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Interview with Donal Farley
Interviewer: Douglas Medina

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Douglas Medina: So, I am here with Don Farley and we are at CUNY Central, it's Friday August 16th at 11am. Let's start off with telling me a little bit about yourself, where did you grow up?

Donal Farley: I grew up in Flushing Queens. I went to Catholic schools, elementary, high school, Manhattan College. I did an internship after my junior year at the New York Telephone Company. It was sort of a management-training program. After graduation in 1957, I wound-up not getting a job that I wanted with the phone company but a friend of mine had taken a summer job in the City Office Management and Budget.

He had asked me if I wanted to come with him and I said okay I will do that for the summer. I wound up staying there nine and a half years and then I moved to CUNY in 1967 and retired in 1992. I was asked by the then Chancellor if I would stay on and help my successor. And I did and that was twenty-one years ago and now I am working for my successor's successor.

My first job at CUNY was Executive Assistant to Seymour Hyman, the first CUNY Vice Chancellor for Campus Planning and Development. He hired me out of the City Budget Office to assist him in his newly created position, which was established after the enactment of state legislation in 1966 that created the City University Construction Fund. That legislation basically took the capital construction out of the City Capital Budget and gave CUNY, the CUNY Construction Fund and the State Dormitory

Authority the ability to finance and provide facilities for the CUNY Colleges. It was just for the senior colleges at that time, but in 1972 was expanded to include the community colleges.

Historically, CUNY had great faculty, great students but horrible facilities. There was a great shortage of facilities and the facilities we had were not in very good shape. So following the creation of the State University Construction Fund in 1962 which was fully State funded, with the State providing full support for the SUNY colleges and no support for the City Colleges, this legislation had the City and State share in the cost of the Capital program; fifty-fifty, so it was the first time that significant state money was brought into the Municipal College System.

As I said, Seymour Hyman was the first Vice-Chancellor for Campus Planning and Development. He brought me from the Office of Management and Budget where I had been the City's devil's advocate; restricting the growth of facilities of CUNY because it cost the City money. So my recruitment was basically two fold, I guess. I was knowledgeable about the system but also restricted its facility expansion.

He had been given a mandate to improve CUNY facility situation and I was his Executive Assistant. His successor was a fellow named Peter Spiridon who took over when Hyman went to William Paterson College as its President. Eventually, Spiridon left to become Vice President at William Paterson and then I moved up into the Vice Chancellor position.

Medina: Tell me a little bit more, going back to where you grew up. What was your parents' background?

Farley: My father was a first generation college graduate. His father came over from Ireland; he was a pub owner in the South Bronx. My father went to St Jerome School, graduated from the eighth grade, and got a job as a runner for a dentist. But at the same time he went to Knights of Columbus evening high school.

He graduated from there and then went to Fordham to get a Law degree while he was working as an aide in a mailroom at the law firm. My mother was a stay at home mother as most women were at that time. So I was born in Sunnyside, grew up in Jackson Heights till I was about five and then my father bought a house in Flushing.

Medina: I see. Did you have siblings?

Farley: I had two sisters.

Medina: Sisters and they were all educationally inclined?

Farley: Well with my father education was a very strong thing, because obviously he had gone a hard way through both high school and college and law school. Yes, I went to Manhattan College as I said and my second sister graduated from Notre Dame College in Staten Island which is now St John's. My younger sister did not go to college.

Medina: And what did you major in when you were at Manhattan College?

Farley: Civil Engineering.

Medina: Now you mentioned that you came to CUNY, what did you know about CUNY before you started your work here?

Farley: Well, as I mentioned, I was in OMB for nine and a half years. I guess may be the last six or so of those years I was handling – first as an assistant and then as the Principle Budget Examiner - the Capital Budget of CUNY. So I was very familiar with CUNY. In that context, I knew the first Chancellor at CUNY, John Everett who lasted about a year and then became President of New School for decades, and then Albert Bowker came in and he was the one who hired Seymour Hyman and together they recruited me out of OMB to come here.

Medina: What was it like to be an Administrator at that time when you first arrived?

Farley: At CUNY?

Medina: Yeah at CUNY, what was the culture like?

Farley: It was interesting because Al Bowker was really building a central staff. There had been no real central staff. The Board of Higher Education had I think two senior employees and maybe a couple of secretaries; Counsel to the Board and Administrator of the Board. Arthur Khan was the counsel; Pearl Max was the administrator. Bowker was a Chief Executive Officer with no organization. The Colleges were independent entities in the City budget, so each President would lobby the City and at that time it wasn't so much the City Council, it was the Mayor and the Borough Presidents who controlled the finances.

The college presidents would lobby for what they wanted. The Board was set up with College Committees. So each College Committee would be the

advocate for their particular college. But they basically were competing with each other for resources. There was no central screening or prioritization of their needs. So when I was in OMB, I would meet with each President of the college and negotiate what they would get and then make recommendations to the Budget Director and propose capital budgets annually.

We decided which projects we would go with. There was no real prioritization by the Board. But then when Al Bowker came in, following John Everett. Everett had lasted a year and nobody quite knew why he left. Bowker was brought in from California. And it was a very interesting period. After passage of the Construction Fund legislation, Bowker and a couple of presidents took on the Chairman of the Board and it was a very public dispute.

The Chancellor, his academic vice chancellor and two presidents all resigned publicly. Their dispute was reported in the press on a daily basis. There were a lot of articles on this where Mayor Wagner tried to negotiate a settlement. The reason for the dispute was that the College Presidents and the Chancellor really wanted to run the place without political interference. The Board was basically an arm of City Hall and followed the agenda of the Mayor, who appointed all of its members. After a number of weeks, the chairman resigned and a new chairman acceptable to Bowker was named.

Al Bowker became a very strong and effective leader of the University. A very unassuming kind of guy, not a guy that you thought would have accomplished the things he ultimately did. His public relations person once referred to him as an “unmade bed”. Al would always have his shirt tips sticking out like that, but he was a brilliant political strategist.

Medina: Speaking of being a Political Strategist, can you talk a little bit about your position and how politics affected what you did. I would imagine since you had the resources, it was heavily politicized?

Farley: No. It's very interesting because this fellow Seymour Hyman that I mentioned had been a Graduate Dean at City College and Bowker had recruited him to head this new campus planning and development office. I was his aide and we had no management staff. There was a small technical engineering unit, housed at City College that kind of did a lot of the plans and repair work on the campuses. The selection of Architects probably

came from City hall and this office would negotiate the contract and review the plans, bid out the construction and things like that.

But when Seymour Hyman came in with this new office of campus planning and development, we hired a management firm to help us structure an office that basically wound up with a planning division and a design and construction management division. The office has basically followed that structure all the years following but we were very aware of the history and the politics of it. So we put the office together – and I was his chief aide – I mean it was a very exciting times because we suddenly had this new resource to fund the Capital Program.

There was a lot of freedom, if CUNY wanted to do a project, it would go to the City University Construction Fund Board and if it said okay, then the Dormitory Authority would finance it through bond sales and manage the construction of these facilities. So there no longer the traditional city budget office review, we had a lot of freedom and as I mentioned before, we were five years behind SUNY's expansion. SUNY under Rockefeller had begun a tremendous expansion, all 100% state funded.

There had been no state money for the city colleges, so it was clearly inequitable and the City University Construction Fund legislation was sort of a catch up kind of legislation that gave CUNY an arrangement whereby half the capital support would be from the State . As I indicated, we were very aware of the history and the political interference and so forth. So we set up protective arrangements. We established something called the Architectural Advisory Board and we appointed as its members prominent architects and other credible people. It was a very hard working group. We invited every Architect in the city to submit their credentials to the Advisory Board. Their proposals indicated what sort of college facilities they had designed (libraries, labs, classroom buildings, etc.), whatever their specialties were, if there were any.

And we amassed these large files on all these architects. And it continues to this day whenever we want to hire an architect for a particular job, we will appoint a selection committee of central office and local college people to review proposals. Then, as now, it was a very open participatory system, specifically because we wanted to avoid the history of what had happened in earlier years and select the best firms available.

One of the first things we did during a period from 1967 to 1970 , was hire a master planner for each campus and advised them of an enrollment

projected for 1975 enrolment at each of the then existant campuses. With that as a given, the master planners, with assistance from each college, projected what programs the students would be enrolled in, how many students would be enrolled in each. And we said to the master planner architects, you have a campus, you have existing facilities, our enrolment is going to expand to this, our students may take these classes, so come up with a physical master plan, a development sequence and schedule and a budget estimate.

So we now had a rational way to plan what each campus should be. Now these several master plans were being developed in the late 1960s. Come 1969, just as these plans were being completed, the decision was made to implement Open Admissions. So what happened here was, we had these master plans and had begun a process where we would hire architects to design individual buildings or renovations of buildings, which would take a year or two followed by a three year construction period; meanwhile Open Admissions would begin a year hence but none of these facilities would be ready for four or five years.

So one of my roles when Open Admissions was to sit on a seven person Central Office Committee, charged with planning the implementation of Open Admissions. My particular role was to figure out where are we were going to fit many more students in buildings already overcrowded. I believe we projected nine thousand new freshmen coming into the city colleges.

Medina: Seventy five percent increase.

Farley: Yes it was huge and my job particularly was getting space on a short-term basis. Since the new buildings would not come on line for a number of years, the only alternative was to rent space, which could come on-line on an expedited basis. It was not a question of financial means. The Governor and Mayor were willing to provide the resources. Bowker would meet with the Mayor once a week and with the Governor once a month. So there was Rockefeller and Lindsey who were liberal republicans, supportive of expansion of the City University. The resources were there, we had this new capital support, and there was support on the operating side as well.

So even as designs for new facilities were being advanced, we went into a crash program to rent space and I was the point person. The City Real Estate Department did all our lease negotiations for us, but we had to

identify what we needed, so we worked with the city. The mayor arranged that we could have a person housed in the Commissioner of Real Estate's office, to help find available space for us and so forth. So everybody was together in the same direction and by 1975 twenty percent of the University's physical plant was in rented space.

So even as the master plans were being completed, buildings were being designed; we had this crash program to rent space. And there may be some press coverage on that; I remember somebody did a three part series for the Daily News, where a dean at Brooklyn College and I were debating, I said we will have the space, he would say there is no way you can get the space in time. But we did manage somehow and went through some very difficult times. I don't know if you know City College, the Great Hall upstairs?

Medina: Sure absolutely.

Farley: Well, we built these eight foot high plywood partitions all through the Great Hall , creating several temporary classrooms. You can imagine how difficult it was to teach and learn with voices coming from adjacent classes.

Medina: It was like cubicles

Farley: Yeah. They just shoe horned in students so they could schedule classes and this crash program to create and rent space until 1975. And then came the city's fiscal crisis and we began a crash program to divest of the rented space because it was expensive and not needed for what would turn out to be a shrinking enrollment.

Medina: So what did you personally think about Open Admissions policy, what do you remember about it?

Farley: I really didn't – you know I was in the capital area, the construction area. I really wasn't in on all of that, but I do remember the lot of activism going on; on our campuses, in the communities. I remember at that time the senior colleges were very exclusive, you had to have a ninety-something average and here in the middle of Harlem – you know with the depressed community around - it was very insular.

I think that Open Admissions obviously was a partial response to the pressures of the times. But as I said we were doing these master plans, Bowker was already projecting an expansion of the University. Before I

got here at his urging, the Board had created a number of new community colleges. And again remember we had been a city funded institution. The senior colleges presidents has not encouraged an expansion of the community colleges because they saw it as a dilution of city support – city resources, they though would be going to the community colleges at the expense of the senior colleges. If you look at New York City verses the rest of New York State, there had been a big growth of community colleges outside the city but not within the city. Ultimately that turned around, and I remember all at once we were having one community college after another created. With Open Admissions however, there may have been and I am sort of speculating, an idea that those new students would go to a community college but the seniors would continue to be selective. The communities didn't buy that idea.

Medina: Why do you think that was, why did it become such a hot explosive topic; Open Admission?

Farley: Well, before Open Admissions there was a lot of have and the have-nots. Living in the middle of Harlem, my kid can't go to school there but we have all these other kids coming in with ninety averages from other places. So I think there was that, and I think there was a lot of political pressure from the minority communities. The University tried to meet the need. For instance, Hostos was created in the South Bronx, and that was sort of the Hispanic College; Medgar Evers was created in Brooklyn as the Black College.

And actually it was interesting when the site was being looked for Kingsborough Community College. There was a big push to put it in mid-Brooklyn, Bed-Stuyvesant, in that area. But it got put at where it is now in Manhattan Beach and there, the local community was pressing for it, why? Not because they wanted a community college there, but there was a lot of talk on putting public housing there, so the wealthy Manhattan Beach community supported “the lesser of two evils”.

Medina: Wow, I didn't know that piece actually. That is fascinating.

Farley: But as part of that, it was agreed that Kingsborough would have a branch in downtown Brooklyn and there it would be looked at as a seedling for a potential new college, which was sort of a concession to the Black community. And that branch ultimately became Medgar Evers so that is what happened. But there was a lot of other things going on – the

construction program became sort of a target as well, because construction jobs were for the white union workers.

So there was a lot of pressure to get the minority community in, both as contractors and as workers. There were a lot of the MBE programs – similar things, the Unions opened up. There were also a lot of activist groups that called themselves names like the five per centers or something – we'll get you a job but you have got to pay me. There was a lot of that stuff and it was not pretty, a lot of violence and stuff like that.

Medina: It seems that when you look at that history, Open Admissions was – and now that you mentioned construction work and the role of labor, it was driven or the Civil Rights movements fueled it?

Farley: Definitely.

Medina: And that was the overall context for what was happening at that time

Farley: Definitely, no question about it. And I remember we had an Academic Vice Chancellor here that Al Bowker had appointed named Timothy Healy. Tim went on from here as the Academic Vice Chancellor to become President of Georgetown. He was a Jesuit priest. After Georgetown he became President of the New York Public Library. He passed away a few years back, while still heading the Library system.

I recall he and Seymour Hyman went to the Bronx High School of Science to explain to their PTA the advent of Open Admissions. They were booed off the stage. Calls came in from donors saying “I am not going to contribute anymore to City University, you are lowering the standards”. So it was very tough, a lot of opposition but on the other hand there was a lot of support. And again it was initially thought that the community college would be an entry for this population; the population didn't see it that way, the leaders didn't see it that way. We want to go to City College or to Hunter College; we don't want to just get put into a community college. So there was a lot of that going on and Lindsey and Rockefeller were put in the middle of that political firestorm. So they were very supportive of Open Admissions.

Medina: Do you think that Open admissions run parallel to the mission of CUNY, the overall mission of CUNY?

Farley: Yes and No. I mean, yes, I think in terms of opening the university to anyone – if you look at the old Townsend Harris days and the creation of

the Free Academy, things like that, you know open to everyone academically able regardless of financial means. On the other hand the academic requirement was in competition with some of that. We want to let everybody in but they've got to be smart, so there was the remediation effort that came in with Open Admissions. Everybody acknowledged that many of these new students really weren't prepared, so there was a large effort to bring them up to speed. Interesting, one thing I always remember that the greatest ethnic beneficiary of Open Admissions was Italian-Americans.

Medina: What was your understanding of CUNY's mission at that time? I mean you had been here for four or five years.

Farley: Well, more like two. That is '67 to '69. I really didn't focus on that and I really didn't think anything of it, I guess from where I sat. My job was a technician; you know, where are we going to house all these students? Everything else was sort of anecdotal. And I think the policy decision had been made so everybody around was trying to figure out – the seven man committee – where we are going to get all these teachers from? Where we are going to fit them? On the other hand there was money there to employ faculty, rent space, etc. so...

Medina: It was a practical aspect to it, right? making it...

Farley: Yeah, very much so. I mean how do you find and hire all these new faculty?

Medina: And the resources for remediation as well.

Farley: Yeah, but we did get a lot of resources because if you remember anything about John Lindsey, he was very pro, very ultra-liberal republican. And he would walk into the minority communities where nobody else would normally be there, with his tie off and everybody embraced him because he was making things happen for heretofore neglected communities.

Medina: So before you mentioned that there was both support and opposition to Open Admissions, do you recall which groups or individuals opposed it and those who supported it?

Farley: Well minority communities did very much so. Opposition was from the more conservative groups, again the parents of the Bronx High school of science students, a lot of whose kids went to City College Engineering and so forth, so you're diluting the program. My smart kid worked to get it in

there and you are going to throw all these other people in there; one is smart and one not prepared.

So it was that kind of thing as well as the older generation donors, the wealthier people who had gone to Baruch or City College's downtown business campus or whatever they called it, they were conservative and they saw this as a watering down. They were proud of the fact that you had to have a ninety-two average to get into Queens College and things like that.

Medina: So, it was that the belief that drove opposition, the standards alone or were there other beliefs that people talked about to support their arguments?

Farley: What do you mean?

Medina: So people who opposed Open Admission said that the standards would be watered down, so was that the main belief driving opposition, the watering down of standards?

Farley: I think so. Yeah. I mean as far as I know. I wasn't personally in the battlefield. I just remember Tim Healy and Seymour Hyman coming back from being booed off the stage at Bronx Science. I think Hyman had also done some TV appearances where he was attacked. Some of them took to late-night talk shows and they were defending it against very vocal opponents.

Medina: So ultimately which groups do you think were the most influential in shaping Open Admissions?

Farley: Which groups?

Medina: Or individuals really shaped the form that Open Admissions took.

Farley: Bowker was the leader and he had a number of people in the university who were behind him. There was a woman named (I believe) Myra Shaunessy I remember, she was a leader in developing remediation curricula. There were others on the academic side who really a lot of effort into determining what kind of remediation, how do you remediate Math. I mean this whole industry was created within the university run centrally but also at the campuses. I just think it was sort of a given at that point that you had how do you make it happen successfully.

Medina: So what about the activism? Because there was a lot of activism, at one point City College was shut down by student activist right? Do you think that played a role?

Farley: Oh I think all that pressures did. And again Lindsey was out there, looking for that community to support him, he was responding to them. So he told the Real estate Commissioner to give us somebody – let us put somebody in their office to help to be able to implement this. I think that the whole political leaders, the majority of the political leaders certainly the minority political leaders were pushing for this.

Medina: Now CUNY was free right? Or State and City Fund.

Farley: That is a misnomer you know. You say CUNY was free but it was free to the full time senior college students. Community colleges were never free, it was just interesting. Community colleges, when I started here there was a three hundred dollars tuition, the city kicked in three hundred, and the state three hundred. The idea was there would be split three ways but it was never intended for the community colleges to be free. The senior colleges, the full time students with the ninety plus averages were free, but all the evening students had to pay tuition, part-time students had to pay tuition. So I remember – do you know Michael Arena?

Medina: Yeah sure.

Farley: Mike and I had a lot of interesting conversations about this because – just on a side bar here; the City University Construction Fund, as I said the city and state paid half of the annual repayment of the bonds that financed the program. It was another restriction, and it was one of the few restrictions on advancing this program as a policy matter that the annual debt service, the principal and interest on all the bonds sold for the program, could not exceed the annual revenue collected by the university.

So the university collected fees called the Instructional and Non-instructional Fees and they amounted to at the time of free tuition, something like twenty-five to thirty million dollars a year at the senior colleges. So what do you mean by free tuition? Where did that money come from, you know, so after I explained this to him, he got really into researching the history. So he is the one you might want to talk to about free tuition really being sort of a misnomer, because it was free to a very select group of students.

Medina: Now the bulk of students who were admitted under the Open Admissions policy in 1970, they benefited from “free tuition” right? What do you think was the relationship between Open Admissions and the imposition of tuition ultimately, if there was any relationship between the two?

Farley: I don’t think there was. The problem with free tuition really came after the city fiscal crisis in the mid seventies, because if you would remember the famous Daily News headline “Ford to City: Drop Dead”. That was a trigger for imposition of tuition - this profligate university. Students can go for nothing; we have all this terrible fiscal crisis and so forth. And at that time Mayor Beame was mayor and a number of the board members resigned and it was a very difficult time for the university because to charge – even though many students already paid, free tuition had a very symbolic meaning.

So everybody agreed in city hall that we have to get rid of free tuition. There had to be a charge because city hall was under great pressure to demonstrate it was fiscally responsible in order to get federal help, the Board of Trustees were equally adamant because there was a lot of pressure on them. So ultimately the Board would not stand down, the university ran out of money (because city budget assumed this tuition would be charged) so the university was closed down for two weeks at the end of the fiscal year.

Al Giardino was Chair of the Board and he and a number of others members resigned. Beame then appointed people who then voted for a charge for tuition, so that is how it happened, it was driven by the city fiscal crisis; it really had nothing to do with Open Admissions.

Medina: What did you think about that; did you feel that it was inevitable that tuition would be imposed because of the fiscal crisis? What was your sense?

Farley: I really didn’t – I was a victim of it. I was laid off for two weeks. I didn’t really focus on that.

Medina: Was there any activism behind it, in terms of people who opposed the imposition of tuition, do you recall faculty, students, and community members resisting that?

Farley: Oh I think there was a lot of noise about it because the Board was responding to that. There weren’t just sitting there thinking what was the right thing. Many people were saying ‘how could you vote tuition’. So there was a lot of pressure on the Board to not cave in, you’re trustees of

this tradition and so forth. I think that came from anybody who benefitted from free tuition at the university, Open Admissions beneficiaries or not.

Medina: So do you think that if the fiscal crisis – and I am asking you to speculate here – if the fiscal crisis didn't occur, would free tuition have continued on, for as long as it could have?

Farley: I would guess yeah. And again as I said to you it's sort of a fiction because it was a percent of the university enrollment who went free. The students, the more privileged students were free; those who had to work had to pay tuition, the night students which were a major component of the university. A lot of people went part-time or at night and whether they were smart enough or not they still had to work. But I think it was a very symbolic issue.

Medina: Exactly, and I think that from what I have read, even alumni actually wanted to oppose the imposition of tuition. They felt it was a tradition that really defined CUNY in many ways. I have always wondered...

Farley: And by the way, I think the imposition of tuition was coupled with financial aid for the poorer students.

Medina: And there was a lot of mobilization by minority politicians as well. They wanted to make sure that students who didn't have the wherewithal would be covered by the state and the city for that matter.

Farley: Right

Medina: So ultimately do you think that there was a connection between Open Admissions, the imposition of tuition and how New York City was changing at that time between '69 and '76?

Farley: I think the imposition of tuition really wasn't part of that. I think it was directly related to the fiscal crisis in the city. I really don't think it was related.

Medina: So when you look back who benefited the most from Open Admissions? It was the Italian-Americans?

Farley: Being the largest cohort, yeah – not blacks or Hispanics as was the general perception. I didn't follow it after but I thought that that was surprising thing that has stuck in my head for all these years.

Medina: So what about the imposition of tuition, did it impact enrollment? My understanding is that it did.

Farley: It did, yeah. And as I said, what happened was we first had this major program to acquire rented space and it became twenty percent of our inventory. So when the fiscal crisis hit, it wasn't solved by the imposition of tuition, CUNY's budget kept getting cut, along with other city agencies as well. So enrollment started to go down, and we had to decide how to cut the budget of the university.

The decision was "people before things", so what suffered greatly was facility maintenance, support staff and I guess adjunct faculty. The idea was you attempt to preserve as much as possible the jobs of the full time faculty. And I don't know whether any of the full time tenured faculty were retrenched. I don't think anybody was let go on but enrollment did go down. So you get rid of all the space that you are paying a lot of money for, people before things.

My job was how do you get rid of all those rented spaces, because there were five year leases, ten year leases to run. Therefore we spent a lot of time going around, I had some old friends in the city budget office who helped me out a little bit. We had rented the old St John's campus in downtown Brooklyn; we had been paying rent to St John's for two major buildings which was a branch campus of Brooklyn College to meet some of this tremendous enrollment expansion. So now how do we get rid of those, the city was looking for welfare offices and it's kind of interesting, all of the welfare recipients all over Brooklyn went downtown Brooklyn where there was office space.

So I got some friend of mine to help us save a million dollars a year by taking these for social service or welfare offices and we abandoned those buildings without penalty. As leases expired, we let them expire, we didn't renew them and we shrank the budget for rent significantly to help accommodate some of these big cuts to preserve what we had in other areas. We also got more efficient because that was kind of the beginning of energy efficiency, what can you do to reduce energy, anything that was not personnel related we would shrink it as much as possible to minimize the lay-offs.

Medina: But it was a pretty intense moment in time. I mean, people were afraid, what is going to happen to me.

Farley: Right. Very much so, I mean it was a very bleak time in the city and it was the so call White Flight; people were moving out of the city, the big tax payer base was leaving, I mean a very depressing time. But obviously...

Medina: So let me ask you some closing questions now. It seems to me that Open Admissions and the imposition of tuition, both policies raised questions about equality, access, standards, and excellence. Do you think those issues are still resonating with CUNY today?

Farley: I think the tuition issue is catchy and I saw Bill Thompson's – No, John Liu's press release – but I don't think it's really significant with the companion of TAP and Pell and that sort of thing. I don't think the tuition is as much the issue. The academic standard is the big issue and it's an issue that runs down to pre K. I mean students aren't ready, how do we improve – this is probably an age old question, how you can improve the educational system to better enable students to succeed.

Medina: And it seems to me also that in a more general sense there is this tension in CUNY's history between meritocracy and democracy. In the sense, that meritocracy represents the standards that are set, and sometimes they seem arbitrary right?

Farley: Mm-hmm...

Medina: But they are not when you really look at the policies. And then democratic movements such as the one we saw in 1969 where the Black students really taking charge or trying to take charge, what do you think about that? Is there a tension between the two? Do we see that today?

Farley: Yeah, there has got to be, I think. I don't know, I mean anything that becomes exclusionary for whatever reason is going to cause a problem. I don't see it with the intensity that used to be.

Medina: Why do you think that is? That is an interesting observation.

Farley: Well I think there has been – I don't know. It's your own individual perception of it but I think there is this less discrimination today. I mean people don't think twice of living in integrated neighborhoods. I know when I was a kid there was only one black person I knew who worked in where I lived in Flushing, in Queens Borough Hill near Booth Memorial Hospital, now New York hospital. The only black person that I knew was somebody who worked in a Chinese laundry as an assistant.

But now there is much more integration of people and I think that that stereotype perception is not what it was before. Also I think there is a lot of people in the minority communities who have benefited from education at CUNY or other places, they say wait a minute, I want standards too, I

don't want my kids to just get a degree because they give degrees in school. So I think we have evolved, and who knows in another generation that you see much more assimilation of people, mixing of people; It's not the intense venomous kind of fear that – maybe you could argue differently with stop-and-frisk but I don't know.

Medina: Or even pathways. I am thinking about pathways, it has raised a lot of concerns particularly from faculty and students.

Farley: Right, who we're saying that you are making it easier now for students to move. And I think that sort of – I can see that tension, I can see both sides of that. But sometimes I know the faculty make noise about it but I don't see the same intensity. I don't see it like in those days, students taking over the Board meeting and locking the door and Seymour Hyman being a very really smart guy telling the students there is a difference between demonstrating and kidnapping. I mean there were really scary days, I was – a couple of times I sat in the building with Jay Hershenson and the two of us were there all night, protecting our turf.

Medina: Don, is there anything that I have not asked you about that you would like to tell me?

Farley: Nothing that comes to mind – I mean I love talking about the history and all that – I know what you are doing and I think the other one you might want to speak with is Meghan Moore-Wilk.

Medina: Tell me her name again?

Farley: Meghan Moore-Wilk. And she is on the CUNY facilities staff – she is at 57th Street. But she has a long history at CUNY.

Medina: Great, as an Administrator?

Farley: Yeah. She is the Director of Space Planning.

Medina: Excellent, anyone else that you can think of?

Farley: Who is around?

Medina: I know, that is one of the challenges in this type of work. Well if you think of anyone don't hesitate to contact me.

Farley: And as you know, if you have any follow up questions give me a ring.

Medina: Absolutely, that would be great if I can do that.

Farley: Absolutely, because I kind of love doing this and I was doing it with another graduate student. She was more interested in the facility history side – I even forget her name. She was going to follow up but she never did, but we had some good conversations about the history of buildings at CUNY.

Medina: Sure, I am interested in that too because it speaks to the funding aspect of it and the relationship between acquiring space throughout New York City and the real-estate industry in New York City; and the relationship between the two. What is the relationship between finance capital, real state interest and CUNY and CUNYs history?

Farley: Well real estate interest, I am not sure I understand – you know we are a big builder in the city, we acquire facilities. One of the things I am doing in retirement is I kind of a point person on housing projects. So we have been able to develop those which I find fascinating because we are doing it with no tax money. The revenue coming in from students paying rent, pays for the repayment of the bonds and the operating cost of the dorms.

So it's self-supporting and we are doing our fourth one right now at Staten Island and hopefully it's going to have students moving in a week from Sunday. We haven't yet got our occupancy certificate, down to the wire and sweating it out with four hundred and fifty students that we're moving in, but these have been fascinating projects.

And these again are a finance and real estate issues we have been dealing with. I am part of a four person team working on public private partnerships. Jen Friedman next-door is the lead person on it and it's kind of our fun thing. Because it's very innovative creative stuff and you try to do it, leveraging whatever value we have in our real estate. The dorms have worked because we have land on the campus that we don't have to pay for, so the numbers work. If we have to acquire or someone acquires a piece of property, then that cost has to get factored into the rent that students pay.

The Graduate Center – and I don't know if you know the dorm they have there; that was a thirty million dollar project. But the Graduate Center contributed fifteen million so the numbers worked because we only had to finance fifteen million. And that is a very successful project, it's full, it's got a waiting list.

Medina: And beautiful accommodations too, I mean the space is nice.

Farley:

Yeah, that really worked that well and then that was part of a much more interesting one because we had the School of Social work on 79th. And that originally was a donation from a fellow named Silverman, who was a big supporter of Hunter's social work program and he contributed a lot of money. He actually built the building and he leased it for a dollar a year for a hundred years.

And we had been there for like forty years, he has died, passed along the facility to – I have forgotten the name of the organization; it's a non-profit. And the woman who heads it was saying 'I have such a valuable real-estate, I technically own it but I am getting a dollar a year for the next sixty years; how about we work out a deal with CUNY that we sell the building and relocate it somewhere else. So we built the new Social Work building at 3rd Avenue at a 119th Street and we acquired a larger piece of property there.

Some public money went in but it was a brand new facility, much more in a better location for the purpose. I mean, Social Services building at Lexington at 79th; we really saw that it was a better fit so we built the new building up in East Harlem. Brodsky worked the deal with us where he had to build us a new facility, we have some public money in it and he contributed forty million to the project and he gave the community services owner twenty million.

So we built this new building but he couldn't get possession of 79th till he completed this for us. So he did, and as part of that deal he acquired a larger piece of property than was necessary because it was in one-ownership and we had to buy the whole thing. So here we were sitting on an empty piece property and that is where we put Graduate Center residence and we didn't have to pay for the site.

We had fifteen million from the Graduate Center Foundation, so we financed the other fifteen million and we got Brodsky, while he was building Social Work to have the same contractors build that; and there were efficiencies by doing that since they were already mobilized on the site. And the residence was full up from day one.

Medina:

Wow. You know the whole history of space at CUNY is just fascinating in itself. I think that deserves its own project too, I mean there is so much to say about it.

Farley:

Yeah, that is why it's fun and Iris Weinshall is the Vice-Chancellor overseeing these activities. She is next door here. So the staff we have is,

Jen, myself and Dana Sunshine across the hall and a bright young woman named Meghan Mulgrew and we develop these public private partnerships.

Everybody else is over in our 57th Street offices but I believe Iris loves the kind of stuff we are doing. It's not that I would say her Office's major work of project implementation is boring but these projects are very creative. We are doing an interesting one with Sloan Kettering and Hunter College on the East Side. The city had issued an RFP for the development of a site which had formerly had a Dept. of Sanitation garage. The east side site formerly had a sanitation garage, which the RFP required to be built within a new building or elsewhere within the district. So Sloan Kettering came to us and said "you have a site down at Brookdale where we could put the sanitation garage rather have it up here and we would share the site with Hunter.

And a deal was negotiated where we got a part of the east side site , we got a hundred million dollars from the city because that was the difference between just giving them a part of the site for the sanitation garage site or all of it. These things together are fascinating. It's really interesting stuff.

Medina:

Excellent, that is why you are still here. It's been a real pleasure Don. I really appreciate this.

[AUDIO END]