David Brooks: So it is June 1, 2006. I’m David Brooks and I’m the interviewer for the University of Montana’s Oral History Project and today I’m talking with Dean Larry Gianchetta about your time here at the University. So would you start us off possibly by talking a little bit about your personal and educational background that led you to U of M and Missoula?

Larry Gianchetta: Ok, all right. I’m a native of Idaho, did my undergraduate work in business at Idaho State University, and went on for a master’s at the University of Montana in mathematical statistics. It was during that time, in Wyoming, that I taught and realized that it was something I had a passion for and so towards the end of my completion of my master’s degree at Laramie, I sent out in the Northwest to state universities, a form letter actually, indicating my interest in coming and teaching for a year or two on the faculty to determine whether I wanted to go on to get a Ph.D. The chair of the Department of Management called me and started by saying, “Larry, this looks like a form letter.” And I say, “Well, that’s because it is.” And he says, “What are you up to?” So I explained to him basically what I was up to and he called a few references and hired me actually over the phone. So in 1969 I came to the University of Montana with a master’s degree as an instructor. After two years my passion for teaching only grew and the other the thing I was trying to measure was the dynamics of faculty politics and my sense was that I could cope with that as well. So I went on to Texas A&M University; I got a Ph.D. in mathematical statistics, which I tell everybody prepared me perfectly to be a Business School dean. I’m saying that in jest to some extent obviously. I never imagined myself as a Business School dean at that time in my life and quite honestly this University followed my progress at Texas A&M very closely because they were as interested as I was in us reuniting here at the University of Montana. So I came actually back in January of ’75 as an assistant professor.

DB: So, you know, you left for a few years to do your Ph.D. and the two things you’ve mentioned as attracting you back here were your passion for teaching and that you could cope with the faculty politics. I think is how you put it. So talk a little bit about when you got here, what relationships were like between you and other faculty, faculty in general, on the campus and relationships between teachers and students.

LG: Yeah, well you know as an adjunct faculty member, as an instructor, I think, you know, tenure and tenure-track faculty were not significant in the scheme of things but it still gave me an opportunity to kind of observe what went on. Probably the first experience I remember is we had a faculty member on the faculty who was tenured [and] who had written a book in basic statistics and, of course, one of the classes I taught was Introduction to Statistics. I reviewed his book and decided it wasn’t appropriate for the introductory level. So I created a
little bit of a stir in my early years. They usually try not to pay attention to instructors, even in the faculty meetings, but you know, when you have a new instructor who’s decided that there are other basic statistics books that would be better for the students than one written by a current faculty member, that created a little bit of an issue. I survived that, so maybe that was the supreme test. I was well received. I think what you can say about the University of Montana is there’s a real love for the student and a real love for teaching generally across the campus and I think if you have that same passion and you’re pretty effective in the classroom I think that really carries you a long way here with the faculty.

DB: So let’s talk a minute about the students at the time. You know, it’s 1969, you came here first, but when you came back with your Ph.D. it would have been what year?

LG: January of ’75.

DB: ’75. So the University is grown quite a bit after World War II at that point, you’re in the midst, or in the tail end of, sort of, Vietnam, which seems in a lot of people’s opinion, to be a sort of volatile time on this campus as well as others. But perhaps things are settling down by then; what sort of things were you involved in with students besides just the classroom and talk a little bit about your involvement: what the feel was, [what the] concerns of students were at the time?

LG: Well, actually in ’69 it was sort of a height of the Vietnam War, in the issues about the war, and I met and got to know President Bob Pantzer quite well. We always talk [about needing] the right leader at the right time and I really feel this university was very fortunate to have Bob Pantzer in the President’s office at that time because I think, given all the difficulties and all the concerns and all the student unrest over the war, I think he dealt with it in a very open-door way. He had a lot of open forums in the Oval. I mean it was very difficult. When I came back in ’75, maybe because I was sort at the height of the activity in ’69, certainly it wasn’t as high profile, issues about the war during that time. Students seemed to be pretty focused again on academics and adding value to themselves intellectually so I would say when I returned, there was much more focus on the basic mission that everybody was here for and that was to learn and to teach.

DB: So I suppose in ’75 and certainly in ’69, I think about you sending out a form letter and just introduced yourself and got hired that way. That seems to me, and correct me if I’m wrong, that is something of a day or a time that is perhaps past, that sort of congeniality. Maybe things were small enough at the time that that could happen and maybe couldn’t today.

The other thing is, before we started talking here, you told me you were at one time coach of the tennis team here as well, and that also seems to have passed, from what I can observe, a person being able to teach and coach at the same time.
LG: Right, right, ok. You know, I don’t know. Again, I think at the instructor level if you had the right references and you had the right credentials and you really were coming here for a year or two to be an instructor [the informal hiring process wasn’t unusual]. You know one of the things I think a lot of us look at for instructorships is an opportunity for students who might be interested in a long-term career in higher education to experiment a little bit and then go on with a Ph.D. You know there are certainly issues with security and background checks and those kinds of things, David, that certainly I think there has been a lot more formality in the process. I don’t think in a 24-hour period [today] I would have received a phone call and inquiry about the form letter and after having called a couple references, calling back and saying, “You have the job if you want it.” There is a lot that is different. There are a lot of things that are different in terms of background checks and security issues.

The tennis team is an interesting thing. I know that you’re in history and interested in history and of course we all remember Bob Lindsay with a lot of affection and he, as a faculty member, also coached the tennis team. I actually played tennis in high school and played a little bit of junior Davis Cup tennis and when I came here I entered in the intramural tennis tournament. I was a little more nimble then and had quite good success. A few weeks after the second time I entered the tournament Harley Lewis—he was the athletic director at the time—and one day said, “Well, jeez, you should come over and be the tennis coach.” I said, “Oh, yeah, Harley, that’s great. I’ll do that some day,” and really never thought anything more about it. And then he called me a couple of months later and said, “Larry, have you made your mind up?” And I said, “Made your mind up about what?” And he says, “We’d really like to consider you being the tennis coach.” So I visited with Bob a little bit, Bob Lindsay, about how it worked for him and how he could make it work. Based on that conversation, Harley’s urging, and my interest in the game, for five years starting in 1980, was the men’s tennis coach.

If you’re trying to put this in historical perspective, I knew about Chris Nord, the Nord family. I’ve known his dad, Ron, and Phyllis, his mother, who has since passed away and Chris was at Boise State. In fact when I was coaching the men here we played against Chris in the conference. I knew from the team’s point of view it wasn’t in the best interest because my primary goal here was to develop as a faculty member. So I actually always had Chris in mind, and Chris kind of knew that, and Chris came right after he graduated and, believe it or not, he’s now been tennis coach for 21 years, which is hard for me to imagine. I go over still when they have home matches and still visit with Chris fairly frequently and I think that the University is really fortunate to have Chris Nord in that position.

DB: So tell me a little bit about the physical changes in the School of Business, as well as I suppose you could comment on the athletics during your time here. You know we’re sitting in a building that’s fairly new right now and so you certainly weren’t in this building when you got here.

LG: No, I was not and we were not. You know people still refer to it as a new building, and relatively, David, using your term, it is still relatively new but this is our 10th anniversary in this building.
building. It’s a little over five times larger than the building we were in previous to this. The School of Education occupies that building now and this has been a wonderful facility for the School of Business. Before, we actually had about half our faculty in what is now the School of Education building and then we had some faculty in the little white houses on Eddy Street; we had some faculty over in Corbin Hall. We still today are still the largest academic unit on campus when you think about single units. Obviously, the College of Arts and Sciences, with all of its units is bigger than the Business School, but for a single academic unit we are the largest single academic unit on campus. The goal was to get us all under one roof because it doesn’t serve the students very well when they don’t know where in the University neighborhood where they might find one of the Business School faculty. We were literally spread all over.

As we built the building we were able to approach alums of the University that resided at Hewlett Packard and Microsoft and not only did they help us equip the building at the time but, David, literally about every two years we’ve replaced all the equipment in this building in every office and in every lab and in every classroom because of alums who valued the education they gained while they were here.

The other thing that I don’t think people know, certainly people from History know it—Harry Fritz was over here teaching this year—is this is really, the Gallagher Business Building, even though it’s called the Gallagher Business Building has really created what we know on every campus as sort of the campus classroom building. Half of the classes that are taught in Gallagher Business Building are by non-business faculty. They’re faculty in Music, in History, in Biology, in Journalism and they and their students all really benefit from technology, the state-of-the-art technology that’s here. We have a wonderful director of technology and he has a very strong staff, so literally, when faculty from History or other academic units come here our technology staff kind of work with them. And an area like History actually becomes a lot more exciting with the right technology to drive it.

So I would have to say initially, when we were even thinking about the building and building the building, I was pretty public that this would be a building that would serve not only the campus community but the broader community. The faculty and staff realize that there are issues relative to that. I basically have a full-time staff person here in the Business School that all she does is schedule this building. This building is a 24-7 center for the University and the Missoula community. You know, whether it’s the Missoula Symphony coming in here or whatever, this building literally is utilized very heavily by both the University community and the broader Missoula community; it really has served a wonderful purpose.

We walk in here every morning, I walk in here every morning and the first thing I do is turn to the right and look at the Wall of Honor and look at Bill and Rosemary Gallagher. I got to know Bill and Rosemary very, very well. We actually had the memorial service for Bill Gallagher when we were halfway completed with the building. And Denny Washington would argue that Bill Gallagher is the person who gave Denny his start. He worked for Bill for quite awhile and Denny—I mean Bill—told Denny, “I think you’re ready to take some of this equipment here and

Larry Gianchetta Interview, OH 408-013, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
“go out and do this thing for yourself.” Bill and Rosemary Gallagher had the Caterpillar dealership for 43 years in Montana, in Wyoming, in part of Idaho and he was a 1925 graduate of the Business School and he always remembered that. While I was here I never let him forget it. But what generous people. I mean generous, you know, in this building, but just generous to the whole Missoula community. And I still preside, I’m one of three trustees that oversee the Gallagher Foundation and their legacy lives on in terms of people in the community who send in proposals and we continue to give support to those kinds of initiatives that Bill and Rosemary envisioned. But I literally, every morning when I walk in, the first thing I do is look up to their picture, see the twinkle in Bill’s eye and see the smile on Rosemary’s face and after 10 years, David, we still, and I think the faculty and staff would tell you this, we still do not take for granted how blessed we are with this.

It represents really what’s happened on the entire campus though, I mean other, you know academic buildings that have come up, [like] Pantzer Hall. Bob and I used to, Bob Pantzer and I used to talk affectionately about the Gallagher Building and Pantzer Hall because a very similar comment was made when they were both erected and that was, “Jeez, these buildings look like they’ve been here forever.” And I know in the design of both those buildings there was a lot of concern to respect the integrity of the history and tradition of the buildings and so if you look at the Gallagher Building you’ll actually see the diamonds—if you look across the street from where we are—exists in Brantley Hall, the same diamonds. And so, what we did is we built brand new buildings that looked like they had been there for quite a while. And, quite frankly, that was the highest compliment that Bob and I ever felt that we ever received, is that people would comment about the buildings in that way.

Athletic facilities, I mean what we have, I mean I love reading Sports Illustrated and reading that, bar-none, in I-AA football there is only one place in the world to go and watch a football game and that in large part is due the fantastic facility that has been built. That had [created] dramatic issues on this campus, because you know state institutions will always operate on limited resources and you and I know that there’s always a tug between academics and athletics. Now you and I are also two people who believe in sound mind and sound body, right David? I think there’s a lot of synergy between academics and athletics but it’s great to see a lot of the faculty who, at the time that stadium was being built, having a lot of concerns about priorities—and I think they were legitimate concerns—being over there. And I notice they’re among the most obnoxious in the fan base, you know, when a game is going on. And the real point is, I think they have grown to appreciate the added value of the athletic facilities to the campus. So yeah, we’re really blessed; we’re really blessed with the physical facilities.

At the end of the day though it’s about the people. It’s great to have the facilities that we have. I think what it does do is it attracts a higher level of faculty. I know at the Business School we’ve been able to recruit in the last the 10 years faculty with national, international, reputations and a lot of why they came here is why I sought this place out and stayed here, is the wonderful culture on this campus. I love the Liberal Arts base. I think it serves our business students really, really well. I’m the first to tell everybody I run into—in fact I just talked to a person in San
Francisco this morning on the phone—and was trying to share [that] about the University of Montana. A statistic they all relate to is we’re still among all public universities, fifth in the nation in terms of the number of Rhodes Scholars and really, I think that talks about the fabric and the culture that exists on the campus; it’s so critical. I think people are surprised when I tell them, you know, there are some academic majors on this campus where 90 out of 120 credits happen within their academic home. Our accrediting body and we are strong believers that more than half of the credits that our students take are outside of the School of Business because that’s really what will make you a successful business person is to have that broader education. So the buildings are wonderful but what remains the same here is the culture that attracted me here 32 years ago, and that’s really the importance of it. I really believe that that has remained pretty much unchanged and still a culture that I’m very, very proud of.

DB: So you’ve laid out pretty well the connections that this building and the School of Business have with the broader Missoula, Montana, community in terms of alumni donations, the founders of this building, but you also mentioned that the building serves the community and I think the one example I heard you give was the Missoula Symphony coming here. How about some other examples of what this building hosts for the community?

LG: Well, I’ll be real candid with you David; we’ve had to be a little more conservative over time. At first we made a real effort to sort of receive everybody into the building, so for a couple years, Loyola High School had their prom here, in the piazza on the second level. Which was a wonderful place for a school of that size to have their prom. It came about really because we had parents of sons and daughters who were going to Loyola High School. Region I Forest Service, since the year we opened, comes every spring break and has about 700. Region I is a wide region in the Northwest; foresters come here for a week-long educational program. It’s a wide range of things that we serve but the Missoula Symphony comes here and has musical programs over here in the Music Building. We have real nice spaces in here for receptions and those sorts of things. The debate teams—we all know about Loyola’s long tradition of [debate success.] You can tell we have a lot of parents who have sons and daughters over at Loyola. [Everyone is aware of] Matt Sturgis and his string of state championships. Well, we actually host, this building fills up entirely and I think that’s B, C—I’m trying to remember what class that is in high schools—but it’s a wonderful opportunity for us to show off the building and you know have prospective students think about maybe coming to the Business School at the University.

But I’ll tell you, I get a little nervous, when Rosemary was alive and we were doing some of this, one of her common complaints—and I know I’m saying this and it will be heard—is, “Larry don’t you think they’re wearing the building out?” Because we really did open it to everything. The one thing Rosemary, of course, was here for the first half of this building’s life and every February 14 she would be the sweetheart of the Business School. We’d bring her and we’d put her right at the wall of honor. I always liked to bring her, at one point of her visit, where the classes would change because it would be great. The students would come out of class. They’d, of course, look at her in her wheelchair and they’d look at her picture that I had her directly
beneath and they’d come over and they’d give her a hug and they’d give her a kiss. They’d just thank her for her support for the building. But she was always concerned and I’ll have to admit, David, from my staffs’ perspective and from the janitors’ perspective and a few other things, we still, I mean we still accommodate lots of things, but we don’t do proms anymore, there a few things we just don’t do anymore. But we do, do still, a really broad range of things for the Missoula community.

DB: Good. So, yeah, I know we’ve been using the building as a centerpiece but I want to ask one more thing about it. You know you mentioned this building is 10 years old, relatively new. The turnover in equipment every two years, we’ve connected the School of Business to some of the larger business figures in the community and also you mentioned this is the largest academic unit on campus and has been since you’ve been here. Why are those things true for the School of Business? Is it student demand? Is it the mission of the School of Business? What has driven that, or either of those?

LG: Well, David, I think you’ve hit on just about every salient point, but let me go back and speak to them. First of all, if you look throughout the Montana University system, even though the Board of Regents is very concerned about duplication, one thing you’ll notice on every campus in the Montana University system is there will be a business program of some sort. There is a lot of high student demand for business and so you know, in terms of our relationship with alumni and alumni giving and alumni partnerships with corporations, that’s part of what we teach them. I mean I think we have a competitive advantage when we reach out to alumni, for support, for partnerships, for those sort of things because it’s part of how business is done. The nice thing about it is I had so many of them in classes for many, many years, when I was in the faculty and full-time faculty member and it’s been long enough ago that these students now are CFOs of Microsoft. I mean they are very well placed in organizations where we can go to them and they can really help us. But a lot of it just really is, it’s part of the culture of business and it’s a very popular area.

DB: So let’s talk about Dean Gianchetta now. You know you’ve given us your personal road to UM. How about for the classroom and the tennis court to the dean’s office? How did that happen?

LG: Well, that’s a question I still ask myself from time to time. It was not a plan: I would like to say that early in life I knew I wanted to be a business school dean. I came here back in ’75 in tenure-track position as a faculty member and obviously for the first five years, before I got involved with the tennis team, I was very focused on teaching and publishing and the kinds of things that you need to do to sort of move yourself through the professorial ranks and get tenured. That’s a very serious issue and so I was pretty focused on that. I loved it all, I loved the classroom, I loved doing research. [With] my background in mathematical statistics I had a little bit of a competitive advantage in that arena and but I told you how I kind of got drawn in to getting involved with the tennis team.
Fairly early on, I’m trying to think, it was probably not much after I started coaching the tennis team, the chair for the Department of Management was vacated and I was approached. Who knows why you get approached for certain things, but I was approached to consider chairing the Department of Management and accepted it. So I did that for five years. I must say it was the most challenging job I had since I’d been on the campus because you’re caught in that awkward position of being a faculty member still, because that’s what you are, you’re a faculty member, and yet you’re an administrator to some of those very faculty and especially if you’ve been colleagues of theirs all along. One of the things I’ve argued—and I’ve frequently get involved for the administration on the administration side for the union and the union contract—I’ve always argued that it’s kind of awkward to have the department chairs be part of the union process. It even makes more complicated this issue of supervising your colleagues so to speak.

But, I obviously must have liked it well enough and was retrieved by the administration. When the opening for the deanship came open I was encouraged to apply for it and I did and ended up being the dean and this my 20th year, which has got to be some kind of a record. Ted Smith was the longest serving dean before then and he was here for 14 years and his son Ted Jr., who is still alive, and his son Roger I know very, very well, but they thought when their father was dean for 14 years that that would be probably a record that would stand for quite a while. I love what I do so much still, David. I’m 60 now and everybody’s, well not everybody, but more frequently than not, I get people saying, “Now, are you thinking of retiring?” And I say to them, “Well, jeez, maybe I should be, everybody is asking me that question.” But you know I still like very much what I do and it’s kind of neat to be in a position for so long.

I’ll tell you something very interesting about the deanship. When the position description was written 20 years ago to be dean of the Business School, even for the dean of the Business School, there was absolutely nothing in the position description about raising money or one’s ability to raise money. They were concerned about your research, they were concerned about your teaching. It was sort of the classic academic model. It would be interesting if there were in fact something abut fundraising in that position description, whether that would have frightened me to the extent that I wouldn’t have considered the position, because I certainly didn’t get in to it because of the dimension of fundraising. Now whether you’re dean of the Honors College or dean of the College of Arts and Sciences or dean of the Business School, probably early on in the position description one of the first things you’ll read is, “What is your experience in and what has been your past success in fundraising?” It’s interesting the way things have evolved, and again, I think it’s largely because I was very close to a lot my students and about the time that fundraising got to be an important dimension for deans, students were out there in organizations where when we approached them they were pretty responsive to some of our needs. People probably look at you kind of weird when you say fundraising is part of the job that you enjoy, but it is. I mean it’s important to the job. One of the things when I first came to the University, the state supported a very large percentage of the overall budget for the University. Now the state gives us less than 12 percent of our overall budget. Part of it is the budget has grown so much. We need to be careful and not be too critical of the state.
because in terms of funded research and grants and certainly we’ve strapped a lot on the back of the student. I mean I used to pay less for a semester to go to school than what students have to pay for a single textbook now. Things have definitely changed in terms of where the revenues come from, but yeah.

DB: So dean for 20 years, can you summarize sort of the direction you’ve tried [to take] the School of Business and maybe give me a few of the signature events that point out your course in that direction or the travels along the way.

LG: All right, well first and foremost, and I’ve said this in writing more than once, if I leave any legacy at all and eventually I’ll have to leave by my choice or theirs, I guess what I’d like it to be said is that I left a remarkable faculty in place. We’re real excited because I just got the 2007 edition of the Princeton Review or the Princeton Guide. This is the guide that high school students use to consider where they might go to college. On March 29, I got up and Betsy Cohen had an article [in the Missoulian]. The article was, once again the University of Montana was the only university in the state of Montana in the Princeton Guide. Part of that is our University culture is pretty consistent with Princeton’s culture. Again that’s one of the things that attracted me here, but in her article—and the 2007 guide wasn’t even out on March 29; I finally got my own official copy. What they did in her article, they talked about the Rhodes Scholars and the rich culture that you and I visited about, but then in her article she indicated—and I had to be close vested until I got the book and really read it and made sure it was true—they kind of separated out three undergraduate programs of excellence and in this order it was English Literature, with the Creative Writing program, Business Administration and Wildlife Biology. That was pretty exciting for the faculty and for me because we knew that we were growing something pretty special here but any dean would say that and share that about any school that they were in charge of. It’s kind of nice to have something like the 2007 Princeton Guide which is, at least to some folks, the gold standard of selection of schools. It validates what we think we were doing with the faculty.

Other signature kinds of things: I was faculty advisor to the first chapter ever formed of what’s called A.I.B.L., American Indian Business Leaders. Now they are nationally headquartered here in the School of Business. Every Tuesday night I still meet as faculty advisor to our A.I.B.L. chapter. It was the very first, and this was 12 years ago, because we just had our 12th annual leadership conference down in Scottsdale Arizona. Now we have 60-some chapters on college and university campuses and have a national board of directors, Dave Archambault out of Pine Ridge, Joe McDonald out of Salish Kootenai College, Sherry Salway Black out of First Nations. Just a remarkable group of people, but for me what’s really exciting is I had, previous to this, spent time on Indian reservations in the state of Montana mostly working in economic development and saw, to use a track term, the many hurdles that people in Indian country still confronted. I’m kind of proud to now go to the annual leadership conference and see hundreds of students come and compete in business planning competitions and advertising competitions. The ones that we’ve replaced, excuse me, that we’ve placed in big organizations, national organizations. I kind of have a little fun with people. I say, “Well, this year I have 22 Indian
students in the A.I.B.L. chapter on the University of Montana campus.” I’ll say things like, “Now two are in Law School, two are in Pre-Med, three are in Computer Science, you know, areas you’d expect them to be in.” Of course, first of all that’s true, but secondly, I’m obviously playing a little bit with the heads of people because I was one that quickly drew too many conclusions about American Indians. I can tell you, David, I’ve learned far more from the Indian students than they have learned from me, but it’s been fun to grow that.

We’re the only University anywhere that hosts the World Trade Center and that’s a fairly long story in terms of how that came about. The license is about $300,000. There are a couple of entrepreneurs in Great Falls, Montana, that purchased [it] and they felt since Great Falls was sort of right in the middle of the state that that would be a perfect place to do a World Trade Center. After they realized that they weren’t gonna make it go, they came to me one morning in my office when I was in the other building, by the way, and said, “You know, if this going to work anywhere, Larry, it’s gonna work in Missoula at the University of Montana and we think you’re probably the person that we’d like to have.” Well, I was very anxious and had a lot of concerns. I’d been in a few World Trade Centers but not many, but I quickly went to the directory because I couldn’t remember any World Trade Centers that were land-locked as Missoula, Montana. What we’ve done, and it’s really neat now when we go to the International World Trade Center Association meetings, is ours is very unique, because ours is all about education. Most World Trade Centers are all about real estate developments and those sorts of things. We’ve created a real unique educational model. You know we have a great leader, that was part of the issue, I mean, even a bad idea can flourish with a great leader. And the director of the World Trade Center had done business all over the world. He’s come here and he’s been very important to the process, but for our students, who are interested in international business, I mean the opportunity for them to work in the World Trade Center [is unique.] But we get several law students who come over and work in the World Trade Center. My faculty and most anybody I encountered told me I’d be absolutely nuts, and there’s some days when it comes to funding and other issues and keeping the World Trade Center going I kind of remember that advice and say to myself, “Well, jeez, maybe you should have listened a little harder,” but generally speaking, it has really served the students very, very well.

When you talk about signatures those are really—having the national A.I.B.L. headquarters housed in the Gallagher Business Building and having the World Trade center housed down on the second floor housed in the Gallagher Business Building—crazy or not, they’re here. They’ve been here for well over a decade and I think many, many, many students on campus have benefited as a result of that. So those certainly stand out as being a little bit of a signature in that sense. But the thing I think I’m proudest of, and I’m being a little redundant here David, look at all the textbooks our faculty write now and the national reputations they’ve established, and international reputations. I’ll have to confess a lot of what helped us attract them here was when they came here to interview, first of all how could you not fall in love with Missoula, Montana? But we’d bring them in here too and we’d talk to them a little bit about partnerships that we had with Microsoft and HP and some other kinds of things that they would know would be important for their own professional growth as faculty members. I know that for many of

Larry Gianchetta Interview, OH 408-013, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
them, it was very important for them to decide to come here, other than they had a lot of choices with other Universities whose names are probably a little more recognizable, or larger than this University. Now we have, we have, such a critical mass of them that it is sort of building on itself. I mean I just have to stay out of the way mostly now and they reach out to their colleagues and stuff. But it’s really exciting and I think that’s why, you know, everybody has heard forever about the creative writing program on this campus. David, I have to confess with you, when I read Betsy Cohen’s article and saw one of the three programs of distinction that were mentioned were Business Administration, I was as surprised as well as elated, you know...

DB: It’s good company.

LG: Yeah.

DB: So, you mentioned the faculty that you are quite happy with, or proud of having here, and I did in fact notice the textbooks when I came in, but I also noticed all the awards that are sitting in front of them and so I wonder if very specifically you could tell me a few of the names of the faculty that you think stand out here and maybe a quick discussion of what a few of those awards over there are for. What are some of the things that this School has garnered?

LG: Well, I guess the first one I’ll do is, I’ll walk over here, and she just got back from Italy after having been in Switzerland. She has written the absolutely leading, the seminal textbook, and it’s translated in languages too so I’m bringing several copies here, her name is Jakki Mohr, The Marketing of High Technology Products and Innovations. She has a combination of Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and then having worked for HP for 15 years and then coming back to academia, and went to the University of Colorado actually to teach and had won every research award and teaching award they had at the University of Colorado. I learned about her and knew I wanted to have her here. I invited her to come here. She’s just world-renowned, I mean she’s just absolutely world-renowned. She now has attracted a few colleagues and a couple she tells me are more world-renowned then she is. Certainly, if you look at the editorial boards that they sit on and the acknowledgements they get from what we call A-level publications, I mean just the very top level and the editorial boards they are on. Jakki has been here, I would say, I’m guessing a little bit here, for a historian this will be horrible, I’d say maybe eight years or so. But, you know, she’s one example.

There’s several others that you could just pull up their website, their individual website, you know we have Jeff Shay, who is here in entrepreneurship, he did his undergraduate and his master’s [at] Babson’s College, which is kind of the, sort of the, entrepreneurial guru Mecca of the world and then went on and got his Ph.D. at Cornell. [He] has been acknowledge by several different professionals as being the leading entrepreneur teacher for his research and those sorts of things.

Larry Gianchetta Interview, OH 408-013, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
David Firth—I’m just sort of now going from department to department to department—David Firth, who did his undergraduate—he’s British, and you’ll pick this up really quickly—he did his undergraduate in physics at Oxford, did his master’s in natural science at Oxford, went on to be a chartered accountant in England, but more importantly worked for KPMG in a consulting capacity, went to UCLA and got a Ph.D. in Information Systems and has come to this campus, this will be his third year. Not only has he helped many scientists here on campus in what we call the commercialization of science or tech-transfer—I mean I have several scientists who have been here and who I’ve known for a long time. They said in terms of taking their science and commercializing it David has moved them further in half a year than the 30 they’ve been here. David, I not only get letters from students who take classes from him but I’ve received letters from parents of students who’ve taken classes from him that say this person has changed their life.

These people could work [anywhere], well I know it, because people try to recruit them from me on an every-other month basis. What I’ve done along with the state support for these people, I’ve had to go out and get private [support]. Jackie sits under what is called the Distinguished Faculty Fellowship, David’s a Faculty Fellow, and Jeff Shay is a Faculty Fellow. I have nine of these people that, quite frankly, people try to recruit on an every-other month basis. Part of the attraction is to work here in this environment both on and off campus. Another large part of the attraction is to work here in this environment both on and off campus. The truth of the matter is they could go and make more money somewhere else but we’ve certainly closed that gap. And you know, I’ll tell you to the person and I hope I don’t get any one of them in trouble, the one primary reason that they tell me they came here is—and I know on any campus you go to, they will tell you—teaching is still very, very, very important, but to these faculty to Jakki, to David, and to Jeff, and I got a whole string more I can give you, but I think you get the idea. To these faculty, they were at institutions where they weren’t convinced that teaching was all that important and for them personally that was still the driver. They love spending time with students, they love being in the classroom and I won’t go any further than that in terms of some of the things that were said to them relative to the overall missions of some these universities. But they could come here and get the kind of support they felt they needed to continue. I mean because when you’re known internationally, I mean there’s other kinds of support that has to be available. They saw the opportunity to be able to continue to get that kind of support, but most importantly they knew that teaching was still the primary reason they came here and that’s why they wanted to be here. That’s why they wanted to be here, they actually have to teach far more classes here than where they had to teach before. But when we say teaching is very important at the University of Montana—I mean you’re over in History, I would consider that one of the finest departments on this campus. I have so much respect for the faculty over there in the history department and you know how important teaching is to that group. So that’s really what drew them here ultimately. I mean they had to sacrifice something in salary, they probably had to sacrifice not being able to spend as much time on their research. When you have to teach several classes every year too, but that’s what they wanted. They wanted to come somewhere,
where they said we really care about teaching and it’s almost first and foremost they wanted to feel good about that statement.

DB: So as 20 years as the dean and more years than that as faculty, it certainly can’t have all been great faculty, great students and rewards. Share with me tough decisions or a tough moment you’ve had in that position.

LG: Well, that’s a fair question. I still have—you know it’s always a challenge. We’re still confronted with limited resources and I’m not so sure that that isn’t true on any campus, but I think state universities, like the University of Montana, it’s more real than some other campuses. When you have a lot of thoroughbreds in the stable and I think our stable filling up with thoroughbreds, from a management point of view, that does create more of management challenge. But generally I think that’s gone pretty darn well. In my first couple of years here we had turnover like the school had not seen for quite a while. The numbers exactly, I won’t give you any names of course, but five people. I think for many years before that there were, I don’t think that anything quite like that happened so there were certain—you know, I’ve worked pretty hard. I think if you were to ask the faculty about me and my work ethic, they’d tell you, probably, no one works harder than me. But you know what’s expected from people who work really hard?

DB: More.

LG: And for most people here that just comes quite naturally. But I’m not here to tell you that we don’t have days or issues that get pretty rough but I think the toughest problem for the University or the toughest problem that I can continue to challenge as dean—and to some extent we have a slight advantage over the other people because we’re able, even on the fundraising side, to be able to bring in resources for faculty travel, and faculty development, and faculty kinds of opportunities—but that’s a continual challenge. I often go in [a lot of] directions. I’ve got two or three new initiatives going on now and I know that there are people thinking, boy, if I hadn’t lost it up until now then I probably have now. A World Trade Center here, I mean, and there are probably still some people who would argue it makes absolutely no sense today. I don’t think anyone would argue about the national headquarters of AIBL being here. There was a lot suspicion early on over exactly what that would do and where it was going but I think that is such important part of what we do as educators. But I literally have two or three ideas now that I’ve thrown out, that we’re all processing, that now everybody is equally comfortable with. In fact, I know of at least one where I’d say the majority of the people would say it’s finally happened, he’s finally gone totally goofy on us.

DB: So I don’t want to end with a question about the tough things. So that seems like a good place for you to finish up is, I guess, is your vision for the future. What are one or two of those ideas that you are going to set the University in the direction of perhaps?
LG: Well I just went down and visited with the students this morning on one of our newest initiatives. We’re looking more and more at what we can do for non-business majors. We’re actually building a few courses in our curriculum that we can do. I think we’re very seriously looking at minors. The one particular initiative I’m talking about is one that I hope might ultimately bring people to the University of Montana almost for no other reason than this idea. It’s called the Montana Business Development Initiative. What we have is we have students—a woman from New York who is looking at doing a dance studio. We have students that really don’t have any business background, but what is required to come in to this Montana Business Development Initiative is that you have to have a business idea. One of the reasons we haven’t done a lot with minors is we’re not really convinced that if you just give very few courses in business, how much value that would add. So a little twist on that, and they’re here all day long for a large part of the summer, sort of developing their business idea and actually leaving with a business plan, and none of them have business backgrounds. We’re starting already to track some people, and not only from our own campus. I think we got two or three from the Law School, I think we got two or three from the Pharmacy School, but we’re starting to draw outside of the state and bring people to the campus. It’s pretty unique, this whole idea, [people who] don’t have to have a business background, come here; the only thing you have to have is a business idea. You’ll leave with a well-written business plan. But David, what they don’t realize is that in the process of the summer they’ll actually learn more about finance, more about accounting, more about marketing, more about some of the business fundamentals in this process, than if we just have them take one accounting class. We take them through all the technical crap. Well, I guess I can call it crap because I’m an accountant, of debits and credits and adjusting journals. I think more often than not they walk out of the class with whatever grade they get just happy they’re out of the class. I’m not sure how much value we’ve added to them in terms of—and the real issue is in most cases they don’t need to be confused by all that technical stuff. There are things about accounting they need to understand, there are things about finance they need to understand. But I guess I’m convinced you can add a lot more value to them if you do it through the process of their own business idea and teach them these different content areas in a way that they’re going to be, just by their very nature, interested. All of the sudden finance becomes pretty important if you’re gonna find a way to finance a business idea. And so that’s one of them.

DB: Great. Well, I appreciate your time today, Dean Gianchetta, and do you have any closing words? Feel free to offer them.

LG: Well, I appreciate, David that you are trying to capture some of the history, as you call it oral history of the University. I do really feel like this is a very special place. I feel very, very fortunate to have spent 32 years here and I think there’s a lot of wonderful stories to be told, so thank you for taking the time and making the effort to do this.

[End of Interview]