

Deborah DiCaprio

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Marist College

Poughkeepsie, New York

Transcribed by Wai Oo

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

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Summary: Deborah DiCaprio talks about her early life and her education at St. Bonaventure University. She discusses the various roles she has taken up at Marist College before becoming the Vice President/Dean of Student Affairs. She discusses the myriad of social changes that have developed on the campus and her thoughts and feelings about the future of Marist College and its student body.

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00:05 **GN:** Good morning, Debbie. Today is July 15th. We're in the Marist College Library and we have the privilege to of interviewing our Dean of Students, Deborah DiCaprio. Good morning Deborah.

00:17 **DD:** Good morning.

00:19 **GN:** Deborah, as you know, we're doing Archives Oral Interviews for the archives of the college and we're interviewing people who have been here a good number of years and you certainly qualify for that. So we're trying to get something about your experience. Before you came to Marist. And here at Marist and changes and developments at Marist. So let's go back to the beginning. Say something about your early years. Where were you born? Not when and go on.

00:50 **DD:** Okay, I actually grew up in eastern Dutchess County. I was not born in Amenia but we moved to Amenia from Salisbury, Connecticut when I was about a year and a half. So I've pretty much been a resident of Dutchess County most of my life. I went to high school in Poughkeepsie because I actually went to Our Lady of Lourdes High School. And I went to St. Bonaventure University which is sixty miles south of Buffalo for my undergrad and my graduate work. And then I actually stayed in the area after that and worked in the area as a teacher in a rehabilitation center. And I also coached the women's swimming team at St Bonaventure and probably when I was in my late twenties ... I think it is. I came back to this part of the state. I went back home to Amenia and started to look for a job around here. I worked initially. That was another era of sort of recession, going into depression. It was the years when everybody had a line up to buy gas on every other day and ...

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[02:04](#) **GN:** About what year was that?

[02:05](#) **DD:** '77. It was about '77, '78. And there weren't a lot of jobs available. And my sister Mary was working as a case manager for the state and got me a job through her connections with the ARC Sheltered Workshop. So it was the Association what we used to call back then Retarded Citizens ... we don't Call them that anymore. And it was a sheltered workshop position. And I was there for probably a year, year and a half. When I saw a job advertised in the Poughkeepsie Journal for a mentor at Marist college.

[02:44](#) **GN:** OK. Before we get into coming here. It just so happens to be the Feast of Saint Bonaventure today in the church and we're celebrating that holy manhood. His ... not his founding of the university but founded in his name. Moreover through your high school and college, were you actively involved in any kind of employment? Did you work on campus? Did you work in the summers, at home?

[03:12](#) **DD:** I worked in summers. Yes, I work summers at home. My first job, when I was still in high school, was at Dairy Queen. Which was very fun ... I got to make all the kind of fun sundaes. And it was ... it was in Millerton, New York which is about ten miles north of the Amenia and it was the only game in town. So it was an amazingly busy place in the summer. There was nowhere else within like a thirty-mile radius to get ice cream so everybody in that part of Dutchess County came to the Dairy Queen in Millerton. And it was fun. I really enjoyed that job.

[03:45](#) **GN:** What kind of hours did you have.

[03:47](#) **DD:** I probably worked a good thirty to forty hours a week. There wasn't a lot to do. You know so I really didn't mind working. And I kind of like making money.

[03:59](#) **GN:** You like making money in those days.

[04:00](#) **DD:** I do. I did like making money. So my ... After that, I got a job the next summer when

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I came home from college or I guess was the summer before I started college. I got a job at a through my father ... at a breakfast lunch ... kind of luncheonette in Lakeville, Connecticut. And that was kind of an interesting place too because it was also the only game in town. And there was really nowhere else to really have breakfast or lunch in that area. And that area also tends to be a very mixed area economically. There are incredibly wealthy people. And then really no middle class and then really, you know kind of more lower class. And so I worked there for four summers. I ended up working there for every summer throughout college.

[04:51](#) **GN:** Did you get a degree when you finished the four years?

[04:52](#) **DD:** Yes. And I loved being a waitress. I really did I thought it was a great job it was very busy. We were busy a lot. A lot of turnover because it was just quick. You know sandwiches that kind of thing.

[05:07](#) **GN:** Besides working let me ask few things about your own. Any particular hobbies? Like ... Did you play the piano, sing, collect stamps, anything like that?

[05:17](#) **DD:** No, I was pretty active in sports. Back in a time before Title IX when there really weren't a lot of opportunities for women but whatever opportunities there were, I took advantage of. And I was a huge reader. I still am. I read all the time. A day doesn't go by where I don't pick up a book. I have to read every day. And I read a lot in my teenage years because I ... you know kind of lived out in the middle of nowhere and ... You know that was a good thing to do. We also had a pool at my parents' house. So we were kind of like the social hub of the neighborhood. So we did a lot of entertaining. And I liked that too. I like cooking. I like entertaining.

[05:59](#) **GN:** Talk about your family a little bit now...

[06:01](#) **DD:** Sure I have a sister who is ten years older than I am who actually entered the convent when I was eight. And she became a Newburgh Dominican and was a Newburgh Dominican for six years and then she did leave the order. I had ... And she moved to California and has been

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there ever since. So from the time I was probably like fourteen, she's lived out in California. I've a brother who's six years older than I am who also went to St. Bonaventure. He lives, you know, fairly close. He lives in Columbia County. I have a sister two years younger who also went to St. Bonaventure and married somebody who also went to St. Bonaventure. And they live over in Sheffield, Massachusetts and. I still ... you know obviously see each other quite a bit. Our kids are actually the same ages.

06:51 **GN:** So the family pool was for the family as well as for the neighbors.

06:55 **DD:** Yes. Yeah. Had a lot of people that you know came over and swam and you know.

07:01 **GN:** Who was the driving force of the family that you all went on to college? Were your parents...?

07:07 **DD:** Both of my parents were college-educated. My dad was born in 1904. My mom was born in 1912 and they obviously had children rather late in life for a variety of reasons. But both of them were college-educated. My dad was actually an attorney. He went to Fordham and Fordham Law School and my mom had a degree from Adelphi University in ... I believe it was in Psychology. But she was by career a social worker. There was never an option. Going to college was something that you did. So there was never any discussion about not going to college. It was sort of an expectation that was out there on the table from my earliest years so.

08:02 **GN:** How did the link to St Bonaventure develop?

08:04 **DD:** Well that's an interesting link. My brother wanted to go to Fordham because my dad had gone to Fordham. My mother and father felt that Fordham was not the best option for Bill. Because he had been raised kind of out in the country. Wasn't really used to city life. Felt that maybe Fordham would be a little bit too tough for him to handle. So they shopped around and found St Bonaventure. Decided ... My dad always joked and said, "Well if you can't be educated by the Jesuits, you might as well be educated by the Franciscans." So they went and took Bill at

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to visit Bonaventure. He fell in love with it. Got in, started there and that was it and then.

Because we went to visit him there. We ... My younger sister and I kind of ... We just sort of figured that's where we'd go, you know. Wasn't the same as today where you know you visited fifteen colleges and so it was good enough for Bill. It was good enough for us. My parents really loved it. They loved going to visit him there. You know the campus was nice. He had a great time so we thought well ... you know.

09:16 **GN:** OK. What did you study in College?

09:19 **DD:** Actually was a History major and an English minor.

09:23 **GN:** OK. Because I am asking that because I want to move in now to your coming to Marist ... and College administration eventually ... but what's the link. How did you come aboard?

09:33 **DD:** Well it's kind of interesting because I am like the worst example of career development that there ever was but I managed somehow to bumble through. When I was getting my Master's at Saint Bonaventure, I was getting my masters in counseling. Because I thought counseling sounded interesting and after a couple of courses, you could pick a certain track. And they had a career counseling track. They had a mental health track and then they had a student development track. Now in terms of student development as a career, I had no idea it existed. But when I read through all of the courses that you would take for these tracks, the one that looked most interesting to me was the student development track. So I actually took and got a degree in student development not really even knowing...

10:31 **GN:** What was to come ...

10:32 **DD:** Yeah. What was going to happen after that. So the interesting thing after that is that when I came back home and was, you know, sort of, you know, flopping around trying to find a job. And the job was advertised for Marist. I thought to myself, "Wow. You know I had great ...

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I had a great time in college, had a great time in graduate school. I worked at a college as a swimming coach. I bet you it would be really fun to work at a college for like my real life.” So that's why I applied for the job and I think the reason I got the job is because I really did have a degree in student development. Which most people didn't have degrees in.

11:13 **GN:** What was the job were you applying for?

11:15 **DD:** The mentor job.

11:16 **GN:** Oh, the mentor job in the dormitories.

11:19 **DD:** Working with students on career goals and adjustment issues and you know. All of those things.

11:23 **GN:** Was that a full-time job?

11:25 **DD:** Full-time live-in job. And Father LaMorte was my boss. And you know so that's how I started.

11:34 **GN:** Do you recall who interviewed you?

11:36 **DD:** I actually do. Because it was the weirdest interview I had ever been in.

11:42 **GN:** I wanna hear about this.

11:43 **DD:** It was Father LaMorte. It was Jimmy **Ramo**. It was this woman named Tori who used to be a mentor and whose husband, and I think his name was Greg was the director of housing at that time. And they lived on campus in Leo and they actually had a young son and ... There may have been one other person on the committee. But it was definitely those three. I remember those three and ... You know, Jimmy had just been hired as an RD so he had just graduated. And he was as usual as Jimmy always is ... very enthusiastic. And we're going through this interview and LaMorte asked me a couple of questions and Tori asked me couple questions and then Jimmy was asking lots of questions and finally Father said, “Why don't you just ask for her phone number? And you can call her up and ask her all these questions.” And the interview was

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over. It was like he was saying “Alright, I’ve heard enough.” So I had no idea whether I did well or not because ... So I went home.

[12:52](#) **GN:** Did you ever find out ... were there more candidates? Probably there were.

[12:56](#) **DD:** There were. And then. And then a couple days later I got a phone call and was offered the job.

[13:04](#) **GN:** And then what would be the responsibility? How did you see yourself working?

[13:08](#) **DD:** It was. It was a very hard transition for me because it was a very loosey-goosey kind of a thing where you sort of had a ... You know map out your own job. And you also didn't work with anybody. You were all by yourself in an office sort of developing relationships with students and you know ... Going around in residence halls, knocking on doors, and introducing yourself and it was a little hard initially to get used to. I did work with the rest of the mentors and with the RDs. We had some committees and we worked together on committees and I really liked that and I really like them. You know we developed a good bond. But the job itself was a little ...

[13:52](#) **GN:** Were you a disciplinarian?

[13:54](#) **DD:** No, just kind of helping students through you know ... Whatever little crisis is happened in their life and work with them and on career and educational goals, trying to help them map out where they saw themselves going.

[14:09](#) **GN:** How many students would you have to be responsible for?

[14:12](#) **DD:** I was responsible for ... Initially, when I first came on board, it was a brand-new position for upper-class students who were not doing well academically. So it was our probation students and I probably had at that time. You know maybe 200 of them. So I would have to outreach to them and they'd either choose to come and see me or not, you know. There was no mandate.

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[14:36](#) **GN:** Did you know them all? Could you recognize 200 students?

[14:42](#) **DD:** That first year honestly, I don't remember because I was only there from January until May. And then the next year, one of the resident positions opened up for freshman. So I took that position and moved into Sheahan. And then I became the mentor for Sheahan. And then, yes. You know I got to know everyone in Sheehan.

[15:03](#) **GN:** That you could identify with their room, their colleagues and who they were associating with.

[15:09](#) **DD:** And you know ... You worked with the RD so you didn't get involved in discipline but you got involved in sort of sorting out ... You know who are troublemakers, who weren't, who needed some help, who needed some assistance. So you know ...

[15:23](#) **GN:** Make a comparison between that. Has that position changed much over the years?

[15:28](#) **DD:** It has for a number of reasons. First of all, when this position was developed, it was a Title III position or a Title I position, I don't remember. Because it was designed to help students who were not doing well academically ... And as you know back then ... You know Marist had a lot of students who came in that. You know had some real remedial needs. Now we don't have that anymore. We have very few students with remedial needs. Still students still have issues and sometimes the issues are even more pressing than the ones thirty years ago. So there's not as much work with students who aren't doing well academically and not as much of that. Helping students through. Getting through. You know the remedial process and signing up for the kinds of tutoring that they need. It's a lot more now ... just kind of helping students develop skills that they need to kind of live independently. You know ... “How do I go about registering for classes?” “How do I go about doing this?” And dealing with students who have a lot of issues because we do have students now I think have a lot more mental health kinds of issues. And also roommate relationship kinds of issues. So. And they do. And also really trying to provide for the

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students in the residence halls. You know a lot of activities and programs that sort of supplement what they're doing in the classroom. You know, try to get faculty in.

[17:03](#) **GN:** My recollection is that ... you people, the mentors in the dorm. You met weekly I think.

[17:10](#) **DD:** Yes. We did.

[17:11](#) **GN:** And shared pretty much problems and solutions.

[17:15](#) **DD:** Right. And we also planned things. So you'd be planning those part of our ... A part of our responsibility was planning programs within the residence halls.

[17:25](#) **GN:** Like what?

[17:26](#) **DD:** You know like alcohol education programs. Stress relief programs. Pretty much anything you know ... Like what would be interesting? Who could we bring in? Speakers. Lecturers. Anything that we can do that would help to provide more educational opportunities in the residence halls for students.

[17:49](#) **GN:** With the college supportive in you people getting more seminars or educational ... What was happening in the nation and what was happening in other colleges?

[18:03](#) **DD:** Yeah. It was. As a matter of fact, I had an opportunity early on actually the first probably three or four years I was here. I went to the freshman year experience conference which was a national conference out of the University of South Carolina. And it really was doing very cutting-edge work back then in terms of putting the focus on the freshman year which Marist had already done by moving all their students into freshman residence halls. Having the freshman mentor program. You know we were ... Marist was really way ahead of the curve on that and ...

[18:42](#) **GN:** Was there much discussion to whether or not freshmen should live in the same buildings with ...?

[18:46](#) **DD:** Very much so. And a lot of arguments pro and con. I was not in favor of that. I had

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come from an environment that was not that way. And I had found in my experience at Bonaventure that I really feel that a lot of my success, my first semester – and that really is the key semester - really was because I had juniors living next to me who gave me some great advice very early on in the semester. And I really look back on those kids as being people who really helped me out of what might have been a bind for me. And they were also great at helping you out in social situations. The upperclassman that lived with you in the residence halls would never leave a party or a place at night without checking on you and see if you wanted – like did you want an escape. In other words, were you with somebody who you really didn't want to be with? And they would provide you the excuse to leave and go back home. And in my residence hall just happen to be the way it fell out that it was like freshman and juniors.

[19:59](#) **GN:** What about male-female? Were there are many women on campus at that time?

[20:04](#) **DD:** At Bonaventure?

[20:04](#) **GN:** No.

[20:05](#) **DD:** Here? Yeah there were not as many but there were definitely ... there was definitely a females on campuses. Yes, definitely a female presence. This was '82.

[20:17](#) **GN:** OK and female presence in the administration as well?

[20:21](#) **DD:** Not as much. No. As a matter of fact, Sister Eileen and I were the only females in Student Affairs. There was Betty Yeaglin who was the director. And then, Sister Eileen and I were the only females for a number years.

[20:37](#) **GN:** And Roberta was here though in counseling.

[20:39](#) **DD:** She was in counseling right. But I mean like in the mentor in that ... In that whole group.

[20:45](#) **GN:** How about the leadership? What part did LaMorte play? Or other names. Betty Yeaglin. Did she play a part in directing things for you or bring you together?

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[20:59](#) **DD:** No. Betty really didn't. Betty kind of ran activities and sort of had an interesting reputation among the rest of us. Everybody liked Betty. But Betty at that point was, you know, probably be on the job.

[21:22](#) **GN:** There was bridge across from the dormitories to the activity office.

[21:26](#) **DD:** Yes. Yeah but LaMorte was very influential. You know he really was. He's the one that you know really kind of drove the freshman program. He's the one that got us interested in going to the conferences. We actually presented at that conference. He and I presented at that conference probably the second year I was here. He also started the Orientation Program as it is today. And it really hasn't changed much. We used to sit around. Bob Lynch, myself, Peter, Father Jimmy. Another guy named Barry.

[22:03](#) **GN:** You mentioned Peter? Peter Amato?

[22:06](#) **DD:** Yeah.

[22:06](#) **GN:** What was his role?

[22:07](#) **DD:** He was a mentor.

[22:08](#) **GN:** He was a mentor?

[22:09](#) **DD:** He was a mentor at the time yeah.

[22:17](#) **GN:** I want to move onto the eventual changes that you developed here. In your own moving on ahead ... I guess the first question is why did you stay here? I mean those were tough years in their own way. And the conditions were not exactly ... Marist was not then what it is now.

[22:36](#) **DD:** Right.

[22:37](#) **GN:** Okay. So there were some difficult physical hardships as it were in providing students with ability to be able to function. I mean we're not out of the woods yet. We're

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building a big building over there. That's gonna open up more space for people to do things.

Speak about that.

[22:56](#) **DD:** Okay. A couple of reasons. First of all, I really liked the energy and the people that I worked with. I can still to this day say that. And some of them are still the same people. But the new people who have joined have the same amount of energy and spirit. That I really did like. I like the fact that people were really hard workers. That there was a sense of "we're all going to pitch in and get this done. Even if we're here at midnight." Setting up tables and breaking down chairs. There was a lot of that. You know, I liked that. I also had an opportunity three years into ... After I'd been here for three years, I really was starting to look around because I thought you know had done this job for three years. Now I'm ready to move on and I was actually in the process of applying for a couple of jobs. When Father LaMorte decided to leave and at that point the Assistant Dean job opened. And instead of having one assistant dean job, they split it into two Assistant Deans. And Peter and I were both hired for that. So I probably would have left if I had gotten a job somewhere else at that point. But that job came through. So I was like okay.

[24:25](#) **GN:** What did that job consists of now?

[24:26](#) **DD:** Then I supervised health services, counseling, the mentors and campus ministry. I think that's ...

[24:38](#) **GN:** Who replaced Father LaMorte? Was it Father Ben?

[24:41](#) **DD:** No. Yes, it was Father Ben. Yes. It was Ben before Luke. I think so.

[24:49](#) **GN:** Yes.

[24:50](#) **DD:** Okay. Alright. Yeah it was Father Ben.

[24:55](#) **GN:** So LaMorte's leaving left a big opening there for you to do more in campus ministry and that kind of activity. Okay. I have ... I want to get to so many things. Let's talk about change which is part of this development. Okay you have a new position now. What's the upside of it?

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What is best about it as compared to where you were?

[25:27](#) **DD:** OK. The best part about this ... I think is that it gave me an opportunity to be involved in strategic planning for the college which was relatively new for me. I was very used to operational planning just on our level but be able to see you know the big picture and where the college is going and why the college is making the decision that it's making. And being able to be part of making those decisions. I really like. I think that it helps also then that I can go back and explain to my folks why the decisions. If you can put the decision in a larger context, that usually makes a lot more sense. If somebody just hands the decision down and you don't really have the background for it, you know...

[26:22](#) **GN:** You have get the rationale for it. Here's why we're doing what we're doing.

[26:25](#) **DD:** Exactly. I mean it makes a lot of sense. It really does. The other thing I like about it is that it's really ... It again is really nice to be part of a group and to be able to facilitate a group that really wants to make some changes. Do some really good things for students. And really help to bring Marist to the next level. And I think that my personality allows that to happen because I don't ... I'm not a control freak or I'm able to let that go. I probably am more of a control freak than I thought I was ... but I'm very good at saying, Now I'll let him do it his way. I'll let her do it her way. It doesn't have to be my way. And I really ... I really like the fact that there's a lot of people that work for me who are really, really good and really, really skilled and really get a lot done and come up with a lot of new and innovative things. And that makes my life a lot easier because I certainly don't have to come up with all the ideas. A lot of them come up with the ideas and I can help facilitate them.

[27:36](#) **GN:** Where does the some of these changes come? Like the cafeteria situation. The students eating. You know the setup of cards or merits that they can use with Marist ... How many meals they entitled to, where they can have them and things of that sort. Where does that

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decision take place?

[27:57](#) **DD:** We actually... Steve Sansola and I ... Steven is the one under in my area that directly supervises Sodexo and what he and I did right after I got this job and right after. Sodexo didn't used to report to student affairs. But that changed when I when I came in and Steve and I decided that we needed to educate ourselves. So we went around and visited about ten ... We hired a consultant. And we went around with the consultant and visited like ten other campuses and.

[28:28](#) **GN:** Give me three.

[28:30](#) **DD:** Quinnipiac.

[28:33](#) **GN:** That's ... Do they have a campus?

[28:34](#) **DD:** Yeah, they do now. They do now. Yeah. Quinnipiac, Sacred Heart, and Hamilton. We also when to Colgate, Siena. We went to a bunch. We did a whole tour. And we really looked at what was out there and really... We talk to students at all the colleges too. We had a table full of students that we sat down with and we said, "What do you like? What don't you like? What would be good? What wouldn't be good?" And then we did the same thing here at Marist. And then negotiated with Sodexo the food plan that we've had now for a number of years. We've actually made more changes for next year so we. And again we did the same thing. We're constantly out there looking at what's out there. And Steve is really good at running focus groups with students all the time and saying, "What do you like? What don't you like?" And you know we ... also keep up on the trends, you know. We have a lot of ... There's a lot of publications in the student affairs area. I mean you can keep up very easily on what's going on out there. And I always have people in our area every year go to conferences. So they can come back with you.

[29:44](#) **GN:** The ideas other people have. Besides food, what other changes? How about just entertainment? The pool setup not the swimming pool. There are pool tables.

[29:55](#) **DD:** There aren't pool tables anymore right now but we'll see what we can do. Generally what we can do with is again. It tends to be kind of a trend things. Right now the big trend in colleges are fitness centers, any performing, any kind of performing space to allow kids opportunities to do whatever performance things they'd like to do. And like intermural recreational sports. So those three things right now...

[30:35](#) **GN:** So you organize intermurals?

[30:36](#) **DD:** We actually... Tim Murray and I have worked it out so that we hired a grad assistant to work with the intermural program. And this kid has just done an unbelievable job. And we were able to get him a little bit more money this year because he puts in way more time than a graduate assistantship. But he has done an unbelievable job with the intermural and recreational program. What I would like to do is actually develop that into an office. I mean we need a director of intramural and recreation. We probably need an assistant director. We have over ... We have literally two thousand kids involved in intermural and recreational sports.

[31:23](#) **GN:** What intermural sports are there now?

[31:25](#) **DD:** There's twenty-three of them right now.

[31:29](#) **GN:** I mean I was thinking something like basketball, volleyball and you know.

[31:31](#) **DD:** Oh, they do everything. And then we do. And then he also does one-shot recreation things too. So you might have a day of maybe certain tournaments or something or kayaking or bring kayaks into the river. Everybody can go down and try kayaking for the day. So you have these or you do a one-day pool tournament. And it's like a double elimination or whatever so he does those kinds of things as well. But you know we have all kinds of all kinds of intramural and recreational sports going on now.

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[32:02](#) **GN:** On change. Let's come back to the campus. When you come on the campus now, you must be struck by your first days in '82 when you came on the campus.

[32:11](#) **DD:** Yes, right, right.

[32:12](#) **GN:** Let's talk about that a little bit. Where would you like to say the biggest changes have taken place?

[32:18](#) **DD:** Well, I would think the biggest changes that have taken place are the fact that the campus has just started to ... I mean first of all ... It has just expanded. That's a huge piece of it. But it's also just been it's been pulled together kind of in a way that makes more sense. I like all the changes. Moving the parking lots to the perimeter and having the green in the center of the campus which gives students another place to recreate. I like the fact that the new buildings are. There's not a hodgepodge you know. There's a planned look for some of these buildings so that everything is going to ...

[33:01](#) **GN:** Coordinated

[33:02](#) **DD:** Right. Like a common palette of colors and stones and bricks and all of that. I think that's really. And it's also. I think. It's giving Marist a more kind of older feel and I don't mean old in a bad sense. But it's beginning to feel look more new collegiate and more mature. That's probably a better word. Marist has been a teenage institution for a while now and I think it's starting to reach its maturity and the buildings are helping with that.

[33:43](#) **GN:** Can Marist students share in the wealth of the stadium? For instance in the gym and?

[33:49](#) **DD:** They play intermural sports almost every night until 2 am.

[33:55](#) **GN:** Is that so?

[33:56](#) **DD:** Yeah. They have. That's a turf field and that's why we put that in there. Oh yeah, they're there all the time. That's part ... I mean you drive out of this campus at eleven o'clock at night, any night. The lights are on and you've got three teams playing football this way. You

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know they can play this way as you can. Yeah. They use it all the time. Yeah. We would love another one.

[34:17](#) **GN:** When the survey came out about where we should develop next, the stadium was not high on my list.

[34:23](#) **DD:** No it wasn't. It wasn't. And you know it's... It's been a huge boom to the students in terms of their recreational space.

[34:34](#) **GN:** Even on the varsity level, I mean a October afternoon with the band playing ... That's quite an image that's out there.

[34:42](#) **DD:** It is.

[34:43](#) **GN:** We're not Notre Dame but we're moving up the line.

[34:48](#) **DD:** Yes, we are. We're becoming a draw in the area. You know it's the place to do.

[34:54](#) **GN:** Let's... in other areas of change of course. The building we're in would be another one. Do students spend much time here?

[35:04](#) **DD:** I think so. I really think that the students love the library. I really... You know our residence halls are very crowded. There's not a lot of quiet study space around. You know we do have some spaces in the Student Center. I think the new Cabaret setup has really helped kind of relieved that press for space because kids can go in there. It's a comfortable place. They'll go in and bring the books they'll sit down and study. But I think the library. You know is just a great asset to the students.

[35:38](#) **GN:** Do we have hours? Do dormitories ... Do they have to be in their rooms by midnight?

[35:43](#) **DD:** No, we have quiet hours after 10 pm. But no people ... there's no curfew and no restricted hours.

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[35:53](#) **GN:** And is the library open all night?

[35:55](#) **DD:** No. It's open ... I think it's open till

[35:58](#) **GN:** Maybe for test week.

[35:59](#) **DD:** On test weeks, it opens longer. And on test weeks, we also open classrooms around for people to study.

[36:05](#) **GN:** Back to you. How about your own ... Your last step up where. What are you doing now? And what's good about it? And what's the most challenging thing?

[36:18](#) **DD:** You know I think the most challenging thing is really being able to anticipate the changes that are happening in my field and position, Marist to be able to stay up with those changes. You know the whole electronic world has opened up all kinds of things for us that make our jobs different. Our students are different. The expectations of the students and families are very different and it's kind of hard to be OK with that and not fight against it. And you can't fight against it. You know you have to say, "Okay, you know the world is changing and you know we really need to be aware of the changes." And we really need to be flexible and nimble enough to make to make changes and to keep Marist on the path that it's going – which is a competitive...

[37:23](#) **GN:** It's interesting. I asked Sue Lawrence a similar question two weeks ago and moving on where will we be ten years from now. In her field of course in communications with you know TV and writing and advertising and the rest of who knows. But there'll be a need for college ... I mean kids will get out of high school then they'll have to go to college and we'll be here.

[37:48](#) **DD:** We'll be here and I really do think that there'll always been a need for the traditional on-ground campus. Now maybe not as many as there are now because I think some students will take the option that just doing online kinds of things. But ... So I think it's important that Marist continue, you know, to move in the direction it's moving so it becomes one of the survivors, you

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know. We want to be one of the ones that still here. You know ten, fifteen, twenty years down the road.

[38:18](#) **GN:** The administration's point of view, talking to Dennis Murray about it, he would say ... told me that the online education is really not for undergraduates.

[38:28](#) **DD:** I don't think it should be.

[38:31](#) **GN:** That they need the interaction with one another. And the maturity that would take place ... Yeah. But you have some problems now that weren't there before. And that when he started to talk about the students and some of them ... there seemed to be somewhat problems in mental or psychological. And one of them is the use of the phones and their constant staying-in-touch with home.

[38:55](#) **DD:** Right.

[38:56](#) **GN:** Rather than the person next to them in the classroom.

[39:01](#) **DD:** Right. I think that's a huge issue and you know it's so easy to get sucked into using that kind of technology. And I understand that. But I think that that's ... I think that parents have to, you know, take the leap and just, you know, let it go. But that's much easier said than done. You know we live in a world that is... You know, that our media has made very scary. We're afraid of everything. Everything is going to you know hurt us or hurt our children or whatever. And I just think that that that parents have this, you know, really incredible obsessive need to stay in constant contact with kids and I don't think that's a good thing. I don't know how to solve it or to stop it. But you know. I don't think it's a good thing. I think you have to let kids, you know, kind of be on their own you know.

[40:04](#) **GN:** You seem to be on the cutting edge already in your thinking. Are there some change though that you would like to see ... brought about of the next year or two in terms of student life or activities or timetable or scheduling?

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[40:20](#) **DD:** Yeah. There is something actually we're talking about it now and trying to get our hands around it. I really think that that student affairs needs to take a bigger role in teaching students about healthy life choices. I almost think that it needs to become a curriculum. A series of one-credit courses, whatever. Our students are incredibly stressed. Many of them are medicated way beyond what I think they should be at this point in their life. Because our society for some reason doesn't want to tolerate discomfort. It's OK for an eighteen-year-old to struggle and to not know what he wants to do and to feel depressed and to, you know, kind of wrestle with feelings. But we don't allow students to do that anymore. As parents we don't allow our children to do that anymore. The amount of kids on medication is frightening and I don't even know how many really are on medication. But kids have to learn how to handle stress. They have to learn how to handle discomfort. And they have to learn how to sit with it for a while so I think that we should be teaching kids how to do that. You know whether it means You know we teach yoga classes. Whether we you know have them do ... you know kind of a wellness curriculum where it's okay for them where they begin to realize that these kinds of things are okay. You don't grow unless you struggle. Education used to about how wrestling and thinking with ideas and questions and ideas ... And that's what we still should be doing we certainly have not evolved fast enough to have skipped those steps. But we seem to feel that we can and I just think that we need to do a better job or we need to do maybe, pick up that piece of it. And really help students by offering them opportunities to learn how to handle and deal with the uncomfortable things in their lives.

[42:50](#) **GN:** One of the impressive things of the student body here is your involvement in what we call Campus Ministry. They see through those activities -- the needs of others really and how others are suffering and terms of poverty or even to health and food and things of that sort. I think that that has really been a kind of a meritorious one. Another happy development here is

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the number of student involved in music programs. Is that an issue in the dormitory? Do they play their clarinets in the dormitories?

[43:26](#) **DD:** You know it isn't an issue but it is an issue for our students that we don't have adequate space for them to practice. I mean that's really a problem and that's what I said before about ... You know when you visit colleges now one of things that you see and you see fitness centers and you see performing arts centers. And the performing arts centers often have a lot of rooms attached to them where kids can go and just practice or musical instruments or practice their dance steps.

[43:52](#) **GN:** You would like to see a music building go up.

[43:54](#) **DD:** I would love to see a performing arts ... a whole performing arts center. Yes absolutely. We need it. And if Marist wants to stay cutting edge, you know, it really needs to think about that.

[44:10](#) **GN:** In the changes, what do you take greatest pride in? What's some of the things that you feel you were part of that and you're happy developed?

[44:20](#) **DD:** I think part of it is developing the Emerging Leaders Program through the freshman program office. We didn't have a freshman program office when I first became the vice president. It was sort of it ... It didn't really exist. Of its own so I made that its own office. So now it has a staff.

[44:48](#) **GN:** What does it really do?

[44:51](#) **DD:** It's actually the Director of the Freshman Program ... She runs ... It's Robin Torres. The mentors work for her and she runs all of the orientation program. She runs the mentor program. And she runs the emerging leaders program which is a really terrific program that we have That involves faculty staff, outside people, and students who take a series of courses that leads up to a certificate program in leadership. It's associated with, tied in with the national

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leadership fraternity. So I think that's ... I think that's been good I think the growth of campus ministry has been great. You know bringing Brother Frank and having him, you know kind of take Campus Ministry to where it is now. And also, I think the athletic program ... You know the athletic program ... We just got the latest six-year graduation rates on Marist athletes. And the six-year graduation rate on Marist athletes is 95% which beats the college graduation rate by 10%. There are 750 student athletes on campus. So it's a big number and you know, I think we've gone a long way in bringing in student athletes who are recruited for the right reasons and who get the messages when they're here that this is your primary reason for being here. Yeah and we still win. So you know you've got ...

[46:27](#) **GN:** The combination of them, completing the course of studies and getting a diploma at the end. What were some of your biggest problems?

[46:40](#) **DD:** You know. Probably the biggest problems are always going to be personnel. You know just sometimes ...

[46:47](#) **GN:** Did you have tell somebody to leave?

[46:50](#) **DD:** No just a kind of the just you know.

[46:51](#) **GN:** That's not easy by the way.

[46:52](#) **DD:** I mean I have done that but I haven't done that lately. Part of it is just like mushing everybody together. You know and making sure that you know the personality. You know who the problem personalities are. You know just wishing that people would just get over that. You know it's like you know they don't have to be your best friend, you just have to work with. I work with a lot of people I don't necessarily like but you work with them. So that's always been the hardest for me. And I think the other piece of it that's really hard for me is the over-enrollment in the freshman class every year and what we do to our poor students in terms of shoving them into residence halls. And this year is the year that's really becoming the breaking

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point for me because we now have juniors who have been in buildups now for three years? And that's just A. it's just not good. B. These are our alums. You want them to be happy when they leave. Everybody forgets what happens first semester, freshman year. Build up first semester freshmen. I don't have a problem with that. But you know you've got to relieve that valve afterward and you can't be constantly doing that to people. And we've been...

[48:07](#) **GN:** Well it's part of the success.

[48:08](#) **DD:** It is part of the success. It is part of the success and I agree. And see that's the bigger picture. That's the bigger picture that I'm always going back. and take saying to my staff went to...

[48:18](#) **GN:** We're too good at this ... We should have them leaving on their own.

[48:21](#) **DD:** Nobody's ... This is not anybody fault. This is not something that you can blame on a person or an office. You know they're doing the best they can to manage numbers. But maybe we do have to learn how to manage numbers differently. Lots of colleges manage this. There has to be a way to manage this.

[48:42](#) **GN:** So we will be using the hotel again.

[48:44](#) **DD:** 180 beds in the hotel.

[48:48](#) **GN:** That's that. Despite all the rooms up on top of the hill over there. Well. OK. And we don't want to send them away. I mean, they do qualify to stay here.

[49:00](#) **DD:** No we don't. Absolutely. No, I agree. It's a nice problem. But it's still a problem.

[49:06](#) **GN:** How about students away like Florence and Spain?

[49:09](#) **DD:** Well you know forty-two freshmen are going to Florence this year. We sent them all letters and said, "We have really... we got way too many freshman. Anybody want to go to Florence? We'll sweeten the pot a little bit for you want to go." We have forty two going.

[49:24](#) **GN:** Is that so?

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[49:25](#) **DD:** So which is great. I also think that's great because I also think that once you build a critical mass in Florence, that program is really going to grow. Yeah. And kids are going to now come to Marist to opt for that their freshman year.

[49:44](#) **GN:** And your own personal relationship here, you've had good friends over the years.

[49:48](#) **DD:** Very good friends. I mean when I really think about it you know. I mean I got married here. My kids were baptized here. You know pretty much all of my you know ... landmark you know kinds of things are here I mean my. You know my kids. You know they know everybody who works here which is one of the reasons why I decided not to send them here because I felt that it would not be fair for them. But I know I have great friends here.

[50:21](#) **GN:** That's kind of where we want to be for this morning to cover this. Is there something we didn't talk about that ... You know you ... I like to say this like that I didn't touch on. You know it could be in terms of ... the administration. The leadership of the college might be one thing.

[50:42](#) **DD:** Well I would like to say that you know I have always felt that the vice president's that I have worked for with You know have been great colleagues. And a lot of people wonder. You know you get into the whole white male. You know the situation and you're the only...

[51:05](#) **GN:** You say vice president. There are a number of different people who are vice president. You're talking about Gerard Cox or you're talking about.

[51:10](#) **DD:** No I'm talking about like Bill Thirsk, Tom Wermuth. All the current vice presidents like the academic vice president all that. And I just think that you know, they have been you know... not... The Student Affairs folks I love working with ... They're great but I find that the

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people on the other side the campuses, you know, are equally as great to work with. It's a great group of people that work on the IOG and on the cabinet and. You know I really feel that you know they're all share in, you know, the vision of what Marist is and what Marist hopefully will even become as we move along and you know, do a great job of helping to get Marist there.

[51:53](#) **GN:** We've turned out a few presidents for Marist, haven't we?

[51:56](#) **DD:** We have, yes.

[51:58](#) **GN:** Has your line of work been attacked by other colleges to kidnapping or headhunters coming here?

[52:05](#) **DD:** You know you get that ... but it's not in a way that's a good thing. And also. If people have the ambition to go somewhere, you know I would really support that. I think that's important and ... You know you're always sad to see people go good people especially. But that's good for them. You know if that's you know if we can help them get to the next step I think that's a good thing to do.

[52:34](#) **GN:** Well Debbie it's been nice talking to you. Thank you so much. We almost put an hour in here.