

Margaret Calista

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Wai Oo

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Margaret Calista

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Summary: Margaret Calista talks about her early education and her early career as a child welfare worker in the City of Poughkeepsie. She reflects on her career at Marist College as the program director for the Social Work program at the college and later as the Dean of the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. She reflects on the positive and negative aspects of working as a Dean at Marist College and her prospects on Marist’s future.

[00:06](#) **GN:** Today is Thursday July 9th, 2009 and we're having an interview with Margaret Calista, the Dean of the School of the Social Sciences at Marist College and we were in the Marist College Library. Good morning, Margaret.

[00:21](#) **MC:** Good morning, Gus.

[00:23](#) **GN:** Margaret, we're trying to get interviews from people who have been at Marist for a good period of time. So we're able to get a historical view when we put that in our archives. But we'd like the start of the beginning. Something personal about yourself. Margaret. Would you please tell us something about your early years? Where did you grow up? And schools you attended.

[00:47](#) **MC:** Okay. So I'm originally from New Jersey and went to public schools in New Jersey and graduated from a small high school.

[00:58](#) **GN:** Where in New Jersey, Margaret?

[01:00](#) **MC:** A place called Pennington, it's sort of halfway between Princeton and Trenton, New Jersey. And it was kind of farm, the farm country part of New Jersey. Outside of Trenton. And my high school when I graduated, there were sixty members of my high school class. So it was a very small group and you know, very close experience going to school with.

[01:29](#) **GN:** You knew all the students very well.

[01:33](#) **MC:** Yeah. So that was there was so successful experience for me. And I went on from there to Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. A girls', a women's college. In those days, we called it a girl school.

[01:50](#) **GN:** How big was Cedar Crest?

[01:51](#) **MC:** Cedar Crest, at that time, was only about five or six hundred students and. It now has, you know of course, gone through many metamorphoses as Marist and but it has stayed a traditional women's college.

[02:09](#) **GN:** Even to this day?

[02:10](#) **MC:** Yes. To this day and in fact, just has appointed its second woman president and its first African-American president. So we're very proud of how it's been a model for women.

[02:30](#) **GN:** What were your fields of interest in college?

[02:32](#) **MC:** At college, I was a History major and a minor in Spanish. And I had just loved history. Always had from high school and elementary school. And I studied mostly at that time Middle Eastern history which is kind of before its time but it was mostly Ancient Middle Eastern history, kind of the beginning of the world. Kind of history. So those lot of connection through anthropology too. And then Spanish, I just got very interested in and I was [...] I took a minor in Spanish and focused mostly on very formal Castilian Spanish and working with the translation of historical documents.

[03:25](#) **GN:** Have you continued your interest in Spanish?

[03:27](#) **MC:** I'm interested but I haven't continued using it.

[03:32](#) **GN:** And is it more reading and knowledge than it is of speaking?

[03:34](#) **MC:** Yes.

[03:37](#) **GN:** Outside of the academic area, what were your interests? Did you participate in choral groups or theater?

[03:43](#) **MC:** Yes, I was the editor of the college newspaper at one point. You know very involved in service organizations and not so much athletics. A little tennis. But mostly community service things and the school newspaper. That was my favorite thing.

[04:07](#) **GN:** Okay, moving on from college, when did you do graduate work?

[04:10](#) **MC:** I actually didn't do graduate work and until after, I'd been practicing in the field of social work. The history degree [...]
When I got out of college and ended up in Poughkeepsie, there wasn't a lot to do with a History degree in Poughkeepsie. So I went to our county personnel office looking for a job. And they told me, there was something available at the City of Poughkeepsie Public Welfare Department in the Child Welfare Area. So the requirements in those days was a bachelor's degree and not any particular training. And I started working as a child welfare worker for the City of Poughkeepsie and I did that for a couple of years. And the children and families on my caseload were placed at the Children's Home in Poughkeepsie. And so when an opening became available there, I went to the Children's Home.

[05:14](#) **GN:** Is that Children's Home still operative here?

[05:16](#) **MC:** Yes. The Children's Home is a hundred sixty-five or seven years old and it was really quite a historical interest. And I was there as a social worker. I was there as an executive director and I served eighteen years on the board of directors. So I have been there and had a long-term relationship with that organization way after I left there as an employee. But when I was there a few years, they offer to help me start my graduate education. So I started taking courses at Columbia in social work. But then had the opportunity to move to the Astor Home for Children. Because at that time the Department of Mental Health was supporting social work education. So.

[06:20](#) **GN:** Where is the Astor's Home? In Rhinebeck? Is that the one?

[06:22](#) **MC:** Yeah and that was operated by the Daughters of Charity and the Daughters of Charity had an agreement with Fordham University to provide education. Graduate education for their social work staff. So I took a position there. And they paid for my graduate education at Fordham.

[06:41](#) **GN:** So you already are living in Poughkeepsie, going to Fordham.

[06:44](#) **MC:** Yes I went to.

[06:45](#) **GN:** Working up in Rhinebeck.

[06:46](#) **MC:** Took me three years and went. You know down on the train. Once a week to go.

[06:52](#) **GN:** I know the route.

[06:53](#) **MC:** Yeah so. So that was [...] That was how I finished my [...] so I had been in the field. You know practicing. By the time I finished, I had actually been social work practice for about eight or nine years. And then I finished the degree and became officially a social worker. And stayed in the field until the late 70s when I left the area for a sort while to go to North Carolina and while I was in North Carolina, I became attached to the University of North Carolina at Cullowhee; Western Carolina University. And worked in their social work department being their Field Supervisor and that's how I got interested in academics.

[07:47](#) **GN:** OK I was going to ask. Did you say you did some teaching at Astor's or at the Children's Home?

[07:54](#) **MC:** I did social work there.

[07:55](#) **GN:** You did social work there. So when do you start actually doing some teaching per se?

[08:01](#) **MC:** I had done a couple of courses at Dutchess Community College as in their community mental health programs in the 70s. But I didn't until the late 70s [...] I didn't really think about academic as in an academic career. But when I started doing the field supervision that Western Carolina University, I also taught a course. And I went on their faculty full-time for a year. But then decided to come back to the Poughkeepsie Area. And when I came back to the Poughkeepsie un 1980. I was so, by then, kind of interested in the academic aspect that I applied for the position at Marist. Marist had just started or was just getting underway a social work degree program in 1980. They needed a program director who had the MSW Qualifications and the clinical experience. So I took that position eventually. Dr Zuccarello was just finishing his last term as the Dean of the faculty.

[09:18](#) **GN:** And Dennis Murray was the President at that time.

[09:20](#) **MC:** He had just come. That summer he was inaugurated. He had started the year before but his inauguration was in July of 1980. I think, I believe. And Donald was the Chair of the Sociology Department which was where the Social Work program was a part of at that time.

[09:44](#) **GN:** So you came to Marist, then to as an obligation [...] an opportunity to teach in the program. Yeah. Okay. Was the Children's School here? Was there a day school or a day camp yet?

[09:59](#) **MC:** No, the daycare center hadn't started yet. That started after that. Not too long sometime in the early 80s. That started. They had a program initially in the old Marian Hall. Yes. And then eventually they had a portable program, a modular home off the

McCann Center parking lot. That was there and that was. Yeah. And then that disappeared too. You know.

[10:36](#) **GN:** So that's the long trail of you coming to Marist right. And you come on board is a full-time position that you're taking in the early 80s.

[10:49](#) **MC:** In 1980. The fall of 1980. And then my task at that time was to get the program accredited. The social work programs.

[10:57](#) **GN:** Was there anybody else on the faculty per se?

[10:59](#) **MC:** Yes Florence Michaels was here. And **Jerry Brien(?)** And Donald. And that was essentially the faculty for the Social Work Program.

[11:13](#) **GN:** Did we have a major yet in that or just a minor?

[11:17](#) **MC:** Yes, we had a major. But it was always called the department and still is. It's called the department of sociology and social work. So there was a little iffiness, I guess. We never had a major in Sociology. But we've only had the major in Social Work.

[11:35](#) **GN:** Was Dan Kirk involved in any of this?

[11:28](#) **MC:** Little bit but not so much because he was really focused on the community psychology approach and the Master's Degree in Psychology.

[11:48](#) **GN:** Yeah all of that is a blur to me at that time.

[11:52](#) **MC:** Out of the Communications area, right.

[11:54](#) **GN:** And Liz was here at the time too. I don't know what she was doing but anyway. Teacher Education had not quite taken off yet.

[12:00](#) **MC:** No. But that was the first time I met Liz when we did really get the Teacher Ed going. And she came in to direct that program.

[12:08](#) **GN:** Things have changed radically here Marist. And you can speak of that more than anyone I think. By like questions as you're doing today. Interviewing candidates or having people come for. How did you [...] Were you interviewed to come on board at that time? Or remember if there was a faculty meeting and/or was it just, "We have an opening and you qualify [so] we'll take you."?

[12:32](#) **MC:** No, there was a day of interviews and I met with Jerry, and Florence and Chris, Donald. And then at the end of the day, I met with Lou. And I remember, people telling me some of my previous friends at the Children's Home that people called to find out about me and you know check on me and so that was [...]

[13:01](#) **GN:** You were vetted as it were.

[13:02](#) **MC:** Yes. So, there seemed to be a process that was involved.

[13:09](#) **GN:** Well. When you signed on, what was your understanding? Were you going to be teaching courses? Or were you going to be directed? We didn't have an internship program yet. Did we?

[13:19](#) **MC:** Yes, we did. We were just starting at the that first year that I came in and I had to also develop.

[13:26](#) **GN:** Well then, you had the experience of North Carolina.

[13:30](#) **MC:** So yes, the Carolina program had just gone through its Council on Social Work Education accreditation. So I was familiar with that. What I wasn't familiar with was the New York State Education Department. Another challenge to get to know about. And you have to work those two things together. Because the council can't accredit a program that the state is not in favor of. And the state doesn't let you get accredited unless they're satisfied too. So it's collaborative.

[14:04](#) **GN:** Two balls are up in the air at the same time. You have to kind of adjust those. Was there a series of courses that had to be introduced? Is that how your program was to be then?

[14:16](#) **MC:** Yes. So I developed many of the original courses. Some of them were under development. And because it is going to be an accredited program, there were always guidelines about what kinds of content you needed to have. And so there was something to work with, so I wasn't making it up out of my head.

[14:35](#) **GN:** Right. Well, we talked coming down the stairs about this library. When you came on board, the library holdings for your courses were quite limited, I suspect.

[14:47](#) **MC:** Right. We worked with the library a lot to get things. Barbara Brennan was someone that [...] She was the acquisition librarian and I worked with her a lot to develop our collection. Particularly in the areas of journals and materials like that so.

[15:04](#) **GN:** OK let's focus a little bit on the outside world of this time. What were those conditions though? Was it calm or stormy? Was there political unrest when you were coming in here?

[15:18](#) **MC:** Right. Well. In the 1980s, we had just come out of another recession of sorts at the end of the 70s. And so there, you know, still were some financial concerns I know in the human services field. People were just starting to recoup again, you know. To get services expanded, more developed and with more secure funding. And then the 80s, you know, tended to be very strong time and it was, you know, that was reflected too in Marist's growth, you know, that we decided to, I guess expand or, you know, it seemed like the way the faculty perceived it at the time and I was a faculty that, you know, every time when you get a few more flowers to plant or something to build, we got a few more students. But the times were relatively good and we were able to attract students and to continue to build a strong program.

[16:17](#) **GN:** Well then, you might recall the building of dormitories that was going to house people because we had pretty much saturated from the local community. We had to go far to other states like Connecticut and Pennsylvania and New Jersey to bring students in. So that was part of [...]

[16:36](#) **MC:** There was [...] For a while here I thought every other young blonde woman on campus came from Long Island.

[16:42](#) **GN:** Right, and there was only one island. That was Long Island. You know, anybody going, “I need a ride to the island.” Signs would go up on the bulletin boards or the elevator [...] There was an elevated there was a “Vator[?]” Do you will recall what the faculty situation was like? Were we in divisions or departments? How were things organized?

[17:07](#) **MC:** We were still in departments but very soon in the 80s, we went into divisions as I recall. But initially I don't know whether when Lou left as Dean of the faculty, whether he was the last Dean to oversee all the departments or whether Andy Molloy did.

[17:26](#) **GN:** Andy Molloy followed Lou, right?

[17:00](#) **MC:** Yes and whether [...] I think for a year or two, we kept departments and then we went into divisions. We were the division of Social and Behavioral Sciences. And Bill Eidle was the Chair of that.

[17:43](#) **GN:** We didn't have Deans yet.

[17:44](#) **MC:** No there weren't Deans yet. There weren't schools. But that [...] I think to me the most striking thing when I came to Marist on the faculty is when I went to the first **plenary** faculty meeting and I actually went through that and then I came away from that and went back and looked at the catalogue for that year and realized that I was the 13th woman faculty member. That there were only a dozen women faculty before I came here. Of course having been in the human service world, I had been in a world where it was always mostly women. I mean the commissioner or the executive director of an agency might be a man. But mostly everybody else were women and so when I came here I was struck at being, you know...

[18:43](#) **GN:** A male-dominated operation.

[18:44](#) **MC:** Right. It was a very new experience for me.

[18:47](#) **GN:** Yeah. You had come from an all-women's college which the faculty was probably mostly women, I suspect.

[18:55](#) **MC:** There were a few men. One of my toughest history professors was a man. So that was partly what struck me. And I was a member of the Affirmative Action Committee I think it was called something like “Affirmative Something Affairs” or something. And one of the first efforts to diversify the faculty was really to attract more women to the faculty that for us, that was a major form of diversity. So. And I followed that for a long time and we did hit fifty percent. And then, we crept back away from that fifty percent and I think today we're still pretty close to the fifty percent mark.

[19:48](#) **GN:** Is that so? I had no idea that the numbers were that close. And how about the student body? That was mostly male too,

wasn't it when you first came? But you saw a gradual increase in women coming.

[20:02](#) **MC:** Yes. And particularly when our configuration of programs came together as a division. You know. Psychology which was then to have Teacher Education and Social Work. And even Criminal Justice now has crept up to be 50 percent women. And so our school is practically 98 percent women students. So we really see it in our school.

[20:27](#) **GN:** Do you have an idea to what the Teacher Ed program is like? Is that the same?

[20:31](#) **MC:** Yeah.

[20:32](#) **GN:** Mostly women. OK.

[20:34](#) **MC:** Well in like in our graduating class last year on Teacher Education. I think there were maybe three male students. You know. The social work program in its graduate classrooms, there's one or two men. Every year that's it.

[20:48](#) **GN:** I don't know if this is true but I heard there was some concern that the student body now has tipped.

[20:55](#) **MC:** It has. It's 60-40.

[20:01](#) **GN:** I was going to say 49-51 but.

[21:04](#) **MC:** No it's 60-40. I mean that and that's the ratio they're struggling to maintain. I mean, you know, nationally, that's a pretty average number for male-female. Female-Male, 60% women.

[21:22](#) **GN:** It's more women than men. 60-40.

[21:28](#) **MC:** And particularly in schools that don't have engineering programs or [...]

[21:30](#) **GN:** Of course, there are probably some explanations for, in terms of, the athletics programs that are available. The women's basketball team for one thing is getting national attention. Marist was not known as much on that scene as it is now. And so, no doubt that has something to do with. Well that kind of leads into the next thing about the changes that have taken place. Here at Marist and we can go to a number of places. Let's just talk about the grounds. The building programs. What strikes you now?

[22:12](#) **MC:** We're always building.

[22:13](#) **GN:** As we speak, they're digging away over here at the hill for the new Hancock Center.

[22:23](#) **MC:** And it's desperately needed. You know [...] it's really. And to me, this is one of the best positions because we're not really planning on real expansion of the undergraduate population. So this is really to meet the needs of the current populations so we can do a better job. Yeah. We're at that point where I feel in our education program, in our psychology programs that we're limited in what we

can do for our students because of space. We don't have lab space for the Psychology program. We don't have classroom labs for the Teacher Ed program. And you know. I'm not feeling like we're in jeopardy but I feel like we're not going to be competitive. If we can't get the kind of space, we need to have quality programs.

[23:17](#) **GN:** It's interesting too. I recall when I was back here and I was serving as a chair for a period of time that even the classroom space. I mean granted eight o'clock is not a popular time you know. Or on a late Friday afternoon. But outside of that the middle of the day, it was getting desperate to get an extra classroom, divide class, and get more space. And so this kind of program that were seeing right now, it's not for more students. It is for operation within and then other aspects of the campus have developed. Do you think the stadium was a good idea?

[24:00](#) **MC:** Well. The stadium is one of those things I guess where someone wants give it to you, you can't say no. And I think it is. It's an attractive thing. I like seeing the students have more flexibility for athletics activity, you know. Not so much our competitive football program but you know the other kinds of activities that can go on in that playing field now. So the lights probably were the most significant thing because and the AstroTurf because that makes it a really functional thing. Whether we needed the actual stadium or not I'm not sure. But we have it. Now we have it.

[24:39](#) **GN:** We do have it. Now you see if I'm talking to a guy there, it's an entirely different view. "Oh absolutely needed." You know. Yeah. You know, we have a hundred guys in uniforms paying thirty thousand dollars a year to play football and to study I mean. That moves to another area about the student body. It has tipped a little bit more greatly actually women to men. Or how do you see the academic performance of them? Or do they come as well-prepared? More prepared. Can they do more than they used to do? Can you require more? What's your view on that?

[25:21](#) **MC:** I definitely think the quality of the students has risen. And that we can expect more of our students than we could at one time. The students. I think if [...] there's been a period there was a period when it was so competitive to get into school that I think into college higher education. That our students are kind of driven. And I think, prior to this year or the last two years, there was a period where there was a little more relaxed. And students for a little more relaxed, you know. They weren't quite so worried about every single A they got. And that sort of thing. We're back to that a little more now. We have, you know, students that have been high achievers. And they [...]

[26:13](#) **GN:** Grade conscious?

[26:13](#) **MC:** They are all very grade-conscious and that I think, you know, puts all the faculty under some pressure. I feel a little bit about our students that we have good quality students. They're capable students. They lack a little intellectual curiosity or they lack a little love of learning. as an end in itself. And I don't think that's true of 100% of our students. But I think that it's true of more of them than not. And that keeps our atmosphere a little less than, you know, blossoming as it could be. You know, it keeps a little the intellectual level a little flat where I think that in a more maybe traditional liberal arts area maybe in in our School of Liberal Arts or/and some pockets in the School of Science, there's a little more of that going on. But I think our general students that are still in the more career-focused programs are a little less intellectually curious. They're kind of more consumer mentality.

[27:34](#) **GN:** They're do what they have to do to get by and get a good grade. That's it.

[27:28](#) **MC:** And the good grade is the token of the realm, you know that's what [...].

[27:44](#) **GN:** How has the internship program gone for you?

[27:47](#) **MC:** Very, very well. And that's been an interesting situation. In our psychology program, which is one of the forerunners in developing internships, they had a twelve-credit full-time internship program. The students began saying, "We'd rather take some more courses." So [...] and because they were interested in graduate schools, more students became interested in graduate school. They felt they needed more academic preparation to go to graduate school rather than all the internships. When you're going for a job the internship really is important for experience. So we shifted our [...] and we no longer require twelve credits of internship in the psychology degree program. They can take it if they want but they minimally have to take six. But they can take the rest of that in coursework so we've offered to develop some more courses for them. We've increased the interest in the five-year program. Some of those students are joining our five-year program. And we've greatly increased a number of our students that are getting accepted directly to Ph D. Programs in the Psychology program. So that's been a shift, you know. In the Teacher Ed program of course, we have to have our twelve credits of student teaching. And the social work program has required 8 credits of internship. So and in criminal justice requires six credits so we're still very active in internship activity.

[29:24](#) **GN:** Very good. You mentioned something. That just came to me that they go onto become graduate students and become even going on to doctorates. This has become thrust from a new blossom as a word I guess of the tree of our educational experience here.

[29:44](#) **MC:** Well in the field of psychology, the PhD is really the significant degree. We do have a licensed school of psychology program which is [...] at Master's level. And we now have a licensed mental health counselor for New York State. That is at the Master's level. But if you want to do a wide range of things in psychology, you need the PhD.

[30:10](#) **GN:** Right. In this area of change, the area of technology comes in now. What's your take on that? Has this been a boost in the educational program? Or is it deterring from some kind of intellectual growth? To some, things are automatic for instance. The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature I mean you used to be able to go take the book off the shelf and look for the articles that you needed. Now you sit down at a computer and you get a printout if you want. How do you feel about it?

[30:45](#) **MC:** I think it's wonderful. You know and I think it has allowed us to increase our expectations of students to stay current. We can provide them with excellent material. You know, it's original source material in a whole different understanding about original source, you know, because it's very contemporary. It's what's going on in the field of research right now. And so I think that's a wonderful aspect for students. And I think the [...] You know technology base here at Marist is an asset. In most cases, it allows us to stay connected with students. I think as we become more proficient and more faculty use it for forums and chats. But I think that will help stimulate the kind of intellectual dialogue and discussion that we would like to have more of. You know, the classroom time of an hour and fifteen minutes doesn't always provide time to really get that kind of discussion going. Whereas a threaded discussion online can you know, go on all week and really engage students.

[32:00](#) **GN:** Would you assent to having a number of your courses online? That your students would not come to campus.

[32:08](#) **MC:** The undergraduate students. We have some online offerings to kind of supplement their program. I don't see that as a core part of their program.

[32:18](#) **GN:** Or incidental or accidental.

[32:21](#) **MC:** Yeah, I think it's a summer class they need to take. Something that they would like to try. And you know if they're doing an internship [...] they would make it possible for them to continue taking a course. I think that's the direction we should go at the undergraduate level. But at the graduate level, I think where it's appropriate in some of our counseling program. It isn't appropriate to teach those courses online. But I think in some content areas, there are graduate courses that could be online.

[32:55](#) **GN:** I spoke to Dennis about this in terms of “Did he feel that the extended learning or distance learning whatever you might want to call, you know, would be a hindrance to the college and its growth?” So that students wouldn't come here. But he would say as you just indicated for the graduate level, you know, some courses can be done that way. Well for undergraduate, there's nothing like the class stimulation and the interaction that would take place. So there's really [...] We're not going to go that route. We're going to play that quietly for incidental work. So that then kind of leads us into the situation of maintaining the growth and the development that we have. Do you any problem with this? Are we well-situated? The space problem that we saw before. This will be somewhat rectified by the new buildings going up. You know. But are we going to be able to maintain what we have? What do you feel?

[34:08](#) **MC:** Well I think so. I think we're at an interesting place that we are well known enough. You know we did the, you know, kind of work to develop the quality of our programs, the quality of our faculty, the quality of our environment here. We've done a lot of that work and that work is, you know, holding us in a good, good position. We're known enough. Our brand is out there quite a bit. So that I think we can maintain ourselves. I think we're, you know, that business about us being partly popular because our price is right. It's good for us particularly right now. But I think again is also has its negatives. Because it keeps us from having more funds to do things. You know if we can continue to keep the push eventually on capital campaign and be able to have money that doesn't have to be directed to bricks and mortar. That will be you know, where our next emphasis should really be. Because if we don't want to raise tuition too much, then we [...]. I think the environment is not there to raise tuition, you know. So we're in a good place. We need to keep that in terms of tuition but we also do need to have other kinds of funds for doing something else besides building a building. Yeah. You know [...]

[35:48](#) **GN:** Do you have much contact with former students, graduates?

[35:52](#) **MC:** Well mostly social work students you know. Because I did spend, you know, most of my time here directing the Social Work program. I've been [...] This is my tenth year as Dean. But I spent all the other years since 1980 being a director of the program. And that was a small program so you know you could get to know all the students very intimately. And many, many of our social work students practice right here in the Hudson Valley.

[36:18](#) **GN:** Yes, Liz's experiences from the Teacher Ed is no matter where you go the stores, Price Chopper, Adams wherever you go, you're running into former students.

[36:31](#) **MC:** So that part is nice. Since I've been Dean, I've tried to obviously get to know some of the other students too. But there's so

many of them that it's hard to [...] And I don't have them in class and I still teach in the social work programs.

[36:47](#) **GN:** You do? Only one course though.

[36:49](#) **MC:** Well I teach two.

[36:50](#) **GN:** You're allowed two. I thought we had a rule about that.

[36:53](#) **MC:** Well I teach the capping course which in the social worker program is a two-semester course. I see. So I don't like to drop them after the fall. So I [...]

[37:06](#) **GN:** Continue on with it. What are your personal experiences? And this, I'm saying you've been here for twenty-nine years. Why did you stay?

[37:17](#) **MC:** Like one year, you're just [...] you know folds right into the next. I mean I think there is something very seductive about an academic calendar. You know just when you think you can't stand it anymore. It's over for a while yet and you do get a chance to refresh and you know, come back. [...] And it's a brand-new year, a new opportunity, new beginning. And so it's very seductive. So here, it is twenty-nine years later.

[37:41](#) **GN:** And you've enjoyed the teaching experiences. Do you visit sites where students are placed in terms of internships? And how far do you go?

[37:55](#) **MC:** We do most of ours pretty locally because there's so much to choose from. You know we don't have to go far. And all of the internship programs tend to have students right in the area. But [...] I've been an accredited site visitor for other social work programs and I have been able to visit programs all over the country in terms of their quality versus [...] Always look at ours too, you know. Yeah so, I think we have a very strong program, very high-quality program.

[38:30](#) **GN:** You're not saying that now because you're the dean of this program, are you? [laughter]

[38:36](#) **MC:** [laughter] No. I'm saying that because I've lots of things to compare it to. Sort of knowing what they're looking for helps us do a better job right to do it too.

[38:49](#) **GN:** And your faculty. You no doubt have increased. I have no idea about the numbers that are actually in place now. Yeah.

[38:58](#) **MC:** We have about forty positions in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. They're never all full. I spent my first three years as Dean thinking that I wasn't getting my job done because we had vacancies. And then I realized, that's the job of the dean to always hire people. So now I accept that. That's part of my job that I may never have a year when every position is filled.

[39:25](#) **GN:** Part of your faculty is full-time. What part of your faculty is part-time?

[39:30](#) **MC:** Well unfortunately, you know the full time is a much smaller percentage than the part time, particularly in psychology.

You know, we have a very high number of courses taught by part-time.

[39:42](#) **GN:** Of course, there is an advantage to that as well when you can get people with expertise from any of the number professions that you have to bring them into. Often you have lawyers and you have doctors and you have all kinds of people working for [...] You move from faculty to administration. Are you happy with that? [laughter]

[40:05](#) **MC:** Well, it was an opportunity. Now you've to understand when I came as program director. Program director's different than a chair because you're appointed as program director and you don't have a term that ends. You just are the program director so I've always been involved in administration at Marist. So moving to the dean now, it wasn't something I volunteered for. I was chair of the search committee and we had that failed search for two years. Then Academic Vice President asked me if I would consider it. And I initially said, I would do it for a couple of years. And he said, "No, you have to do it for at least five years." And so I said I would do it for five years. And you know. Every year, I think, "Well I'll tell the A.V.P. that this will be my last year" And then someone else resigns. And for a while there we had two or three openings for Deans so I felt like I couldn't abandon them. So that's why I'm still here so then I was thinking about it this year. And then, Mike Tannenbaum resigned. And I said, "Mike, why did you do that for?" So I know my time is coming. I just don't know exactly when it is.

[41:23](#) **GN:** Yes, I had two years. They were trying to find a Dean and I was sitting in there for that particular time. And then after I left think, well when Guy L(?) another year or two. Those positions are not particularly easy. What would you say is the most difficult aspect of the Deanship?

[41:45](#) **MC:** Well I think that unlike some other schools, we have what's called a kind of a weaker department chair system. So a lot of the busier work of the administration is really done by the dean and not the department chair. Like faculty evaluation. All the hiring. You know a lot of things are not delegated to the chair. Which in our system I think is okay because the chairs don't have much support and it would be very hard, you know, to have them do it. And they have [...] they may get one course release that's all. So I'm not advocating on the present system that they should do more work as I think they have enough to do. But it does make this job sort of a very "requires a lot of hands-on" activity. And by nature, I don't mind that so much. But I think other people are not thinking about that when they're thinking about being an administrator. They're thinking more about you know brokering deals and raising funds and things like that. Which would be good things for the deans to do. But we're a little bit tied down to do that.

[43:03](#) **GN:** Yeah. And you only work eleven months a year. So that what surprised me that you don't stop teaching. They don't stop coming in because the faculty is not coming in. You come in every day for that time. What's the best part of it?

[43:21](#) **MC:** The best part is for me the exciting thing was to really understand all the different programs and the school at that level. You know, being just associated with one small program. I knew my colleagues of course. But I really didn't know what they were trying to achieve or what their goals were and what their successes were. So I enjoyed that. The other good part is the Dean's Council. I mean, getting to work with the Deans of the other schools and working with Tom is a very, you know, good thing because [...]

[44:03](#) **GN:** You're sitting at the table with the others.

[44:04](#) **MC:** Yeah, you really get to see what we're trying to do from an academic perspective. And then of course we go to Cabinet and we see what the overall vice presidents and presidents are trying to do. So you feel like you have a chance to contribute to that. And to also benefit from it and you know learn from it.

[44:28](#) **GN:** The understanding that you get a whole picture instead of just your little segment of it.

[44:34](#) **MC:** And social workers like that. We're kind of holistic, you know. So goes along with my experience.

[44:42](#) **GN:** Okay, let's play make-believe. I'm going to get you to have an invitation sent to you to come to the next board meeting. So you have a chance now to talk to the board from your perspective of twenty-nine years here and ten years as dean. What would you like to say to them that that's the best thing that we have that we have to keep going in the first order? And in the second, what would you like to see change?

[45:16](#) **MC:** Well I think. I think our faculty really is the best thing that we have. And I think that we really should move to a three-three teaching load. But I think that we need to do that in a culture of not just you know, taking a course away, you know. Just reducing. I don't like that term of reducing. What I'd like to see is that we shift out of this idea of you know, people are here to be in the classroom a certain number of hours a week. And they have to sit in their office a certain number of hours a week. But that, we actually create a reason for people to be here to be with students. One of the things about space, you know, that I think is different at other schools. It's that a faculty member does something great, it's happening in class and the bell rings and then an hour and fifteen minutes. They can't say to students, "Let's go somewhere and finish up this conversation. There's no place to go." The chances are most of the students are lock-stepped into another class. Next period right after. We have, you know, even the free period is not a free period.

[46:36](#) **GN:** You know, that's a joke. Isn't it? For that word.

[46:37](#) **MC:** Everything is so tightly scheduled. So that we don't have [...] There's no reason for a faculty member to hang around or get involved because the students are all busy someplace else. The other faculty are all busy somewhere else. So I don't think we realize how much this issue of our spatial environment has really limited what our thinking and our behavior in terms of what we do. I mean we live in corridors. People walk up and down the hall and wave to somebody in their office. But there's no place for people to just hang out on the floor with the faculty. You have to call a meeting in order to be able to you know declare space and a time when people can be together. So if we're missing something that I think is what we're missing. That sense of "this is a place to work and play and talk and be together." You know. Even the idea of private offices is you know, important for people to do their work. But common spaces really, I think are the more important thing right now. And we're creating, you know, too much fragmentation in the way we operate. Yeah. So I think that that's what I would say. You know we really need to think about space and I'm sure I'm sure Deb DiCaprio would say the same thing about space for students. That if the students want to be together and do things and they are curtailed because of the amount of common space that they have to work in. So I wouldn't want to see that, you know, detract from our growth in a positive way. You know development in a positive way.

[48:34](#) **GN:** Well, two good idea. I mean the idea of reducing the mandatory teaching. Yet nevertheless, you know, have people around in fact, there's no place for them to go. I mean faculty room doesn't exist, you know, faculty cafeteria or the lunch area. We seemed

although we used to have something like it. But as we advanced, we lost it which is the ironic part.

[49:01](#) **MC:** Right. Well one of the things we always talk about with the science folks see, the science folks have classroom. You know use classrooms but they also have labs. And they have control of those labs, you know in terms of scheduling and what they're used for and of course that has changed to over time. But generally speaking, there always is a lab space. You know there's some place. And we talk about the great relationships between our science faculty and the students and some of the things they can do together. I think that's one of the reasons. You know.

[49:31](#) **GN:** It grows out of that common experience always together.

[49:36](#) **MC:** Right and you're supposed to hang out in the lab. You know you do that. Well we all need labs of some kind. You know not. Not in the same sense that they have to be equipped like that. But you know that lab space. That space to be together. And I think if we looked at our teaching now that we're talking about maybe doing something to the core. If we looked at our curriculum and our teaching and we said, "You know. Yes, you're only going to teach three courses. But every course needs to have a project." You know and a project that's going to require the faculty and students to work together on. Something of that nature, you know, that would say yes. You're not going to necessarily have to lecture more hours a week. You're going to be with your students doing something constructive with them and modeling that whole need to dialogue and to have intellectual conversations. To you know be thoughtful and reflective about what they're doing and learning. As opposed to just you know content delivered and then you know, spit back.

[50:40](#) **GN:** Do you have a model is there a place you've been where that exists? Where the ideal has exactly been realized?

[50:48](#) **MC:** I think it is. It's what we're struggling to imitate in terms of the liberal arts college. You know that this is.

[50:59](#) **GN:** We know what it should be but we can't quite get there.

[51:04](#) **MC:** Yeah, right. And I think we're not looking at the influence. I mean when you look at our grid and I try to explain to people our scheduling grid. You know when interviewing someone today, sort of say this is the way it is. I mean there's no such thing as Monday Wednesday Friday Tuesday Thursday. I mean it's all over the map. And it is putting us in little boxes. And our life is in these one hour and fifteen minute chunks you know. And it goes from eight o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night I mean that's not normal. You know that's not a part of a reflective [...]

[51:40](#) **GN:** Can we just back up a little bit to start all over? [laughter]

[51:44](#) **MC:** Right, you know. And we got to that and look how we do when we come up with the annual calendar. You know, how we have to force ourselves into a certain number of days.

[51:54](#) **GN:** We've got to finish before Christmas. We had to have a short interim. We have to have before Memorial Day. We have to have graduation. Those things are part of the game.

[52:05](#) **MC:** So you know we're kind of forced themselves into this. And I think we haven't realized that maybe now we've put

ourselves in a situation where we're ready. We have the quality of students I think we have the interests of faculty to be more an intellectual community. I think we now [...] we look around and we say, "Well everybody's on the bus. You know everybody's on the way to somewhere or doing something there's nobody here to play with." You know. And the same way in our athletics area and in our Student Activities area. We, you know, provide everything for everybody. You know so much. So many different sports and activities you know. The NCAA makes us have all these things right, gender equity and you know. And so you do too much you can't do anything really. In some depth you know.

[53:04](#) **GN:** On the academic level, do you see a major change coming in the core?

[53:11](#) **MC:** I actually hope so. You know I do. I think this young woman, Moira Fitzgibbons, energetic and willing to kind of push through stuff. I mean by push through I mean she's going to get that going. I think that we're ready for something a little different. Again. [...] I don't think we've made much progress at Marist in interdisciplinary studies, integration of studies. And I think the other schools are ahead of us and in that area and that we should get that. Our core could be the place where we begin to really see that. I was reading about a core from a student coming from one of the schools that we work with. It was a very interesting twenty-four credit, first-year program. And it covered a real introduction to the liberal arts. But it covered it in a very interdisciplinary approach. And things were not thought of as three-credit blocks you know they were thought of as.

[54:29](#) **GN:** Interdisciplinary. Not the blind. Doing the history of literature, the math.

[54:33](#) **MC:** So I think that would help us. You know. To have something more like that. To also open up our thinking that our faculty although they're trained in a particular discipline. They're not limited in their intellect to teach other things, to just see things from other perspectives.

[54:56](#) **GN:** Team teachings and things of that sort of maybe part of the future. You'd think ten years from now we'll have something like this?

[55:06](#) **MC:** Well I don't know of course. But I think that we need to move in that direction. Because I think other schools will be ahead of us. I think that's what the world is starting to say. You know we're no longer just talking about diversity and tolerating diversity. We're really talking about the whole, a mix. You know where everything is interrelated and connected and you know. So I think we have to keep up with that somehow.

[55:38](#) **GN:** Well that's kind of hitting on the point about what needs attention. And I think you're just saying that now in terms of [...] If we've got to make some changes in the core. That it's become more integrated across lines rather than necessarily six points of credits math and history and the science. You know there can be some history of science and there can be some, you know, practical applications about communications that would and we should be able to read and write and speak. Which is to be a strong point to go ahead with.

[56:21](#) **MC:** I was just thinking of communications. When people say communications, you know, they think all of our students should have a course in public speaking. Public speaking is one aspect of communication. It isn't what communication really is. It's an application of communication but students may need a much more in-depth understanding of communication and then maybe the

public speaking will come. You know. I don't think we want to just give students more technical skills. You know, I think we want to get them to think about what it means to communicate.

[56:55](#) **GN:** And have something to say when it's time to say it unlike what we're hearing now on television and a lot of places. And that sort, well I can't believe the time is running on. What is there that you'd like to say that we didn't say? Now that you know the [...]

[57:12](#) **MC:** I think my experience of being at Marist has, you said what kept me here. I think because there was always something new and interesting coming along. You know. I've had a lot of opportunity to serve on strategic planning committees you know. Middle States committees, NCAA accreditation committees. And that opportunity to be included and invited to be a part of the bigger picture. Budget Priorities Committee. You know, I think it's been the thing that's always been very [...]

[57:46](#) **GN:** Makes you get up in the morning.

[57:52](#) **MC:** You know it's really made my experience here be one where I felt like it was useful to be here.

[57:59](#) **GN:** Well it keeps you young. It seems to me that you haven't changed much then the twenty-nine years that you have been here. Although that's probably [...]

[57:07](#) **MC:** Not totally true.

[58:09](#) **GN:** Thank you very much, Margaret. It's nice talking to you and we're just finishing at 58.9 minutes.