Crisis manager
Shea ’88 faces early hurdles as governor’s chief of staff

by Matthew Golden

Instead, Shea became fascinated with politics at an early age. “I was also fortunate to have some very positive influences and opportunities. One of my American history teachers, Gene Jensen, really piqued my interest in politics,” Shea recalled. “And The College of New Jersey provided an entryway to my career. I have tried to do the best I can with interesting and, I think, important work.”

In 1995, Shea traveled overseas to serve as speechwriter and attaché to the United States ambassador in France. He returned to the U.S. one year later and became an aide at the United Nations. “In 2000, I managed to snag him again,” DeMaio recalled. “He came to work on Jon Corzine’s campaign for the U.S. Senate as director of communications.”

Corzine won the Senate seat and named Shea his chief of staff. The two have been working together for the past six years and have developed a deep and mutual sense of loyalty. “We have been through two statewide elections in New Jersey, and those are never easy,” Shea said, only partially in jest.

“Shea has returned to his New Jersey roots after several years away. ‘This wasn’t a job I dreamed of,’ he noted. ‘In fact, it wasn’t even one that I really wanted. It was the building a home in Fort Lauderdale, and I thought I would be enjoying the sun and palm trees by now. When the governor asked me to do this, though, I couldn’t say no.’

Next up for Shea? “Who knows,” he responded when asked. “I’m not a planner. In terms of my career, I have been given the chance to do some really interesting and, I think, important work. I have tried to do the best I can with those opportunities. When they stop coming, I’ll head south.”

Until then, Shea will keep his focus squarely on New Jersey.