





Dr. George Hanbury

A WELL-DONE CAREER THAT'S NOT OVER YET

BY **KEVIN GALE**

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY **EDUARDO SCHNEIDER**;
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF **NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**

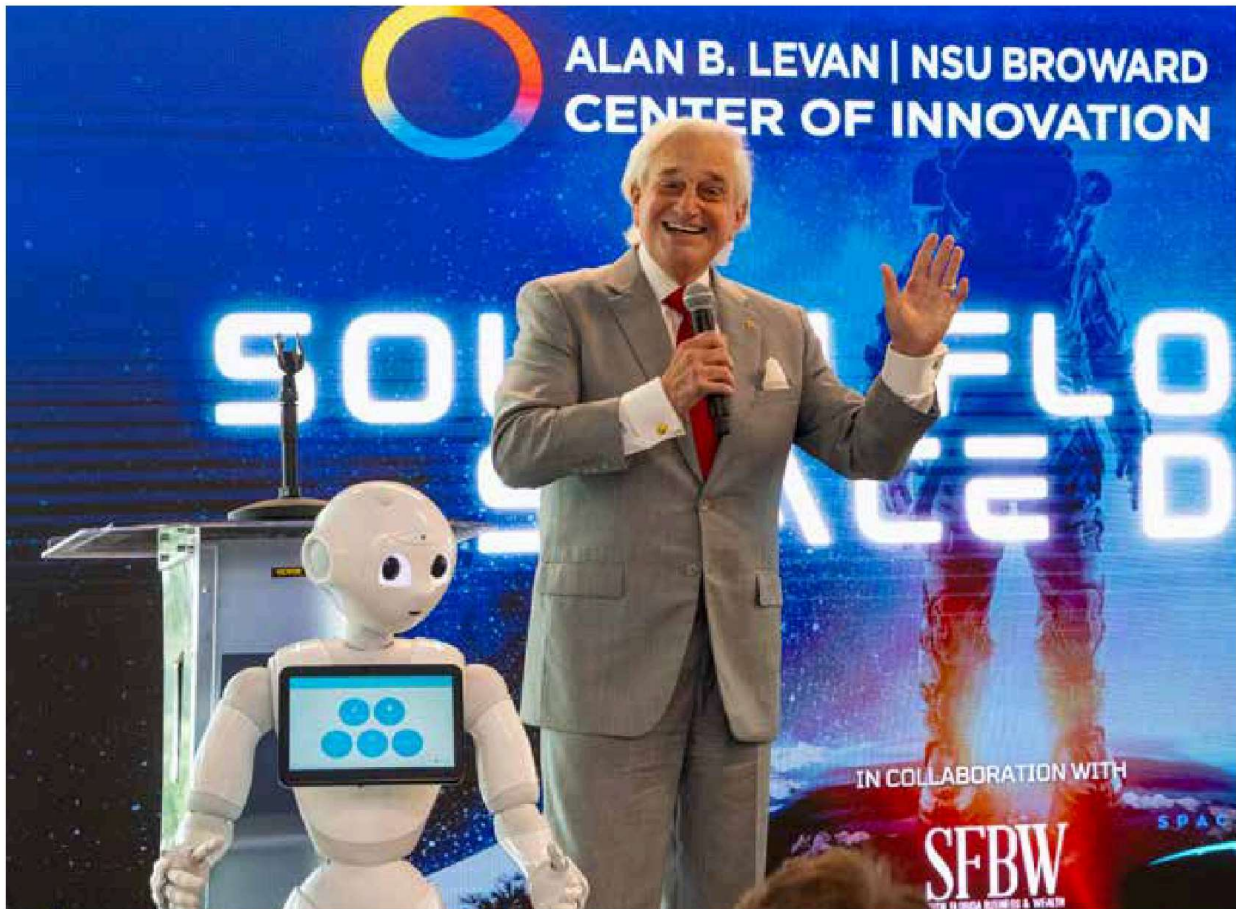
*d*r. George L. Hanbury II will step down as president and CEO of Nova Southeastern University at the end of the year, leaving behind a long trail of accomplishments at both the university and the city of Fort Lauderdale.

His new role will be chancellor and creator of NSU's new Institute of Citizenship, Leadership and International Affairs. His successor, Dr. Harry K. Moon, M.D., is already NSU's executive vice president and chief operating officer.

Hanbury served as NSU's COO for 12 years before becoming president in 2011. Before that, he had a 30-year career as city manager of Fort Lauderdale; Portsmouth, Va.; and Virginia Beach.

The list of NSU's accomplishments under Hanbury's watch are considerable:

- The NSU campus has expanded by more than 1.5 million square feet to more than 6 million square feet. In addition to Davie/Fort Lauderdale, campuses are in Dania Beach (oceanographic campus), Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Palm Beach, Fort Myers and Miami. There are



DR. GEORGE HANBURY SPEAKING AT ALAN B. LEVAN | NSU BROWARD CENTER OF INNOVATION

also locations in Denver and San Juan, Puerto Rico, the latter opening in 2014 with master and doctoral programs.

- NSU is Florida's largest private university with more than 22,000 students, 5,500 employees, a \$2 billion balance sheet and \$1.1 billion in net assets.
- In 2018, the university welcomed the inaugural class at the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Allopathic Medicine, South Florida's fourth medical school. By 2030, NSU expects to be awarding more degrees to physicians than any other university nationally with both osteopathic and allopathic medical schools.
- In 2019, NSU opened a Tampa Bay regional campus, which includes a branch site for the Patel college and an international dental program.
- NSU partnered with Broward County in 2021 to establish the Alan B. Levan | NSU Broward Center of Innovation at the Alvin Sherman Library on the Fort Lauderdale campus. The center is an economic engine for startup businesses and provides entrepreneurial opportunities for NSU students.
- NSU worked with Hospital Corporation of America to establish in 2021 HCA University Hospital, a teaching and research hospital adjacent to the main campus in Davie.

"George Hanbury has led Nova Southeastern University through years of unparalleled achievement. The university is

financially sound and well on track to continue its rise to preeminence among national research universities," says Charlie Palmer, chair of NSU's board of trustees. "We have recognized the strong and effective partnership between President Hanbury and Dr. Moon over these past five years and we see that promotion from within will serve the university's best interest."

HANBURY INSTITUTE

Hanbury is a keen student of history and the new George Hanbury Institute for Leadership and the American Dream sounds like something that would make fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson smile. Its foundation pillars are integrity, citizenship, civility, compassion, collaboration and courage (the I-C⁵ Model).

The institute, to be housed in NSU's office of the provost, will help address these issues as part of an I-C⁵ model for all students. A select number of students also will become Hanbury Scholars as part of the institute's Leadership Academy.

However, the impact will spread further with a target audience of high-level executives and officials in the for-profit, non-profit and governmental sectors. The goal will be to help them become transformative leaders by emphasizing collective interests and goals and diminishing the selfish interest of individuals. The corollary is that leaders are committed to individuals' personal goals. In essence, it's about developing reciprocal trust.

The institute appears to be coming at the right time amid rapid

technological change and a shortage of civility in society.

“Our responsibility and mission as educators of tomorrow’s leaders, and even today’s leaders, in an unpredictable and AI world, is to equip all our students and others participating in the program with values to live and lead in a democratic society where people may disagree on many issues, but will endeavor to engage in meaningful, respectful, and civil dialogue,” the concept paper for the institute says.

VISION EFFORTS SUCCEED

The institute mirrors one of Hanbury’s first accomplishments as president — focusing NSU’s mission and vision with eight core values – integrity, academic excellence, student-centered, innovation, opportunity, scholarship/research, diversity and community. That plan was known as Vision 2020 and has now been followed by Vision 2025, which positions the university as a preeminent, professional-dominant, doctoral-research university that provides competitive career advantages to its students and produces alumni who serve and lead with integrity.

The university has raised 94 percent of the \$1 billion goal in external research funding and philanthropic contributions since fiscal 2010.

NSU is one of 59 U.S. universities to hold the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s dual designation of both “Community Engaged” and “High Research Activity.” NSU is one of three universities in the U.S. to have two medical schools – a College of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) and a College of Allopathic Medicine (MD). Dr. Moon, besides being the university’s COO, is also COO of NSU Health.

CITY MANAGER MEETS NSU

When Dr. Hanbury became city manager in Fort Lauderdale, the city’s goal was to become the best city of its size by 1994. The city had done a lot of visioning exercises and passed a major bond issue, so Dr. Hanbury’s role was to get everything enacted.

Given the rapid turnover of city managers in general, he was told by one mentor not to fall in love with the city, but Dr. Hanbury said, “What’s not to love about Fort Lauderdale and South Florida?” He lives at the Four Seasons Apartments overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway near Las Olas Boulevard. His living room used to be part of the Le Dôme restaurant atop the 11-story building.

Amid a recession, Hanbury had to reduce and reorganize the city’s workforce even amid ambitious projects like constructing Riverwalk. Bumper stickers, billboards and even a banner plane were used to oppose his plans. “Save Fort Lauderdale Fire and Fire Hanbury” was the expressed intent.

With some shifting, he was able to create an economic development department and famed landscape designer Edward Stone was hired to develop plans for Riverwalk and beach improvements. Riverwalk was going to be cement and oyster shells, but bricks were needed for contributors. Coming from Virginia originally, Hanbury said he knew where to find bricks, which ultimately raised a lot of money.

Hanbury also developed a collaboration with H. Wayne Huizenga to foster further economic development.

He eventually made good on promises to police and fire about pay. They gave him a museum-quality weapon to thank him for his “uncompromising support toward labor and public safety professional firefighters of Fort Lauderdale.”

Now, he can say with a grin, “They were the same ones who wanted to fire me.”

Hanbury also supported an ordinance that permitted outdoor dining, which was once uncommon in the city, after a visit to the News Café in South Beach. That was followed up by allowing weekend parking on Las Olas Boulevard, which gave those sitting outdoors a better sense of safety.

Parking revenue was used to help buy the Holiday Inn at State Road A1A and Las Olas Boulevard, which is now the site of Oceanside Park.

FRIENDSHIP LEADS TO PARTNERSHIP

It’s not coincidental that these projects led to his arrival at NSU as COO.

Attorney Ray Ferrero Jr. moved into the Four Seasons about two months after Hanbury and eventually joined the board of NSU, became chairman and ultimately was asked to be president. Hanbury and Ferrero, a highly regarded trial lawyer, became good friends.

Hanbury recounts a key conversation with Ferrero, “‘George, the board has asked me to be president.’ He said, ‘I’ve been a lawyer for 38 years.’ And I said, ‘Well, I’ve been a city manager for 30 years.’ And he said, ‘Well, a city is kind of like a small university. You need to bring disparate groups together to accomplish something. You create a vision, a mission, and you develop it. You did that with the beach. You did that with Riverwalk, you did it downtown on Las Olas. You came up with rezonings. You sold bonds. You had to come up with zero-based budgeting..Well, I don’t know how to do that.’ He said, ‘I’ve created a new position of a chief operating officer.’”

The tenure of a city manager might be likened to dog years and Hanbury was ready to move on. Moreover, he had just finished his doctorate in public service at Florida Atlantic University. When Ferrero eventually stepped down, a board of trustee member told Hanbury he had been auditioning to become president for 12 years while he was COO.

Now, Hanbury is preparing to succeed Ferrero as chancellor and Ferrero will have the newly created title of president emeritus. As of deadline for this issue, a search was on for a new chief operating officer.

NSU’s adroitness at succession planning and onboarding has not gone unnoticed, especially when public universities in Florida and elsewhere have had plenty of scandal, controversy and failed presidencies. *Inside Higher Education* noted how NSU’s approach “marks a departure from higher education norms and hews more toward the practices of corporate America.”

NSU’s teams may be called The Sharks, but it doesn’t look like Jaws is lurking about its leadership ranks. ♦