

**Shaileen Kopec**

Marist College  
Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri  
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

**Kopec, Shaileen**

Transcript – Shaileen Kopec

**Interviewee:** Shaileen Kopec

**Interviewers:** Gus Nolan and Jan Stivers

**Interview Date:** August 24, 2022

**Location:** Marist Archives and Special Collections

**Topic:** Marist College History

**Subject Headings:** Kopec, Shaileen  
Marist College Executive  
Marist College History  
Marist College (Poughkeepsie, NY)  
Marist College Social Aspects

**Summary:** Shaileen speaks about her time working first as a part-time employee and then a full time executive at Marist College. She discusses how the growth of the college necessitated the growth of the position and department she was hired into. Shaileen also discusses the relationship of the Marist Alumni and the success of the college and it's graduates. She also talks about what that might look like moving forward in the next phase of higher education.

Gus Nolan ([00:00:02](#)):

Good afternoon folks today is Wednesday, August 24th. And we're having an interview with Shaileen Kopec retired Marist executive. She had a number of roles here, which one? While I was here? Maybe director of development might have been her last role, but I'm not sure about that.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:00:24](#)):

Well, I was vice president for college advancement and then I transitioned into being a senior development officer. So that was the end, but I did have eight different jobs at Marist. Which we won't go into.

Gus Nolan ([00:00:39](#)):

It's all mashed together. One thing and another.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:00:41](#)):

That's right.

Gus Nolan ([00:00:41](#)):

Okay. But this is the second time we're meeting. The first time was November 8, 2001. Surely it's been a long time since we had this kind of a discussion. One thing is very clear. You really have had a very successful career in your lifespan of work. I'm just wondering now how you might think about, could it have been different when you look at the decisions you made to come here, have you had second thoughts about it?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:01:19](#)):

Oh, heavens no, I loved being in higher education as my career. In fact, when Tony and I got married and I moved to Poughkeepsie, I had worked three years at the University of New Haven. And it was a great experience. There were a lot of similarities to Marist. It was a school that they were trying to build, you know, had humble beginnings and they were really ramping it up. And there were a lot of things that I loved about New Haven. So, when I came here - actually, I held off to get a job that was more specifically in my area of interest in higher education. I had been considered for a job at Dutchess in student services. And I said to Tony, you know, that's not really what I want to do, you know? I know it was hard to get a job then. I mean, this, that was high inflation back in 1972. But anyway, I said, you know, I don't wanna pass this up, but it's not where I wanna be. And I think once you get tracked in, you know - so anyway, no, I was very fortunate to move here.

Gus Nolan ([00:02:25](#)):

Well, the reason I'm looking at the other parts that, first of all, the Marist salary at the time was rather humble by other standards that I'm sure - you were the mother of two babies at home.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:02:38](#)):

Well, not yet when I first came.

Gus Nolan ([00:02:41](#)):

Well, you were going to be, and yet you still stayed the course. You're Director of Alumni of a college you did not graduate from, and you're a woman that's firstly, an all male college for most of the alumni. Was that not a tough mountain to climb?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:02:57](#)):

Well, you know, it was so interesting because I was really impressed that Marist hired me because I knew I was not an alum. Having worked at a college prior, I was not an alum. And I thought of the 2000 plus students, there's only like maybe, I don't know, a couple of hundred, if that many women. So I knew it was all male. So it was kind of reinforcing to me because I thought wow, if they're gonna hire me, then they, you know, it makes a statement about what they want for their program that they're hiring me because they think I can take it where it should go. Because, Rich Foy had a high interest in that alumni role. He said that we needed to really step it up, professionalize it, move it from part-time to full-time. And I met with him (as was noted in the last interview we had) once a week for an hour, he was my mentor. He really filled me in on what Marist was about.

Gus Nolan ([00:03:58](#)):

But that's not surprising, because he was a very young president, with really no college experience. In fact, he was president before he ever taught in college here. So you know, that idea, and Marist was not known with a great reputation for anything. I mean, we were a farm, you know? So your coming on board, which to me in retrospect looks like a risky shift, but you're so confident in it.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:04:29](#)):

Yeah, I did have confidence. I have to tell you a funny little comment that came along the way. All the alumni executive board were males, and it was interesting, shall we say. But, I became friendly with all of them over the years. You know - when they passed away, I contacted their families. I mean, they were a special group of people. And I remember, I don't know how many years into my working at Marist, but one of them who I know said "You know, we really didn't wanna hire you," they were alumni that were on the committee, "because you weren't an alum and you were a woman." So, that was a different mindset back in the day. But - he did say, but "You were so qualified". So I kind of felt that was one small step for women at Marist, but it also was reinforcing to me because I felt - you know what? They value my experience and that's why they hired me. And, I must have had some good chemistry with them that they felt they could work with me.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:30](#)):

Yeah. And it was a kind of, I guess - I'm speaking now, because from my point of view it was a kind of can do spirit. We can do it. You know, we built the chapel, we built the gym, we're building Donnelly, you know? All hands on deck, together. So it was a team effort. I mean, it seems like you were willing to come in and pull your share over there, or load that hadn't been taken care of, you know, so that's another moving point. I mean, physically, we weren't even something to look at. In fact, the first letter, first line of the opening of the first middle states, was "The best time to approach Marist is at night."

Shaileen Kopec ([00:06:15](#)):

Well, I've got a better one than that. When I was working in the alumni office, I was right next to Dave Flynn, who was the Admissions Director. And he would - Dave had a nice little sense of humor, but he was a very focused guy. And he would say to the tour guides "Now, remember when you get to Donnelly

go around like three, four times, up and down. They won't even figure it out where it begins or ends!" Which was true, you could get lost over there.

Gus Nolan ([00:06:40](#)):

At one time, there were stained glass windows. So that had to do with this "approach at night", it looked colorful. It's only the next day you saw the bulldozers and the other stuff that was out there, you know? Okay, then just one more question: the next step from just about survival, to getting recognized - with the IBM grants, and with Upward Bound, and with federal money coming in. Marist has a little more room, I suppose, to feel a certain security - but how did that happen?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:07:25](#)):

Well, it's interesting. I mean, you're right on it in terms of what Marist did in those early years with the federal money, and establishing a relationship with IBM, and so forth. I always knew this because I had been at Marist so long, and I had an ongoing relationship with Rich Foy. But, I came to an even more, an even deeper appreciation for what his role was when I wrote the article - the remembrance in the Marist magazine. And as I wrote it, I knew a lot of it. And I also could hear his voice echoing, because he always had carried all this information and these stories. But most of all, the strategies about advancing Marist College. But as I read it, I thought, you know? The Foy era and the Murray era are very distinct, but it's so interesting about the foundations that were established during the Foy era and by the core faculty, many of whom are former brothers. A lot of those things that you just said, relative to getting government grants, to being very entrepreneurial and trying to find a way to make it happen, but never forgetting the mission of the institution. So when I came to Marist - now, I did have the advantage of working at University of New Haven, because they were very entrepreneurial. They had a lot of people that were go getters to build their college. And so they went after grants that shaped their academic programs. But they never went after anything that wasn't consistent with what the school was about. And that's what Marist was. All those programs that were developed had to do with the mission of the institution. And Title III - that was major. Title III, having that come into play.

Gus Nolan ([00:09:25](#)):

Summarize it, what was Title III?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:09:27](#)):

Title III was a federal grant that was for developing institutions. I hope I'm right that that was under Rich Foy, but it was for developing institutions. It was a boost from the federal government to provide money that could develop areas that were important to creating a strong institution that went beyond the academics. So it helped us with counseling, it helped us with career development. There were different things like that, that it contributed to. I'm sure there's something in the archives about Title III, I hope. If it's Dennis Murray, that's a different story. He was the person on top of it, but Marist did have those federal grants. They had those grants for disabled kids. You know when I got here, there were blind and deaf students, there were kids that were in wheelchairs. And this was reflective of the time. When I got here, I was like where did all these kids come from that -

New Speaker ([00:10:30](#)):

And had aids, had personal care within your class...

Shaileen Kopec ([00:10:34](#)):

Yes. You never saw that many people in public who were disabled, it was a revelation to me. But the big thing was that the students at Marist were very welcoming; I mean, they would take these kids to the bars, they'd pick 'em up in their wheelchairs and take 'em to the bars! And I could give you a lot of examples because I did kind of unofficially get involved with some student organizations and got to know the students as well. But yeah, Marist was very resourceful, but didn't get off the beaten path. And that was an issue then people were like "Well, we're not supposed to be doing this and that." Well, no, that's not so. I didn't think so. I understood it because of my contacts from New Haven. I wasn't clinging to the "We're a liberal arts school." Because we never lost the liberal arts core.

Gus Nolan ([00:11:23](#)):

Yeah. Speaking about that foundation, that Murray built on is the literal foundation of the dormitories. Linus' direction to go and get the grants to build Sheehan, and Leo, and Champagnat, which then allowed - we were not going off of the Hudson Valley anymore. So I mean, that strategy of saying, looking forward - to saying, here's a problem, how are gonna solve it? Let's try this, you know?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:11:55](#)):

And taking a risk, being very strategic and taking a risk, but taking a risk that if you put the right effort and brain power, and everybody worked toward it, we could make it successful. They weren't - Over the years, I don't think in anything Marist has been wildly risky, but has taken risks in terms of taking on debt, or pushing out for - I thought one of the biggest things that Marist did in the early years, when I was here, was build the McCann Center. That was risky, because it took forever to complete it, and find the resources. There was no fundraising money available, zero, it was really - but that, that was one of the moments I think you could point to and say, that was a transformational moment, just like this library, that was a transformational moment. You had to develop the campus in order to create the new foundation for Marist - the broader, more modern, more serviceable for our students foundation. And he was there doing it in the beginning, and Dennis, of course did it astronomically.

Gus Nolan ([00:13:10](#)):

Yeah. But I was asking Liz the other day about is there such things as administrative courses? Linus never had an administrative course, as far as I know. He came in here, a high school teacher, and Paul Ambrose said "Well, who else am I gonna ask to do it?" So that was immediate on the job training, but the native skills that he had brought to this, the reason, the rationale of saying "If we can get the dormitories up." Interestingly, not all Marist brothers sent their students to Marist College. I mean, Fairfield's got a better shot at some of the students out of St. Ann's, and St. Anslem's, and St. Helen's, and Mount St. Michael. But there was enough of a bloodstream that we did survive. And then there was a neat part where if there was room, they were able to rent it out to IBM-ers who were in Sheehan against the first year. Some of those rooms were, they were students or whatever in night school. And so they were able to some kind of way they could justify the use of the space. That's my, maybe Christian memory of it.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:14:35](#)):

Well, one of the things when you talk about what contributed to the success, especially the future success of Marist, I always look at it as there was the brothers model; and then there was the Rich Foy brothers model, that was based on the original brothers model when they were here in the monastery and on the farm; and then there was the Dennis Murray business model that incorporated other approaches. And one of the things that was very interesting about - well, first of all, the brothers model

is from which all these things emanate, relative to being industrious and being collaborative and finding a solution. Not saying, "Well, we can't-" well, I certainly would never say they couldn't afford it, cause they couldn't afford much, "but we'll find a way." I mean, they would go and get lumber donated from people in the town and so forth. They would find a way, that was very much the brother's way, that became the Marist way. "Well, we've gotta do it, and this is why we have to do it, and we have to figure out a way to do it." So one of the things that was a legacy of the brothers was they were very unusual, I thought as a religious order, where they were like "We wanna be in the community, and not just the Catholic ,community" although they did jump into the Catholic community with St. Peter's school, and they would have the blood drives with St. Francis and those types of things. But I remember at one of my Rich Foy mentoring sessions, him telling me that - and you would remember this, I wasn't around here - but he said, "We decided to take the wall down because it was symbolic. When you walked, went by here and you saw that wall, well, you didn't go beyond the wall. We took the wall down to say, we're here, we're part of this community!" That was not done to build enrollment, that was done because that was a mindset that the brothers had and wanted.

Gus Nolan ([00:16:43](#)):

Here's a part of that - the wall was crumbling. [laughter] Nilus came to Linus and said "What should we do?" And Linus said "Take it down." This without a committee meeting, without a study, without any kind of saying "Should we do this? What's gonna happen when we take the wall down?" Just do it, you know, and we've better without the wall. Then Dennis comes along and puts back up, a nice sense, you know, to protect us. Or protect people coming in.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:17:19](#)):

And jaywalking too! Across Route 9. Yeah. But as I say, the brothers had a self sustaining model for this monastery, and it included their teaching each other; or those that were qualified to be teachers to teach at the college level. And, one of the stories that I got to know through, or the real thinking through Rich was when he was talking - and this came to the fore when I was writing the article about him in the magazine. And that was the brothers were reaching a point where they needed a revenue stream. They couldn't continue on with just hatching the eggs and growing the food. So everybody was like behind "Okay, we'll let some laymen in." Now they did do the IBM thing, which was great, but that turned out to be an everlasting relationship. So that was also very timely. But the other thing they did was that they thought that they could bring in so many lay young men, and that they would create the revenue stream for the brothers, but then things were changing within the order. And this notion of what they were going to do had to be changed. And I remember Rich saying - he was in the forefront saying - "We can't just think in terms of bringing these young men in and having a core group of them, we have to expand the enrollment to get to a larger one." So he was the one that was like "We have to push to a thousand students." So to me that was like the taking the best of the brothers self sustaining, entrepreneurial model, and then creating it in the next phase. And having that be the Foy model, so to speak. Because by then, it was not a Catholic institution. They had sold it to the brothers - or the brothers had sold it to Marist. But some of the foundations that were sustained were the relationships in the community. One thing I was impressed with when I came here in 1972 is you go out in the community - first of all, they say "Oh, we know brother so and so, and we know brother so and so." And Rich Foy when he was a brother was very involved with the United way. He didn't have to be president the United way. He was not a guy that liked to be in the spotlight, by the way. So I'm sure that was a really tough on him, but it was a great move for Marist College to be in the community that way. But the other thing that people would talk about was, you know, Marist is a good little school. It's a little school, but it's a good little school. You know there was a perception that it had merit, and probably because Catholic education at

the time was held in high regard for its excellence and standards and things like that. The other thing that Rich did was he brought in people who weren't Catholic, and brought them into be on the board of trustees. And so this is where I think a lot of these roots got settled. A lot of these things kept growing off, you know? But again, Dennis was the person who made it explode. But there was a lot of foundational work that has been carried forward.

Gus Nolan ([00:20:51](#)):

I yield to my colleague here. I nominated -

Jan Stivers ([00:20:56](#)):

Well, let me ask a follow up to that. It's very clear that you described these as foundational, that Marist would not be what it is today, had it not been for these values and mindsets. This approach, entrepreneurial approach. Today, can you detect - do you think a visitor to Marist today could detect the influence of the Marist brothers? Is it palpable? Or is it foundational and kind of below the level of vision? Well, level of visibility I need to say,

Shaileen Kopec ([00:21:39](#)):

Well, there are a lot of physical manifestations of the brothers. I think you can come to this campus and see that the Marist brothers were not only the founders, but they're held in regard - high regard - by the school. And I say that because initially, it was because of all the buildings, but these buildings are slowly but surely going. I don't know. I think Donnelly someday will disappear. I hate to say it. Because it would take so much to renovate it. But you have Champagnat hall, and the chapel is an enduring symbol. And I think if for nothing else, people are like "Oh, what's the story on the chapel?" Now, thanks to Brother Joe - brother Joseph Belanger- he made it his mission to have all these plaques made. So you have the bench out there and it explains what the chapel is. And so the college has done a good job; and this is with Dennis Murray's support, put historical remembrances. St. Peter's will tell you about why it's called St. Peter's when you go there. So these are plaques. So there are some permanent things that are available. The builders - founders and builders presentation in the entrance to Donnelly. I had worked on both those conceptions and executions. And one of the last things I did, in fact, it went up after I left - it was trying to capture that, having a place where it could be highly visible. It initially started over there 'cause that's where a lot of people came in. Sean Sammon's done a great job getting that really beautifully done. It's more than a plaque. It tells the story of Champagnat. If you go into Fontaine, they give Brother Paul his due. They explain who he was and what was going on. So there are manifestations all around that are permanent. So I think people would get a sense of, as far as like - well, the biggest thing is it's Marist, you know? I remember when I got here, the seventies were kind of rocky times everywhere. Believe me, they were rocky everywhere. And they were Rocky here in a variety of ways, but one of them was "Well, is it a Catholic school or not a Catholic school?" And, you know, "Maybe if we changed our name from Marist, people would realize we're not a Catholic school." That wasn't the consensus. There were just people popping up here and there that were saying things like that. Well, the fact of the matter is that Marist College has been the carrier of the Marist name and allowing a door to be open to people's understanding of where that name came from. But that name has also become synonymous with academic excellence on the university level. And that's what we really are on the university level. The one thing that I think is not highly conspicuous, but is definitely - and I said it before, was - that the brothers had a core liberal art. They had, their curriculum was liberal arts. It was vigorous. Those guys were like studying, they were so smart. I was talking to Tony, my husband, this morning and he was like, "Those guys are so smart." 'Cause he knew all the legacy people. And he said, "And they went on to become highly educated with their doctorates at," you know, Rich was at NYU and



Catholic university Fordham, all these top schools. So that's a great thing that's maintained. It's a differentiator for Marist College right now. But that may not be as - it's not conspicuous when you come on the campus. Yeah, I think Marist has done a good job acknowledging his heritage as times change and things change. Not Marist forcing change, just the course of what's going on everywhere, whatever it may be. There's still an honoring, and it's permanent. You'd have to jackhammer the stuff to take it away.

Gus Nolan ([00:26:07](#)):

Sidebar on this - I had this discussion with Richard LaMorte on the interview. I said to him, "Is Marist a Catholic college?" And he said, "Well, let me ask you this. If the college was 90% black, would you say it's a black college? If it was 75% Jewish, would you say it's a Jewish college?" The population of Marist is like 87% nominally Catholic. But I think the point is, what is it to be a Catholic? So the name up there is one thing, but the percentages of people who believe in a real presence within the church is down like 20% from the hundred, you know? It's down, it's not over 80%, it's somewhere in the 70s, I believe. So, what is it to be a Catholic is kind of missing. It's nice to have a name. Like you've gotta have priests in charge and nuns and things like that. That's - the world has changed differently. I think that that's part of where Marist has grown with the flow. It certainly numerically, I think, has a good percentage of Catholic students who have a certain tradition, but the practice may not keep up with what the tradition was. And so I think that's -

Shaileen Kopec ([00:27:36](#)):

Yeah. I don't know what the percentage now is, but - oh, one thing I would mention that is not as visible, but as important is campus ministry. It happens, that Marist brothers are the leaders of that. But that is, it's always been the largest club on campus, a thousand students or whatever. But it's become more recognizable as ecumenical. However, there are Marist brothers that are in charge of it. I think Marist had to make some strategic decisions about being Catholic in the very beginning. I mean, the brothers were way ahead of the curve. I mean, there were people like "Well, should we do-" you know, they knew that Marist College was contingent on having enough Marist brothers; and not only enough Marist brothers, but did you want to take those Marist brothers and just keep them at Marist College? Or shouldn't they be out there going to these secondary schools? Which is really what Champagnat was focused on. So that was also, I think, a dilemma that they had and that was something that Rich pointed out. So it wasn't - it was seen that change was afoot. And are we going to get mowed down by change? Are we gonna be proactive? Are we gonna get out in front of change? Are we going to be flumoxed or are we gonna live in a bubble and let - you know, it's sad when you look at some of these small private schools that did have Catholic or were Catholic colleges that dissolved. It's because they couldn't get, they couldn't accept that there was change. That's why Marist went co-ed, you know, it wasn't in the carts - all male schools were not in the carts. They had to go co-ed.

Gus Nolan ([00:29:35](#)):

And giving up control of the board of trustees. Linus, you know, made a secular board rather than a religious board.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:29:44](#)):

Yes! Very significant.

Gus Nolan ([00:29:46](#)):

For a very significant financial reason too: the brothers would not be charged with the suits that may come to the institution. And lo and behold, most of the high schools went the same way, becoming run by boards of trustees or whatever kind of government was sitting.

Jan Stivers ([00:30:07](#)):

Well, we're talking about this connection between Marist as it was and Marist as it is today. You mentioned - well, it's really the university - and we've made a conscious decision, even though we have a doctoral program now to continue to use the name Marist College rather than Marist University. Do you wanna talk about that at all?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:30:31](#)):

Well, I would be very surprised. This is just me talking, retired and private citizen. If Marist did not become university in the next strategic plan, I would be surprised. I love that it's Marist College. We are very much an undergraduate experience, but the fact that we have a doctoral program, we have a PA program, we've had masters programs. I don't know what's going on because of COVID and everything else. But, you know, when you go out into the international circles being called a college -- especially Marist College, where there are a lot of Marist Colleges out in the world because of the Marist brothers, a college is seen as a high school, as you know. So the practical reasons why that would be the case. I think Dennis did a great job. And I remember 'cause I was like in the thick of things at the time, where we were - and actually I got this too, when I was working in admissions, when I was doing marketing work with Harry - that we were pushing Marist. We wanted people to know the name Marist, which is interesting because in terms of the Dennis Murray business model there was a -- and this is not written down in a piece of paper. Dennis is the one to talk to, if you wanna get the full scoop, this is my perception of having been part of the cabinet. You had Marist under Dennis and to this day, in fact, very interestingly, Kevin Weinman emphasized this in one of his communications back to school, and that is highly tuition intensive. In fact, I was surprised it was still like way over, it was still over 95%. Now they're doing good things with reserves and all that sort of stuff. But the thing that I think that was very hard to get across to the rest of the campus, and in particularly the faculty, because they were doing what they should be doing: teaching in the classroom. And the administrators had to oversee things and make things happen. But being so tuition dependent was perilous. You know, it's amazing that Marist, I think the only time I remember there being anybody laid off was during the pandemic. I remember lots of schools going through periods where they were laying people off.

Jan Stivers ([00:33:13](#)):

2008. Vassar had huge layoffs, we had none.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:33:13](#)):

That's right. So the thing is, what does it mean to be tuition intensive? I'll tell you having sat on the cabinet, you're looking at the numbers, you're looking at, you know, to be tuition -- this model. It was very interesting when Dennis came in, because I don't know if Marist was one of the first small private colleges, highly tuition dependent, no endowment, young alumni or no wealthy alumni. But the model was that we will make it on this highly tuition dependent course because we will continually have quality improvement. That's what I think is consistent with today as it was in the beginning with the brothers. I mean, I heard all those old, the tales from the old alums, the oldest alums that were not brothers, who would be like "Oh, you know, it was so hard. We'd walk in and we'd see the brothers in the class. And we'd say, there goes the curve." You know? And, or "My father would say this to me, if I can't flunk out -

you can't flunk out of Marist College." And, you know, there were high expectations that these faculty had in the early days. So there was a commitment to quality. They didn't water it down just because they were getting this broad spectrum of students coming in that had different academic qualifications. Shall we put it that way? But there was always this effort to academically improve Marist. One of the first things was becoming more of a comprehensive institution. Having the liberal arts core, but they had business when they got here. But Gus, you were in the thick of this when communication major came in. That was a huge move. People were resistant to it because it wasn't the liberal arts. But, you know, what is Marist known for now? One of the things is communication in a variety of forms, gone off to sports and everything, but communication. It's very interesting to look at the major areas that were strong in the earlier years and how they got enhanced and how they became like signature - not signature, but strong majors that are identified with Marist. Now, one of them is psychology. You know, Dan Kirk, who was a genius and a real go-getter; he established the masters program, which was really gutsy at that time, given Marist's academic reputation. But he created a high quality program. Psychology was always a high quality. I thought when I got here and assessing things, they were the first ones I think, to be out there with internships, they were doing these internships. Communications opened up a whole other world because they were in New York City. And then the IBM partnership and also the early leadership of Rich getting the computers in here. And then Dennis' whole grasping of technology was another reason. So computer science, and now cyber security and all of that has emerged. I'm sure there's some other majors that -- oh, fashion, that's a story unto itself. Actually one of my favorites, I always love the science department. I love the people in the science department, I love the students, I love the alumni. I just loved how they were so engaged and so dedicated to each other, the students and the -- and then they kept hiring people like themselves. And they looked to the legends that hired them, you know? And so I was just like so thrilled when I saw - first of all that building come up, that came up after I had left Marist, science building. And then all these other majors that show, PA and physical therapy. The other one that I think has just been like a spectacular major for Marist is medical technology. I mean, Cathy Newkirk and her group did a phenomenal job. I was just reading they're fifth in the country in terms of the quality of that program. And they get hired in the fall and they go to Sloan Kettering and they get bonuses. I mean, they're like right into the big time, because it's such an excellent program. And that's also a model of the student-teacher relationship, the emphasis on research and support - being supportive of what you wanna be and what you want to become. So Marist has had all these areas of strength, and fortunately they've hired people that have been able to come to Marist and be excited and say "I can do things. I can take things to another level."

Jan Stivers ([00:38:36](#)):

Well, you were one of those people.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:38:40](#)):

Well...

Jan Stivers ([00:38:41](#)):

And you did it as perhaps the only woman in a leadership position in those early days. Certainly the only woman in an executive position. So can you talk to us about your experience in leadership as a woman from that particular focus, and then also maybe include some advice to women seeking leadership positions in institutions like Marist?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:39:17](#)):

Well, it was interesting. We started with my being hired and like, "Okay, come on, help join the team" and so forth. So I felt that was a very good beginning. I was fortunate that it was a combination of opportunities just kept opening up and they needed people to do these things. 'Cause I was the first full-time PR director and alumni director and doing things in admissions and then development and so forth. So - but I also, I was able to craft my career so that it could mesh with being a mother, with having kids and then little kids and all of that. So I was very fortunate that I worked four years full-time for Marist and then ten years part-time under three different vice presidents who were like "Don't go! We would like you to stay!" So I was able to set - they gave me a lot of flexibility and therefore I learned a lot of things.

Gus Nolan ([00:40:31](#)):

You were here part-time?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:40:32](#)):

For 10 years. Yeah

Jan Stivers ([00:40:34](#)):

That was very forward thinking of Marist to allow that sort of job flexibility.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:40:38](#)):

Oh, well I'll tell you. Tom Wade was my boss at the time. He was the director of development. And I said to - I'll never forget this - Tom and I were close, I mean, I just loved Tom always. At the time he was my boss. I wasn't, you know, I mean, as time went on, he and Anne and Tom and became great friends with Tony and I. But I always, Tom and I would always get together for lunch and talk business and development and fundraising and everything. And he was quite a guy. But anyway, I remember going to say to Tom, I said "You know, Tom, I need to tell you something. I'm having a baby and I'm not planning to come back." This was 1976. And he goes - well, he must have realized that something was up because without missing a beat, he goes, "Congratulations. Would you like a part-time job?" He said it all in one sentence. And I was like, "Oh, well, I've never been a mother before." And, back at that time, women just - they stopped working. I mean, I wasn't getting booted out of Marist by a long shot, but I was like "Well, how do they do this?" Which was a little ironic because my mother was a young widow who had three children and I saw how she did it, you know? And maybe that's why I had a lot of drive in that sense. But anyway, so I said "Oh, well, I've never been a mother. I don't know," and he goes "Well, take your time." And he said "Look, you know what? You're having the baby in September, be in touch with me in January. See how things are going. You could work from home," he said, "you could work from home. You can work any hours you want." So anyway, I won't go into all of that, but it turned out that I was able to do that. And then I was able to, so I did - they had me doing a lot of things, but concentrated like events. And then I did grants. And then I did marketing and...

Jan Stivers ([00:42:35](#)):

Let me introduce another thought. Yeah, just parallel to all of this. You were one of those who brought our attention to the community. In other words, the Poughkeepsie Journal got a lot of feed from you about all, because what was happening here. And so people - you know, we were no longer just a farm here, and the wall had come down and of course the sports program gradually was along. When we had Rick Spitz eventually arriving on the scene, you know, we had that kind of popularity and competitive - we had 2000 students that were competing against 40,000 students, you know? And so that, that was

the story that when you broke open that egg, as it were, and let this whole thing go out that the vitality, or what was happening in the placement of - well, now your journalism came into it. Because getting - and the marketing came into it, you see all of that is thought of would not be recorded for posterity.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:43:41](#)):

Yes. It was interesting because after I did the two years as alumni director, Rich was like "I'd like you to move." I kept always saying, you know, "You should let people know more about this school." 'Cause I had worked in PR at New Haven because I thought there's so much amazing stuff going on here and you should not let just the Poughkeepsie Journal, but let all the alums know. I mean all the fantastic abroad programs that Joe **Bella**, I mean, there was just so much good stuff. But you know, Rich struggled a little bit because he didn't want a public relations director. I remember he did not like that term public relations. And I think it was because the brothers were so modest. They weren't out there. I know that was the case. So, I had an interesting little thing with him where he said "Okay, I want you to - I would like you to shift over and I want you to do the press releases. I want you to do publications. I want you to get this story out, but I don't wanna use the term public relations director." And I was like, "Well, you know, puts me at a disadvantage because that's the term when you go to the newspaper where you call somebody up." And he goes, "No, no, I'm not comfortable with that." I said "Okay." So he said, "Well what do you think it should be?" So I thought long and hard. And I was like, ahead of my time, "Communications director, I'll be the director of communications." And at first I thought, "Well, nobody will know what that is. But then I thought, "Oh, well that's a good opener." They'll be like "Well, what's that?" Because nobody had that title. And then I'll never forget, like a year later I got a phone call. We were working in St. Peter's. I was up in the attic there and the phone call arrived and it was Rich. And I thought "Why was calling me? Oh no." Usually he calls because we got to the radio station is after us because we're fighting with the unions or something, you know? And I thought "Oh no!" So he called about something mundane and then he goes, "Oh, and by the way, well, you know that title you want? Okay, you can have it. Goodbye!" So that's how that shifted. So I love that you bring that up. Not for my own glorification, but I mean, just that that was something that Marist needed and people were asking for. And it was a big move that they even, they took away the PR component from Jack Doherty's job and saw they needed to elevate it. But that was an interesting time too, because there was a lot of change going on in higher education. Maybe not at Notre Dame and places like that, but in higher education, relative to marketing institutions - colleges and universities. They didn't do that, that was considered whatever, you know, they weren't promoting themselves. And that was one of the things that was very significant that happened when Harry Wood came in, cause he really was excellent as a brander and he really changed the face of Marist through his work. He really did.

Gus Nolan ([00:46:43](#)):

Let's continue on this vein. Especially with how your own career advanced up into the senior administrative levels, executive levels. Can you talk about what happened next?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:46:59](#)):

Well, you know, there were times that I just made decisions about advancing my career and I think women need to do that. And a lot of it just comes from within, you know, I knew that working part-time that at some point I needed to really work full-time so that I could contribute to the family income in a more robust way, shall we say? And so, I had been doing some freelance work for the admissions office in marketing over the years. And I was asked to be the marketing communications director and I thought, you know, "Do I wanna go to admissions? I mean, I love the marketing. I think I know so much about Marist." And I thought so I had been working in development at that time and I remember people

were like, "You sure you wanna go to admissions? Do you know, they are under the gun to get the students in here." And I was like "Oh, I know, I know." So I go over there, I loved working in admissions. It was, I can't even begin to tell you how great it was. It gave me - enriched my perspective across my work at Marist and I really enjoyed it. It was very creative.

Gus Nolan ([00:48:25](#)):

What did you do?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:48:26](#)):

I was director of enrollment communications. The first one that was --

Jan Stivers ([00:48:30](#)):

And was this under Harry?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:48:31](#)):

Yes. I was responsible for all the marketing materials and anything that had to promote the college with the, you know,

Jan Stivers ([00:48:39](#)):

The view book?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:48:41](#)):

The view book, yeah, that was the first thing we did: upgrade the view book. We did commercials. We did a lot of writing related to programs at Marist, tried to place things that promoted Marist.

Gus Nolan ([00:48:55](#)):

How about sending students to the schools to give the talks, you know, that program.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:49:02](#)):

Yes. I was involved with getting people - oh no, I was not involved with that. What I was involved with when they had open houses, getting alums to come in and one of them was Jim D Felice, you know? Our Hudson valley alum, who's like world famous with his writing. I remember inviting him. I can see him now in Donnelly hall talking to prospective English majors. And I loved hearing those stories. I mean, the stories of alum. So I did do that. You know, it was interesting how the things that you did at Marist kind of intersected and helped you because you had networks...

Gus Nolan ([00:49:42](#)):

Spell out, advancing one's career. Do you demand more space? Secretarial help? More equipment? More money? All of the above?

Jan Stivers ([00:49:53](#)):

Or responsibility.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:49:53](#)):

I have to tell you when I was working at Marist, there wasn't much to negotiate for.

Gus Nolan ([00:49:58](#)):

No money. You talked about working over in, uh...

Shaileen Kopec ([00:50:05](#)):

St. Peter's.

Gus Nolan ([00:50:05](#)):

Upstairs in the attic. I mean -

Shaileen Kopec ([00:50:07](#)):

I was pregnant too. I was afraid if I ever had the baby up there, they never get me down.

Gus Nolan ([00:50:13](#)):

So that's...

Shaileen Kopec ([00:50:14](#)):

Well, one of the things that was interesting as you move into like the higher end of it was that Marist was adjusting what they were gonna pay people because they were looking to the outside. I had to like prove myself much more than anybody else had to for that job. Because I was inside, I was here. I did move into development. In fact, after - I was still working for Harry, I really enjoyed working for Harry and I loved admissions, but the development director position opened up and I thought, "This is an opportunity to make more money. And there are not a lot of opportunities to - " and I really liked being in that area. So I remember going in to see Harry and I walked in and I said "Harry, I have to tell you something." And he goes, "Please don't tell me that you're gonna take that job over in development." And I was like, "Yes." And he goes, "I knew it, I knew it." So I went over as director of development and I really, really liked that job. And after about a year, a year and a half, Paul Brown, who was the VP was leaving and so I became an interim VP. And there was - at first, I was asked if I wanted to pursue the job. And I was like, "I don't have the experience" I'm saying to myself, "I really don't have the experience." But I learned it in the trench. You know, I had vacancies and had to quadruple up on work. I mean, I really worked very, very hard. But I also thought I worked smart in the sense that I capitalized on everything that I had, that I knew from the experiences at Marist.

Jan Stivers ([00:52:05](#)):

So who helped you to ramp up to that level?

Shaileen Kopec ([00:52:11](#)):

I have had mentors prior to moving into the VP job. Obviously Dennis was a mentor when I got there, but the strongest mentor I had was Richard Foy. I was very fortunate when I was in the University of New Haven that I had a mentor who was also a man. There were no women mentors. My mother in a way was a mentor. As I got older, my daughter Tina was an amazing mentor because she was another generation and she really knew how to advance. But, I just felt compelled to keep moving up. I thought in the end it was like, "I can do this job," you know, and "there are things I'm gonna need to know and improve upon, but I've got-" it's like any, nobody's got a hundred percent of everything you have to just



know your strengths. And Tony was supportive. The kids were the right age so that I could manage, it was - you know how it is Jan, but you know, it's hard. The balance was very, very hard. The thing that was really whatever in the end was it took 11 years for another woman to be hired at that senior level to be a senior executive at Marist. I mean, when Deb DeCaprio came in, it was 11 years. Now she's exceeded my service in terms of serving as an executive. But, you know, how to analyze that? I don't know. Marist was not unusual in that it didn't have management programs. I think, I wish I had had some management training because I had to learn on the job or at my own initiative or advice from Dennis. But I think that having women - Well, I'll tell you a story when I was an interim VP. I went to a middle states planning committee meeting, middle states committee meeting, that was over in Lowell Thomas boardroom and huge table, everybody around it. And we were the committee, we were the subcommittee chairs, you know? There was a steering committee and we were the subcommittee chairs. Were you here in the nineties? Were you at that meeting? Do you remember the discussion about women at that meeting?

Jan Stivers ([00:54:59](#)):

I don't.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:55:00](#)):

Well, first of all, middle states had gone to - I don't know if it was Baroque? It was a school in New York City. They had just gone through a middle states thing and they didn't like hold up their accreditation, but they put 'em on like a radar, red light thing. And they gave him so much time -

Jan Stivers ([00:55:29](#)):

With conditions.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:55:29](#)):

With conditions. That's it. I forget all the terms. You would know 'cause you were chair - co chair at one time. And one of the reasons was because of total lack of diversity at their institution. Now this is early nineties, we're talking.

Gus Nolan ([00:55:45](#)):

Wow.

Jan Stivers ([00:55:45](#)):

In New York City institution, public institution.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:55:48](#)):

If that was the one, but it was something like that, one of them. And it was shocking because they were not a bad school, you know? Deserved to be like on the ropes. So one of the context was there's a lot of discussion, a lot of like, presentation discussion in the beginning about, "Don't forget, gotta have this diverse situation. Okay. All right. Onward now. We're gonna nominate people to be on the - " Actually I guess it wasn't on the committee, I guess it was cabinet. And I don't know, I can't recall, but they were looking to nominate people to be on these various committees. So, okay. So I said to myself, "Well, you know, I'm the new kid on the block here. I'm just gonna like soak it all in and, and figure out what's going on." And as I listened, I kept thinking something is really wrong here. They haven't mentioned one



woman to be on any of these committees, never mind, as they call it a person of color - not that we had many at Marist at that time. So anyway, finally, I was just - I said, "Look, you know, I'm sort of new with this and I'm interim" and so forth, "but you know, didn't we just talk about X, Y, and Z? And didn't we talk about the need for diversity? And yet I haven't heard one woman's name mentioned and everybody stopped and they looked around and they couldn't think of anybody. They couldn't think of anybody. And I was like, I'll be darn if I'm going to be the first one to spit out some names here, you know, this is an example of where women are invisible. You know, they're not seen in leadership roles, even if they are in leadership roles. So, um, finally somebody said, well, what about, uh, I can't remember all the, the names, what about so and so, and then, and what about, and then they were like, well, are you sure she could do it? I'm like, oh my gosh, this is really crazy. You know? And, and I wanted to jump up and say, of course she can do it. We're not talking about, you know, writing the declaration of independence here, you know, you know, she's capable enough to do X, Y, and Z. She's capable enough to be in this role.

Jan Stivers ([00:57:55](#)):

I'm so sorry to tell you. 10 years later, we had the exact same experience.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:57:59](#)):

Well, that was, that was, I'll tell you. That was a moment. That was one of those aha moments women have, like really, and then they had this list where they did put certain people on women on the list. They finally got Joe Parker on there because there were no African Americans on the campus to speak of. And, um, and then they said, well, now we have to win this down. Well, we can, and people were literally saying which I can understand, because there were some very strong, good people, Mars people that should be on that list, but they couldn't take off this man. They couldn't take off that man to put on they. And I was like, this is what it's all about. You know, you have to have a critical mass of, of women so that people will believe that they can do these things. And somebody's going to have to take a big risk and put some of these competent women yeah. Out there. It, it was crazy. I, and,

Jan Stivers ([00:58:58](#)):

And, uh, totally lacking this sense that the product will be better in

Shaileen Kopec ([00:59:05](#)):

Diverse

Jan Stivers ([00:59:05](#)):

View points, contribute

Shaileen Kopec ([00:59:07](#)):

To it. Right now. I would think that same thing was happening at other institutions. I'm not saying this was a Mars thing. If anything, Marist is, you know, I mean, it's a Marist, like really like, uh, went out and got women to fill those classrooms. You know? I mean, the MES really did a great job with the faculty and the fact

Jan Stivers ([00:59:27](#)):

That you were offered a part-time position that was really ahead of it's time.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:59:31](#)):

Oh, it was. Yes.

Jan Stivers ([00:59:33](#)):

Again, we, we lost a lot of good women faculty because they could not move to a part-time position when they were pregnant.

Shaileen Kopec ([00:59:41](#)):

Yes. Yeah. That, and that was just because like Tom negotiated it with, uh, actually Dennis must have been here. Uh, no, rich rich Foy was here. Then I worked for John Lahey which was, or Tony Cenera John Lahey first, which was great. Then I worked for, worked for Tony Cenera. So they kept saying like, oh, we don't want you to go. You know? And in fact, I even renegotiated now, then I did do some negotiating. You know, I renegotiated every time I was working for somebody different, I renegotiated it because first of all, I felt more comfortable in the part-time role and in terms of how I was balancing the kids and work and stuff like that. Uh, but I also could see that some of these things could be done expeditiously and they certainly could be done at home. I didn't have to have an, but I did negotiate an office with John Lahey, you know? And in fact, I remember calling him up and said, you know, John I'm deciding, I, well, I also, by the way, had a part when I was working part-time for Marist, which I did not have an office here. I had my own advertising business and that started because Bob Norman called me up one day and he goes, I really need a big favor. And I was like, Bob, what's up? He said, well, you know how I do these voiceovers, public service announcements for IBM. And I was like, Uhhuh. He said, well, they are outsourcing it. They're not just like saying to me, come to Poughkeepsie, come to Kingston, sit down, read this copy. And we're paying you for your voice. He said, they said, if you wanna continue doing this, you need to develop, get, write the copy too. So he called me. So I wrote all those IBM public service announcements for Poughkeepsie and Kingston for about seven or eight years. Really. Huh. And, um, uh, and so, uh, so when it got to like year, I dunno what year it was, maybe it was only five or six years, I guess it got to about that point. And I was like, you know what, I'm getting run ragged here. You know, I get these little kids, I got married, I got, I have this advertisement. I, and plus I had other clients by the way. And uh, so I decided, okay, I'm closing down the advertisement advertising business, and I'm gonna go out and find somebody who is going to let me work 20 hours a week. And I had a certain number in mind. So I thought first person I'm gonna call is John Lahey. Wouldn't that be nice if I could work at Marist? So I called him up and I said, oh, you know, John, this is what, I'm what I'm thinking, gonna close up my business, whatever. And I said, so I'm contacting different people. See what he says, what do you want? I said, oh, well, I'd like to work 20 hours a week, 10 to two, you know, okay, how much do you want? I said, such as he says, I don't know if I can do that, but let me, let me find, I said, oh John, don't worry about it. You know, take your time. He goes, no, don't call anybody else. I'm gonna call you back this afternoon. He said, I can't do this, but I can do this, sold! <Laugh>. Ah, and then he found me that little office where the, where Tony Campilii's safe, used to be when Adrian, I used to work next to the safe in the little room. So you had to be like, you had to have advocates like that. John Lahey was an advocate. Tom was an advocate, you know, I guess that's a good point. You were asking about that. I was thinking more mentors. I did learn a lot from them. You know, Tony Cenera was an advocate and they were willing to, uh, but, but you're right. There was no flex flexibility. There were no you know, it's, it was ad hoc. It's still a puzzling relationship. Yes, it was. But when I decided to step down as VP, I also was ready to leave Marist and do something else because I had done that for 14 years and it was highly demanding. We didn't have the resources that they had now, which I understood. I lived with the resources. We didn't have the staffing, you know, but you had the expectations, but we had expectation. And also we didn't have the time, we were still out with the tilling, the ground and planting

the seeds and doing all of that. And so at that time I was, I was about 50. I was in my late fifties or mid fifties, I guess now, today you couldn't do this because the job market is different. But I said to myself, I'm gonna move. I need to do it now because I'm gonna be too old. And also I wanna have something that I can do for a stretch. So that's when I talked to Dennis and he was like, oh, you know, and he was great. We did work out an arrangement where I would stay in the advancement office and I was able to get an office that I did negotiate. Oh, got the office up in there in the library, which Dennis is in now. That was good because I wasn't hanging around in the old, you know, being the old VP hanging around in the other office. And I was able to have a highly productive workspace. And I love being in the library because I love seeing faculty and students, which I wasn't seeing over in Fontaine that just was just kind of motivated you and kind of kept you going. So I don't know if people could do what I did because there weren't the opportunities I had all these opportunities because the school was growing and the school was changing and opportunities came up and Marist was of the mindset. Like, do you think you can do this because we think you can do X, Y, and Z. And you run with the ball that, that I think has been characteristic of Marist throughout. That's why you have all these centers of excellence.

Gus Nolan ([01:05:15](#)):

I have to turn the page though, time is running out. Yes. Time is running. And I was gonna say, Marist it's not about of money now. From what I understand, 500 million in the endowment and, you know, so it's not, but kind of a crystal ball thing... How are we doing? And are we gonna survive? You know, we're not struggling to have it. Is that, what do we, what do we need to do to keep ahead of the flow as it were, you know, ahead of the curve here? What's your view?

Shaileen Kopec ([01:05:56](#)):

Well, first of all, I would disagree with you a little bit, 500 million. Yeah. That's a lot, that's a healthy endowment. No question about it. However, and I wouldn't be saying this with such assertiveness, if I hadn't read what Dr. Wyman had said about being 95 or 96%, whatever it is over 90, tuition dependent, that means we, we don't live on the edge like a lot of schools do that, they're ready to go under. I think if anything, the pandemic showed that the administrative structures, the faculty strengths, the faculty commitment, the fact, one of the things that has been consistent is the technology application at Marist. That has been a real part of the foundation. All of those, there's some schools that are like us that are in bad shape. You know, everybody had to get back enrollment and higher ed, higher ed is in for rocky waters. It's, it's the boat. The whole higher ed boat is shaking around because not only is it post pandemic and Marist is not immune to any of these, but Marist may be better positioned because it has a more solid infrastructure of how things are put together to keep the institution strong, which includes quality of academics and how they fit, how we fiscally manage. But the biggest thing is Marist has always had this ability to adapt and try to be ahead of change or assess where they should be. Sometimes Marist hung back. You know, when the library, we were so desperate for a library, people were like, how can we call ourselves a college with those, with that old library we had, nevermind, when it moved to Fontaine. But the thing was that this library opened at the right moment in time and for a whole host of reasons. And if they Marist had done it sooner, it wouldn't have been the library it is, it wouldn't have cost what it did, which was a bargain because of the timing of it. It just happened to be a good time to be going out for construction. But also everybody wanted to do this library because Marist was on the front end of what do you do with digital resources? You know, so anyway, I think, Marist has to keep doing what it's been doing, and that is maintaining excellence. You know, one of the reasons there's, there are a number of reasons why Marist is so successful today, but one of them is that it really kept its eye on the ball with regard to academics. You know, I'm astounded even in the last 10 years, the majors that are being offered here. And that's because you had people in,

in leadership roles in the, and they, they could be a Dean or Dean and key senior leaders, or just go getters that are in all these different schools that we have, but they came up, they, they, they identified these majors and they went through all the things you have to do to institutionalize them. So, so Marist I think is well positioned with regard to what it's offering. I don't think we're offering anything that nobody doesn't want anymore, which some schools are, but at the same time, um, there are, there are environmental issues that are going on that, uh, have to be coped with. You know, we're in a very interesting political environment, you know, which can't be overlooked. I mean, colleges have always been, reactive and adapted to you know, regulations and, you know, so forth. But, but, so depending on what prevails politically there could, you have to be adaptable and, and be able to deal with what may come forward on that. The other thing I think that Marist has to be, mindful of is, you know, college is outrageously expensive and they are, very much. And it's not accessible to people, you know, for a variety of reasons, but the biggest reason is cost. The other thing is very disturbing is that fewer males are going to college. And the other thing that that colleges are being pressed on is accountability. And they're being pressed on relevance. So that's why these majors that we have, they're very relevant. You know, people have to, you know, I mean, people are graduating with degrees that didn't even exist 10 years ago or five years ago sometimes. And that's, those are the people that are, being hired, but the competition is going to intensify the pressures to be fiscally sound and well managed are going to intensify and the expectation that people, that parents, and students have on a return on their investment. You know, so I think Marist is well positioned to take these things on because of the culture. I think I've never met Kevin Weinman. I haven't met him yet. I've been at a few things where he's spoken, but I know people like him a lot. I think there's a very positive environment going on here. And so I think we have good leadership. He has an amazing background, a very varied background of liberal arts and business and all of that. You know, we were very fortunate. We had Rich, Foy, we had Dennis Murray and leadership cannot be underestimated. The other thing, I think there's gonna be a lot of competition for faculty. If there are fewer people going to college, there gonna be fewer PhDs. You know, and that's what's going on. So Marist in my lifetime, even if I lived to be a hundred, a hundred years old, I don't think we'll ever, no one will ever be able to put their feet up on the desk and say, we are set. That is never gonna happen. You know?

Gus Nolan ([01:12:14](#)):

I'm afraid that we, the lack of students in the Middle East, in the Northeast is, is quite a critical point. And so that recruiting now is nationwide, you know, as well as international. So we're trying to get students from Europe and from Asia, you know, it's, I mean, we have people working in recruitment, whatever you call that admissions office. You know, seeking, you know, other sources, you know, whatever it is. Dennis used to talk about the streams of income that we have to improve on, you know, and we did that, like the internships and giving interns in New York, when people in California, who never went to Marist, you know, but that that's one thing. But now we need the stream of influence for getting students to find their way. Where is Marist, you know? And it's the beauty of the campus right away is I think one of the major attractions once they see it, I can live here. You know, that's always

Shaileen Kopec ([01:13:23](#)):

The admissions office. Sean, Kaylor's done a tremendous job. I mean, one of the reasons why Marist successful is continuity regardless. I mean, we had a president, we had, we had very good, CFOs, you know, so forth, and admissions I think has done a tremendous job and Marist was way ahead of our, of some of maybe not our competitors anymore, in terms of getting out and trying to, to have a national reach. So they're not, they're by no means starting from scratch. Well, you know, again, the Hawaii connection, I mean, Marist's amazing that way, isn't it? You know, that kind of bloomed into something,

you know? And and so I think there, are a lot of good minds and people behind that in the admissions office and their allies that are doing that. I think it's very important to retain good people, you know, good people. The faculty is the key. Believe me, it is the key, they're the ones that have the most contact with the students. They're the ones who shape their destinies, you know? And I think that, you know people because of cost or too much, I don't know other things going on are losing a little bit of the sense of college is the path to a better life. And you know, that, you know, it's, it is ironic because some of them whose parents were not able to go to college, like my, my mother went to college, but my father did not. But my mother was highly unusual that she went to college, but, my parents' generation, there was no doubt their kids were going to college, whether they had a college education or not. And I don't know where that's at today.

Gus Nolan ([01:15:23](#)):

Well, you were talking before about the political climate. And I do think we have a political climate that questions, the value of college, there, a political climate that includes a segment, that questions, the value of college. You also talked about accountability. And so we've got a real close eye on, will you make more money as a college graduate than you would as a computer technician or even an electrician. So I think those are yeah. Factors that are represent stressors,

Shaileen Kopec ([01:16:01](#)):

Challenges. Yeah. I think the thing though is not, unless you talk to people that have been through those, these experiences, but I don't think there's an awareness and I in development, raising money for scholarships, with a lot of experience, talking to students, a lot of interaction with financial aid, never concealing anything that was confidential, but, you know, and I'm not saying this, I got from financial aid here at Marist, but I am aware on all of reading, but talking to people how parents were so committed to sending their kids to college, that they, the kids had big debt, but they had big debt. And some of those pressures almost led them or did lead them to bankruptcy because you can't dismiss college, uh, loans. They won't dismiss the college loans. So the question would be like, what are parents, it's more than willing to sacrifice, most parents will do anything for their kids. It's like, is it viable? You know, is that yeah. And that's why the most important thing that you can support at Marist is scholarships that are directed to helping kids with need because...

Jan Stivers ([01:17:18](#)):

Speaking of, Gus established a scholarship in Liz's name.

Shaileen Kopec ([01:17:24](#)):

Oh, well, isn't that great? That's terrific. That's

Gus Nolan ([01:17:27](#)):

With her money [laughter]

Shaileen Kopec ([01:17:28](#)):

Hey, you know what, that I'll tell you. The thing I can't get over is when I hear what some of the endowments are that I started working on eons ago, it was, they're so unbelievably robust, and they're really well managed, which is good because you have to keep up with the times, but, well

Gus Nolan ([01:17:47](#)):

Thank you. Before we go, is there anything you'd like to put into this interview? We didn't even bring up at all, you know, and you know, here you are, you spend an hour with us, we do all the questioning and so on. And I was just wondering if you might have some statements saying, you know, I really enjoyed my time at Marist... glad to ask some of these questions, but I wish you would do this for future people. <laugh> we're gonna, is there

Jan Stivers ([01:18:19](#)):

Anything else you wanted to say? Is there anything you wanted to make sure we got into the record that we didn't ask you about?

Shaileen Kopec ([01:18:25](#)):

I just feel very, very fortunate to have had an career and higher education, you know, education is so, so important. And when you're in higher ed, and especially if you you've been in you have the, the opportunity to see people that come back to the college, which I did in my area and see what they've done and, but, and how appreciative they are for going to Marist and how they, they know that it changed their life. You know, it gave them a career and a focus. Yes. But it, it, they exposed them to so many people and friends and they were, they, they came to a, a little, little town and saw how it functioned and how was a good model of how people collaborate and deal with, you know, differing views and, and things like that. It really remarkable. I mean, I just recently went to an event of, for Jim Johnson's retirement, I worked with Hudson River Valley Institute for 20 years, helping them on this and that. And there were a couple of people there and, and they come, hi, how are you? And then even just thinking about Jim Johnson as a person being here, I thought there are so many amazing people that you meet when you work at Marist. Mm-hmm <affirmative>, you know, I don't know if people can say that consistently. I mean, every day I would meet new people and learn new things. And I, it is a, I would say it's a career worth pursuing to higher education is so important. It's transformative it's the origin of so many, you know, changes that happen in society that make for a better life and a better society. And but it's,

Gus Nolan ([01:20:28](#)):

I'm always struck by the concepts of making a living or learning how to live. You know, that, in other words, I just thinking of many of the people with all the millions of ball players and so on who, with drugs and everything else, you know, uh, we're down the hill so quickly, you know, and some people would just get out of college, but they read <laugh>, they can see a movie and see a lot, and the movie, they can just take a walk in the woods, you know, and just kind of be into, uh, nature and see the sky and, and everything. And, you know, it's just, uh, this is a gift we have and we really have to appreciate, and with that, thank you.

Shaileen Kopec ([01:21:16](#)):

I would agree with that. Thank you for that.