

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FAITH D'ALESSANDRO

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Paul Clemens: Good. We are now recording. Rather than run through these questions, although I may very well run through the questions, let me start out by just asking you to sketch out for us a little bit of your life experience up to the time you came to Rutgers, which would mean going into, as much as you want to, where you grew up, what your family looks like. Configure brothers, sisters, mother, father, [and] what they do for a living. What sort of jobs you've had? Where you went to school, especially your high school, which is probably relevant to what we're doing? And then I'll come back with some questions, so just to let you talk a little bit.

Faith D'Alessandro: Okay. A little bit about me, I was born on June 11, 1999, in Brooklyn, New York, but when I was born, my family moved to Middletown, New Jersey. I have two older sisters, and I'm very close with my immediate family and extended family. I have twenty first cousins, and we're all very, very close. We try to get together as much as possible. Growing up in Middletown has been very nice. It's a very suburban area. There's a lot of families. I think most people who live here have families, and there's usually children just playing around on their bikes outside my house. I live next to the elementary school, which is always nice. My earlier years, I spent most of my time with my sisters. They're like my best friends, but I also have local friends, too, who I met in first grade, and we are still best friends to this day. [laughter] What else? My mom is a phlebotomist at Bayshore Hospital, and my dad is a building manager in Manhattan. My oldest sister is an echocardiogram technician, and my other sister is getting her Ph.D. in pharmacy right now in Boston and that's really exciting. It stinks because she's so far away, but it's good that she's pursuing her dreams. Are there any questions? Oh, I went to Middletown High School North for high school. That was the one thing I was forgetting.

PC: A couple just quickly, Middletown High School North suggests that there's more than one high school in Middletown. It's big enough community to have two high schools?

FD: Yes, it is a big little town. As weird as it sounds, Middletown is pretty big for a small town, and there's Middletown High School North and South. I know earlier on, in the beginning of Middletown, there was only one, but as it expanded, I think in the '50s or so, they added South.

PC: I live in Metuchen. We have two [high schools] in Edison, which is a shell around the donut hole of Metuchen, but that's for geographical reasons. One is north of Metuchen, and the other one is south of Metuchen, J.P. Stevens and Edison High School. That's a really big town. We're a little borough. I think of Middletown as being somewhere in between those two, in terms of what I know about it, which isn't a lot. There is a more substantive question. You have described three members of your family who are connected to the health profession in some way or another. Without going into any details or whatever you're comfortable with, have they been affected by the pandemic in ways that are professional?

FD: Honestly, it just picked up their workload more than staggered it. My mom is working longer hours, and my sister has had much more extreme situations in her experience working in the hospital. My other sister, who is doing her pharmacy [doctorate] in Boston, it's impacted her experience a little bit with rotations and things like that getting pushed back, moved forward, some stuff virtually. But, honestly, I feel like it's almost made their experiences more intense. [laughter]

PC: One of your sisters is in a pharmacy program, right?

FD: Yes.

PC: She has an internship at some point in time, which is in an actual pharmacy or in a research institute, or which?

FD: Honestly, my sister has done so much; it's kind of hard to keep track. She just actually got hired for a fellowship. She's very excited. She's at the end of her program, so she's more moving into the after-the-fact and getting a job now.

PC: One of the close friends of my daughter-in-law and my son is in a pharmacy program, and her internships have been molded by the fact that she wants to go into research pharmacology of some form or another, as opposed to being a local pharmacist or running a pharmacy lab or something. I know that some pharmacists right now, for example, are giving out vaccines.

FD: Yes.

PC: It's quite a range of experiences. [In] high school, what were your interests?

FD: My interests were kind of all over the place a little bit. Extracurriculars, I did coed soccer team for the township, and I was involved in the drama club, so I helped with costumes and makeup for the school plays. I was involved in the National Honors Society for more of my academic side, but my main interests in high school were probably history. [laughter] That was my favorite subject. I spent most of my time with my history teacher in high school during lunch hours, and that was something I bonded with a lot of my teachers [over].

PC: In terms of focusing yourself on being a teacher, when did that happen?

FD: My calling for being an educator happened pretty early in life. I think it was middle school when I found that I loved history, and I figured out that I wanted to be a history teacher, at that point, in middle school. I still think middle school now, but I have also opened to possibilities of [teaching] high school. That made my experience in high school have more of a guidance to it because I was aware that I wanted to be an educator, and I took advantage of the educators I had at my disposal, to have conversations with them about it. I even took a class called "Future Teachers" in my senior year of high school, or maybe my junior year, but I was able to student-teach in my local middle school because of that and it was really helpful in knowing what I wanted to continue doing.

PC: In terms of history, did you take AP [advanced placement] history courses?

FD: Yes, I took AP U.S. History and AP European History.

PC: Okay. That AP European History is about the only way that European history still gets taught, at least in New Jersey. It's part of world history, of course, but world history has taken over things.

FD: Yes, I actually took the Praxis exam on Friday, and a lot of my knowledge from AP European History was coming up during the exam. I was like, "I am so happy that I took that class." [laughter]

PC: I just talked to two other people, not for this, but two students I'm in touch with, who have taken the Praxis. Did you find it easy?

FD: Well, a lot of the questions, I felt like I was being tricked a bit when there were certain things about it in the wording that you're supposed to know, "That's not the right answer." My biggest struggle was with technology because I had to do it at home, and my exam closed out on me right before I started, which was a nightmare. I was on the phone with the people at ETS [Educational Testing Service], and I'm trying to get this up and I'm crying right before my exam. It was a mess that way, but content-wise, I was able to get through it and I passed, so that was good. [laughter]

PC: I am amazed that the questions are such that most people pass it. I know there are lots of sections and you don't have to do really well on it, but I can't imagine writing questions for world history that most people could answer.

FD: They were so specific, like, "How am I going to know this?" [laughter]

PC: It's just such a huge field. You couldn't give a college student with a history degree a multiple-choice world history section and expect them to pass it. It seems utterly absurd to me. I know it's real, but I also know you can get through the test and do quite well on it without getting all the world history questions right.

FD: Yes. I was banking on every other section. [laughter]

PC: Good. So, you know right there that you've passed that test. They tell you right at the point you finish it?

FD: Yes, they give you your number score. You need a 157 to pass, so I thankfully got above that.

PC: Good, good. One other thing about your high school experiences, did you do paid work at any time while you were in high school? Did you have a job, so to speak?

FD: I was a hostess at a local steakhouse for, I think, from my sophomore to junior year, and then, later on, in my junior year to senior year, I was more focused on babysitting for local families. My neighbors actually really needed a sitter for a good amount of time, so I put most of my time there. I also live across the street from a vegetable farm, and my neighbors needed help there. So, I spent two summers working on the farm with them.

PC: They're people who sell locally at these town weekend fairs that the towns have now and things of that sort?

FD: Yes, they sell at the farmer's market, and they actually have their own stand that's across the street from my house. There'll be lines down the street to go get their tomatoes, they're fantastic. They even sell their vegetables to local restaurants to use in their dishes as well.

PC: Selling from your home is also something I can relate to. When I was a kid, I never worked directly at least at that farm, but one of my very close friend's father had a garden about three blocks from his house and he grew all the summer vegetables. So, we'd put them out in front of the house, and I'd help out for the whole summer usually. We'd just sit there and sell things to people who came by. I think of that as something that is fifty years ago. Farmer's markets have taken over for that to the extent it still exists, and it's nice to hear that there are still people who sell from their front door.

FD: Oh, yes, it definitely was a timeless experience being out there in a field and having to bring watermelons to people's cars. [laughter]

PC: Great, okay. Tell me about how your college selection went. Why Rutgers?

FD: For me personally, I was drawn to the Graduate School of Education [GSE], and that's what dictated my decision to go to Rutgers. The other school I was debating was Monmouth, but for my personal experience, I wanted to go a little bit further from home. I live about ten, fifteen minutes away from Monmouth. It didn't make sense for me to go there if I was just going to live at home then, and I wasn't in the position to be a commuter student. Definitely location and the education program really pushed me towards going to Rutgers. I also liked the large campus feel.

PC: When you got to Rutgers your first semester, you were living in a residence hall?

FD: Yes, I lived in Tinsley Hall on College Avenue.

PC: This shows what I can remember [of] the layout. I know most of them. Tinsley is down in the Bishop Quad or something. Is that where it is?

FD: It's right on College Avenue. It's one of those twin dorm halls. Mettler [Hall] is right across the street, and then the dean for freshman, I believe, is that building that's between them, and there's the little garden. It's right across the street from where Panera is.

PC: Okay. It's not one of the new places. It's on the edge of what they used to call, and may still do, some people do, the Bishop Quad, the set of buildings that are around Bishop House, and most of them are dated dorms. They used to be dorms many years ago. The ones that have been renovated are actually fairly nice, but some of them have been torn down and replaced and that sort of stuff. I think I know roughly where it is. I don't know which one it is exactly. You get to Rutgers. Did you decide to become a history major immediately?

FD: I knew in the back of my mind I wanted to be a history major, but I was scared to commit to it. I always have some sort of self-doubt in my abilities to pursue history. I struggled as a student early on. As I got older, it's a lot of hard work for me to do well, but it's something I care about, so I do push myself to do it. What happened freshman year is on the SAS [School of Arts and Sciences] website, I was declared an engineering major, which is the last thing I would want to do, and I was not sure how that even happened. It was something went wrong with the computer programming. I called the office, and they're like, "Okay, then what major do you want?" In that moment, as a freshman, I had to tell them I wanted to be a history major to fix that issue and it pushed me to committing, but I have never looked back or doubted it since.

PC: The last person I interviewed was declared a business major--it was a male--without him having any idea whatsoever that he was. He didn't do it, just like you. Apparently, maybe they look at your background and say, "This is what you're most likely to be."

FD: I cannot imagine for the life of me; me as an engineer is like pigs flying. [laughter]

PC: Right, that's a hard thing. In general, pre-pandemic, before the spring semester, when we had to do the pivot, how did that part of your education go here?

FD: Before the pandemic, my education at Rutgers was very fulfilling. I loved going to class every day. I didn't mind going from campus to campus. I learned so much, and I grew so much as a student here. Extracurricular-wise, I'm involved in my sorority, which was really nice coming home after class. I actually lived there and [got] involved in activities, and I held leadership positions for this organization. It was a great balance between academics and things that I found fun afterwards, and then everything changed. [laughter]

PC: I remember you telling me, though, when we spoke before this, that you continued to live at the sorority after the pandemic started. I don't know whether you are now, but you continued to.

FD: Yes. Right after we got back from spring break, we were there for a few weeks. Then, once everything got pushed to online, we had to go home, unfortunately, but I was able to stay after we knew about COVID for a little bit and then had to move out.

PC: Again, don't get any more personal about this than you feel comfortable with, but in terms of you and your sorority sisters, were you talking about family problems or even direct problems? Were other people affected? This is an unusual living condition in that you are still in what is a dorm-like environment, where transmission is probably more likely than it would be if you're in a bubble with three other people. Did you in any way feel that it was a dangerous situation to live in?

FD: Well, the house was actually open this year for girls to live in during the pandemic, but a lot of people didn't. We had trouble even getting numbers to be enough that it was secure, but they worked it out. It was situated in a way that it was spaced out, so people weren't in each other's faces. There was a capacity in the dining hall. If girls did get the virus, they had an

isolation/quarantine room, and a cleaning crew [came] in once they were done quarantining to clean it out. They had a pretty safe layout.

PC: Stop there. You had an isolation room in the sorority itself?

FD: Yes. There was that room that was on the first floor, which was generally for the house mothers, but when girls were sick, they were put in there. I didn't live in the house this year, so I don't know where the house mothers went when that was the issue. They probably just went to a different room. How they had it set up, I think most girls who were living there did feel safe. I never felt unsafe when I did come back after spring break for that short period of time before we were told to go home. Everyone was handling it really well. My advisor's very organized and had it down to a T what everyone needed to do.

PC: If you know the answer to this, when the sorority made these decisions about keeping the house open and have a quarantine room, did Rutgers get involved in that, or was that something you worked out together? How did that happen?

FD: I'm honestly not sure of the details. I was on the executive board when this was happening. I think it was just the sorority on its own individually, nationally decided to keep it open because people did need places to live. There's girls who live in California who wanted to be in New Jersey for the school year, and certain situations like that that were able to keep it open nationally, just like some of the apartments. It's considered an off-campus living that they were able to keep open.

PC: You go into that spring semester last year [spring 2020], and you're taking a number of courses. You said generally your courses were going well across all your college experience until the pandemic hit. So, you pivot. What happened in your classes?

FD: The classes went all online, and it seemed like the work clearly became less hands-on in some of the classes. I was in a creative writing course, and in person, it was so important that we were sharing pieces and able to do writing activities together, when now, from home, we had to have our work already done before class and it was more discussion-based rather than hands-on work. Definitely, motivation went down for a lot of students, and it's continuing as an issue being online because you aren't leaving your house and in an environment where you are drilled in to focus. I think that made completing the spring semester a little difficult, and it was hard being at home with everybody who was quarantined from the lockdown. Then, having to be in my room and concentrating on class made it really a struggle to maintain my grades, even though I pushed to take that time and continue with my GPA [grade point average] I was striving for.

PC: You had, when you were at home at that time, your own personal computer or laptop or something to work from? You weren't sharing it with one of your sisters who'd come home or your mother or father or something like that?

FD: Thankfully, I had my own laptop I could work from, which made it so much easier. If I had to share, that would've been really hard. [laughter]

PC: Did you try to do classwork--because you had to be somewhere and you had your laptop, but it wasn't convenient--on your phone?

FD: I had to actually use my phone a few times because my old laptop died on me, of course, right when we were on online classes for the spring. I needed to rely on that or using my dad's iPad for online classes, just having it propped up, so that I could participate in class, which made it a little difficult. Once I had the ability to get a new computer, I did, which has been very helpful this past school year.

PC: That's a common story, and when it happens to, let's say, a professor, you can lose a whole class for a week just because people can't get on one way or another. Again, here I might be wrong, but I think you must have registered for your next fall courses, the ones you've just taken, after the pandemic had become an issue at Rutgers. How did that affect the way you picked courses, if it did at all?

FD: A little bit, but not much, because I had the classes I was required to take for the Graduate School of Education. I'm also ahead in credits, so I didn't need anything for my major, and I just took some fun electives. I took "Rock and Culture," which I just learned about music, which was really nice. When I was initially signing up for classes, I was like, "I don't want to go to Livingston Campus for this," which made me doubt it at first, but then I was like, "We're online, and we might still be online. I'm just going to take it." I'm happy I did because it was really fun.

PC: Okay. It didn't fundamentally alter the way you picked courses.

FD: Not really, no.

PC: You come back this fall [2020]. You are in the GSE now, and it's in your fourth year and their first year as a graduate student. How'd it go?

FD: A little disappointing, I'm not going to lie, just because being in the Graduate School of Education, you want all this hands-on work and to get the real feel and experience for it, and completely understandable, everybody was turned upside down. Being in a profession that requires you to be with a group of people in a smaller room, I understand why everything needed to change. Instead of observing in classrooms last semester, we just watched videos from our computer that were made by the Graduate School of Education with just information and different pillars that they wanted you to understand as teachers. There was a diversity course, and there was information on socially and emotionally addressing students in different categories that they made us watch with these videos, and we had to answer questions in order to get hours. Then, they also had us do these Atlas videos, which were just recordings of different lesson plans that teachers have done in the past. We were required to answer these ten questions for each video and see what we can find from their lesson plans that we're looking for, so how were they promoting questioning through their students and things like that, we had to answer while watching these videos.

PC: You were taking courses at the same time in the fall [of 2020], as you said, in some other departments or schools, SAS or whatever. Were the GSE courses as interactive as the ones that you were taking elsewhere, less interactive, as good as? How would you rate [the courses]?

FD: I think the classes I had to take, aside from the observations, the professors who were teaching did a wonderful job. I think the GSE did more to make the classes interactive than the SAS classes did. For my SAS classes, it was either asynchronous, where I was watching a lecture and answering questions based on that and then doing homework on top of that, or I was in a children's literature class where, in my free time, I was required to read all these different books, and then on the day of class, we went on Zoom or Webex and we had a conversation about the books we were reading and different themes in literature. That was interesting because it was more discussion-based, when the other class I was in for SAS was just more watching a video and doing work on my own time.

PC: The children's literature class was an SAS course?

FD: Yes.

PC: In which department? Is that English?

FD: Yes.

PC: Yes, okay. That sounds neat. Good for the English Department that they have something like that.

FD: Yes, it was a great class.

PC: It obviously fits in with what you want to do in your career, too.

FD: It was perfect because I want to get a certification to teach middle school English as well, so I was just getting those credits done. It really solidified that decision for me as well because I enjoyed the class so much.

PC: Is your focus in the GSE now fairly clear? You obviously are going for Social Studies Education.

FC: Yes.

PC: You said you want to get certification there. Have they convinced you that you need it in Special Education as well?

FD: They suggest it because it makes you more marketable. I'm hoping to add that as well to my repertoire of certifications I'm getting. There's nothing I can do right now because I already took "Introduction to Special Education." I have room for credits too, that there's no harm in getting it as well. But they do generally suggest--they push it a bit--for people to get it because that's what everyone is looking to hire, someone who has that capability.

PC: What I have heard about it, more in New York than New Jersey right now, is that it is desperately in demand. On the other hand, the schools don't really have a good way to do it because it really requires in-person education. Of all the areas that are getting disastrously affected, working in special ed, working with autistic children, it's falling apart.

FD: It's funny you mention that because my mom and I were just having a discussion about that before our interview about how these special needs students require structure and how the pandemic has just been flipping their whole world around even more. I think that she was telling me that there's some schools that are making these adjustments for special needs kids where they can come in person, but it's just for those students, so it keeps it limited and safer for exposure and things.

PC: What you did in the first semester this year, was there any time that, if there hadn't been a pandemic, when you would have actually been in a high school or a middle school yourself?

FD: Yes. That was supposed to be my observation time, where I was going to be going into a classroom and observing it hands-on and, right before my eyes, it's happening, which is what I do wish we could've done, even if it was virtually. That seems to be what's happening this semester. I'm going to be attending classes, it's supposed to be in Woodbridge, but they have it virtually for now, which is exciting. But, yes, we were supposed to be in classrooms this past semester, and instead, we watched videos.

PC: You will be able to go in virtually to these schools, some of you. Presumably, you know people who are going to go in person because there are some schools that are actually open or may be open, let's put it that way.

FD: Yes.

PC: Things change daily. If what's going on right now continues, or if this new virus gets in or a new form of the virus, new mutation of it, who knows what will happen? But, in any case, do you know anybody who's actually being posted into a school?

FD: I'm not sure yet. There's still people in my social studies cohort who don't know where they're placed, and we're supposed to be starting on Thursday. We're all just playing a bit of a waiting game. I found out that I was going to be in Woodbridge, I think, a week or two ago, too. I know they initially were supposed to be going back in person in January [2021], but because the cases are rising, they're going to be virtual until March and then hopefully in person, but if situations change. Out of people in the cohort, I haven't heard anyone saying directly, like, "I'm going to be in person," but I haven't also asked, so I can look into that.

PC: But that's at least something that may happen and may even happen to you. Who knows? Schools may open up. I do know that when COVID-19 hit in the spring, most of the people who were doing things from Rutgers were essentially taken out of the schools, not by Rutgers as much as by the schools themselves. Just, at a certain point, they couldn't manage it anymore. It

was too dangerous. What has the GSE done to allay any fears you might have about actually going into the schools? Have they talked to you about that at all?

FD: The GSE is struggling a bit communication-wise right now. We've been getting long emails on the plans and this and that. I just recently got an email about COVID precautions and things like that with this next phase coming up. I haven't heard anything specifically tailored for me or any other individual students. I'm personally not nervous because I am going to be virtual, and then hopefully, if things do change, I will have some sort of communication with them about what we need to do in order to keep it as safe as possible. It's been more communication based [on] when they know, too, because this whole thing has made them plan day by day, and they'll tell us as they know. A lot of things are left up in the air.

PC: What was the highlight? What was the best thing you got out of the GSE education this last fall [2020]?

FD: I would say, I took "Urban Education," [which] I found really rewarding, and "Introduction to Social Studies Education." In "Urban Education," I learned a lot that I didn't know previously because I did grow up in a suburban area and I wasn't exposed to the certain challenges that students in urban school districts faced and how teachers go about handling that. I felt definitely more prepared to be hired in a more diverse area. I also really loved "Social Studies Education," [which] not only focused on ways to teach social studies and the current issues that are happening today, but we also got to explore just different avenues of what's going on in students' lives as well and finding out different resources to use them. We worked a lot with representation in the history classroom. We learned a lot about Eurocentric history and how we need to shift away from that and how to incorporate all narratives in our history lessons. I found that really rewarding to learn about, too. It made me more confident about working in a classroom, hopefully soon. [laughter]

PC: You know the range of partner schools that have hooked up with the GSE. Do you have any preference about where you go when you do your teaching?

FD: I honestly don't. I'm excited to be placed in Woodbridge right now. For me personally, it was all based on location, depending on where I'm living. Right now, I am living in New Brunswick for this next semester [spring 2021], but next year, I most likely will be living [at] home. Whatever will make the easiest commute has been my priority.

PC: I think the goal in most of these placements has always been, if everything works out, to have you do your observation in your spring semester, so your second semester at the GSE, in a school that you will then move into your internship in the fall semester. It doesn't always work that way, but the goal is to give you continuity in the school and maybe even, if you're lucky, with the same cooperating teacher with you all the way through. Sometimes, it works. Sometimes, it doesn't. Let's hope, if that's your case, I hope it does work out.

FD: I do, too. I'm very excited for this, and I think that I'm going to be placed in a really good school.

PC: If those are the things that work best, what was the major problem that you had during the fall semester [2020]?

FD: I think my biggest disappointment was going back to just watching those videos for observation hours. It was just very tedious work that I didn't really feel like I got much from. I understand the intention of it, and it did have me watching lesson plans in a way that I normally wouldn't have and looking out for certain things. But there comes a point where you're just sitting in a room watching someone else teach on your computer, that you're just disinterested by it. I know a lot of other people in the cohort were also feeling these doubts and exhaustion from just having to do something that they're not that interested in.

PC: What you hear most from the student population generally as a faculty member is that the students complained over the fall semester about too much busy work. Faculty members would make students "do the readings" or do this or that, bombarded them with a lot of things to do that they didn't see any real educational value in. That's probably the equivalent of what you're saying for the GSE. As a teacher or future teacher, what do you learn from this experience? What are you going to carry away from this that might help you become a better teacher when you actually have to go into the classroom next fall or when you get a job after you get out of this?

FD: It definitely showed me how unpredictable the world is and how you need to be ready to be flexible with everything you're doing in the classroom. If you're planning on doing this one lesson plan one day, it might not work, and you might have to do it virtually with a million other different things instead. Just knowing how to navigate that, to change where it's needed, and not get too overwhelmed by that but also have that preparation in the back of your mind is something I've definitely witnessed through this entire experience. It also showed me the importance of technology in and outside the classroom when it comes to education, and having that knowledge on how to navigate it helps students themselves with navigating it, too, if we were in a similar situation like this when I'm teaching, that classes are virtual. It's definitely showed me that and how challenging it can be to work with technology that's also very unpredictable, but just kind of rolling with the punches with it all.

PC: Yes. The basic thing you were doing, I'm assuming, is you were Zooming; you were using Zoom. Were you using any of the things that are associated with classroom teaching, any tools other than Zoom in what you had to do?

FD: Yes. For my "Intro to Social Studies Education" class, we used a lot of Jamboards, which were really interesting, where we would have these discussions about readings or when other people were presenting, and we would make sure we were listening and participating through these Jamboards by saying something we learned or asking questions through it, which was fun and different, compared to some other classes which just strictly stuck to Zoom. [Editor's Note: Jamboard is a digital interactive whiteboard developed by Google.]

PC: Is a Jamboard something like a chat?

FD: It's kind of like a big whiteboard on your computer ...

PC: Okay, a whiteboard.

FD: ... Where you add sticky notes that you type up and they're anonymous, so whoever is presenting can read through them and either comment towards your comment or answer any questions you might have.

PC: Is there anything else you used that you remember?

FD: Not off the top of my head. Maybe just Google Slides, and a lot of teachers relied on articles to get information to us in a different way than just telling us through Zoom.

PC: Google Slides is a lot like--one of the things I use is Hypothesis, which does some of the same things as Google Slides. It provides a PDF of a document that everybody can edit--well, not edit, but comment on. It's actually not quite what Word Perfect is like when you do editing there because you can't edit the PDF, all you can do is comment on it, but it allows a lot of people to talk to each other about a commonly-read article or whatever. I think Google Slides works roughly the same way. It's been a while since I've used it. The thing that I am curious about more generally, and I'll talk to you about this after you've done some of your own teaching, is whether or not you're picking up anything, the good part of all this, is if you are picking up anything you could see yourself using even when you go back to brick-and-mortar teaching, as they say, in some point in time? For college professors, the answer is, "Yes, we have." There are some of these things we're playing with that I could see using with a regular class and getting a lot out of them. But that long introduction, it raises the question, what has the GSE told you about the ability of the students you're going to be working with to deal with the technological gap between what you would expect them to be able to do with technology and what, at their base, in their homes, they can do with technology? In other words, what about the students who lack the computer that I have or you have at home and are trying to do this on a phone and in a house with five other people? Do they talk to you about that? Do they give you workarounds?

FD: That was something they touched upon in one of the videos we had to watch for observation hours, where they were interviewing students and families on their challenges with technology during the pandemic. It was nice to hear where the teachers and students were requesting more communication between the teachers and different methods that they would appreciate, so maybe emails on directions or different things that make it more clear. We even, in one of the videos, heard from families who don't speak English and were having trouble with the directions because they weren't translated, so keeping that in mind and knowing who your audience is, and making sure that everyone is able to understand the directions and what you're saying in order to get on to class through the computer. Besides that, I feel like I'm probably going to learn the most by actually doing. The Graduate School of Education did tap into it, and I'm sure if I asked them questions on it, they would be able to provide me more guidance on it.

PC: It's not your problem vis-à-vis the GSE, by and large. There are students in the GSE who perhaps aren't as well connected as you are, but it will be your problem when you go in and have to teach high school students who, in some cases, simply don't have the technology that you would anticipate them having and be worried about how to teach them if they don't. It's going to

come up, again, unless we get out of this and you're actually in a real classroom in the fall. I know from the experiences I've listened to of second-year students, the people who are now in their fifth year of the program and have hopefully completed their student-teaching, that there was some sort of friction between them and the Graduate School of Education about placements and safety. Did any of that filter down? Did your class hear about that?

FD: We didn't hear about any of that friction, but there was a bit of a chip on their shoulder when it came to placements and asking questions. They're like, "We're figuring it out. We're figuring it out. Don't ask us any more questions. We'll let you know when we know" kind of deal. You could tell they're really just overwhelmed and frustrated with all of the emails they're getting. But, at the same time, we're on the other end, not knowing anything about what's going on as it's closely inching up. There was this little bit of a tension there that we definitely could feel as the students. I know I'm confident in my decision with becoming an educator, but there were some people in my cohort who began to have these real doubts, like, "Oh, no, is this for me? Because I'm not enjoying it." Also, it's hard because we are in a pandemic, and there are all these uncertainties right now.

PC: I think one of the questions overall that will be--interesting is the wrong word, it probably would be profoundly depressing--is whether this is going to stop a lot of people who wanted to become teachers from doing so. Clearly, for some people, this will be a really difficult time to have gone through, and they're going to say, "I just can't imagine myself in a profession where this sort of chaos can occur." That doesn't surprise me at all. A few people drop out of the GSE program period at the end of the first year, let's say, but this time--and I'm not saying that's going to happen this time--but this time, the long-term consequences of all this may affect some people. Anything else you want me to know about what your experience has been like in this first go-round at the GSE?

FD: No, I think I pretty much covered it. I feel bad that I criticized them a bit on the communication issues and information, but I understand where they're coming from and how everything is just so upside down right now. The quality of classes they are providing us with, I have found the professors and the material they're creating so fulfilling and enjoyable to be a part of that that has been very good. I just wanted to emphasize that.

PC: There are several programs at Rutgers, and the GSE is one of such, and in fairness, the huge programs in the lab sciences, where students have been asked to take perhaps somewhat greater risks than other students have, that's inevitable in this sort of situation. Maybe you shouldn't feel too badly about criticizing people who've had a very difficult time nonetheless keeping up with how to deal with this environment. They came up with pretty clear protocols in the sciences and in programs like, I'd say, dance at Mason Gross, where they had to bring people in to work out, so to speak, but they didn't in every program. Don't worry about criticizing. [laughter] If you're on the other side of this, in high school at some point in time, and there is another outbreak of this thing, which could happen. We know from the 1918, a different pandemic, it was an influenza, not COVID, that it would crop up again every year with diminishing numbers and less severity for about half a decade. We don't quite know why that happened. So, these things play out in different ways. I think that's probably enough to record today. I think I've got a good

handle on what you've done. I'm going to stop the recording, but then I want to ask you a couple of things off the audio.

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