

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH TIMOTHY S. MESCON

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

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Monday, 8 May 2006
Location: Dean's Office, Coles College of Business

TS: Tim, why don't we just begin with when and where you were born?

TM: Thanks Tom. I'm excited to do this. I was born in Atlanta at what was Georgia Baptist Hospital [Atlanta Medical Center], on November 28, 1954.

TS: Of course, your father [Dr. Michael Mescon] was already famous by that time.

TM: Well, actually then, at that time, he was in the army. He was in the middle of an enlistment assignment, after which he joined the faculty at Georgia State [University].

TS: Okay, so you were in Atlanta before he was at Georgia State.

TM: Right.

TS: Did your father, Mike, grow up in Atlanta?

TM: He grew up, for the most part, in Charleston, and then on Miami Beach.

TS: Why were you in Atlanta?

TM: My mother grew up here. She was actually in the first graduating class of Grady High School.

TS: What's her name?

TM: Enid, her maiden name was Minsk. She grew up here. My dad was stationed at Ft. Jackson in Columbia [South Carolina], and my mom came back here for the birth because my grandparents were here. Then we all went to Columbia for a couple of years.

TS: I see. And then your father started at Georgia State right after he got out of the military?

TM: Right, which I would say was about '56.

TS: Then he stays there straight through?

TM: He's still there. He's really involved with the Andrew Young School [of Policy Studies] fifty years later.

TS: '56 was fifty years ago; it's hard to believe.

TM: Unbelievable.

TS: So you went through public schools, I guess, in Atlanta?

TM: Actually, I went to what is now called the Greenfield Hebrew Academy. [I] finished through seventh grade there and then started high school, which in those days, started in eighth grade, at Westminster [Schools, Atlanta].

TS: Oh, so you went private school all the way.

TM: Right.

TS: And then graduated from Westminster, and I've got Tulane [University] that you went to?

TM: I did my undergraduate work at Tulane, that's right.

TS: You graduated in '75 from there. You had a B.A. from Tulane, so probably not a business degree?

TM: No, in liberal arts, I actually had a major in sociology. At that time, Tulane had no real business school, and many liberal arts universities in the late '60s, early '70s did away with their business programs. So it was sort of just this classic liberal arts education.

TS: I've been surprised in the interviews I've done, how many of the people in the business college had liberal arts undergraduate degrees.

TM: It's interesting, isn't it?

TS: Craig was in communications, Craig [E.] Aronoff.

TM: I'm not sure Craig ever had a business degree.

TS: No, he didn't.

TM: Joe's [Joseph H. Astrachan] was in psychology, I think.

TS: Ted [H.] Shore was something, psychology.

TM: Psychology also, right. Interesting.

- TS: Right. So, was that your doings after you came here, to have people that maybe had a diverse background?
- TM: No, but I think if you look at the history of business education, not until more recent time have undergraduate programs in business really exploded. The historical model was to get a baccalaureate degree in the liberal arts and then get a business degree, an MBA. I still think it's a pretty attractive model that you're well grounded in the arts and sciences and then pursue a professional degree.
- TS: By the time that you got your bachelor's, did you have an idea what direction your career was going to take?
- TM: I think growing up in an academic household I sort of had this interest of pursuing graduate studies in business. So at Tulane I started to visit with graduate schools through career services that would come to campus and would talk about their programs. I was particularly enamored with the MBA program at Southern Methodist University, because they had a very structured co-op program where they would place you in paid employment that was related to your course of study. At that point of my education I thought it was something that I really needed. So I ended up moving. I had started the MBA program at Tulane, but was so enamored with the structure of this program at SMU that I left and went to Dallas.
- TS: So you're doing co-op on your way through?
- TM: Right. I worked for what was a huge restaurant chain at the time, based in Dallas, called Bonanza International. They have these steak houses, and I worked in their training and development center, which was called "Steak Tech," writing training manuals for the company. So it was great experience. [I] learned a lot. It was a fantastic time to be at SMU because the dean then, very short-lived as dean, but he was a very famous educator by the name of C. Jackson Grayson, [Jr.], who had been previously in the Nixon administration as head of wage and price controls. He had come to SMU, but really wasn't fit for academia. But I had the pleasure of working with him for the time he was there, and then he left and formed this American Productivity and Quality Center, which became a hugely successful enterprise in Houston. It was a great experience for me to really [study under a] very well known business mind and some one who was very politically interested and was very involved in a lot of different interesting things.
- TS: One of the things we've been interested in, in all the interviews we've done, is mentoring, and who the mentors were for the people we interview.
- TM: Grayson was always very accommodating to me. He was very nice. We remained in contact for many years, and he was just a great resource for me. And actually it's funny, as an undergraduate, I had a sociology professor I looked at

like that who has just retired from Tulane, Ed Morse [Edward V. Morse], and he was there for decades. He was an industrial, an organizational sociologist, [and] had a degree from Cornell. That probably is what directed me more toward business. It was sort of his interest. I had a senior thesis, I remember, looking at a General Motors facility in Jackson, Mississippi, so it started to become very business-oriented at the time, really interesting.

TS: Why Georgia for your doctorate?

TM: Great question. I was looking at two courses of study: one was in a strategic management area and one was in what's called this Quality of Work Life area. So for the Quality of Work Life, I flew out to Los Angeles and I interviewed at the program at UCLA. While I was out there I had the opportunity to visit with some doctoral students who told me, on average, they spent about seven years in the doctoral program. I went to Athens. . . .

TS: Seven years is a long time.

TM: It's a long time. And that had a lot to do with the decision that I made, but I had never been to the UCLA campus. It was just fantastic, very impressive and a great faculty, but [I] went to Athens. It seemed as if there was a little more structure to it, and you could move through the program. Of course, you were in control of that, but a little bit more expeditiously. The professor who ended up being my major professor was very famous in the strategic management area. His name was Bill Glueck [William F. Glueck]. He subsequently passed away, but was a great mentor as well. Like every prospective doctoral student, they offered me a package that was really enticing, so that's why I ended up there.

TS: I think, if I remember correctly, Craig told me that your father basically told him he didn't care where he got his doctorate, just get it as fast as you can, and he went to Texas instead of going to an Ivy League school because he thought it didn't really make any difference. Getting the degree was what was important.

TM: Exactly. I really wasn't as obsessed with the timing, but it was just the structure of the program that appealed to me a little more.

TS: I assume in terms of your mentors that your father mentored you all along.

TM: Very much, but really kept hands off of decisions like this. I really . . .

TS: He didn't push you towards a business career?

TM: He didn't push towards anything, not with college selection, not with anything. I think he was available on request if I had concerns or questions, but really took a very laissez faire approach to decision-making, which I think was helpful.

- TS: Okay, so you graduate, actually in pretty much record time, it seems to me, 1979. That's only four years beyond your bachelor's degree.
- TM: I left there in August of '79 and packed up a U-haul and drove to Tempe, Arizona. Glueck was funny; he would write six letters of reference to various business schools, but he had to approve the business school, so I had three interviews. I interviewed at Arizona State, at Colorado, and at NYU.
- TS: They all sound like good choices.
- TM: All great places, and I visited all of them and had offers from all of them, but I really, really agonized. The day before I made my final decision I had a very close friend that I shared office space with at the doctoral program at Georgia, who is still one of my closest friends, a fellow by the name of George Vozikis. George is from Athens, Greece, and we shared an office for the whole time I was in Athens [Georgia]. He's had a chair for the last five years at the University of Tulsa, and has just taken another chair at Fresno State, so he's moving this summer. But George is a great guy, and I just agonized about it [with him]. I actually ended up going to Tempe. It's very interesting; I haven't talked about this in a long time. At the time the University of Colorado at Boulder (it's funny, I have a kid who's there who just finished his freshman year there) but it just launched this new campus in Denver. All new faculty were going to split their teaching time between Boulder and Denver. What eventually happened, which sort of reinforced the decision I made about going to Arizona State, the Denver campus became a separate university. It's now the University of Colorado at Denver. There's a state college there, too, called Metro State. Anyway, going to Tempe to Arizona State was a great decision, but it was a tough one.
- TS: How many years did you stay there?
- TM: I stayed three years.
- TS: And then you go from there to Salisbury?
- TM: No, I went to the University of Miami. I spent three years at Arizona State, and it was a very productive three years because it was a huge management department with about forty faculty. The focus was predominately on research, and as I tell all junior faculty here, you need to hit the ground running and leverage those early years out. I had always had a love affair with the University of Miami. Both my parents went to college there. You know, my dad grew up there. My grandparents had lived there, and every winter break we'd go down to Miami, spring break, we'd go down to Miami. So, I always, always had an interest in going there. I joined the faculty there as an associate professor in the fall of '82 and stayed there for five years, was tenured, [and] became an assistant dean in the business school running all the undergraduate programs. But the most important experience was, (and I just went back for the twenty-year reunion) I became

master of what is now the Henry King Stanford residential college there. They had a president then, Tad Foote [Edward T. Foote], who had previously been dean of the law school at Washington University. [He] had done his academic studies in Ivy League schools where they have these residential colleges, where faculty live and students live, and he thought it would be a great retention tool. It's been phenomenally success.

TS: I wish we had something like that here.

TM: It's unbelievable. So I was appointed master of what is this Henry King Stanford residential college twenty years ago. We just had the anniversary. I was just down there and did a lecture (they had a twenty-year celebration) and President Foote was there, who was retired. Now Donna [E.] Shalala is their president, and so she was there. Actually, Dr. Stanford couldn't come, but I sent him a note with all the coverage. I just got a very nice letter. He's just such a wonderful man.

TS: He spoke on our campus once.

TM: Yes, I had him here for our Tetley [Lecture] Series. He's such a gracious gentleman.

TS: Didn't he serve a term at the University of Georgia?

TM: After Knapp [Charles B. Knapp] left, he was interim president at UGA.

TS: Right, and I think that maybe was the first time he came here, either during that time, or shortly after.

TM: It could be. He's just such a great guy. So I really enjoyed my time at Miami. [I] probably would have stayed, but I wanted to be a dean, and our daughter was born there. The opportunity came up to be dean at what was this new business school, which is now Salisbury University in Maryland, to start this program. Entrepreneur Frank Perdue [Perdue Farms] had given them a bunch of money to create a business school, build a building, hire a faculty, and it was a big decision. The biggest decision was really to move from Miami to the rural eastern shore of Maryland. But at that time in our lives, it was probably, if we were going to make a move like that, that was the time to do it. I signed a three-year commitment, made a commitment to be there no less than three years, and moved to Salisbury in August of '87. I stayed three years, hired a faculty, built the building, and I've been back there. [I] was back last year at their invitation and really enjoyed it. There's something to be said for [a place with] about 7,500 students; it's almost exclusively a residential campus. You're two and a half hours from everywhere, Tom: from Baltimore, from Washington, from Philadelphia, or from Norfolk.

TS: Too far to commute, though.

TM: Oh yes. We lived a minute from campus! You're thirty minutes from the ocean, literally, and thirty minutes from the Chesapeake. What's so interesting about that Delmarva Peninsula, until the mid-'50s, the only way to get to this peninsula was via ferry. In the mid-'50s, a bridge was built over the Chesapeake, but until then I mean, it was rural. This is an interesting coincidence: University of Miami had a distinguished professor for three years while I was there, and my secretary left and went to work for him, at my encouragement, a fellow that you know by the name of James Michener. Michener came to Miami and we got to have many a lunch, thanks to my former assistant, and of course he strongly encouraged me to read *Chesapeake*, where he really actually references Frank Perdue in there. So what a great opportunity that was and how cool that was. It was fascinating. There are two islands in the Chesapeake, and I'll have to think about them for a second, but in the Civil War one fought for the North and one fought for the South. To this day they still don't talk to each other! So, I mean, it's fascinating. But it is also really rural, and less so, now. But I spent a lot of time in the car and a lot of time on a commuter plane from the little airport there. But, really, I had a great time as first dean of the Perdue school of business there. A nice little connection: I hired a recent retiree from Georgia State Business School, a fellow by the name of T. P. Hall and his wife, Nancy [G.], to join our faculty and they were fantastic, very important there. And then I had the opportunity to interview and come here a year later, I hired them both to come here; they've been great. Nancy has since retired. T.P. still teaches in our executive MBA program and probably retired from Georgia State about twenty years ago. They are just good souls. But that was a great learning experience for me. Then Craig [E.] Aronoff chaired the search committee.

TS: That was my next question. Why did you leave there? It sounds like a great place, except for the isolation.

TM: Yes. I think more than anything else I was more metro-oriented. You know, except for the stint in Athens, I had lived my whole life in metro areas, and it's an interesting story, Tom. I get a call from Craig Aronoff, and I had never been to this campus before. I was very flattered to get the call so [I] flew in, stayed with my parents, and drove up in the morning for the first interview.

TS: Did your father know anything about our campus?

TM: Only through Craig. Of course, my father had held the first chair of private enterprise in the country, which was created in 1963 at Georgia State. Craig came here to hold the chair, so he knew that through Craig, but he really didn't know very much. So I'm in the car driving up Interstate 75, and I haven't lived in Atlanta in a long time, and I'm looking at this bumper-to-bumper traffic even then. Listen, it was 1989, southbound on 75, and [I'm] thinking how could you mess up this opportunity? If this is where Atlanta has moved

- TS: Obviously some people out here with all the cars.
- TM: Right, all these commuters. The opportunity was sort of self-evident.
- TS: We must have been up to about 10,000 students by then.
- TM: It hit 10,000 shortly after I got here [total enrollment of 10,030 in Fall Quarter, 1990] because I remember that celebration. But it was a good group of faculty. The commitment had already been made to build this building [Burruss Building] while the business school was still over in the Education Building [Willingham Hall] and some trailers by the [old] Administration Building. It was a nice group of people here.
- TS: Right, I remember that.
- TM: I actually also had a fellow on the faculty here that I had recommended apply here, who had been one of my doctoral students at Arizona State, Bob Desman [Robert A. Desman]. Bob was teaching at Pepperdine [University], and his wife was getting transferred to Atlanta, and he said, "Do have any suggestions?" I said, "Call the people at Kennesaw." So Bob was here. I had known Harry [J.] Lasher, because Harry and I had been involved in some associations together and the like, so I knew some people, not a lot, but some. And Craig, I knew from growing up here, and actually more so from Craig working with my father.
- TS: Right. What was your first impression when you got to the Kennesaw State campus here?
- TM: Well, I had always had the impression that the faculty (and the college itself) was very aggressive, very entrepreneurial, very innovative. Betty was full of enthusiasm. It seemed as if it represented a great growth opportunity. It felt as if it would be a good fit, if an offer was made that it was going to be a good fit. I tell you, the greatest, probably, emotional issue I dealt with was I loved the work we were doing at Salisbury, and the president was just a fantastic guy. You talk about mentors; this is another interesting story. His name was Thomas [E.] Bellavance. He was a great Yankee from Massachusetts, just a wonderful, wonderful guy. It was very difficult telling him I was thinking about leaving. Tragically, a couple of years later, he passed away. He had very serious cancer and died. He was a great college president. He raised a ton of money for that university and was a great visionary, and really was a great role model. He was a nice man. So I moved here in the summer of '90, so I spent three years at Salisbury.
- TS: Well, given your track record, you should have left here about '93, I guess [laughter].

TM: It's funny, never in my wildest dreams would I believe that sixteen years later, Tom, that you and I would be having this conversation. But the decade of the '90s was a great time to be in metropolitan Atlanta. The metro area saw its most ever profound growth. Overall, about 100,000 people net population growth each year of that decade. It was a combination of a couple of things that made this such a great opportunity, personally and professionally. First of all, it was the growth of the metro, and then (I hope it's come up somewhere else in these interviews) I believe the most profound transformation of this institution took place the moment that the then chancellor of the University System of Georgia, Stephen [R.] Portch, decided to call this a university.

TS: In '96.

TM: Right. What we had was this confluence of two things: unprecedented growth in the metro area, and then with the wave of the magic wand this became a university. So all of this migration into the metro area, who were looking at institutions of higher educations, all of a sudden, just saw one more university.

TS: Right.

TM: We didn't have to have any discussion of why is it a college, why is it not a university, what's a state college versus a university. It really leveled this playing field probably more dramatically than anything else I've observed in the sixteen years that I've been here. We've done a lot of things, but that more than anything else, made our job that much easier. It was really amazing.

TS: You're right on those figures on the growth. Cobb County grew 36 percent in the 1990s, and the whole state grew 26 percent, and it was practically all in the metropolitan area.

TM: I tell people we have a great faculty, great programs, but we are blessed with stellar geography for what was a commuter campus. Obviously we've changed that, but if you're going to be a commuter campus you couldn't have begged for better geography than what we've got.

TS: Right. I've heard in some of the interviews that you were brought in to get the college accredited and such as that. I wonder if you could just speak a little bit about maybe why they brought you in, what your vision was, or what the president's vision was?

TM: Sure. It was sort of a confluence of understanding. I felt that the metro Atlanta academic marketplace, Tom, is one of the most competitive in the United States. We have not only one of the greatest numbers of indigenous colleges and universities, but we also have a host of suitcase programs that have homesteaded here with not just a single presence, but multiple campuses. Places like Troy University and Central Michigan and University of Phoenix and Strayer

[University] and Westwood [College] and Argosy University [originally, the Georgia School of Professional Psychology], and places we never heard of before. There are dozens of what's called "points of distribution" in the metropolitan Atlanta area. I'm saying this because my belief was, to play in this sandbox, to play in this competitive arena, we had to have business school accreditation. We had never seen it as a matter of concern. The growth had been such for Kennesaw College and then Kennesaw State College that no one really believed that it was very important.

TS: That students were going to come here anyway.

TM: No matter what, but in my conversations with Betty I said that ultimately, for the things that I'd like to do, that I believed we had to commit to that level of accreditation. Now what that required on her part and Ed [Edwin A.] Rugg's part, was an acknowledgment of certain resource allocations that had to come over here if we were serious about that. So we received initial accreditation in 1994 from our accreditation agency, which is called AACSB, which stands for the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business. It accredits business schools worldwide. Then in 2001, we received separate accreditation for our accounting program. Then in 2004, both programs were re-accredited, and we're now on a five-year cycle. So it was very, very important. For example, in that period before 2004, we started our executive MBA program, and Georgia State just would kill us. We had students who would apply to both, and they'd talk to those students and say, "Why would you want to enroll in an unaccredited business school?" Now, of course, the university was accredited through SACS, but that's just how you play when you're competing for students. So it became very, very important. For example, in the metro area, only ourselves and Georgia State have separately accredited accounting programs, not [Georgia] Tech, not Emory, so we think it's very important.

TS: I understand that there was a lot of politics about getting accredited because AACSB was kind of like a closed shop that didn't really want to let people in. Could you talk about that a little bit and what you all did to kind of force them into it?

TM: Sure, and that's a great observation. It was a small fraternity since its inception. Only flagship state universities or privates were able to enter the fraternity. They changed their guidelines in '04 to create what they called "mission driven standards." That really represented an opportunity for us. In the years after I joined here in the summer of 1990, through the next four years we sent a lot of faculty to AACSB seminars. You've got to get involved in the association. You've got to be very visible. That's part of the internal politics of the process. Additionally, you work with AACSB in selecting your visitation team that comes to accredit you. All of the deans that came for that initial accreditation visit, five deans, I had known, or worked with, over the years, and that's part of the political process. That's just the way it works. It was still an incredibly complicated

process. But I give the faculty a lot of credit; faculty were intimately involved with that. Jerry [D.] Sawyer, particularly, played a very critical role with us in that. He was just a fantastic resource. Faculty really stepped it up, and so it was a big deal for us, very big deal for us. Since then we have become intimately involved with AACSB in a lot of their initiatives, in a lot of their seminars. We constantly send a lot of faculty to them and you have to do that. That's just part of the gaming, if you will. You've got to have strong initiative, strong processes, strong programs, but you've got to be involved in the association as well.

TS: Right. Wasn't there something about maybe forming another association to challenge them? Were you involved with that?

TM: Yes. I wasn't because I felt it was bad strategy. That other association, the Association for Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), made a big play to get business schools, like Kennesaw, involved in their program. I felt, [in] my role as dean, that it was bad strategy. I wanted the same accreditation that Georgia State had, and I felt as if it would not be beneficial to go this other road. I wanted us to be mainstreamed. That is what it amounted to. There's a risk associated with it.

TS: So Kennesaw was never a member?

TM: No.

TS: Would you talk a little bit about what "mission driven standards" means?

TM: Sure. As you walk around our building, you will see all kinds of displays that talk about our core values and our learning goals for our undergraduate program and our graduate program, and that's really what the strategic intent is at AACSB. It's really to define what your strengths are, what your basic value set is, and how do you incorporate those values into learning goals for your undergraduate and graduate programs. We spend a lot of time working on that and continue to work on that. We still have a very active strategic planning committee that I chair, comprised predominately of faculty, and we're constantly tweaking our strategic plan. Probably the most profound document that we released as part of this initial accreditation process tied to our mission was a document around faculty performance guidelines. We've continued to tweak that over the last twelve, thirteen, fourteen years. It created for us really what has been a paradigm for our faculty. Three workload tracks for our business school: we have teaching track, a balanced track, and a research track. That document has continued to really be the heart and soul of our strategic direction.

TS: A number of faculty have told me that that's what attracted them to Kennesaw. Could you talk a little bit about how that three-tiered system came about?

- TM: Yes. Kennesaw always had a pretty big graduate program and under AACSB guidelines. . . .
- TS: Always meaning since '85 or so?
- TM: Right, since it got started. As a result, there's a direct proportionate relationship between the size of your MBA program and the level of research expected by AACSB. So because they had a high research expectation, there was an expectation that we really had to have a lot of productive faculty in terms of scholarship. The AACSB usually looked at that in terms of breadth and depth across your faculty and within any given department. So I felt the only way we could accomplish that would be: a) to relieve faculty of some of the instructional burden, if you will, of teaching four classes or three classes a quarter, whatever it was at that time; and b) to continue to recruit a research-oriented faculty. So we created three workload tracks. It's easier to explain as we migrated to the semester system. But we had the teaching track where faculty would teach "four-four" (four classes per semester, four three-semester credit hour classes). We had a balanced track where they would teach three classes a semester. Then we had the research track where they would teach two classes a semester. With specific research expectations, depending on what track you were on. We were beginning to recruit faculty for predominately the balance track, or the research track, and it seems to have continued to work effectively. We probably have, I'm guessing now, 40 percent of our faculty on the research track, 40 percent on the balanced track, and 20 percent on the teaching track.
- TS: Teaching track being primarily people that don't have a doctorate?
- TM: Predominately, that's correct. Though it is beginning to attract some near retiree, terminally qualified faculty, who just like to predominately teach, which is fine.
- TS: I guess when you're talking about "we developed this," was there a faculty committee?
- TM: Absolutely. It had to be faculty driven, so it was a faculty committee. I remember from the beginning, Armen Tashchian, who served a number of years as head of our marketing department, chaired this. We had a number of faculty involved, and we continued to modify the document about every eighteen months. We just had a recent modification to this document, as well. So we continue to tweak it, [and] it continues to be a strong statement for us, consistent with our strategic direction. Dozens of business schools around the country have adopted something comparable. It's become a model, really, for this campus, Tom, that other colleges at KSU have been very interested in.
- TS: I guess that would be one of my follow up questions. They may be interested, but I don't know of anybody that's actually doing it other than the business college, and I just wonder why not because it sounds very attractive to the faculty.

TM: I don't know why not. Here's the way it works. Let's say you're on the research track, and our commitment to you is to keep you on that track for three years. You have annual reviews every year where your chair communicates with you. Are you, in fact, making acceptable progress on this? As you reach the third year of this process, you sit down with your chair, who determines, "Well, Dr. Scott, this looks like this is appropriate for you," or, "No, your productivity is not meeting the expectations of this. I think you need to move to the balanced track." So in concert with the chair, with the faculty member, you make that determination. We do that in three year cycles, and it seems to work, Tom. We have faculty that we move track to track in all directions. You may move from the research track to the balanced track, or you move from the balanced track to the research track. We think it's a great model. I think a university like this, which is on certainly a modest, but upward slope, increasing the expectations for research incrementally annually—a model like this would probably work for different academic units on campus as well.

TS: Did it take extra financing to make this work?

TM: No.

TS: You cut down on the number of sections that you teach didn't you?

TM: No, great question, but no. At the same time, our faculty committed to teaching larger sections. So, for example, we run Principles of Economics classes with 120, 130 students. Accounting classes may run up to 75 or 85 students. Business law classes run over a hundred. So our faculty made the determination that the appeal of teaching fewer sections could be somewhat mitigated, however, by their willingness to teach larger sections.

TS: I guess maybe one of the reasons that would be hard to implement, in say Humanities and Social Sciences is the large amount of writing that you expect in classes.

TM: Yes. And I think that's an issue. I think we've evolved over the years to more team-based projects. The faculty, I think, acknowledge that without an army of graduate students out there or teaching assistants, you do what you have to do within our budgetary restraints, and somehow it works. I will say that in the years since Lynn Black [Lendley C. Black] has come on, as hopefully provost, but as VP of Academic Affairs, we have been very fortunate with the level of new positions that he has provided for us, and that's been a big help. The coming year is going to be a crappy year for the whole university. I don't know if you've heard, but it's not a good budget year for us, and that's too bad.

TS: I hadn't heard about creating the provost position.

- TM: I'm a big advocate. I've talked with incoming President Papp about it. I think you need an executive vice president, a vice president to whom all those other vice presidents acknowledge that this is really our chief operating officer. And it needs to be the academic vice president. You're not asking me about this, I'm just waxing politics on this, or poetic, that you cannot have a university approaching 20,000 students, 1,500 employees, with an army, a bevy of vice presidents, all of whom, are vying for the president's attention. It's just illogical.
- TS: So that's the advantage of the provost position that they all report to the provost.
- TM: That's right. The provost is the king of the VPs. It needs to be acknowledged at a university that that executive vice president is your academic vice president. It's not your "business vice president," it's not your "student affairs," and it doesn't cast aspersions on them, that's what universities are about. It's about academic affairs.
- TS: First among equals.
- TM: That's it. If you don't like it, then you shouldn't be in academia because that's what it's about.
- TS: I do have a sort of sum up question on that, but before I do, you talk about the large class size. What about the graduate programs? What are the class sizes in there?
- TM: We restrict (and it doesn't really sound like much of a restriction) our core level Masters classes to forty; they cannot exceed forty. Electives never get that size, and that works fine.
- TS: And I assume that a lot of people that are on the scholarship track are heavily involved in the graduate instruction.
- TM: That's right. It's important to note that, of course, we now offer graduate classes here, at the Galleria, and in Dalton. We have a great interest in growing the Galleria presence. I'd like to see it grow, Tom, for the whole university. I'd like everybody offering classes at and around the Galleria. There's too big a market there, and it's Cobb County.
- TS: That's the Platinum Triangle
- TM: That's right. We've been there three years now, the business school has. I would rather we weren't alone. I'd like some company down there. I'd like us to rent more space.
- TS: I know they have a lot of conferences down there. Is that the kind of spaces that you rent?

- TM: No. We're in the 700 building, which is an office building in the Galleria. We rent classroom space for our MBA program.
- TS: And Dalton is on the Dalton State campus?
- TM: That's correct. President Burran [James A. Burran] has been fantastic. He's a great guy. We're going to grow that program as well. Truthfully, I'd like to see us offering classes in Chattanooga.
- TS: Do you think that will happen?
- TM: We're going up to meet with the president of Chattanooga State [Technical Community College], which is their technical college in Chattanooga. Big. He'd very much like to accommodate us on his campus.
- TS: That would be a novel approach.
- TM: It won't make UTC happy, but we think there's a market there, and he thinks there's a market there.
- TS: I guess it's not that novel when you think of Troy State or Troy University teaching classes in Atlanta.
- TM: That's right, and Central Michigan.
- TS: So they're not bound to Alabama.
- TM: They don't seem to be. But it's novel for our system, Tom, and, as you know, you never have the answer for how things will wind their way through our university system.
- TS: Let me see if I can sum up what we've done so far. When you came in, you pushed the idea of becoming accredited, but you weren't pushing the idea at that time of the three-tiered system.
- TM: No. That happened, though, prior to accreditation. It happened as we were crafting our strategic plan leading up to accreditation, so it was a very important part of that.
- TS: Okay. Maybe enough on that.
- TM: The only other initiative I would mention that we launched prior to accreditation that's been very important for us is our executive MBA program.
- TS: I guess we had one MBA program when you got here, right?

TM: That's correct.

TS: Okay, why don't you talk a little bit about the executive MBA program? The one with physicians is very interesting, I think.

TM: What executive MBA programs do, and there are 100 or so around the country, is they enable younger universities like Kennesaw State University to penetrate a more senior professional market. Universities, like Kennesaw, sometimes have to wait forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years for alumni base to get big enough and senior enough to really benefit the university. What we hoped an executive MBA program would do would target a very different level market, not an eighteen-year old market, but a thirty-eight year old market of working professionals who would give us much better entrée into corporate Atlanta, if you will. So Tom [W.] Miller was the initial director of our executive MBA program [and] did a fantastic job. That program has been run now by Tom Miller, Gary [L.] Selden, [and] Rodney [G.] Alsop. Most recently we have an interesting structure; Larry Bell [Lawrence E. Bell III] is the managing director of Executive Education programs, but as a non-academic, and a fellow by the name of Mike Salvador [Michael S. Salvador] chairs the Leadership and Professional Development Department we created that supports those programs. By the way, if I may, that's a very novel approach to staffing executive MBA programs. We created, with the support of Ed Rugg, a fifth academic department called Leadership and Professional Development. Those faculty, who come from a variety of business disciplines, only teach in the executive MBA program. That's not done almost anywhere else in the country, and it's been an important innovation for us. It's not a big department, probably only ten faculty, but those faculty exclusively teach in the executive MBA program. We supplement that with other faculty from the Coles College of Business. Then a few years after we started the executive program, we started the MBA for Physician Executives, and we ran that for seven years. It was a niche opportunity for us. There was only one other program in the country at the time, at the University of South Florida, and it proved out to be an incredibly successful initiative.

TS: We're not doing that any more?

TM: No. We knew, when we started it, it would have a limited shelf life. But, for example, the president of the largest healthcare system in Georgia is an alum, Dr. Rob Lipson [Robert A. Lipson]. We've got other distinguished alums, really throughout the country, who have gone through that physician's executive program. Once again, it's part of our core value of being entrepreneurial, first to market. By all rights, if that program started in Atlanta, the Emory Business School should have done it, but we were first. It was very important.

TS: After all, they've got a medical program.

- TM: Correct.
- TS: So you figured that you were pretty well going to saturate the market within seven years, of people that were pretty interested.
- TM: Actually we didn't think it would run more than about five years. It actually lasted a little bit longer than we thought it would.
- TS: So this is kind of like, if you've got a team of physicians that are in partnership together, and one of them handles the books, he is in effect, the business manager? That's the one that would go through the program?
- TM: Generally, and that's a great illustration. Large medical practices have become enormously complex, and what we've found is that the physician executive program attracted three kinds of physicians: the first type was a physician who had just sold his or her practice to a large healthcare organization; the second was a physician who saw the benefit of getting an MBA to help him or her simply run their practice; and the third attracted a group of physicians who wanted to get out of medicine completely. They wanted to use the MBA to catapult them to getting into something. It was very interesting.
- TS: What year did the executive MBA program start?
- TM: That's a great question, and I knew you were going to ask. I think it's in its thirteenth year; I'm thinking '93.
- TS: Three years after you got here, roughly.
- TM: Yes. And then we started the physicians executive program probably a year or so after that.
- TS: So it's really before we got accredited.
- TM: When we started the executive MBA.
- TS: And then that's when you were saying the competition with Georgia State
- TM: We had two things going against us: one, we weren't accredited; and two, as you recall, we had just become Kennesaw State College, and for this corporate professional market, trying to explain why would I go to a state college and not XYZ university MBA program? It's tough, complicated. And then perhaps the greatest coup in our executive programs was creating the partnership that we've created with BellSouth and Cingular, which is now eight years old. We responded to a request for proposals. We beat out a lot of other schools, to run in house, on site, an MBA program, initially for BellSouth, and now for BellSouth and Cingular. They have been a fantastic partner for us. We've run programs at

- different BellSouth locations, near Perimeter Mall, in Norcross, over near Lenox Square, and now we run it at the BellSouth offices attached to the Lindbergh MARTA station. They've been a fantastic partner for us.
- TS: Well, now, you do some other things off campus too, don't you, with Kroger and Post Properties?
- TM: We did. We ran executive development programs for Kroger. We created Kroger University. We ran a similar program for Post Properties called Post University. We are very excited. We just signed an agreement, literally in the last month with IBM, to run an in-house executive education program for IBM, starting this fall. We're very excited. It's really a hybrid, Tom. It can be noncredit, or the students can enroll in our MBA program and receive credit for five MBA courses, so it's a very interesting model.
- TS: What about the funding for these programs? The people that go through the executive MBA program pay a much higher tuition than other students.
- TM: We're very proud of that. We started our executive MBA program thirteen years ago. It was about \$17,000.00 [and] today it's \$45,000.00. So it is, without question, the highest ticket price program at Kennesaw State University.
- TS: Does that generate revenue for us, or does that just pay the costs?
- TM: It is today a break-even program. It supports funding a number of staff positions that support that program. It funds a host of other initiatives on campus, and is today, fundamentally, a break-even program. It is important that it become a net revenue-generator as well. At one time it supported a lot of additional faculty research and travel support. And with this IBM program, we're committed to continuing to pursue programs that will throw off resources to do other things with faculty, as well.
- TS: Well, a business college ought to be able to do that.
- TM: We ought to be able to do it, exactly.
- TS: That's right.
- TM: We have over 1,300 executive MBA alumni.
- TS: That's great.
- TM: So it's very important.
- TS: That's one way to build alumni that are already at or near the top, I guess.

TM: That's right. As you know, as part of that, we spent a couple of hundred thousand dollars and built out the north wing of KSU Center. That's where we house our executive MBA program.

TS: I know another one of the things that's happened while you've been here is the growth of the number of endowed chairs in this college. Could you talk a little bit about that and how that came about?

TM: We never got enough. We are constantly looking. But we're very proud that this month we're honoring one of our first and largest supporters, Jack Dinos, who I visited just after I had come to the campus. I visited with President [Betty L.] Siegel. Jack had just sold his business, Southern Tea, which was the largest private label tea manufacturing company in the United States. Jack had been involved with our Family Business Program, which Craig Aronoff started in '87, and Jack made a commitment to really supplement the chair of Private Enterprise, but to raise it to a truly endowed chair level. He then came back after our accreditation and endowed the chair that I hold, making both qualify for eminent scholar matches from the Board of Regents, which is a good thing because they don't exist any more.

TS: So whatever we raised, the Regents put in exactly the same amount.

TM: Well, they would match up to half a million dollars. For us, they wouldn't do more than that. And then, actually, we created a third endowed position that Wachovia endowed, which was also matched by the Board of Regents. Then we had another endowed professorship that Carastar Industries, a great Cobb company in Austell [Georgia], which has always been involved with the business school, gave.

TS: Bob Prillaman [Robert M. Prillaman].

TM: It was Bob Prillaman, and then Tom [E.] Smith committed to support. To me, Tom, endowing professorships has always been a priority. We're constantly looking for other opportunities, and I think that's a vehicle that we can use to attract great faculty.

TS: So what is it, four?

TM: There are four endowed positions right now. We've got a couple of other "asks" that have been made in the last months, so we're hoping to expand.

TS: Why did the Regents stop matching?

TM: I don't know. That's always budgetary. I don't know. And it's too bad because I think it's very small dollars in context, and it's very beneficial for campuses like us.

TS: Right. We've got our first one in the history department now.

TM: That's right, which is great.

TS: And that came out of a project through Craig.

TM: Right. We continue to be involved with Shaw [Industries]. Shaw has been very helpful getting us started with the MBA in Dalton [Georgia], so they're a great university partner.

TS: Right. Well, I know that one of the other things [is that] there's been a whole lot of public outreach with things like the Tetley Lecture Series.

TM: That comes back to Jack Dinos as well. Jack's company was bought by Tetley, and I said, "Jack, what about the possibility of their giving us some money?" So I flew to Shelton, Connecticut, where Tetley was headquartered, and they committed to endowing this lecture series, which is now entering its seventeenth year. We've brought, through that series, six to eight senior executives a year to campus. It continues to be just a fantastic series.

TS: So you're doing six or eight a year?

TM: Definitely, and I'll give you a list of the folks we've had.

TS: I remember the guy from Valuejet spoke one year. If I had any money I would have invested in Valuejet stock right on the spot [laughter]!

TM: Yes, it's been a fantastic series, it really has.

TS: I know you've had some very distinguished people you've brought here.

TM: And by the way, part of our strategy: we started initially to get these CEO's to campus, Tom. We felt that most of these had never been to the campus before. You can't really appreciate the university until you walk the campus. It's very important to get them out here and over the years, of course, as the campus has grown, the campus is more impressive. It's still very beneficial.

TS: It's a lot prettier than it was, I think.

TM: Exactly.

TS: Before you came here, we must not have raised much money at all as an institution or foundation.

- TM: I don't think so. It really wasn't a priority and you know, Tom, we still haven't had a capital campaign and for a university approaching its fiftieth year, we really need to pursue that; it's time. Georgia State waited almost ninety years to have a capital campaign. We really can't afford to do that.
- TS: This building opened up the year after you arrived, so it's fifteen, sixteen years old now.
- TM: That's right. It's funny, I just met with campus architects, and they're talking about a sort of renovation of the atrium area. This building was a great deal for the university. The state spent ten million dollars to build it and furnish it, which is unheard of. It really became the architectural style for the last fifteen years now on this campus.
- TS: Yes. Ten million, you couldn't do much of anything with that right now.
- TM: Anything. We love this building. I love the floor plan. We love student activity. We pushed hard to get food service over here, and you know we have an Einstein's restaurant now. I like a busy building; I like to see students using the building. We just opened this MB&A Resource Center downstairs. We want students to feel free to use this building.
- TS: What's MB&A?
- TM: They're a big credit card company that funded the creation of a career resource center downstairs in this building. They were just bought by Bank of America. I assume, at some point, it will be called the Bank of America Career Resource Center. We provide sixty hours a week of career services support in partnership with the university. That's right downstairs, right across from the Einstein's. And the building is wireless. We want students here day and night. It's their building. It is state property, and we want them to feel free to use it.
- TS: That is great. You must be out of space as far as faculty offices, aren't you?
- TM: There will be plenty of space in this building, except for the fact that we house a huge number of information technology support personnel. There is a huge staff contingent in this building from the School of the Arts. When and if any of those people move, we'll be fine.
- TS: Maybe the arts people will be able to move when they get their new building.
- TM: I hope so. And that Leadership and Professional Development Department, Tom, they're housed over in KSU Center. So we have a whole academic department that's over there.

- TS: Right. Why don't we talk a bit about your own professional accomplishments because I know you've written a ton of books and articles, and so on. That's really kind of unusual, at least on this campus, for a dean to actually be doing a lot of scholarship.
- TM: Well, I'm very excited. Later this year we hope to release an entrepreneurship book through the KSU Press, in concert with my friend, my office mate from Georgia, George Vozikis at Fresno State, and another colleague of ours, who is at the University of Portland in Oregon. That will be my fourth book. I have always maintained with our faculty, Tom, and particularly our junior faculty, that the only attribute that keeps faculty mobile is research. I want to be a great classroom teacher. I've won awards for teaching, but, ultimately, the only transportable attribute that faculty have is research, and so you've got to keep a finger in it, and I just think it's very important. It's important to be professionally active and it's important, I don't know if you serve as a role model, but certainly setting some kind of standard for your own faculty. If you're pounding your shoe on the table about research among faculty, they're going to ask, "Well, what are you doing?"
- TS: Yes. Maybe back in the past more than in the present, I've oftentimes wondered, as scholarship expectations grew, whether we really had the top administrators in place to really judge that or to win the respect of faculty.
- TM: I think that's really important, and that goes for department chairs. It's very important. It's something I enjoy. Listen, I still like to see my name in print. I think there are still topics that I think are germane for me. My involvement, professionally, is through the Academy of Management, which is the academic association for management faculty (they have an entrepreneurship division, which I chaired at one time), and then through AACSB, through various deans' conferences as well.
- TS: Right. Well, I haven't flown on Air Tran in some time.
- TM: Right, I still write for Air Tran.
- TS: I used to enjoy opening up that magazine and reading your column.
- TM: I still do, and it serves an interesting purpose. I wrote for Delta for almost twenty years, and now I've written for Air Tran for about five. For example, one of our Tetley Series Lectures this spring: we had the top execs from BrandsMart, which is a big retailer that just opened near campus, and they're out of Florida. Well, I wrote about them in this article after they spoke. I was so enamored of what they spoke about. So then I was able to send them a copy of this article, and I'm going to visit with them in a couple of weeks. This is how all of this should work, eventually. Air Tran, for me, is a great outlet: a) in these airline magazines, a lot of people read them, and b) I can write about business topics, but kind of write about anything I want, which is great.

- TS: The ones I've read have been really interesting and have been written for a lay audience.
- TM: Yes, and it's just kind of fun. For example, this is from last month, or the month before, and I had a chance to write about Target Corporation out of Minneapolis, and about their community involvement. So, it's just fun.
- TS: Yes. What was *Memos to Management* about?
- TM: My father and I had been writing for Delta for years and that was a compilation of the Delta articles, and probably about ten essays by CEOs on a variety of topics, as well, so it was a fun project for us.
- TS: This sounds typical of what I think I've read in the Air Tran magazine. It gets right to the point with some real practical advice of how a company does what it does.
- TM: That's correct. So they've been great outlets. I'm looking forward to this work with KSU Press, which I've just been delighted with. It's a big project that we're going to be glad to get done [laughter]!
- TS: I'm sure! Well, let me just ask you a kind of summing up type of question. You gave a description of what attracted you to Kennesaw back in '89 and '90. What do you see as the intellectual life of the campus now? Where are we in terms of that?
- TM: Well I think, like any campus that's evolving, that the intellectual life here has become much more dynamic, much more vibrant, much more comprehensive, and I think that will continue to grow and evolve over time. The biggest issue we wrestle with, Tom, I think, is we need about twice as many students living on campus as we've got right now. It is argued that the tipping point for universities, in terms of really creating a vibrant on-campus life, is to have about 25 percent of your students living on campus. We have about 2,000 students. We need about 4,000.
- TS: So we're about 10 percent.
- TM: Right, that's exactly right. And I think until that happens, it's going to be a struggle. We're in a great position compared to where we've been historically, but we really need sort of the next bump is what it amounts to. That will change this campus forever and ever. We have many more faculty living near the university, and the business school has almost always had classes seven days a week, so there's a much livelier campus environment.
- TS: Do you think we'll ever have a residential college like the Miami model?

TM: It'll be up to the next president. I really think

TS: Do you think it would be a good idea?

TM: I think it's a great idea, I think it's fantastic. What I didn't mention is that I had two other faculty members and their spouses living in our residential college as well. One is the vice provost of the University of Miami now, and the other one went on to become a college president, so they were great faculty. One was an economics professor [and] one was a communications professor. So it wasn't just me. We had a team of faculty and student life personnel living in the college. We had a Nobel Laureate. We had a Pulitzer Prize winner. It was a phenomenal program.

TS: I'd love that myself.

TM: Yes, it's really unbelievable, unbelievable. It was very moving for me to go back into that house that I hadn't been in for almost twenty years, and see hundreds of students gathered in there. It's just a very cool place.

TS: What are you proudest of in your sixteen years at Kennesaw?

TM: I think mostly of the faculty, Tom. We have 105 full-time faculty now. It's a great, great faculty, [and] very well respected in their professional areas. The university is about faculty and students, and you retain students because of great faculty, so I think we have very, very little turnover with our faculty. As you know, in the last year, we had two of our department chairs leave and became deans at other business schools, which is great. A third department chair now runs the Siegel Institute for Leadership, Ethics and Character. Another department chair is Dean of Graduate Studies on this campus. So I think that's an important role that I have to play, as a mentor or as a coach, is to get administrators ready to pursue other opportunities that they are interested in.

TS: Right. Well, I think I'm just about at the end of my list of questions; of course, there are a lot of other things that we could talk about. There are some great things happening around here.

TM: I think, first of all, I want to thank you for doing this. I think it is very important in the history of universities to maintain an oral and written record of what brought us through different stages of development. I look at my own professional career, which is now entering its twenty-eighth year. I mean it goes like that. I think maintaining an accurate record is very important just in terms of acknowledging where are our roots.

TS: Well, I've been astounded [while] doing these interviews, of how much is going on, on this campus. I thought I was pretty much on top of what is happening, but it is remarkable how much faculty do.

TM: I just appreciate you doing this. This will be a great legacy for this university.

TS: I hope so, and I certainly appreciate your time today.

TM: Thanks, Tom, very much.

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