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Stuart Silverman oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, June 3, 2003

Stuart H. Silverman (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Year of Arrival

In 1970, Dr. Silverman had a job offer to teach at Rogers Williams College in Rhode Island, when he spotted an advertisement in the New York Times seeking an assistant professor at the University of South Florida. Initially thinking that the University of South Florida was in Miami and intrigued by the ad, Dr. Silverman applied for the teaching position. In the summer of 1970, Dr. Silverman was asked to come down to USF for an interview; he was offered the position of assistant professor, which he accepted happily.

First impressions

“The people were spectacular, and the campus was bare, but nice. It took not too long and I figured out that this [Tampa] was not Miami, but I loved it and have been here almost thirty-three years.”

Physical description of campus in 1970

In 1970, the campus was about one mile square. In terms of buildings on campus, the College of Education, Faculty Office building (FAO), the Social Sciences building, one or two engineering buildings, the computer center (located on the engineering side of campus), the Administration building, and the University Center had all been built prior to Dr. Silverman’s arrival to USF. Across campus, the Fine Arts complex and the medical school buildings were just being built as the medical program had not officially begun. “There were very few trees on campus, so the burning sun with no trees and no water sprinkling system made the campus kind of barren and sandy—a sort of beach feeling campus.”

Instructor and department

Dr. Silverman was actually hired to USF as an instructor [correction]. “I started at the very bottom, as low as you could get.” He started as an instructor in the Educational Psychology department, which was located in the College of Education. At that time, Educational Psychology and another department were placed in the FAO building, as the College of Education had no additional room. Dr. Silverman recalls how no one [faculty or department] in the College of Education let the Educational Psychology department forget the fact that they were not physically located in the College of Education building.

Educational Psychology department

The Educational Psychology department was separated into two parts: Educational Psychology and Social Foundations; each division had between seven and eight faculty members. Interestingly enough, many of the faculty members from the Educational Psychology division still remain at the university, for example, Darryl Bostov, John Folman, Ellen Kimmel, Glen Giger, and Wade Birley have worked at the university for over thirty years. “This [USF] was a place that attracted people and it kept us over the years. I think many of us had other opportunities, but this was a place that we stayed, we liked and we stayed.”

Attraction of USF to potential faculty members

When Dr. Silverman interviewed for a position at USF in 1970, he was told by the administration of the College of Education, that the university was “first a student-centered college and university, that teaching was the critical skill that faculty needed, that program development [since the College of Education was so new] was something that we could feel free to engage in. That we [faculty] could invent programs, we could find new programs, and we could work in new programs.”

Accent on teaching/Accent on learning

Furthermore, Dr. Silverman supported the idea that while his primary responsibility was to train future teachers and conduct research, the “accent was on teaching.” This emphasis on teaching corresponded with USF’s official motto, which was displayed prominently throughout the university, “Accent on Learning.” Don Lance, chair of the College of Education, Charlie Manker, associate dean of the College of Education, and other faculty, convinced Dr. Silverman that USF was a “place where work with students would be valued and one could create and innovate both in the classroom and programmatically and that just sold me.”

Origins of Accent on Learning motto

In 1970, when Dr. Silverman began teaching at USF, the Accent on Learning motto was already in place and featured prominently on all university materials. Over the years, USF’s motto became less and less emphasized and ultimately disappeared.

John Allen leaves USF

During 1970, President John Allen was getting ready to leave the university; his final semester took place in the fall and during the spring semester. USF had an interim president until Cecil Mackey was hired as the second official president.

Cecil Mackey’s presidency

Mackey’s charge as USF president was to focus on changing the “nature of the university.” No longer would USF be thought of as “a sleepy, little, regional university, this is going to be a place that will shine and that will move up the university ladder.” In order to accomplish his vision, President Mackey was constantly searching for outside funding to support the university. Dr. Silverman at the time of Mackey’s administration was assistant professor and would not have had many opportunities to meet with the

president. Occasionally, Dr. Silverman joined Mackey in running, which was a favorite pastime of President Mackey's. According to Dr. Silverman, Mackey "set the university on a course that we still maintain now, but now at a much higher level."

FAO and new College of Education buildings

Once the new College of Education building was built, both the educational psychology and social foundations department moved, however Dr. Silverman by this point was involved with the Honors Program, and he was relocated to Cooper Hall. Throughout his career, Dr. Silverman has moved his office from FAO to Cooper Hall (where Honors Program was located), and is currently back in the FAO building.

Diversity of faculty in Educational Psychology department

In those early days, there was one faculty member in the educational psychology department who was Asian, Martin Wong. When Dr. Silverman was hired, Ellen Kimmel, an adjunct at the time, was working in the department; she was later hired as full faculty the following year. There were no Hispanic or African American faculty working in the department. One of the reasons for lack of diversity in the educational psychology department was the fact that over the years, the department has not received any new lines [positions], and "It was not possible to diversify the department." While the department was committed to diversity, it never received funding to support additional positions. Dr. Silverman is quick to point out that most of the faculty who were initially hired in the 1970s never left the university.

Faculty interaction between different departments

In the 1970s, the College of Education was an upper level college, meaning that it only enrolled upperclassman and did not instruct undergraduates; only juniors and seniors could enroll in education courses. In terms of interaction with other departments in the university, faculty members generally only interacted with other faculty in the different departments of the College of Education. Because education students were not only receiving a degree, but also certification from the state, other departments within the College of Education were frequently being consulted for changes in requirements. Outside of the College of Education, faculty did not interact with other colleges or departments in any formal manner, "there was no need too." The only time that interactions between departments on campus took place was when the state, for example, would change teacher certification requirements and the College of Education would have to ask another department if they could offer a course that would fulfill the new requirement.

All-University Book Program abolished and current reinstatement of program

In 1968-1969, one year before Dr. Silverman's arrival to USF, the All-University Book Program was ended. This program was one opportunity in which faculty from different departments could interact with one another, for all faculty and students were required to read the same book. Interestingly enough, the Honors College has recently reinstated the All-University Book Program. In the fall semester of 2003, incoming honors students will be required to read the same book; a seminar to discuss the book will be held prior to the opening of the semester.

Make-up of students in the College of Education

Dr. Silverman believes that when he came to USF, he was the youngest faculty member on campus at twenty-five years old. In fact, many of the students and the majority of faculty in the College of Education were older than him. In terms of the structure of the college, Dr. Silverman saw his students, who were either juniors or seniors, at a point in their academic careers where they were spending half of the time taking courses and the other half of their time interning at local schools. Already into their major coursework, these students did not have time to participate in extra curricular college activities, “These were not students who were exploring different academic areas, and these were not students who were trying to find themselves. These were students who had made a conscience decision that I want to be educated to be able to perform this activity out there as an adult.”

Less traditional college “stuff” offered at USF than other universities

The first intercollegiate basketball team did not make its appearance to USF until the fall of 1970 and was made up only freshman players; the varsity basketball team did not begin playing until the following year or so. “In terms of major sports, there was only one.” In general, most students did not attend soccer, baseball or track events. USF did not have “a lot of the trappings of what a traditional school” would offer. In fact, most of the social lives of students were more focused off campus, than toward activities that were occurring on campus. The amount of activities offered on campus as well as student participation, has changed and increased over the years, “This was a different place, there were very few students who lived on campus. Most students commuted and lived at home.”

Students’ reaction to Dr. Silverman’s young age and N.Y. accent

Since there was not much difference in terms of age between Dr. Silverman and his students, he was able to draw upon these shared connections with his students, which included similar tastes in music, art and literature. His graduate students on the other hand were a bit more difficult for they generally included teachers who were seeking a master’s degree. For the first few years of his teaching career in the College of Education, Dr. Silverman felt that he had to prove his level of knowledge of the subject to his students every time he walked into a new classroom. In addition, Dr. Silverman felt that having a New York accent made some of his students feel that he was “looking down upon the South, Florida, and education,” and therefore he had to work harder in order to make an impression upon his students. Overall, Dr. Silverman feels that whatever differences he and students may have had, they managed to “work it out and together - they had learned an awful lot.”

A career at USF?

Having only been exposed to New York’s educational system and being so young, Dr. Silverman describes himself as characteristically “provincial;” he gave no real thought to what he would be doing in five years. By the time Dr. Silverman had given some thought to the kinds of things he might do in terms of his future career, he decided that he liked USF and really had no desire to leave.

Work at other universities prior to USF

Prior to accepting a teaching position at USF, Dr. Silverman worked at Albert Einstein College of Medicine as a research assistant for a few years. During his last year of graduate school, he was an instructor at western Connecticut State College where he taught psychology. Teaching only psychology, Dr. Silverman wanted to find a position where he could focus on educational psychology and work with students who wanted to be teachers.

Residence in relation in USF

Having lived in an apartment in New York his entire life, Dr. Silverman and his wife initially looked at apartments when they first arrived in Tampa. Realizing that they could own a town house in Temple Terrace for less than the price of renting an apartment, Dr. Silverman decided to purchase a home. It took him a total of five to six minutes to travel from his home to the USF campus. Living so close to the university provided Dr. Silverman with many opportunities to participate in USF events. Dr. Silverman estimates that between one-third and one-half of the people who lived in the townhouse complex were affiliated with USF in some manner. Often times in the evenings, people including USF personnel and faculty living in the complex would come out of their homes and talk with each other. "It was a wonderful experience."

Surrounding areas of USF

In 1970, Fowler Avenue consisted of one lane in each direction. Interstate 275, which was then called 75, had just opened. In terms of businesses, Fowler Avenue had the following: Maggie Anne's plant nursery (east of USF, near CDB), Holiday Inn, Steak-N-Shake, Lums, a Day-Care Center and the University Restaurant (UR). On the east side of USF, there was very little. As far as Fletcher Avenue, Dr. Silverman does not recall much if anything. "The northern bounds of life ended on Fowler Avenue because there was nothing on Fletcher Avenue or north of Fletcher."

University Restaurant (UR)

"On Friday nights, you could find dozens upon dozens of faculty members enjoying adult beverages till late hours."

Political climate of USF in the 1970s and effects on student body

Teaching in the College of Education, Dr. Silverman points out that his students in part to their junior and senior status, had less time to participate in university related events. Already training for their careers, and older than the average student at the university, most of the students in the College of Education were conservative in terms of their political views. Their conservative nature was expressed in their dress, political attitudes, and lack of participation in anti-war, women and civil rights demonstrations; overall, fewer College of Education students participated in these kinds of events. "I lived with a relatively conservative bunch of people. On other parts of the campus, Cooper Hall for example, there was very radical kinds of folks, both on the faculty and among students." In terms of political movements, women, civil rights and civil liberties groups maintained a strong presence on campus and were located predominantly in the philosophy, English

and political science departments. Dr. Silverman believes that while his students were concerned about political issues on campus, they were less visible and less likely to demonstrate their views.

Few anti-war protests on campus

Dr. Silverman does not recall many anti-war or pro-war protests on campus. When Dr. Silverman was at USF for barely a week, he and his fellow colleagues read a feature article in the *Tampa Tribune* which said that there was going to be an anti-war demonstration held in downtown Tampa that weekend. Excited at the prospect, Dr. Silverman and his wife Helene went downtown and demonstrated along with approximately thirty-five people. In comparison to other cities around the country, Tampa was “not a community that demonstrated an awful lot.” Furthermore, Dr. Silverman asserts that this demonstration took place about a year after the Johns Committee, and therefore, there was a certain feeling of hesitation among many members of the community.

Dress code

There were no formal dress code regulations when Dr. Silverman came to USF in 1970. In fact, for the first seventeen years of his career at the university, he recalls that he only wore “formal” shoes three or four times, otherwise he wore sandals and a collared t-shirt, jeans or slacks. “I am not aware that there ever was one [dress code] here [at USF].” As late as the mid-sixties, Dr. Silverman was told that the University of Tampa had a formal dress code. In a public university such as USF, it would have been difficult to enforce such regulations.

Food service on campus

Most of Dr. Silverman’s students lived off campus and therefore ate most of their meals at home. He does recall however, that in the Argos area of housing, there was a faculty and staff dining room where he would frequently eat. Dr. Silverman also recalls that the university did provide a meal plan for those students who lived on campus offering students twenty meals a week; the students frequently complained to Dr. Silverman that the food was terrible. “I think that was probably what every student in every college would have said all over the country. As the years have passed, food service has become more sophisticated and caters more to taste.”

Faculty teaching work load-quarter to semester system

When Dr. Silverman came to USF, the teaching load for faculty consisted of twelve credits. At that time, the university was on a quarter teaching system which meant that faculty would teach three courses for four hours a week. Faculty members were also expected to serve on a few committees and conduct some amount of research. On occasion, faculty could receive a “release” from teaching full course loads if they were involved in heavy research, a special project, or taught very large courses (between sixty to eighty students rather than twenty). Most of the faculty taught in the department of education taught a full load. Occasionally, Dr. Silverman would be relieved from teaching one course if he agreed to follow a group of interns throughout their internships. Once the quarter system was revised to the semester system, classes were gradually

changed from four to three credits; professors still taught twelve hours, but three physical courses. Teaching twelve credits was the expectation of the university administration and for that reason no faculty member challenged the policy. Faculty were not expected or told by the university administration that they had to do be a researcher. Instead the faculty was advised to conduct research for nobody received promotion or tenure if they did not perform some level of research. Despite this move toward research, Dr. Silverman feels that the accent was still on teaching rather than research.

Accent on teaching shift toward accent on research

When Vice President of Academic Affairs O'Bryan came to the university, a shift toward an emphasis on research versus teaching began to take place. The tenure and promotion process began to change as faculty began to feel pressure toward conducting research over teaching. "Teaching was not sufficient – it was necessary but it was not sufficient – and that you really needed research." During this period in university history, faculty would go through their promotion and tenure reviews and even if they would receive approval from their department, chair, college, and dean, they might not receive promotion and tenure from the central administration if they did not conduct enough research. "In a sense the change was a bit of a surprise I think, to many people but it became very clear pretty clear that that's was the direction the university was going." For new faculty that was being hired into the university, the emphasis on research was not something new as most had come out of graduate programs with extensive publishing and research experience. "It [new emphasis] was something sort of the given and understood. As Dr. Silverman explains the shift, he reinforces the point that it was only the "old-timers" who had been at USF for a long time that initially had trouble with the change in emphasis.

Effects on Dr. Silverman

In terms of tenure and promotion, by the time the university had adopted the approach of increased research, Dr. Silverman was mostly complete with his personal tenure and promotional status. Documenting of research became more important during this period and Dr. Silverman not only kept better records, but also began to design research projects, which correlated with his current work in the school system; publications and presentations could be produced. "It did me a lot of good, because instead of just going out and working in schools, I now went out and thought a little more systematically about what I was doing, why I was doing it, and got to publish some of those results." The dean responsible for implementing this change in emphasis in the College of Education was Roger Wilk who came to USF in 1975/76. According to Dr. Silverman, Dean Wilk told his faculty that they could not think of themselves professionally on a day-to-day basis, but instead, had to think of their careers in terms of a three-five year basis.

Honors College, Dr. Silverman's introduction

In 1985/86, Dr. Silverman volunteered to sit on the undergraduate council on undergraduate education, because all faculty of the university were expected to provide some level of service. In 1986/87 academic years, a chair was needed to head the committee and Dr. Silverman was nominated because the by-laws (of the group) stated that a person could only accept the position if they were in their third year of service to

the committee. Dr. Silverman became the chair of the council and worked heavily with Dr. Scheurle, who was then the dean of undergraduate studies. By chance, both Silverman and Scheurle were signing course approvals that the undergraduate council had just passed. While completing these approvals, Dr. Scheurle remarked to Dr. Silverman that he would have to find a replacement for the Honors Program as Dr. Shank had recently resigned as its head. Not even realizing that USF had had an Honors Program, Dr. Silverman went home that evening and looked at the university catalog. Finding the program interesting, the next morning Dr. Silverman went to Dr. Scheurle and asked him if he could take over the program. Offering his background in Educational Psychology, concern of undergraduates, and commitment to the university, Dr. Silverman explained to Dr. Scheurle that he would like to run the Honors Program. Dr. Scheurle offered the position to Dr. Silverman on an interim basis in April of 1987. Finishing his fourth year as director, David Shank taught Dr. Silverman about the Honors Program and introduced him to the students. David Shank was going to work in the Office of the Provost.

Interim director of the Honors Program

Dr. Silverman initially started in the Honors Program on a half-time basis, splitting his time between the College of Education and Honors Program. During the year, an official search for a full-time director was initiated among the local university community. Within one year, Dr. Silverman was hired in a full-time capacity as the head of the program although he continued to teach one course in the College of Education. “I was at the right place, at the right time, when somebody scratched his head and said, ‘What am I going to do one of my very good people is leaving?’ If I had not been standing signing those things [papers] at that time, I would still be very happily teaching in the College of Education. Instead I am ecstatically working in the Honors Program here in the university.”

Structure and mission of the Honors Program

When Dr. Silverman first started in the Honors Program, there were only about thirty to thirty-five students and the first class, which consisted of four-five students, was graduating. At the time, the mission of the Honors College and Program was to provide students with the “best liberal arts education that would be the equivalent of what they could get at the best name brand schools.” In its current form, the Honors Program officially began in 1983 with a committee charged with designing the curriculum. Prior to 1983, Richard Taylor, a philosophy instructor, and Max Dertke both initiated programs at USF, which became the precursor to the Honors Program. David Shank was the first director of the program and Dr. Bill Scheurle was its first dean. The object of the program was to provide a liberal arts education. Professors in the College of Liberal Arts took part in designing all of the courses.

Philosophy of Honors Program

“The nature of the program was one in which they started out with a very broad philosophical view in a course taught mostly by philosophers.” After their philosophical introduction, students then studied the social sciences, natural sciences, arts and humanities, and then examined areas that they were interested in. In other words,

students went from learning about a particular topic in a broad sense, to looking at other disciplines descriptions, and finally spending a year writing a thesis on the subject. When Dr. Silverman took over the Honors Program, students typically enrolled in five-six course sequences. Over the years, Dr. Silverman has kept the core of the program the same, but has added a total of nine courses to the original five.

Change in emphasis of Honors program/statistics

In recent years, the emphasis has changed in the Honors Program in part due to the “nature of the students.” In the early days of the program, honors students were averaging between 1100 and 1150 on the SAT’s; they now average 1300. The first class that Dr. Silverman admitted consisted of fifty-four students; this year [2003] the program will be admitting over 450 students with a total of 1,300 total students by fall of 2003. The “very best faculty on this campus” is recruited to teach courses in the Honors Program. With a change in the original emphasis of the program, Dr. Silverman understands that many of his students disproportionably end up in graduate, medical or law school. Therefore, one of the keys for success of instruction of honors students is to focus on research. Intensely studying the process of research and presenting research at conferences are new strategies that the Honors Program has embraced in recent years to assist its students. In fact, this year will mark the first annual honors symposium on research here at USF. This change in emphasis will afford honors students the opportunities to expose themselves to research, which they need in order to go on to graduate and professional programs.

Growth of Honors Program

Since its inception, the Honors Program has grown by leaps and bounds. “We grow by double digits almost every year.” This growth is due in part to the sheer number of students graduating from high schools in Florida, as well as the efforts by many people to recruit honors students. Furthermore, once these students are enrolled in the program, the staff and faculty provide exceptional experiences in which the students tell others about. To illustrate this point further, Dr. Silverman describes how four to five years he counted sixty sets of siblings that had both attended the Honors Program. This is significant figure because a sibling who has been through the Honors Program tells their sibling that they should also enroll in the program because they have had an enjoyable experience. In one case, a student even recommended the program to his/her mother and now both mother and daughter are completing the coursework together.

Reasons for students enrolling in Honors Program at USF

Many of the students who enroll in the Honors Program at USF have the test scores and grades to attend Duke, Virginia, Michigan, Harvard, Stanford, Tulane and Emory, in other words, all the “name-brand schools.” Some of the reasons that honors students come to USF include location, prior involvement of student with USF programs, and others come from around the country because of recognized programs. “This is a school with a reputation of being a good, solid university. People are coming here for a variety of reasons.”

Characteristics of honors students

In some respects, honors students are no different from all other students. “Some of them like mosh-pits, some of them like country western music, some of them like jazz, and some of them like classical music.” However, “because of innate wiring, environment, the right teachers along the way, these are mostly students who are higher achieving than other students. Not only may they be brighter than other students innately, but also they are higher achieving because they have been pushed, they have been cajoled, they have been encouraged, and they have been threatened.” Furthermore, these students are more goal-oriented than other students and come to USF already having an idea of what profession they might be interested in pursuing; usually these professions are ones that the average student has never even heard of. For example, at the age of seventeen, an honors student may come to USF knowing that they want to be a pediatric thoracic surgeon, or a biomedical engineer. In general, honors students are more focused and “have a good sense of when to turn the burners on” when they need to study for an exam. In terms of motivation, compulsive nature, and orientation of goals, honors students are different from other students at USF. In addition, honors students tend to have parents that push them hard with respects to education. While they may come into the program doing what their parents wanted them to do, honor students generally come out of the program doing the kinds of things that they wanted to do. The Honors Program consists of students who are varsity athletes, musicians, beauty contestants, and even cheerleaders for local sports teams.

Volunteer work by honors students

“They [honors students] are very good human beings.” Every year, honor students complete extensive hours of volunteer and service work throughout on campus and throughout the local community. “They do a lot of things to make this community better.”

The resurgence of the All-University Book in the Honors College

Developed by John Allen in the early 1960s, the All-University Book program is being brought back by the Honors College in the fall of 2003. Every other week, a group of honor students get together and hold a discussion based on previous readings. Collectively, these students decided that incoming freshman to the Honors Program should all read the same book over the summer prior to entering USF. Culminating in a symposium on the first Saturday of the semester, the “old timers” in the program would lead a discussion of the book. The idea was to create a sense of bonding among incoming freshman honor students as well as bonding between freshman and upper class students. “Like most of the ideas that come out of students, I try to claim credit for it because it is a wonderful idea.” While trying to decide what book should be chosen for the students to read, someone realized that directly down the hall of the Honors College is a professor named Charles Gion of the philosophy department, who has recently edited a book called *The Grand Inquisitor*. Originally written by Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor* offers college students an intense discussion on the subject of religion; this is an important topic for college students. Ultimately, the honors students decided that *The Grand Inquisitor* would be the first book selected for the symposium. Professor Gion will lead the

discussion of his book and will work with the honors faculty and students in order to prepare them for the symposium. Additionally, the professor has agreed to supply the Honors College with a discounted price on the book so that each student can purchase the book during freshman orientation week. The All-University Book will now become a requirement of all honors college students and an annual event. As of this point, the Honors College is only requiring that incoming freshman to the program read the book; at this point the administration of the Honors College is not making it a requirement for all the honors students. “It was a student initiative. We really think that in an honors college ought to have people reading a substantive book as a prelude to coming into USF.”

Housing for Honors College

When Dr. Silverman first became director of the program, there was no separate housing for honors students. In 1988, Dr. Silverman met with Ray King, who was then head of housing, and asked him of the possibility of obtaining separate housing for honors students. Dr. King agreed to Dr. Silverman’s request, and Lambda Hall was initially used for honors housing until it became full. Presently, one floor of Epsilon Hall is being used as well as Lambda Hall. Honors housing is important because it put students together who share common interests including the Honors College and Program, Liberal Arts core courses, and preparations for similar exams. Each year, honors housing is filled to capacity. In the old days, when honors’ housing was strictly in Lambda Hall, men lived on the bottom floor and women lived on the top. When honors’ housing spread to Epsilon, one side of the hall was reserved for males and the other for females; currently the suites are now all single sex, but the floor is mixed with both sexes.

Interaction with Honors students in honors housing

Honors faculty interacts frequently with honors students, however, very little of this kind of contact takes place in resident halls. Students can participate in activities with faculty members in the Honors College itself, but not in campus housing. All of the programs that take place within the Honors College are open to all honors students and therefore the administration of the college feels that the sponsored activities should take place in a public domain. For example, Louis Martin-Vega, dean of engineering, gave a talk to the honors student about USF’s program in engineering. On a regular basis, the honors college tries to offer programs that allow students to interact with faculty and community members.

Current location of Honors College

Currently, the Honors College is “well hidden” on the second floor of the Faculty Office Building (FAO). In its present state, the college consists of a classroom, lounge, computer lab, and office space for the staff.

Expansion of Honors College

President Genshaft as well as the development office at USF has made a pledge that the Honors College will receive their own building. Development is charged and committed to raising funds for the construction of an honors building. In the next few years, Dr. Silverman envisions someone donating enough money so that an honors building can be

constructed; physical location has not yet been determined. “I think somebody will find having an honors college named after them to be sort of a wonderful legacy.”

Social life on campus of honors students

Honors students do plan activities such as movie nights, which are held on campus at the University Lecture Hall (ULH) building. Picnics are also held on campus at USF’s Riverfront Park. Service projects are also completed on campus property at The H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Shriners’s Hospital for Children Discussion groups known as “The Thought Seekers,” and a Biomedical Ethics group conducted by Dr. David Shank are additional examples of student activities that the honors students participate in on the USF campus. Pool tables are also rented once a semester in the Marshall Center. “They try and find things that they can do on campus.”

Change in amount of social activities offered to students on campus

“Social lives of students now especially the ones that live in the residence halls can be on campus because Student Affairs and the Office of Campus Housing provides a really full set of activities for students who want to participate.”

Still teaching?

In addition to being responsible for 1,300 students in the Honors College, Dr. Silverman is also in charge of the honors faculty and staff. In light of this, for the last six or seven years, Dr. Silverman has not had time to teach in the College of Education. Once a year, however, he does teach an honors seminar. Unlike other units on campus, a formal entrance and secretary do not protect the dean’s office in the Honors College. In other words, Dr. Silverman’s office is located in the same hallway as the advisors and coordinators of the college. As students walk down the hallway, Dr. Silverman’s office is the first one that they see. Students are constantly dropping into his office to complete paperwork or share their concerns, “In some ways I do not have time to teach if I am to do what I am supposed to do and what I want to do—to help these 1,300 students get through the university, get on to whatever their next step is. If I am to do whatever needs to be done to recruit increasing number of better students on the front end, I just cannot take the time to teach.” In spite of the time constraints, every year Dr. Silverman tries to teach a four-credit honors seminar.

Caller of names for graduation ceremonies—additional responsibilities

In 1988 when Dr. Silverman began heading up the Honors College, it was clear that he would attend all of the graduation ceremonies. Finding himself bored with the “droning” sound of the person calling out the graduating names of students, Dr. Silverman was asked by Dr. Scheurle, who then was responsible for graduation, if he would like to read the names. In 1998, Dr. Silverman began reading names for graduation ceremonies. With the exception of two ceremonies, Dr. Silverman has read every name of every student who has appeared at graduation since 1998. According to someone’s calculations, Dr. Silverman has read between sixty to seventy thousand names over the course of the past fourteen or fifteen years. He admits that he probably gets thirty to forty percent of the pronunciations of names incorrect. According to Dr. Silverman the goal is to say the names smoothly. “Only the student and the family knows how badly I bollixed

the name up. It is an unbelievable experience for me because I see students and as they hand me their card I see some students who are shaking...this is a momentous occasion in their lives. I see some students who believe that they are not graduating until I say their name so they hand me their card and they stop, they will not walk until I say their name. I see other students who mouth their name as I say their name.” USF has a high percentage of students who are first generation college, “...for many of them this is a highlight of their lives.” This spring [2003], Dr. Silverman is a bit nervous because instead of USF’s typical two graduation ceremonies, there will be three.

Final thoughts

“I have watched countless students go through and have become teachers, who have beaten all odds. I have watched honors students come through and succeed with problems the likes of which that you cannot imagine. I have watched my wife get her Ph.D. from USF. I have watched my daughter get her B.A. and now is ABD [All-But Dissertation] on her degree.” What has impressed Dr. Silverman over the years is that USF has had students that have overcome circumstances that would have “fallen most people”—illnesses, bad environments, medical conditions. “If a student is motivated and if a student cares enough, that student ought not give up. If they want it badly enough she can do it, he can do it. At this particular place, no matter how bad circumstances might be, every student I know has been able to find somebody who works here at the university who will help—even if it takes knocking on ten doors before they find that person.” “I would like to offer thanks to all those hundreds of faculty and staff members who will always at the drop of the hat, make sure that some students needs are met. I would like to students to know that if they persist they will get through because there are people here who will help them get through.”

End of Interview