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Sellers: George, if you'll tell me a little bit about how you ended up at Florida State and bring us up to the time when you were approached to do something with this Bryan Hall Learning Center.

Weaver: I came to Florida State fresh out of graduate school in 1967, so I've had a long tenure in the Psychology Department. Over the years, I was involved with undergraduates in various sorts of ways. I became the (I think they called it then) the associate chair for undergraduate studies. So I was involved in advising; I worked with students throughout. But as time went on, I got into other aspects of administration; I became the department chair. I did that for my six years. I was about to finish my term in 1995, and was button-holed by my colleague, Jim Smith, who told me that he'd been serving on a committee to establish a residential college. I really knew nothing about this, and he invited me to come to a meeting that was being chaired by the then-associate dean in Arts and Sciences, Walter Moore. So I came to the meeting. Other people I knew there – Ken Goldsby from chemistry – I didn't know the housing people at the time, but Rita Moser and Sherrill Ragans were at this meeting, as was Jim Smith. They told me that they'd been working on an idea for a – we were calling it then a “residential college.” Jim and Ken – again, the two scientists that I knew on the committee – talked about their own experience, and I'd had the same experience, that you often dealt with a senior student maybe going off to graduate school who was involved in your laboratory and very excited about what was going on, and said, “Why didn't I know about this when I was a freshman? Why didn't I know that I could be working with faculty members or that faculty members would even talk to me as a student in all the time that I was at the university.” So what I understood from that first meeting, and I think in our discussions since, is that one of the primary goals of a residential college was to introduce students to the opportunities provided by a research university. And the essence of that would be to let students know, who were in their first or second year, the kinds of things that you typically didn't find out about until you were in your last two semesters. For example, that you might need letters of recommendation from a faculty member. Most freshmen never even thought about that. The other is that faculty members are, for the most part, looking around all the time for the bright, capable undergraduate student to be involved in their research, whether this was in a scientific laboratory or in a creative situation in theater, and things of this sort. So that was what I was introduced to then. I think that the committee'd been meeting for a year. I thought it was a very interesting idea. At about this time – this was in 1995 – I was in my last year as department chair, and I think Jim was already sort of tagging me as maybe the person to carry this forward, once I finished my stint as department chair. At about this same time, it came to our attention – and again the housing

people were well aware of this – that Bryan Hall was going to be upgraded and renovated and returned to its role as a residential facility. It had been used for administration, advising and other things. But once University Center was established, the building was emptied out and it was going to be renovated for residential use again. So the convergence of these ideas, these sort of events in time – the discussion of a “residential college” to introduce to students in housing units to academic sorts of opportunities, and the Bryan Hall building being available – brought the notion together that maybe Bryan Hall could be the source or the seat of our first residential college.

The term “residential college” turned out to be very problematic. The term “college” at some levels, and certainly in Westcott in the upper administration levels (Steve Edwards in particular) just thought that we should not be talking about another college. This term “college” implied a separate entity, a different unit – so I will soon stop saying residential college committee because we had to change the name for both political and then for real reasons. We weren’t trying to set up an independent degree-granting situation. But one of the things that we talked about pretty regularly is that students who do well on campus – if you’re an honors student, you come into the honors program typically and you have all kinds of opportunities provided to you. You’re tended to, you’re taken care of, you do meet faculty members. At the time, Bruce Bickley was the head of the honors program, and they had a series of Monday night colloquia, presentations by faculty members, campus tours – a number of things in their freshman year that we thought would be appropriate for the program that we were after. But we were specifically looking to take students who were not identified as honors students. So this was to be an honors-type academic exposure for non-honors students. We talked about this to some great deal, more than maybe we should have. But what becomes apparent is that the people who go on and get Ph.D.s almost never make decisions about the universities. The people who make decisions about universities get elected to the legislature, and they are typically people in business, they’re typically people who are in mid-management or they’re in banking or they major in business. I’m just saying they are not chemistry Ph.D.s, they’re not psychology Ph.D.s. So we really had this kind of notion, this bootstrap notion, that if you introduced students who didn’t necessarily have a 3.5 GPA to these aspects of a research university when they were in their first couple of years, they might very well – even if they didn’t go on and do a master’s thesis or things of that sort – they would then have the appreciation for what the research university was about. We would be planting these seeds in the non-Ph.D.-track people that might actually come to fruition and come back to the university and to the broader world. So again, we were kind of utopians in a way, but really trying to do something different than was done already throughout our campus and other campuses. And what I soon discovered – again, this is kind of out of chronological order – but I soon discovered that there were discussions of residential colleges at residential campuses all across the country – still ongoing now – but in the mid-1990s it was a big topic. There was a national conference at the University of Michigan attended by representatives of all the major universities, and it turns out that most of them already had residential programs of the sort that we were talking about.

Sellers: So you all were kind of ‘Johnny-come-latelys’ to this idea.

Weaver: Well, in a sense. There were traditional programs – the Dartmouth, the Yale, the Harvard, where there were actually sort of units. There were eating clubs or dining clubs or whatever you call them where even as a first year student you had contact with faculty members, you were sort of told about the university.

Sellers: Weren't those kind of legacy-oriented?

Weaver: Well, they were to a certain extent, and they started out being kind of small. This was a tradition of the small four-year college, that is would have this sort of notion if you ate together, you studied together, you did these sort of things. And in fact, if you look at the history of “dormitory living” or residential living, that was the origin. At Oxford and Cambridge the professors had their rooms and that they tutored in the rooms and the students lived right close together. And over several hundred years, the faculty members got married, moved off campuses into their nice little houses. The students were left on campus, and what you ended up then was a division between what was once an integrated university, you then had the academic side and you had the student service side. So housing and things of that sort became departments that essentially housed students. Faculty members became departmentalized at the colleges and schools or whatever, and they did their thing. But over many generations, they separated almost completely. And it's an exaggeration to say that they [students] were warehoused, but they were essentially put in larger and larger units. Here at Florida State University we have Smith Hall, various others, huge things holding 600-700-800 students with RAs sort of coordinating them. But there was no contact with faculty members or the academic mission of the university – that was not really a part of it. More focused on football games, partying, and things of that sort.

So again, what we were realizing and what many people around the country were realizing was that the residential experience of students was being in some way wasted. They're on campus in residence halls, but almost intentionally given no contact with what the university is all about. So when you talk about a residential college or learning center, essentially these were efforts to bring the academic into the residential setting and make it meaningful and make it work. The first national conference I went to on living-learning centers was, as I mentioned, at the University of Michigan. While we were there for this conference, the local student newspaper came out with a story indicating that the university was setting up plans to require all 5,000 freshmen every year to be part of some sort of a living-learning set-up. Now a lot of that was just using sections of large residential halls, dividing them up and actually giving them a name, giving them a theme, so that every student was going to be a part of a living-learning center starting in their freshman year. At Michigan, as at Florida State and many universities, students only stay in the residence halls the first year. Maybe the second year, but it's a rare case when you find a junior or senior living in a “dormitory.” So you have a very short period of time to make the contact. If you don't do it in the first year while you had them in the residence hall, then they will move off campus or other places and you can no longer do anything of an organized sort.

So anyhow, this was the background that I sort of came into. I was at some point asked – Walter Moore was the one who asked me – would I be willing to take on the role of chair of this

residential college community, tying it in with the Bryan Hall renovation, and I agreed. I said I wanted to talk to the provost and maybe the president about resources and things of that sort. In fact, that was the next major step in — one day in May when we were having a rare tropical storm — in fact, it was a mini-hurricane in May — I think it was the 5th of May — the university was closed because the storm was so bad. But I met with Larry Abele and Sandy D’Alemberte in the president’s office and talked to the about the reality of a living-learning center in Bryan Hall. It was at that point that I brought along a two-year time line that actually laid out month by month what needed to be done. They were duly impressed that I’d given it that much thought, and they had no other candidate, and so they agreed that I would be named the new director of the Bryan Hall whatever it was going to be. Larry and I had worked together — he was chair of biology when I first became chair of psychology and then he became dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and then he became the provost. So I had a long history of working with Larry, and he knew what I did and what I was about and I guess he thought I could do it. Again, they didn’t have anybody else to do it. So I was ready to go.

As I mentioned, I’d done a lot of work with undergraduates; I was the undergraduate advisor for many years and I really sort of paid attention to undergraduates more than maybe some of my colleagues who focused on the graduate students. But I’d never worked with freshmen. In psychology, other than the general psychology course, all the courses are really upper division courses. So I knew it was going to be a new event for me; I knew nothing about what freshmen first year students were all about. But we set out to build this program.

So by the summer of 1995, I was taking tours, driving off to different places, to Greensboro, a residential college that had been in existence since the 1970s. I also went to Appalachian State. Then I started lining myself up for national and other conferences. I started receiving literature from programs across the country. Then met with the committee — pretty much the same committee — Kens Goldsby; Jim Smith; Corrine (don’t know last name) in religion; Rita Moser, housing; at the time Philip McClusky Titus who was the associate director, and Sherrill Ragans. The people changed as time went along, but this was the beginning committee, and we met pretty much — certainly once a month now that we knew that we were going to be building something — to lay out the details of the program. It wasn’t too long into the sequence before I got the good news that because of clay or other issues in the foundation, Bryan Hall was not going to be ready in the fall of 1996, which was just a year from the summer in which I was doing this. It would not be ready until 1997. This was extremely good news. I even sent Larry Abele a note saying “I’m sorry it’s going to be delayed, but I’m so happy.” Because as I looked more and more at this and as the committee dealt with this, we realized that this was a pretty major task to get something like this set up.

So anyhow, in the summer I did these visits, and then throughout the year 1995-‘96, the committee met and we worked on the two major aspects of the academic program. We wanted two things. We wanted to have — well, the primary way in which we thought that we would introduce students to the “opportunities provided by a research university” — the primary way is to have them interact with faculty members. We wanted to do that in two ways. One was to have small in-house classes taught by faculty members, not by graduate students. We knew right off the bat that this was going to be an expensive process. In other words, instead of having a

faculty member teach 80 students of 90 students or even more students in an introductory class, we were going to ask them to teach (and ask their departments to allow them to teach) 25 students in a small class setting.

Sellers: Would the department get a special credit for allowing that?

Weaver: One of the issues is would the department get a credit. Actually, the way it worked – we know how the dean’s office worked – you essentially get FTE credits. The more students you teach, the more money you get, the more funds you get. We asked that the college not penalize a department for having a single faculty member teach a small class. What we realized is in the College of Arts and Sciences – now we had 19 departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, and it wasn’t intended that the courses would only come from Arts and Sciences – but out of those departments we needed about five or six courses each semester. So if you looked at that, five or six courses a semester – let’s say it was 12 courses a year – with 19 departments, let’s say you got 20 faculty members per department on the average – some of them had many more than that – you’re looking at maybe 400 faculty members, and we wanted to essentially borrow a dozen a year. And have a person, let’s say, from religion, teach an introduction to religion class to 25 students rather than to 50 or 80 or 100 students. But just for one section. So this was an issue, and it turned out not to be a major issue, in part because faculty members for the most part were willing to give a shot at teaching a small class. If the department chair was assured that he or she and their department were not going to be punished because they had a dip in their FTEs in one particular course, then it wasn’t hard to recruit faculty members for that. And again, this notion of an in-house class was really the core to it, once we discovered in part that the way the renovations were done that there was going to be a study room or a library that, because it was above the lobby, did not have the plumbing and other fixtures required for bathrooms. In other words, in a quirk, this area was not going to be used for residential areas, where I think it had been before. So we then sort of said, “Look, reserve this – this is going to be our in-house classroom; we’re going to put audio-visual materials in here, we’re going to get nice seating and desks in here, we’re going to have this set up for the classroom.” So again, that was the one part, the in-house class. The other part, which we had thought about a lot and in our wisdom thought it would work great – and it never worked out that great – was to require students to be a part of a mentor group in their second semester. So in addition to the in-house classes fall and spring, in the spring they would actually be involved in what we would call a research group or a scholarly group. We thought of it as something like 10 or 15 students in a small sort of quasi-seminar with a willing faculty member, and the focus would be on the faculty member’s research and creative activity.

Now, we knew these students didn’t have a lot of skills, they weren’t going to be able to do research projects where they crunched numbers or did chemical assays and things of that sort. So we were looking for people who would kind of even do an autobiographically – “here’s how I got involved in nuclear physics” or “here’s how I got involved in modern dance” or “here’s how I got involved in whatever.” So again, this was to be a way by which students had contact with real faculty members and learned more about what real faculty members thought they were here

for. Because most faculty members, although they do teach, they are here to do the creative and scholarly things that make their hearts beat. So again, this was the idealized notion.

And again, and part of this is again sort of out of order, was that during the fall semester – the mentor groups would be in the spring semester – but in the fall semester, we were going to – and we did – and this always did work pretty well – we borrowed from what the honors program did. They had a Monday night colloquium series, and so we did a Monday night colloquium series also. Every Monday throughout the fall semester, every single one of the Bryan Hall students was expected to show up at an auditorium at which there would be announcements and other sorts of things, and they would all sort of see each other as a group and know that, “Hey, we’re all Bryan Hall-ers.” But then they would have a short and fairly informal presentation by a faculty member drawn from the arts, from the sciences, from the humanities, whatever area it might be, the faculty member then trying to give the entering students an idea, again, what made their heart beat, what was exciting to them, what their life was all about. Now again, this was not an easy task because most faculty members, when asked to give a talk, immediately pull out the last talk they gave at their scientific or other society and maybe take a few paragraphs out. So it wasn’t that easy, but we were able to get every year some pretty energetic people who were willing to stand in front of a group of students – often they’re kind of mumbling and shuffling their feet – “who is this person?” – and actually do this like “I’m a faculty member at Florida State University and I’m in the theater department and here are kinds of things that we do.” “I’m in social work” or “I’m in —.” Again, we tried to cross the whole gamut. So this was our grand idea is that with the in-house classes, small classes taught by faculty members, with the Monday night colloquium series in which they got exposed to faculty members across the campus, and then with the spring mentoring group in which they actually worked with an individual faculty member in a very small group in a non-traditional setting, non-classroom setting, that we would in one year – because this was a one year program — [interview interrupted]

So anyway, we had the – our grand plan was set out, we had our exposure to opportunities provided by the research university in various sort of ways and forms, and we were set to go.

Sellers: The colloquium speakers that you were able to bring in during the fall on Monday nights, was there some hope that those speakers would then become the mentors?

Weaver: We even went beyond that. We had the speakers – I think we had essentially 15 weeks – I guess you lost the first week – you had 14 weeks – our plan was to have 10 speakers. To leave them four nights to have mentor volunteers – prospective mentor volunteers – come and give very brief presentations to the body of students.

Sellers: So the speakers weren’t necessarily going to be the mentors.

Weaver: No, although they could be. But we actually then sent out through various mailings, asked faculty members if they’d be interested in doing a mentor group and being creative in this way. We even asked them how many students we thought they could do this

with. So then we would – we had four nights at the end of the semester which typically had four or five different people each give five minute presentations. This was not – didn't work all that great either. You know, you have these great ideas. The problem with faculty members is that when they start talking about what they are going to do, to do it in five minutes was not that easy. They tended to drag on or they got too technical. But again, this was the plan. And since at that time, the first year, the mentor activity was a requirement – in order to stay in Bryan Hall, you had to be in the mentor group in the spring. What we then had was a list of mentor group options, and then we had to have a way by which students got themselves assigned to them. So we gave them a list of all the names we had of people who might be mentors, and they then ranked their top choices. Very difficult process. I had a very able assistant at the time – an undergraduate, Victoria Coutchavalis. She then became a graduate student and worked and worked with me for two more years as a graduate assistant. Victoria was extraordinary. She would make easy these insurmountable tasks. We had all these pieces of paper with people's rankings of who they wanted to work with. And not surprising, 70% of the students all wanted to be in the same mentor group. And there were many mentor group options that no one mentioned in any of their five choices, probably even ten choices. So we realized right off the bat that we were going to be essentially assigning students to a mentor group that they did not want to be a part of, or that they didn't care about. They may not have been not interested, but it wasn't what they chose. So again, even in the first year we saw some difficulties with this. With beginning students of various majors, again, if you were a business major, if there was somebody – we had some people from the College of Business who wanted to be mentor groups – they all wanted to be in that. So again, our notion that the students would just take any opportunity to be with any faculty member at any time, any place, whatever, turns out not to be correct. Students are not quite like a herd of cats, but they are in some sense – we discovered you can't necessarily make these freshman students become what you think they want to become. And this is just one of a number of lessons — or what we thought they ought to want to become.

So again, off we go. The year '95-'96 was all spent in preparation. Little did I know that in the way that housing works that you actually have to have the brochure for the fall of 1997 done by October of '96. Things just happen so quickly as we moved along here. But we managed to get the housing application form set up, that it was going to be a separate application for Bryan Hall. First of all, the student had to have applied to housing for housing, they had to have paid their down payment or commitment fee. So we only dealt with students who had become a part of the housing database by paying their \$200 initial fee. We then sent to them information about Bryan Hall, to all the students who had applied for housing, letting them know that there was this opportunity, and if they were interested, please fill out the form. And the form essentially, other than just a little bit of your name, where you come from – it actually was an essay. We asked the students to, based on the brochure that we sent them describing the goals of the program, say what they thought they would get out of the Bryan Hall program. That was the – you know, different words that we may have put in, but we had kind of an open request for “tell us why you think you might do well in Bryan Hall, what you might provide.” Well, this worked pretty well – way beyond our expectations. We knew we could only hold about 230 students, I think it turns out to be – about that many students. And we had 1,000 applications in almost no

time at all. And as Rita Moser has probably pointed out, and we became aware right off the bat, one of the confounding issues here was that Bryan Hall was coming on line as the newest, best renovated hall, instead of the gang showers and things of that sort, had the new design that's through all the housing units now where you have a set of two rooms with the bathroom between. And everything was new, sparkling fresh. So we never knew how many students wanted to be a part of the Bryan Hall experience as opposed to wanted to live in the nicest hall. The other problem that we ran into was that when you looked at these essays – we didn't give them a very tight set of specifications as to what they should direct their comments – it was really just freeform essays. We then had committee meetings where we tried to decide which essay meant a student would be a good student for Bryan Hall. It was certainly a challenge. In subsequent years, we became more specific with regard to the particulars of what should be address in the essay, but it was never that easy. We tried to make sure that every application or every applicant had his or her essay read by a faculty member on a faculty committee, by a member of the housing staff, and by a student member. We had students also serve on this. We thought that getting three different perspectives on each essay would be helpful. It probably was helpful, but it was a lot of work. If you have 1,000 applications, you have a limited number of faculty and staff members. The same applications had to be photocopied in triplicate to go to different people. Again, this is where Victoria came in. We had folders going out to students, to faculty members, whatever: "here is a set of 20, rank them or rate them on a 4 point scale, 0-1-2-and 3. Zero means don't ever let them come to Bryan Hall under any circumstance; 3 means they walk on water, they gotta come. They you figure out what you mean by 2 and 1. Then at some point when we had to make the decisions as to who we admitted, which is in May of 1997, because the class came in in August of 1997, we just then added up these numbers and started using the highest numbers as the people we sent the invitations to. Again, it's like a sausage making process; it was very messy in various ways. We had students we sent acceptances to say "I'm going somewhere else" or "I've got a roommate – can my roommate?" but they didn't apply to Bryan Hall. But we ended up getting a nice group of students. All the rooms were filled. So on whatever the particular day – August 20 or something of that sort – they started coming into Bryan Hall and the job was complete – ha ha!

The job was complete in that we showed that we could actually fill a hall with students who seemed to be interested, and now it was a matter of whether we could actually carry it off. From that point on, I think it was just a matter of being on a treadmill or rat race, or whatever you might —. Because now you had the current class, you had the Monday night colloquia series that you have to keep staffed and moving, you had plans for the upcoming mentors. But by October of the current year, you had to have the brochure ready for the next year. Any new changes, any new initiatives, whatever. You had to be recruiting next year's faculty members for teaching the in-house classes as you had the current in-house classes going. You had some problems with department chairs not liking the notion that some of their faculty members were teaching these classes. Again, it was just the every day – it was like a very small microcosm of a college; even though it wasn't a residential college, it had sort of departmental or college issues throughout. But again, we worked fine with the first year.

At the end of the first year, the mentor program was so problematic – the fact that there

was required assignment and students complained about that – that when we did the year-end questionnaire, which we did every year – we had a fairly extensive questionnaire ranging from everything, “how do you like the room, how do you like this, what about the Monday night colloquium series, what about the in-house classes, what did you like best, what did you not like” – open-end questions as well as multiple choice sort of questions. It was clear that the mentor program was one of our biggest issues. So by the second year, we made the mentor program voluntary. And throughout the time that I was involved with it, there was a mentor program in the spring semester, but it was variable. If you had some very interesting mentorship options, you would in fact get a lot of students who said, “I’d like to be in that.” Typically the person who was going to do it said, “I can only do a certain number of students,” so that there were disappointed students who didn’t get in. But we had some good mentor experiences. I did one every year. Mine was related to memory – I think it was sort of there’s an old saying in chemistry, “you are what you eat” – my theme was “you are what you remember.” In other words, that which makes you a person is based just on what you know about yourself in your memory. So I would have a dozen to 15 students every year, and I really enjoyed that. So my mentor experience was positive. The problem in this was that you wanted them to read certain things; you wanted it not to be just a discussion thing, so you did give them reading assignments. But since they are only going to get one hour S-U grade on this, the notion that we would have written projects or written reports or a journal, that also ended up pretty much falling by the wayside. So the mentoring ended up being really a kind of a break-out group that you met once with a week with a group of students, you had some say as to what you talked about, you defined the theme, but if you gave them a heavy assignment, if you gave them a long chapter to read from a book – even if you photocopied it and handed it them – you knew that it was likely that only a few of them would read it. So again, this notion that students are just dying to have contact with faculty members in some equality sense, which was the beginning of the whole notion, turns out to be a little naive on our part. The more structured you make it, the easier it is to make it work. Again, when I reviewed what was going on at some of the other more established residential programs around the country — first of all, they often were thematic in that you would have a hall for majors in theater, for example. So again, and this is where the program goes beyond my particular ken in terms of what I was directly involved with, but more residential living-learning programs – it’s called the Bryan Hall Living-Learning program – were established on campus – the next one was Broward the very next year, and they were thematically focused. So the Broward Hall was public service or policy – it was rooted in the College of Social Sciences. Then eventually we were able to take over the renovated Cawthon, which was divided between education majors-to-be and music-to-be. Then there was the program that Human Sciences was involved with, and it tied in also to an expansion of the Women In Science, Math, and Engineering – WIMSE – program. So again, what Bryan Hall was until – I think it’s essentially moved on to a different phase now, but it was the only program that was essentially open to all majors or all types, all sorts. And it suffered in some ways because of that open door policy with regard to the kinds of focus and energies that you could expect. Again, we had some very energetic students and go-getter students. Throughout my years when I stayed on, after I’d given this over to Dennis Moore and others, while I was still in the dean’s office, I would run into a

student now and then who would say, “Dr. Weaver, the Bryan Hall program was the most important thing – it was the greatest year of my life!” So I know that for individual students, it was in fact all that we’d hoped it to be. But for a number of the other students, it was kind of an interesting diversion from what they did for the rest of their college career, which we had very little control over.

Anyhow, we tried each year to tweak the program, to make it a little better based on the students’ responses. In fact, I think we did that. But the things that worked best, for sure, were the in-house classes. I think there was no doubt that students appreciated the fact that amongst the other classes that they had in their freshmen year, typically very large classes (sometimes in the hundreds), they at least had one class that was offered by not a TA, great teachers though they may be, but by a faculty member, and in their own hall with students who lived down the hall from them. So in terms of getting to know each other, the students in Bryan Hall, I believe within three or four weeks, because they went to class with those students in the hall or their roommate was in a class with other students in the hall, or the other students they were in a class with had roommates, they did in fact know each other in a very short period of time. Whereas in some of the other halls, if you were on a different floor – you knew the kids on your floor — I went to a dormitory or residence hall when I was at the University of Iowa, and I knew people on my floor but I never knew people two floors up because you only saw them on the stairs now and then to the dining hall. So again, I think in terms of the social cohesion, Bryan Hall was a great success. In terms of the first year of those in-house classes, I think that went very well. Even the Monday night colloquium series – sometimes they were restless and not very polite – it was an exposure that I think left a trace with many of those students with regard to “Wow, I didn’t know about this” or “I didn’t know faculty members were involved with these kinds of things.” But with regard to our goal of sort of zapping right into students and making them a part of a different world, the academic world, I think that we had marginal success. And I think that the focused programs that then really followed and had a better chance of success with regard to energies of students in their particular field.

Sellers: I teach in the program, and I have run into some special situations, and I wanted to ask everybody involved – it seems to me that by specifically eliminating the honors students, that you are lowering the possibility that you will actually get students who are there for more than the fact that their parents want them to have a little bit more *in loco parentis* supervision. Is that a problem?

Weaver: Well, it was a problem, but I wouldn’t change that, looking back. The honors program was already established and we already had an honors hall. So Landis Hall was already set up; they had a place to go. They had a Monday night colloquium series. They had small classes, so their honors seminars, honors classes, honors oriented classes. So to make Bryan Hall – there would have been no Bryan Hall – it would have just been an extension of Landis; it would have been the Landis Annex. So to take this program out of the honors domain, since it was an attempt to deal with, as I mentioned before, the students who don’t always get those great advantages, don’t have the small classes and haven’t been recognized as great students. Again,

this notion that maybe we would then hit the people who actually became part of the legislature was kind of a grandiose dream, but it was clearly a hope of getting – again, taking advantage of the fact that students are on campus in a residence facility and bringing something academic into it. So I'd go back to the University of Michigan –

Sellers: So you were willing to take that “Okay, maybe the parents thought they needed a little bit more supervision —.”

Weaver: Again, it wasn't just the parents. There were students who – a student goes off to college, parents probably have a lot to do with regard to which college the student goes to and what their major's going to be and things of that sort. So the parental influence is just one factor here. But if I go back to the University of Michigan notion, the notion was that every student, not just honors students, should have an academic component built into their residential setting.

Sellers: So regardless of what the underlying reason for them being there was, it was a good thing that you were going to do.

Weaver: Right. We were going to bring the academic part of the university into the residence hall. And again, historically – and I think this is true all around – there is a wall between the student services division and the academics, and for the most part they don't interact. So I would still push for a program of this sort. Maybe not specifically Bryan Hall. In fact, it might be better if we had some scuzzy old place that was beat up and whatever, and then say, “Hey, it's kind of dingy, but you're going to have an opportunity to —.” But again, those are fun games to play in the head but I don't know how they would work. But I would think that – and housing people, Rita Moser and others, are not unaware of this – they do have various sorts of presentations that they have in the halls. The hall governments – each has a hall president, they're asked to co-ordinate activities, bring in faculty members for guest talks and things of that sort. So it's not that this is totally unheard of, but again, what we were looking at was that point of making it a real focus of the hall and to see how it worked, and to go from that.

End side A

Weaver: So in discussion with Bruce Bickley, this issue of honors and the competition between the honors program and Bryan Hall, the potential for competition – we put in our brochure (with Bruce's urging) that if a student were accepted in both the honors program and the Bryan Hall program, they had to choose one or the other – they couldn't do both. In fact, our Monday night colloquium series was intentionally set on Monday night because that's when the honors program —. And again, especially in the first year, if the students in the Bryan Hall program – we were trying to do some special new activity and they were being sort of bled off or some of them or all of them off to the honors activities, we wouldn't have had a program that we could have put our hands on. So again, whether it was the best thing to do, it was the only thing that we could do to make it other than just an expansion of the honors program, and go that

direction. The notion – I think it’s still the case that in Cawthon, in Broward, and at Bryan Hall, we never ask for grade point information. So that was one of the major differences. See, one of the things now – to become a freshman at FSU, the average GPA – the average grade point of entering freshmen at Florida State University is now 3.55. The average SAT of entering freshmen is 1200. So there is not a freshman student on campus these days who is not capable. Now again, an average is an average. But admission is so tight at Florida State University, even several years ago we were having 12,000 students apply and we were taking less than half of those. I’m sure they still get 12,000, and I know they’re taking well less than half of those now because of the enrollment cuts. So when you get over 12,000 students apply and you pick maybe 4,000, and you start from the kids that have the highest GPA —. So again, I think in some ways at universities with a lot of competition to get in – we’re not quite the University of Virginia now – but this issue of honor student-non-honor student – the non-honor student is not necessarily a dud. Now there are inattentive students; there are rude students; there are students who have not been properly socialized by their parents. And maybe that is related to grade point. But I think that’s what we saw – there were very bright students who were just a pain in the whatever in Bryan Hall. And it wasn’t the smarts, it was their feeling of entitlement or various other sorts of things. And again, I think in the honors program, the feeling of entitlement had to do more with the grades. I used to do honors seminars years ago, and I finally asked not to be involved in that any more because, once again, honors students feel that they are top of the line. If you ask them in a little honors seminar – again, the honors seminars were S-U graded – they would not work. So I found that there could be lack of energy and oomph anywhere in the system, and that the grade point was not necessarily a factor. But again, with regard to grade point or not grade point, I think that thematically based living-learning programs for first year students are probably the easiest way of getting focused attention. So the music majors-to-be in Cawthon, the fact that they are going to be hanging out with other music majors, that there are practice rooms right in the hall, that there is a couple of good pianos – that really makes it meaningful in a way that students would maybe not die to get in there, but —

Sellers: The diversity of the interests of the students in the Bryan Hall when you teach —

Weaver: Yes, it’s across the gamut.

Sellers: It’s hard to know what to say to reach them because there are so many different focuses.

Weaver: Again, I think it may be an idea before its time – maybe not before its time – it was an idea that came from – it came out of the heads of some very dedicated faculty members – Jim Smith, Ken Goldsby are the two, and Walter Moore particularly. They sincerely believed, based on the students that they often ran into who were working in their laboratories, that had these students been given the opportunity to associate with faculty members in their freshmen or sophomore years, they would have relished it and profited from it.

Sellers: But those were maybe not the run of the mill students.

Weaver: Yes. And see, you're looking backwards; you're getting the students who said, "Boy, if only I had had this experience when I was a freshman —." Well, that would have been great for them.

Sellers: They may not have appreciated it.

Weaver: Well, they may not have, but this is already a very select group of students who find their way into faculty members with research programs in their junior and senior year. So the notion that everybody is out there dying to have this sort of exposure to faculty members. Like my review of programs at other campuses, they were either thematically based or really were sort of dynamic with regard to the – with the social or the living-learning aspect of what was going on in the particular hall. This notion that you could take a wide group of students of all majors and then just give them a little taste of small class-ness or whatever is going to have an effect – again, it may work for some students, but I'm not sure it's cost effective. In fact, I talked to Sandy D'Alemberte – I wrote a memo after two or three years just saying that I really thought that Bryan Hall was not cost effective. The in-house classes, for the most part no one else tried to do five classes a semester of the in-house sort. Broward had, I think, one class it offered in the social sciences. I think the music and education, it may be one class or a certain sort of experience. So again, in terms of getting faculty members to do a mini-college or mini-program here, was again grandiose and fun in certain ways, but not a way that I would try to set up a program like that again. I think either thematic, or like I said, just to have some way in which you sort of energize the students that doesn't rely on them adopting the notion that research opportunities provided by the university are the things that they are really interested in. Because they are typically not interested in that, to their knowledge, at that time.

Sellers: When did you leave the program?

Weaver: Let's see. Dennis started as director in the fall of 2001, so I did '97, '98, '99, and then since Dennis was in London, I actually did the recruitment and the faculty lining-up for the 2000. But then he started in 2001 as director.

Sellers: What have we not covered?

Weaver: From my experience, probably everything. I'll tell you one of the things that – I don't know if you've actually seen this output, but we did track the first year students from the very first year in Bryan Hall, and found comparative groups that we thought we could look at in terms of grade point. And even though we did not select them based on grade point, and we actually matched them on grade point with our cohort groups, overall they did better. They graduated and they did better – they graduated at a higher percentage over the four or five years that we tracked the students who just came in. The other two groups were on-campus and off-

campus groups. And also, they did a little better on the grade point, but it's hard to know —. And again, after that first year, the reputation – the program had a reputation, it started getting back from kids who had been on campus, through their brothers or sisters or people they knew applied to the Bryan Hall program. We got more and more applicants as time went on. And I think more and more they at least knew what we were looking for in their essays. Again, whether they actually confirmed to what their essays – or whether their mother wrote the essays for them — again, that's one of the jokes we've always had was “Geez, sounds like the mother's really writing this one.”

So no, I think you've covered everything that I can provide here. It's great to look back and go through my files again.

End