so that the smaller size atmosphere will probably survive consolidation as well. I really don't see that many downsides to consolidation. In fact, I see another big upside for computing. I've already mentioned the doctoral program. One of the big concerns that I have about computing education is the lack of women, and we have something like 12 percent of our undergraduate students are female. We're doing a bit better in the graduate programs. We have about 35 percent.
- TS: Are you talking about in your school?
- HR: In computing. SPSU as a whole—undergraduate degrees—is only about 20 percent female. Tom, the reason I worry about this is both a social justice aspect to it and a real belief in diversity and the fact that if you build a diverse engineering team you get better solutions. But it's also the economic aspect to it. I think we're expecting by 2020, 1.4 million vacancies in computing. Based on current enrollment patterns, we will be only able to fill about a third of those with students graduating from U.S. universities. The way in which we've always solved that problem by importing labor, particularly from India, is becoming less feasible because the salaries and living standards are going up in India. [The U.S.

is] becoming less attractive as a destination if you want to come here for financial reasons. There may be other reasons you want to come to the States, but the financial consideration is becoming less. If we as a system of higher education are going to meet the needs of this economy we need to grow the number of students in computing. Since we're pretty much ignoring 50 percent of our potential students, that's the obvious population to go after.

Now, we also know that in general women are not interested in technology for technology's sake. There are plenty of studies on that. What women are interested in by and large is technology to do something with. The phrase that has been coined is computing with a purpose. The way you typically operationalize that is by having a major in computing and then a minor in application domain which may be healthcare or education or music or supply chain management or public administration, you name it. Well, you can't build those programs at SPSU because we don't have any of these minors. Well, we can now start thinking about building those programs in the consolidated university because those minors are available at Kennesaw. As it turns out in particular in our IT program we kind of have enough space to be able to build those programs without having to go anywhere else. We can do that within the BSIT. I'm hoping that whoever takes over for me takes the ball and runs with that. That's part of the reason that I've already told Dr. Papp and Dr. [Ken] Harmon that I would like for the IT program to have a presence on the Kennesaw campus as well. Software engineering and gaming can stay here. Computer science will probably be on both campuses, but I'd like IT to have a presence on the Kennesaw campus as well so that we can start building these computing with a purpose programs.

TS: Well, you've got the Clendenin computer science building [on the Kennesaw campus]. Can't let that go to waste.

HR: No, there is space. [The Department of] Information Systems, which is currently in that building is moving out and moving into the Coles College—but the building has a different name, it's not the...

TS: Burruss.

HR: Yes, the Burruss Building. So there is space. It is one of the issues that is going to have to be resolved—how do you deal with programs that have a presence on both campuses? Obviously, it's much easier to have everybody in the single location to build organization and culture and all that kind of stuff. I think this is a real case where students' interests have to trump what is easier for the administration to do.

TS: What about other types of diversity? I know Southern Poly has been proud of the number of black students over all. How about in your school?

HR: In my school it's about the same as it is in SPSU as a whole.

TS: Over 20 percent?

HR: Yes. The main ethnic group that is underrepresented—and that's slowly changing as well—is the Hispanics and/or Latinos. That has partly to do with the decisions that have been made by the Board of Regents about undocumented...

TS: Out-of-state tuition?

HR: Yes. It still irks me. I did some work with Dr. [Steven] Miletto [chosen the 2009 Georgia high school principal of the year by the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders], who was at the time [from 2003 to 2010] principal of Osborne High School in South Cobb. [There is] a very large undocumented Latino population in that area. Well, he had been working very hard to get the Latino students to stay in school because typically they drop out by the time they get to the junior level in high school because by that time they can work. So he had been working very hard with parents in particular to make sure those kids stayed in school. His PTA meetings were bi-lingual. He had several trainees [doing] translation. What happened is that he had the same percentage of Latino students taking AP classes as he had in the population of the school as a whole.

TS: Wow, that's amazing.

HR: Yes. He really kept it. So what happens with those kids afterwards, right? For them it's a complete dead end.

TS: But that's been a problem?

HR: Yes, that's been a problem, and it's not just a problem at SPSU. You have that problem with students at KSU as well. But ethnic diversity is less of a problem than gender diversity for us.

TS: What about international students?

HR: We have a fairly large number of Chinese students at the undergraduate level, a small group of students from Africa, from Cameroon. At the master's level we have the MS in computer science at about 75 percent Indian students. In IT we have a large number of Indian students as well as a number of students from Thailand.

TS: Are these online courses; is that how they're in it?

HR: No, the Indian students are here face-to-face although they would like to take online courses as much as possible for financial reasons. We are building a presence in Ghana for the MSIT, but those students will be online; they will stay in Ghana, so yes, fairly international. What I like about the particular students we

get at the undergraduate level from Cameroon is that they make a real contribution to student life. The Chinese students tend to stick together a little more. I can understand that. It's a different country, a different culture, different language, and they have spent the first two years of university education together, so they know each other. Then I have faculty members, I guess about 40 percent of my faculty members are Chinese who prefer talking Chinese with those students. So they don't become as much a part of the community as do the students from Cameroon. The other lack of diversity I'm sure we have is socio-economic diversity. Again, it's not as bad as it is at the flagships, but we have relatively few poorer students. It's interesting that most of the diversity efforts that we make address gender diversity, ethnic diversity, but we do very little in terms of socio-economic diversity, and my feeling is that a white kid from rural south Georgia probably brings as much diversity to campus as a African-American kid from an affluent area in Alpharetta.

TS: We've got anywhere from a dozen to twenty-five homeless students on campus at Kennesaw State.

HR: I do value diversity, but I think we tend to think too much when we talk about diversity in things that you can see like gender and ethnicity, and not in terms of class.

TS: Right. I interrupted you, Laura Beth.

LD: No, that's fine. The only other thing I wanted to bring up—of course, my department has media arts—and you mentioned we don't really do anything artistic here at SPSU, which is true for the most part, but I'm thinking about our new media arts majors who I think have collaborated with you in some ways.

HR: Yes. I think that what you guys have been doing under Mark's leadership [Mark Nunes] has been really remarkable in that you've been able to find a real role for the arts in a polytechnic university. It's still kind of technology-oriented. It's not an English literature program, but it is a technologically-oriented arts program, and, yes, I think it's great. One of the things that, again, the gaming guys have been working with your students because we think that for many of the students that come into our gaming program, the new media arts program is a much better program for them to take with an increased emphasis on retention and so on and for the right reasons. Finding those types of programs for students who think they are interested in gaming, but they don't quite understand what type of gaming program we have, the new media arts program is a nice alternative.

LD: Right. I think they've work great together.

HR: The other thing that they've done—and this is where we do do some artistic stuff as well—is the collaboration that they've built between the gaming program and the architecture program where we have students in our gaming capstone working

with students who are doing their senior thesis in architecture. It started two or three years ago with a project to do with the colonization of Mars. What the architecture students designed was what would it looked like if we built a colony on Mars. Then the gaming students came in and started animating aspects of that.

LD: Oh, cool.

HR: Yes, that was really cool.

LD: The Mars project could probably benefit from some of the things they did here; I don't know if they picked up on it.

TS: Kathleen do you have any questions?

KH: Sure. I noticed under your research on your SPSU website you have computing education and IT service delivery quality, but you also had health information technology. How did you decide on that?

HR: Well, the computing education is straight-forward, right? IT service delivery quality I think is straight-forward as well. The reason I became interested in health information technology was partly driven by the HITECH Act [Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (2009)], which was passed as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, you know, the Obama stimulus package. What was available under the HITECH Act was significant incentives to both physicians and hospitals to start implementing electronic health records systems, and penalties if you hadn't implemented an electronic health records system by 2015—so the carrot and stick approach. The problem was that there weren't enough folks around to help physicians and hospitals implement an electronic health records system. That's how I became interested in health information technology.

The health care industry is so messed up, if you ask me. Just taking somebody with generic IT skills and putting them in a healthcare delivery environment, they're just not going to know what they need to do. So that's why I got interested in health information technology. More so, the social organizational side of things rather than the purely technology side of things because from a purely technology point of view it's not that different from the financial industry, but from an organization point of view it is a completely messed up system, if you ask me. I sometimes say, "If I was teaching a course in organization behavior, and as a project you came up with a way in which we've organized healthcare delivery in this country, I would not only fail you for this course, I would fail you for the prerequisite courses as well!

Again, the way in which we started doing that is a bit like how we built our software engineering program as well. In both cases we saw a need for rapid professional development for software engineering, which was with Lockheed

Martin for HIT. It was just with a bunch of people who had the background in IT and were out of work. We started building programs to get them ready for new careers. Once we had built those programs as professional development programs, we then leveraged them to build the degree programs as well. So the degree program in software engineering came out of the collaboration with Lockheed Martin. The program that we built in health information technology to accelerate a training program in HIT has led to a number of courses so you can now do a certificate in HIT as part of an undergraduate degree in IT. That's probably more than you wanted to know.

KH: I really didn't connect the two until you pointed it out. I was a little curious. I read about your recent promotion with the University of South Florida [St. Petersburg], if I may talk about it?

TS: Sure, go ahead.

KH: I know you've done quite a bit for SPSU. Now that you've gained the position of regional vice chancellor for academic affairs, what do you hope to bring to that school?

HR: It's not a technology school. It is more of a broader university. In fact, they have almost no programs in computing. The position is essentially the vice president for academic affairs position, and there are a number of minor internal issues that have to be sorted to do with tenure, promotion criteria for faculty and some workload issues, issues you have at every university. One of the things that I really like about them is the level of community engagement. They pride themselves on being recognized by Carnegie [Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching] as a community engaged university. That works both in terms of the community providing resources to the university in terms of, for example, internships, but we're also using the local community to provide a lot of service learning opportunities for our students. For example, just south of the campus is a socio-economically depressed, primarily African-American, area. So education students go in there to help with tutoring. The finance students have been going into that area to help with tax preparation and that type of work. I'm hoping to build more on that community engagement.

The other thing that they really do want to do is build some programs in business intelligence and analytics. They need somebody at a senior administrative level that can spearhead those efforts. I think that's part of the reason that they'd like to get me there. The other thing is that, like SPSU, but unlike KSU, they're sitting on a lot of data that they don't know how to analyze to help improve retention and student success and so on so. Again, I'm hoping to bring my expertise in analytic statistics, business intelligence, to help them improve their operations. Again, that's one of the big things in the consolidation. You guys are way, way ahead in the use of data to help support your operations than we are. The stuff that Erik Bowe [assistant vice president and chief data officer] has been

building up—his group—it's way ahead of where we are.

TS: Why don't we just pick up on some of these things that you've just said? Let's talk about retention a little bit more. Southern Polytechnic has been improving on retention and graduation rates; they're still in the thirty percentile range [a graduation rate of 38.03 percent for the fall 2007 cohort of first-time, full-time students through summer 2013]. What about your programs in software engineering and IT and so on?

HR: We're not that much better. Let me make two comments: the first comment is the graduation rate as it is measured by the feds and the way we report it is not all that relevant to SPSU and to KSU because all you look at is first-time, full-time freshmen.

TS: Which is a tiny part of the overall student population.

HR: Yes. So what I've started to look at is I look at all incoming students, no matter how and when they come in, and see whether they graduate. At my master's level about 80 to 85 percent of students who come [to SPSU] come out with a degree from SPSU. Now, it may not be in the school of computing. Some of them move into the MBA program. So that's a kind of graduation rate. That's really high.

TS: Absolutely.

HR: But at the undergraduate level the best I get is in IT where about 50 percent of incoming students get a degree, and the worst I get is in computer science where about 35 percent of students get a degree. So that's not that much better than the federal rate. What I also see is a very long tail. We have students who started more than six years ago and are still taking maybe one or two courses a semester and still working toward graduation, but if you have an arbitrary count of four years to six years, those students...

TS: Do you have statistics on the twelve-year graduation rate?

HR: Yes. I do. It doesn't get a lot better. It moves from 50 percent to 52 percent or something like that, but, no, it's not good. There's a lot of speculation about why that might be the case. One of the things that I've been looking at is course success rates. It's a constant conversation that we have within the school that if a course has essentially three criteria, the first one is if you have a high withdrawal rate that is more than 20 percent or if less than 75 percent of the students who didn't withdraw get an A, B or C, or if there are significant differences between different sections of the course, let's have a conversation about what's going on. At the moment the course success rates in all of the courses offered out of my school area is 75 percent or higher, so 75 percent or higher of students get an A, B or C and the rest D and F and withdrawal. So I know that the main points as far as retention and progression are concerned are not being in the courses that are

offered out of my school. If I do similar exercises for courses out of other departments, I can tell you what the problems are, and they're not in English!

LD: Thank you!

TS: So it's not English that's holding up the rates.

HR: No, it is math that's holding them back. We have success rates in some of our Calculus II courses of 35 percent. You think a failure rate of 35 percent you'd be really concerned...

TS: But 65 percent...

HR: Yes, 65 percent of students failed. And it's not a one off. We've all tried things in a course, and it didn't work out, so the pass rate dropped a little bit. But this is consistent—35 percent pass rate. These are courses that you can't run away from them, given the majors we have here. You need to do Calculus I; you need to do Calculus II. In the case of computing you need to do Discrete Structures. Now, Discrete Structures we've solved by bringing that in-house, made it a more relevant course for computing majors rather than a more abstract math course. But Calculus I and Calculus II I can't do anything about other than hope that during the consolidation somehow the success rates will go up.

TS: I guess the debate is how do you do something about those failure rates without watering down the courses?

HR: Well, there are two issues there. First of all, yes, you can do something about it. I mean, the things that they've done at Virginia Tech with math. Essentially, you test early and you test often and you have early interventions. Math is a very incremental kind of subject. You get lost in week two, you might as well forget it. But if you know the student got lost in week two, and you do something to bring them back on track, then maybe you get him through. The second thing is our standards may be too high. Again, I have students who come in who've done their math somewhere else, transferred in their math, and they are as successful after they graduate as students who take their math here. So if math is that important for successful careers in computing, how come a kid who takes the courses at Georgia Highlands [College] or at Chattahoochee Tech is going to be as successful after they graduate as a student who struggled through the math here? We need to think about those standards as well. I think there is a real disagreement between not just mathematicians, but between mathematicians and some other folks at KSU on the one hand, and I think me and a lot of other faculty here on the other hand about what you mean by quality. Is it fitness for purpose or is it some kind of adherence to abstractly, independently defined standards? I follow the accreditation agencies, and I think quality is fitness for purpose. Do we give the students the skills and the knowledge that they need in order to be successful after they graduate both professionally and from a life point of view?

But, yes, it is a real problem. There's also been some speculation that part of the reason that we have a fairly low graduation rate is that students acquire skills as they go through the programs here, which makes them marketable, and there is some truth to that because typically what you see is that if a student makes it to junior status then they graduate. We see that, for example, in our programs in biology. Once they get to the junior level they get out with a degree. Again, if I look at programs in computing, I see a fairly large number of students disappearing. I don't know if they go somewhere else—but dropping out of SPSU in their junior year. Whether that's because they've gotten a job or whether it's because they transferred somewhere else I don't know. But, again, I think there is some truth to the belief that our students get skills through the program that makes them marketable without them having to complete their degree. Clearly, that puts the onus on us to make sure that they understand that career prospects are a little better if they stick it out and get the degree even if they finish on a part-time basis.

TS: I know one of our problems on the Kennesaw campus when you're talking about juniors and seniors has been with advising and scheduling and making sure that they can actually take the courses that they need when they need them to graduate.

HR: For us that should be less of a problem because, again, I can only talk for computing, but I think the other units have very similar policies in place—we tell students when we offer which courses, which semesters, and whether they'll be all during the day or in the evening. We require students when they come in to make a plan of study where they promise us—we make a schedule with them; you're going to take these courses in that semester. The policy we have in place also requires them to see an advisor if they deviate from that course schedule that they have formulated. The problem is that's the bit we're not enforcing, so we do get students as they come in to start thinking about the courses they're going to take for the next two years. But there are no repercussions if they don't, and that's the weakness in our system.

TS: You had mentioned that down at St. Petersburg community engagement is going to be important. Where do you think Southern Polytechnic stands in terms of community engagement right now?

HR: I think we're doing a good job with engagement with professional communities. I'm not sure how good a job we do with engagement with the surrounding community, the civic society and so on. But, yes, in the professional community we do a good job.

TS: Because of the jobs.

HR: Yes, that's partly because of our accreditation agencies and so on that require us to do that. You [Laura Beth] can talk to this as well. I don't know that we do as

- well as we could with the high schools, with the communities down Franklin Road, wherever it is, over there somewhere.
- TS: Not far away.
- LD: I agree. There are plenty of opportunities that for whatever reason we haven't taken advantage of yet.
- TS: You were talking about scholarship too, to follow up on Kathleen's questions—you've continued to do scholarship obviously in a deanship. Maybe I should ask, how have you been able to do that?
- HR: Well, a lot of my scholarly publications have to do with what we've done in the area of education. So the [focus] is on the new programs we've developed in health information technology, for example. So I think I've always been able to leverage a lot of the administrative professional activities I've been doing or even service activities in publications. They're not publications that you'd find in the leading scholarly journals in the field. They're more education oriented. Yes, it's leveraging what you're doing anyway, and as many reports that I write for Zvi that can be turned into (laughter)...
- TS: Right, right. When did you hear about the consolidation?
- HR: An hour before the press release came out.
- TS: Is that when the meeting with President Rossbaucher and the deans took place?
- HR: Two hours in fact, November 1 at 10:00 o'clock.
- TS: And the announcement was at 12:00?
- HR: At 12:00, yes.
- TS: So you found out two hours ahead of time. What was your reaction?
- HR: You can't put that in the transcript (laughter)!
- TS: You were not happy!
- HR: Well, look, my reaction was not one of happiness or sadness or whatever. It was just an issue of disbelief because nobody saw it coming, and the two hours that I had, or maybe an hour and a half, I needed to call a lot of people that needed to know before the press release like my department chairs and other faculty members and some sponsors, some potential donors we'd been courting as well. It was only over the weekend that I could start thinking a little bit about what implications this might have for . . .

- TS: This was on a Friday when the announcement was made?
- HR: Yes. I have to say that I was the one who within that group of deans and VP's and so on that felt least negative about the whole thing. I saw opportunities straight away. Now, I've been fortunate as part of the executive leadership institute that I did for the University System of Georgia, this leadership development program they have in place, I had shadowed [Lendley C.] Lynn Black, the previous provost, so I knew maybe a little more about KSU than the other people in that meeting. But, yes, initially it was, you know (laughter)...
- TS: Well, I think maybe the shock for most people was that they weren't consulted. Do you think that was the case?
- HR: That's interesting because [Dr. Albert J.] Al Churella—he's the faculty member in [the Department of] Social and International Studies here on campus—he's an historian, and he has spent a lot of his work looking at mergers and acquisitions, [Ed. Note: Churella has written *From Steam to Diesel: Managerial Customs and Organizational Capabilities in the Twentieth-Century American Locomotive Industry* (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1998); and *The Pennsylvania Railroad, Volume I: Building an Empire, 1846-1968*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013)]. In one of the senate meetings he said, "Look, if I'd been advising the board based on what I know about mergers and acquisitions, I would have told them to do exactly like this, just drop the bomb, don't do any consultation, don't leak it out bit by bit, just drop the bomb."
- TS: That's a Machiavellian approach.
- HR: Yes, and he says, and he knows more about this stuff than I do, that historically that has been the best way to manage mergers and acquisitions. If they had consulted us, what would have happened? I mean, we would have all said, "Bad idea!" They would have gone ahead anyway. And we would have felt even worse about it, right? I see why he may have found what he found.
- TS: So who is the "they" that made the decision? Is it [Chancellor Henry M.] Hank Huckaby by himself or the Board of Regents? Who do you think made the decision?
- HR: I don't know. I suspect that a lot of that was Hank Huckaby's doings, but I don't know.
- TS: Because everybody was left out of the loop.
- HR: Right. What's interesting, Tom, is the reaction that you saw on this campus, which was, well, nobody could quite understand why it was being done, so we came up with all kinds of hypotheses for why it was done. It had to do with the

football team. You guys needed some more students in order to be able to justify being NCAA Division I.

TS: And more male students helps with Title IX?

HR: Yes [laughs]. Another one was Dan Papp getting back at SPSU so he can protect the engineering programs at Georgia Tech and so on (laughter). That was great fun! I have to say given the principles of consolidation the Board had put out—to avoid duplication of programs, it made very little sense to me.

TS: Made very little?

HR: Little sense because there is almost no duplication of programs. If that's the main rationale that you put out, then fine. If on the other hand the Board had said, "We want to do this consolidation because we want to build broader, more comprehensive universities," then this did make a lot of sense because of the complementarity of programs. But one other thing—the Monday after, I was at a reception for the HIT summit somewhere over at the Atlanta Chamber [of Commerce], and I ran into some faculty members from Georgia State and Georgia Tech. I said, "Listen, the next good consolidation will be between Georgia State and Georgia Tech. You're even closer than KSU and SPSU." They said, "That could never happen. We have completely different programs." I said, "Yes."

TS: The *Marietta Daily Journal* asked Hank Huckaby about that, and he said he hadn't thought about it. Maybe he has now (laughter). You mentioned a number of times in the interview that there are advantages to the consolidation. Could you say something more about that?

HR: What is starting to worry me a little bit is that at least some of the folks at KSU—let's put it like this; there's a growing feeling on the SPSU campus that this has become a hostile takeover rather than a consolidation.

TS: A growing feeling?

HR: Yes.

TS: Why do you think that is so?

HR: Well, I think there are certain decisions that are being made that ignore the special culture that we have, that ignore the special nature of the programs that we have, and the kind of support that they need. A good example is the decision that was made in Career Services where we used to have a staff member dedicated exclusively to industry relationships. All she did was build up relationships with very specific industries and specific companies because the hiring practice in many large engineering companies is not that they hire individuals; they hire individuals from specific schools. So you have to get your school onto the list of

schools. The consolidated folks have now decided that we don't need a person like that anymore. I think that's partly driven by lack of familiarity with how things are done on this campus. We're doing things in many cases in maybe weird ways, but let's have a conversation first, and let me explain to you why we're doing it the way we're doing it. Then if you disagree, that's fine, but at least you understood why we're doing it the way we're doing it. I don't know that that attitude—the perception is that that is not the attitude on the KSU campus. I have to say it certainly is not a problem at the top. I think both Dan Papp and Ken Harmon realize the unique strengths and issues we bring to the table, but I'm not sure that that has permeated down to the levels where we need them. I also think that the way in which we're dealing with the IT infrastructure is going to be a big problem. IT infrastructure is crucial to the operations we run here, and I just don't know that there is sufficient realization on the Kennesaw campus of the importance for the IT infrastructure to our operations and so on. But, look, I'm sure it will work its way out, but there are some unhappy people on this campus.

TS: I guess too that practically all the senior administrators have come from Kennesaw State, and that probably contributed to the feelings as well.

HR: Well, and I think that with one exception you can make the case that that wasn't a bad decision to make. The one exception I would argue is the VP for IT infrastructure and CEO. I really think the way we set it up here is more appropriate for the type of larger institution that we're building than the way it is run at KSU. That's not a criticism of Randy Hinds [vice president for operations and chief information officer and chief business officer] in any way, but I really do think that the more centralized university IT service that we have created on this campus are crucial for our operations, but I think it would be crucial for the operation of the larger university as well.

TS: When they announced the people in Randy Hinds' area in the new university, at least the names I recognized came from Kennesaw State. So is Southern Poly being squeezed out?

HR: Yes, and, look, I can understand why it did make sense certainly at the level of the provost, of the president, maybe even at the level of the chief business officer, but I think the fact that Randy Hinds has three or four different hats is probably not the optimal solution, but Dan made that decision and Dan has good reasons, I assume, for making that decision. As I say it has led to some unease on this campus.

TS: So your school is basically staying intact and becoming a larger college. Were you already thinking about going somewhere else before all this happened?

HR: Yes, and I told both Dan and Ken that my decision to move to St. Pete has nothing to do with the consolidation. In fact, I was a candidate for two provost

positions last year that didn't pan out, and I had been short-listed for another provost position even before the consolidation was announced.

TS: I saw that, I think one was in Florida, wasn't it?

HR: Yes, with Florida Polytechnic and one was the University of Houston-Downtown as well.

TS: So it's your MO not to stay anywhere for too long?

HR: Six years—six or seven years. That's long enough!

TS: I think I'm about out of questions. This has been fascinating.

HR: Thank you. I've enjoyed it too.

TS: I think you may be rivaling Bob Harbort! I don't believe we've got introverted computer science faculty.

HR: No, no, no. I could find you some if you want (laughs)!

TS: This has been great; thank you very much.

HR: Thank you I've enjoyed it.

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