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1 INTERVIEW OF BLAINE BROWNELL, 1994

2 BLAKE HAILEY: Today's date is
3 February 28th, 1994. I'm Blake Hailey, and we're
4 pleased to have with us Dr. Blaine Brownell, the
5 Provost for University of North Texas with us today.

6 We're making this videotape in the
7 Biomed Communications Center of the Gibson D. Lewis
8 library, at the University of North Texas Health
9 Science Center in Fort Worth.

10 Now, Dr. Brownell, after saying all
11 of that, I'd like to turn over to you and ask you a
12 couple questions. I'd like to start out with your --
13 maybe some of your prior background and experience in
14 kind of leading up to your time at UNT.

15 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, my degree
16 is a Ph.D. in American history, specialization in
17 urban history and my first teaching position was at
18 Perdue University in Indiana, and then I spent 16
19 years at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a
20 number of academic and administrative positions. And
21 then in 1990, I came to the University of -- of North
22 Texas.

23 BLAKE HAILEY: What -- could you also
24 describe a little bit of what a Provost for the
25 University of North Texas -- what your duties are

1 there?

2 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: It's -- the
3 Provost is, for one of a better term, the number two
4 person at the University who shares the council of
5 vice presidents and acts for the President in his
6 absence. The Provost has, in my case, also the title
7 of vice-president for academic affairs. So reporting
8 to me are all the academic units in the campus,
9 including the library and all the support services.

10 BLAKE HAILEY: What were some of your
11 goals when you came to -- to UNT in regards to that
12 University as well as the thoughts on what was then
13 TCOM?

14 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, when I --
15 this is, of course, the first time I've ever been a
16 Provost. And I have been both a graduate dean at one
17 time and a -- and a dean of social behavioral sciences
18 before. And a couple -- I had a couple of center
19 directorships so I'd been -- I'd been obviously
20 working my way toward vice presidency.

21 When I came to North Texas, I was
22 attracted by the area, by the opportunity that the
23 University had because of its location, because of its
24 broad array of programs, especially at the doctoral
25 level. And I remember I was very impressed to visit

1 what was then TCOM, and to see the facilities here in
2 Fort Worth, and to see this very solid urban base that
3 this institution had here in one of the two major
4 cities in the metroplex.

5 BLAKE HAILEY: Did you have some
6 ideas as what you wanted to see the Health Science
7 Center, or TCOM at that time, do.

8 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: It's
9 interesting because at the University of Alabama at
10 Birmingham, while I was -- obviously, my academic
11 appoint was in the history department, I had been dean
12 of the graduate school. And in that capacity, I had
13 responsibility for oversight over the graduate
14 programs in the campus, most of which were in the bio
15 medical sciences.

16 BLAKE HAILEY: Uh-huh.

17 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: And that was,
18 of course -- contained a very large and successful
19 allopathic medical school as well as an extremely
20 successful clinical center and research center, with
21 well over a hundred million dollars of peer review
22 grant funding. And so I was very curious about
23 TCOM and what it was, where it fit in the panoply of
24 medical institutions, and I consulted with some of my
25 colleagues in Birmingham about it, but I was -- I had

1 been somewhat prepared before coming here to see the
2 potential for a major Health Science Center and all of
3 its constituent units and the impact that it could
4 make on the local community in the region.

5 BLAKE HAILEY: Did you feel that
6 there was a need to help gain community support in
7 Denton for TCOM to become a Health Science Center?
8 And if so, what types of things did you try to work
9 with?

10 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: I think the --
11 when I first came here of course, I was mainly
12 concerned with trying to just get everything straight
13 the way it was. But I anticipated eagerly working
14 with the Health Science Center and this relationship
15 came especially to fruition after Dr. Ivan Cohen
16 became the vice president here at the medical
17 school -- and -- and the dean.

18 And it was around that time that we
19 started -- in fact, in the interview process for his
20 position, that I think a lot of the discussions that I
21 -- that I first encountered concerning the Health
22 Science Center took place. The larger, broader,
23 long-range potential for TCOM.

24 BLAKE HAILEY: So that was kind of
25 one of your thoughts in searching for a candidate, was

1 someone who wanted to help further this along, then,
2 this Health Science Center idea.

3 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: That -- yes.

4 And -- and also the correlative to that, which was the
5 fostering of the relationship with the -- with the
6 University.

7 BLAKE HAILEY: Were there any other
8 events or things you can think of that helped drawing
9 support for the Health Science Center as you worked
10 through this process?

11 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, we were
12 already aware, and I was soon made aware when I got
13 here, of the -- the research activity that was already
14 going on, and also the training of graduate students
15 that was already going on down here under the auspices
16 of the degrees that the University of North Texas had
17 actually conducted by the faculty here, many of whom
18 had, of course, at one time been faculty at the
19 University. So there was already the -- the curdle
20 for the additional programs that would actually make
21 this medical school into a -- into a Health Science
22 Center and the future of those programs and how we
23 would manage to -- to secure those programs here in
24 Fort Worth, while really not losing program authority
25 up in Denton was one of my first challenges. Because

1 that required not only a lot of negotiations between
2 Fort Worth and Denton, but also with the coordinating
3 board in Austin.

4 BLAKE HAILEY: So the outcome, sounds
5 like, was it successful, then, from that vantage
6 point?

7 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, now it
8 looks like it should have been obvious to everybody
9 from the beginning and that everybody just rolled merrily
10 along but there were some fits and starts, and -- I
11 think from the University's side, there was the notion
12 that the Health Science Center had a nice ring to it,
13 but it was not entirely -- we -- weren't entirely sure
14 what this -- what this meant, or what the implications
15 were, and what the opportunities for collaboration
16 would be. In fact, I think beyond just the notion of
17 what a Health Science Center is and the potential it
18 has, we're still not entirely certain where this
19 particular institution will go and how it will
20 develop.

21 BLAKE HAILEY: So there's still some
22 problems with growing as you go through and work
23 through some of these changes between the two
24 Universities, then, I guess there will be some trouble
25 times here and there.

1 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well,
2 challenges --

3 BLAKE HAILEY: Challenges.

4 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: -- we'll say,
5 certainly not compared to anything truly serious.
6 That's for sure.

7 BLAKE HAILEY: Why do you think it
8 was necessary for the growth and success of TCOM to
9 become this Health Science Center?

10 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: I think one of
11 the things, frankly, was the -- the increasingly
12 apparent fact that TCOM was one of the few
13 freestanding medical professional schools in the state.

14 BLAKE HAILEY: Uh-huh.

15 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: And with the --
16 the designation by Texas A&M of its medical school as
17 the Health Science Center, for no other reason, that
18 left TCOM out by itself. It's also increasingly
19 apparent that in order to -- especially from an
20 educational perspective, to do what needs to be done
21 nowadays just relying on one first professional degree
22 is not -- is not sufficient.

23 Even within a single University, to
24 have a -- just a separate school of medicine, it's
25 difficult not to have the various supporting programs

1 in allied health and public health and et cetera. But
2 to have a -- essentially a separate institution with
3 its own President, with just only one first
4 professional degree, was not -- was not adequate. And
5 so it was almost essential that -- that it have the
6 capacity to become more complex and to -- especially
7 to serve this very large urban area.

8 BLAKE HAILEY: How do you see this
9 Health Science Center being different from the other,
10 I believe there are seven medical schools or health
11 science centers in Texas. How do you see this one as
12 -- or what does this one have to offer that is
13 different from the rest of them.

14 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: It's -- of
15 course, for one thing, it's an osteopathic medical
16 school. And that carries many advantages, especially
17 in terms of some of the new developments and community
18 health and in public health and preventive medicine,
19 and then in general practice.

20 Many of the other medical centers,
21 including the one that I came from, and obviously UT
22 Southwestern is another example, have thrived on the
23 bases of what you might called the "Old medicine" and
24 boy, there was nothing better than that when times
25 were good, with very significant grant activity, large

1 gifts from individuals and corporations, major
2 budgets, high visibility, clinical programs. But all
3 of that now is -- is being called into significant
4 question by the recent developments in health care
5 reform and in terms of the infancies of how we're
6 going to pay for that. So I think the biggest
7 distinctions with this Health Science Center is that,
8 number one, it's relatively new. It has a -- an
9 excellent facility base. It's got an excellent
10 location in the City of Fort Worth. It's positioned
11 very well in the metroplex. And it should be on the
12 cutting edge of a lot of the new developments in
13 medical education and in health care generally.

14 BLAKE HAILEY: So I guess the health
15 care reform and all that is a big -- a big concern of
16 yours or of the Health Science Center. You really
17 have to watch that, it sounds like, to see where the
18 Health Science Center goes next.

19 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: It -- it's
20 certainly a concern of everybody, even more down here
21 than up in Denton, as you might imagine. Trying to
22 make sure that the that the primary responsibility for
23 -- for education and research can be carried out in a
24 quality way with all the many changes that are -- that
25 are taking place. In that regard, I think it's a real

1 advantage that this particular Health Science Center
2 does not have its own hospital, because that's going
3 to be a serious burden in many other centers,
4 particularly since the extra funding for medical
5 education, it does not look like it's going to be
6 forthcoming.

7 BLAKE HAILEY: So most of the medical
8 schools have a -- I guess, a major hospital associated
9 with them.

10 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Many do. Not
11 -- not all. But many do. Especially the largest
12 ones.

13 BLAKE HAILEY: So it's possible that
14 those that don't, or have some small relationship may
15 do better through this upcoming situation?

16 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, it's --
17 as -- hospitals have obviously get all their resources
18 from the fees that they charge and other support which
19 they receive, and is -- there's a tremendous break put
20 on a lot of the reimbursement mechanisms in order to
21 keep the health care cost down, the hospitals are
22 going to get squeezed more than any other single
23 entity.

24 BLAKE HAILEY: So, in a sense, we're
25 in pretty good shape in that respect, too.

1 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Yeah.

2 BLAKE HAILEY: Where do you -- why do
3 you think this was the right time for the Health
4 Science Center proposal to go through? Do you think
5 there could have been a -- maybe later, earlier time?
6 Why did you decide on this particular moment?

7 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: I think the
8 dynamic really was that -- that -- that the time had
9 come. It -- we would have been left as being the only
10 medical school in Texas not part of a Health Science
11 Center.

12 BLAKE HAILEY: Uh-huh.

13 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: And it was also
14 clear that -- that in terms of the staged development
15 that TCOM had reached, that it needed the authority to
16 offer other degrees in association with the first
17 professional degree in order to really expand and
18 develop to meet the needs of the area. So it was not
19 all together. Certain, given the approval processes
20 we had to go through, given the legislative battle
21 that we had to wage, that the time really would come.
22 Although all of us agreed that it was inevitable. It
23 was absolutely inevitable. But I think that it was
24 really part of a natural process that -- that both
25 institutions had reached a stage in their planning and

1 their thinking where this was the next logical step.

2 And I think Dr. Cullen's arrival here tended to

3 confirm that, because his experience in other parts of

4 the country convinced him completely that this was the

5 -- the most important thing other than securing

6 appropriate hospital affiliations for our medical

7 students. Those are the two highest priority items

8 that he had.

9 BLAKE HAILEY: How has the

10 relationship been between TCOM and the UNT faculty

11 over the years? It seems like -- it looks like it's

12 been, you know, pretty good over the past few years.

13 Has it always been doing well?

14 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: It's -- it's

15 been an interesting marriage, and it is a marriage. I

16 mean, we do bear the same name. I think in the very

17 beginning the -- the University was of critical

18 importance to TCOM. And, in fact, as you -- as you

19 know, the first two years of -- of essentially

20 training for the medical students was conducted up in

21 Denton.

22 BLAKE HAILEY: Right.

23 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: And I think in

24 a relatively short time, all that activity, of course,

25 not only shifted here in Fort Worth, but given the

1 construction of new facilities, given the migration of
2 some of those North Texas faculty down to Fort Worth
3 to become TCOM faculty, given the many other strides
4 that the medical school has made, that relationship
5 changed very fundamentally. So I'm sure there were
6 some people along the way who were used to having this
7 -- this poor relative in Fort Worth that they were
8 trying to help out. Then all of a sudden, the poor
9 relative had grown and matured and -- and now is
10 competing with them for research grants and for
11 faculty employments.

12 And so there was -- there was
13 tension. And there were arguments over who was
14 receiving at, you know, whether adequate funding was
15 being received for doing this or doing that. But I
16 think there was a -- that underlying all of that was a
17 sense that the two relations -- the two institutions
18 were joined by their -- there reporting the same
19 border regions, by the reporting the same
20 chancellor, and I think even more than that, to the
21 sense of possibility of what the medical school could
22 -- could become. So I think the relationship had been
23 solid, although you -- you have -- even on -- when a
24 medical school is located on the same campus as a
25 University, there are differences in culture between

1 the professional culture and a -- and a -- say an
2 academic culture, and between the kind of research
3 activities that faculty conduct in a medical school or
4 professional school environment as opposed to a
5 general University environment. There's salary
6 differentials, there are -- there's all kinds of
7 things that can create some tension. But I don't
8 think that any of -- any of those things between North
9 Texas and TCOM are really unusual or -- or are out of
10 the -- out of the ordinary. In fact, you could make
11 the argument that under the circumstances, the
12 relationships have been remarkably good.

13 BLAKE HAILEY: I think -- sound like,
14 to me, then, that having a medical school in Fort
15 Worth versus having on Denton campus is probably a
16 better scenario for everyone all the way around --
17 except for you having to drive back and forth between
18 the two?

19 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, it's a --
20 I like to come to Fort Worth. I honestly do. So it's
21 a -- a -- no. I think it -- it -- it enhances the
22 capability of the -- of the total institution, if you
23 want to look at it that way. It was kind of a mini
24 system to have us located here in Fort Worth as well
25 as in -- as in Denton. And of course, eventually, I

1 think we have under process right now, we will have
2 technology in -- better technology established so that
3 we can communicate without having to drive up down the
4 highway.

5 BLAKE HAILEY: That will be nice, I
6 think. What other decisions or concerns that you have
7 to make and think about when this proposal started to
8 make UNT or TCOM the UNT Health Science Center, were
9 some pretty tough choices that had to be made on your
10 end?

11 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: No not really,
12 except the -- the first step that would take place
13 when -- after the Health Science Center was
14 designated, the first programmatic step would be to
15 secure independent separate Ph.D. programs at the
16 Health Science Center. It was necessary to -- for it
17 to become a Health Science Center because without
18 that, there would be no place, frankly, to locate
19 these Ph.D. programs, which are graduate programs and
20 not professional programs. But once that structure
21 was available, then the first step would be to locate
22 those Ph.D. programs here. Now, those programs were
23 North Texas programs.

24 BLAKE HAILEY: Uh-huh.

25 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: The students

1 registered at North Texas, the formula funding for
2 their courses they taught came to North Texas, and
3 North Texas still had faculty members that
4 participated in them. So, to find a way where those
5 programs could, in effect, shift down here without
6 eliminating UNT's ability to continue to pursue
7 education in those areas was a -- was a challenge.
8 And we had to go to the coordinating board and frankly
9 just told them what our problem was to see what help
10 they could -- they could give us in making this
11 possible at a time when the duplication of programs
12 was under great scrutiny throughout the state, but I'm
13 pleased to say that we were able to accomplish a
14 transition that was -- that was smooth, there were
15 some rough points, but, you know, essentially a smooth
16 transition. And North Texas continues to offer
17 graduate work in those areas. And now the Health
18 Science Center has Ph.D. programs in its own right,
19 which is absolutely appropriate given its stage of
20 development.

21 BLAKE HAILEY: So you achieved all
22 the goals you needed to, then, it sounds like.

23 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, we got
24 that worked out. That's true.

25 BLAKE HAILEY: Okay. How does the

1 Health Science Center creation change the mission of
2 UNT and TCOM in regards to education and research in
3 that -- in that part of the mission statement?

4 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: One interesting
5 thing is that North Texas now includes as part of its
6 official mission, and as part of the goals and
7 objectives that its developing it's collaboration with
8 the Health Science Center. And I think a similar
9 statement is included in the Health Science Center's
10 mission in goals and objectives. All that shows is
11 that in terms of impact, the expectation and necessity
12 for collaboration between the two institutions now is
13 greater than -- than it ever has been. That -- that
14 change of name so that the University of North Texas
15 exists with the -- with the Health Science Center as
16 well as the Denton campus is more than just a cosmetic
17 change. And so I think we -- we have mechanisms in
18 place now at a higher level that are more serious for
19 collaboration than we -- and mutual consultation than
20 we've ever had before.

21 BLAKE HAILEY: So there's a lot of
22 chance for interaction between the Health Science
23 Center and various schools and departments at UNT now.

24 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: It's a -- I'm
25 there is it's prospect for that, and we are exploring

1 ways for that to -- to reach fruition, although a
2 lot of that routine communication is really at an
3 administrative level more than at a program level,
4 although that's going to change.

5 BLAKE HAILEY: What are the next
6 steps that you see for the future development in the
7 Health Science Center? What would you like to see
8 happen here?

9 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, it's a --
10 I think what will happen in time, there's no question
11 about it, is that there will be additional academic
12 programs that the Health Science Center will have.
13 Public health is the most obvious. The next step,
14 potentially, programs in pharmacy, allied health,
15 other health programs that will supplement and -- and
16 support the medical degree are inevitable. So they
17 will occur. The question is the timing. And the
18 question is the extent to which the University can
19 benefit from some of these programs and how the
20 institutions will work together. But I think that
21 even by the end of this decade we'll see the addition
22 of some of these new programs. And as I said,
23 probably public health will be the next -- the next
24 one.

25 BLAKE HAILEY: What challenges lie

1 ahead for the Health Science Center that you see that
2 they need to overcome?

3 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: One of the
4 biggest challenges that -- that is obviously
5 well-known here, is that considering the -- the size
6 of the urban area that -- that this Health Science
7 Center serves, it is not very well funded. Certainly
8 compared with the -- oh let's say, Texas Tech, is just
9 an example, out in Lubbock. And so there needs to be
10 over a period of -- this is not a very good time to
11 get new funds, but there needs to be over a period of
12 time, a systematic effort to increase the number of
13 faculty to be more suitable to the kind of urban base
14 that the medical school and the Health Science Center
15 will have to serve. So I think that will be a -- a
16 constant effort. And -- but there will also be
17 challenges that all health science centers will have
18 to confront. And we've already alluded to some of
19 those --

20 BLAKE HAILEY: Right.

21 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: -- the changes
22 and the -- and -- associated with health care reform.

23 BLAKE HAILEY: What challenges --
24 shifting focus for a moment, what challenges lie ahead
25 for your position and in the University of North

1 Texas, the main campus itself, now?

2 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, we've got
3 -- we're also in a period of resource scarcity. And
4 we're undergoing a -- a small decline in enrollment,
5 but it results in what seems to be an enormous decline
6 in funding, potentially enormous decline. And so we
7 got to get our enrollment situation turned around.
8 There are a lot of questions nowadays about the role
9 of the sciences and education, particularly at the
10 advanced level sciences with the end of the Cold War,
11 the declining job prospects for graduates. So we'll
12 be devoting a lot of thought to that. There are --
13 because we have committed ourselves to share
14 information on programs, there's a lot of time will be
15 taken up, continue to be taken up collaborations
16 between the University and the Health Science Center.
17 And I think the -- the main challenge right now is
18 just to try to keep some sense of momentum going to
19 develop the institution to make investments in things
20 we need to invest in. At that same time, there will
21 be no increase in resources, and in fact, could well
22 be another decline in resources in the next biennium.

23 BLAKE HAILEY: What is the enrollment
24 at the University of North Texas, currently.

25 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: It's about

1 26,300 as of last fall.

2 BLAKE HAILEY: So that's a large

3 number of students there?

4 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Large number of

5 students. That's true.

6 BLAKE HAILEY: Now, I guess one of

7 the big -- the big question I have for you is what

8 lies ahead for you in the future and how -- do you see

9 your role changing as Provost with these programs here

10 at the Health Science Center and at UNT? How do you

11 see the role changing for you and people after you?

12 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: I don't think

13 the fundamental role of the Provost of the University.

14 With change are each new program, with each new

15 challenge, or with each new opportunity life seems to

16 get more complicated, more demanding. But I don't

17 think the nature of the position itself will -- will

18 change. For me, personally, I'll either continue to

19 be Provost, I'll be a University President someday, or

20 I'll end up teaching a lot of undergraduate history

21 courses. We'll have to wait and see how that turns

22 out.

23 BLAKE HAILEY: Well, I guess you

24 could be President of the University and teach some

25 history courses, you'd probably like both worlds,

1 wouldn't you?

2 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Well, it's kind
3 of hard to do both of those things at the same time.

4 BLAKE HAILEY: That's true. We've
5 covered a lot of ground here this evening,
6 Dr. Brownell, we've covered quite a bit of subjects.
7 You have a lot of knowledge in the Health Science
8 Center transformation. Is there anything that I -- in
9 my layman's approach, have not touched on in this
10 transformation?

11 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: I think as a
12 historian, one thing that's always amazed me a little
13 bit is that one assumes as you embark on a historical
14 project, that there was a -- some fundamental
15 underlying logic in everything that moves forward in a
16 kind of straight, linear way.

17 When you're actually get into it, you
18 discover the impact that personalities have, the
19 impact that serendipity had. And while there was
20 nothing dramatic in this case, there were
21 nevertheless, combinations of personality and
22 opportunity that were kind of a chemistry that
23 explained a lot of these things that maybe logic can't
24 explain. And so whoever uses these tapes, and whoever
25 reflects on the beginning of the Health Science

1 Center, I think would do well to look -- sort of in
2 the nooks and crannies for those explanations, as well
3 as the facts that obviously was a good, solid body of
4 -- of evidence to suggest that a Health Science
5 Center was inevitable.

6 But I think the way it happened, and
7 the way the -- the process occurred really had mostly
8 to do with the circumstances people found themselves
9 in, and the particular people. And who they were and
10 how they interacted. I'm too close to it now, but
11 whoever does the subject at one point will -- I think,
12 have a good subject to do.

13 BLAKE HAILEY: Well, you definitely
14 played a very large role in the transformation of the
15 UNT Health Science Center as I can see here today, and
16 appreciate you taking time out of your extremely busy
17 schedule to -- to meet with us. And we really can't
18 thank you enough. Are there any -- any other things
19 you'd like to --

20 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: No. It's an
21 important project, and I compliment you and your
22 colleagues for undertaking it. And it's been a
23 pleasure.

24 BLAKE HAILEY: Well, again, I
25 appreciate it. I know your comments will be valuable

1 in a few years when they start putting this together

2 into a written form. And again, thanks so much for

3 the time that you've given us today.

4 And with that, I'll wrap up this

5 interview. Thank you and have a nice day.

6 MR. BLAINE BROWNELL: Thank you.

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