

Amy Woods

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Ann Sandri

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Woods, Amy

Transcript – Amy Woods

Interviewee: Amy Woods

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Summary: Amy speaks of her early life growing up in Connecticut and coming to Marist College after high school, her various internships during her college career and her decision to ultimately accept a position in the Advancement office of Marist college after graduation. Amy talks about who she worked for and with in the early years before becoming Alumni Director.

Gus Nolan (00:00:02):

Today is Wednesday, the 20th of June, and we have a chance to interview a long time person here at Marist, who she's now head of the alumni office, Amy Woods. Amy this is an interview for the Marist college oral archives project and I'm interviewing members of the Marist staff, graduates personnel, faculty, administrators, friends of the college. We're trying to get a picture of Marist from a lot of different points of view. There's like five or six parts of this before Marist, Marist college after Marist, work experience, general observations. So hopefully we can spend an hour pursuing these topics and all the segments are 10 or 15 minutes. So from the beginning, before Marist, let's see, where were you born and when?

Amy Woods (00:01:08):

Hmm. I was born in the Valley and here I am in another Valley. I like to joke about that. So I was born in the Naugatuck River Valley in Connecticut. They call it the Valley. So I was born in Derby, but I grew up in Seymour, but Seymour, Shelton, Ansonia and Derby are considered the Valley.

Gus Nolan (00:01:28):

I went through Derby on the way to Yale.

Amy Woods (00:01:31):

Everyone passes, it goes over the dam on Route 34. And you land in my town when you get across the dam in Seymour. So I went to Seymour high school.

Gus Nolan (00:01:39):

Okay. You just jumped ahead. Where did you, did you go to grammar school?

Amy Woods (00:01:46):

I did. I did elementary school in Seymour. It was called Chatfield school, so that's K through six.

Gus Nolan (00:01:53):

Okay. And the rest of the family, are you an only child or you have some siblings?

Amy Woods (00:01:59):

I have two younger brothers. Michael is three years younger than me and John is 10 years younger than me.

Gus Nolan (00:02:06):

Okay. And talk about childhood experiences, like did you play, did they belong to clubs? Do you go in the choir? Did you have any hobbies? generally speaking

Amy Woods (00:02:19):

I joined, yes, I joined a lot of clubs. I started, the opportunity really doesn't come up until middle school. I find that now. So even with my son, elementary school doesn't have too much to join, no

extracurricular. So when you get to middle school, I joined student council immediately and just started running things from there. I dabbled in athletics a little, but it wasn't my thing. I did little league on the side, I played softball on the side, through the town, but otherwise I did clubs, so I was big into student council. And then into high school I continued with that and my girlfriend and I became president and vice president of the student council and of the National Honor Society.

Gus Nolan (00:03:00):

Oh, okay, through grade school, so was there a playground? Did you ice skate? There isn't, there's a big Lake there, a stream or something, canoe?

Amy Woods (00:03:15):

There's a river. Yeah, it's a river. No, I didn't use that river too often, but it's funny you mentioned ice skating. My mother loved figure skating growing up, so she bought me figure skates so we would go, but it was just recreational. It was for fun. So we did that, but I started skiing when I was about 10 and not too far from here being, from Connecticut. And we're not too far from the Connecticut line here in Poughkeepsie, Mohawk mountain up in Cornwall, Connecticut. That's where I learned to ski. So, I joined the ski club and I also did it, our town rec had a really nice ski program and we took weekend trips to Vermont and New Hampshire to ski.

Gus Nolan (00:03:53):

This might be a little bit close to you and that's okay.

Amy Woods (00:03:57):

So that was one activity that I enjoy quite a bit.

Gus Nolan (00:04:00):

High school, any particular interest in high school? Studies, like reading? you like geography, you like math, you like chemistry anything here?

Amy Woods (00:04:13):

I tended to veer toward the English liberal studies. Liberal arts studies should say, math was not my forte. Science was okay, but I preferred more of the reading in the English classes. And like I said before I got really involved with the extracurricular activities. They did start a brand new class my senior year of high school in advertising. And even though it was last period and most of the students left and they would never take a seventh period class because they wanted to go home early cause you're a senior. I didn't have a car, so I was kind of stuck there anyway, so I took the advertising class, and tried that out my senior year.

Gus Nolan (00:04:53):

Did you like it?

Amy Woods (00:04:54):

Yeah, I don't, looking back now, it didn't give me too much. It was only a little inkling into it. But uh,

Gus Nolan (00:05:00):

What is it in placing ads, how it works? You buying space? What aspects of it?

Amy Woods (00:05:05):

I don't remember the specifics of it. No, there wasn't anything about placing and buying. I think it, I think it was more of the the ads themselves mostly. Yeah, I think more of that if I remember. I, like I said,

Gus Nolan (00:05:21):

I'm talking like I know what I'm talking about, but anyway, it's just, alright, you finished high school then, when do you go to Marist right away?

Amy Woods (00:05:30):

So yeah, pretty much that. So I applied as the traditional student does, you know, their senior year. So I visited four or five colleges. I only applied to two in the end and it was a really tough decision. The decision sat on the kitchen table for weeks and my mother got fed up and said, you need to pick one. And hence it was Marist College. So, I went in, yeah fall after senior year in 93, 1993,

Gus Nolan (00:05:58):

1993. Did you know anybody here?

Amy Woods (00:06:03):

No, nobody from my high school was coming here. I had met someone back home in the Valley who at a party I met that had gone to Marist and he spoke very highly of it. So that helped, you know, to make me feel a little more comfortable. But the brochures at the time, which was, and remember Anne from admissions and Harry Wood, the crew, the crew, Oh my goodness. And she went to Dutchess community college after here. I can't think of her name right now. Her brochures and her, the crew poster and the crew pictures. I didn't even row crew, but I loved the promotional materials that they were putting out at that time.

Gus Nolan (00:06:43):

I see. Well, okay. Harry Woods I remember very well, and so, what was Marist like at that time? Were the dorms up? At least at three, Champanet was up. Oh and Dennis Murray was here by that time. So we're beginning to put up Lowell Thomas

Amy Woods (00:07:06):

So yeah, Lowell Thomas went up at 87. Right, so still fairly new, but it was a, and Dyson was new. Dyson was early nineties. That was up and done when I came here. So what was going on? The big mud pit in the center of campus. I'm surprised we got as many students in 93 that we did. It was a low enrolled class. They went to the wait list. I know this cause I went into admissions afterward, but they went to the waitlist for my class. I'm proud to say I wasn't on the wait list, but they did go. There was a mud pit in the center of campus. It's now the green and the student center. That was being built and it was a disaster. And when we came here as freshmen, we had to walk the long way over to classes. You couldn't walk through the center campus for the whole winter you had to go around. So it was messy but, Marist must've done a really good job on pitching the new building "This is what you guys are going to get in a year, this big beautiful student center."

Gus Nolan (00:08:04):

Yeah. Well yeah. Other things we have wouldn't necessarily appeal to you because you had the water in the Valley already. I mean the Hudson is here but no,

Amy Woods (00:08:14):

No, it was still gorgeous. You know, I think the day I came to tour my parents fell in love with it. Also, my parents liked the distance from home and my dad really liked that there were a lot of good restaurants up here. Cause the other school, we can keep it nameless if you'd like, was only 30 minutes from my house, but of equal caliber of Marist. And um,

Gus Nolan (00:08:38):

Now you can't say that nothing is equal to us now, as you know.

Amy Woods (00:08:41):

No more. They had the major, they had communications, but we were more well known than they were. We the Bob Norman internship program. And what we did with communication was, at least when you look at brochures and at the time it wasn't online college fairs. Marist had a lot more going on with communications program than this other school. And I also got to move further away from home. So those were some of the reasons.

Gus Nolan (00:09:09):

Yeah, well you're only like an hour away now. What was the student population like?

Amy Woods (00:09:19):

Well, my class only had about 850, so a 3000 maybe, right.

Gus Nolan (00:09:27):

This other school of which you speak?

Amy Woods (00:09:27):

A little bit. Not too much larger between four and 5,000. A little bit older, they've been around a little bit longer, but very similar. Had the religious background, but liberal arts school, they were also only about an hour and a half from the city, maybe a little less. But we tended to use the city a little more for the communications program. I think business was their big thing whereas when I was looking at it, they Com was big at the time because Lowell Thomas center had just been built not too long ago. So we had these brand new TV studios and you teaching and so it was just the big thing.

Gus Nolan (00:10:04):

Oh, well you blessed us, you're here.

Amy Woods (00:10:08):

I never use that term, never ever.

Gus Nolan (00:10:11):

Never use that expression. Okay, because your're so smart, that's why. Okay, what about your life on campus? You did reside here because you're an hour and a half from home. Where did you live and what kind of life did you have?

Amy Woods (00:10:28):

Sheahan Hall, first year, so second year the Midrise opened, the paint literally was still wet, the elevator wasn't even working yet and they let us move in. My roommate and I had super duper priority points, so we picked our room off of blueprints. The end of freshman year we picked the top floor corner room overlooking the Hudson river.

Gus Nolan (00:10:52):

Did you charge admission for views from my room?

Amy Woods (00:10:56):

So we were in a suite in the Midrise sophomore year. The two of us stayed roommates all four years. So Marist picked us and put us together, we had never known each other. She's from Springfield, Massachusetts. We stayed together all four years. So the third year we lived in I-1. I-1 are those townhouses right next to the Hancock center. I lived in the very first one on the top of the Hill. The last year I went down the Hill to those lower ones and I lived in J-3, I think it was.

Gus Nolan (00:11:26):

Okay, on campus activities, anything?

Amy Woods (00:11:30):

Yes, lots of clubs and activities.

Gus Nolan (00:11:33):

Lots of clubs, like for instance?

Amy Woods (00:11:35):

So general clubs range from the Italian American society to, I joined them all, the Hispanic club, I think I went to some black student union meetings. I did. I was a DJ with...

Gus Nolan (00:11:46):

A lot. Languages. Do you speak Italian or French or anything? Even though we belong to the Italian club

Amy Woods (00:11:52):

The Spanish I know is from high school and Mo Bibeau but I only took two years of Spanish here, like probably two or maybe three semesters, four semesters. So it wasn't a big thing. I didn't join those clubs, but I did more of the social activities.

Gus Nolan (00:12:12):

How about theater?

Amy Woods (00:12:12):

I didn't do theater. I did radio, I was a disc jockey at the radio station. I co-hosted a show with Kent Rinehart and I co-hosted a show with my roommate and I did that for three full years, I started as a freshman. So as a freshman, when, let's talk before freshman year, I came up for orientation in June and Kent Rinehart was my, one of the orientation leaders. My mother to this day still remembers him. He was hysterical. So when I moved in freshman year, we remembered Kent, you know, we said hi on move in day and ultimately at some point Kent kind of roped me into student government as an unsuspecting freshman. And I was named secretary of student government, which means I had to take minutes at all of the legislator (I can't say that word for completely) and Senate meetings, hours of minutes.

Gus Nolan (00:13:11):

Did you have shorthand ability or?

Amy Woods (00:13:11):

My own version of it, not real shorthand. It was stressful. I remember one or two times going back to my dorm room and crying because I couldn't handle the notes that they wanted and my homework at the same time. But I stayed in student government for another one or two years and I ultimately became a Senator, a resident Senator.

Gus Nolan (00:13:35):

Is Jerry Cox in place at this time?

Amy Woods (00:13:37):

He's here. Yeah, I think he was Dean of student affairs.

Gus Nolan (00:13:39):

Okay. And Harry Woods is, not Harry, Bob Lynch is not in yet?

Amy Woods (00:13:45):

Yeah.

Gus Nolan (00:13:46):

He's in the distance but he's not.

Amy Woods (00:13:46):

So this is in 93/94 he's there in the building. I don't know what his title was. I think he was active college activities. Yeah.

Gus Nolan (00:13:58):

Moving on. And how about the summers? What did you do in the summers while you were in college? Did you ever work?

Amy Woods (00:14:04):

Oh yeah. Yeah. So I first started, well I worked at a pharmacy in Seymour, in high school. So I did that a little bit when I went back home. Then I was temping for a temp agency at random offices. Hated it, hated that. So I decided that I really want to be a waitress. I wanted cash tips, I knew people who were waiting tables and that's cash for a college student in the summer. So there's a huge banquet facility right on Route 34 and you pass it when you're going over the dam. And it's called Villa Bianca B, The Inn at Villa Bianca. There's a lot of weddings there. So I spent a full summer waiting at weddings there.

Gus Nolan (00:14:48):

Weddings every weekend virtually?

Amy Woods (00:14:48):

Oh yeah, Friday, Saturday nights till one o'clock in the morning. Yeah. Big tables. Tables of 10 people serving prime rib. Yeah. So, but you don't get tips doing that. But it got me in the door. A friend got me the job so I could learn how to be a server. So then I decided, well, where's the most popular spot in Connecticut to go to get good tips? Well the Harbor in New Haven, for me anyway, being that was only 20-25 minutes from my house. So I went to the big high scale seafood restaurant on the harbor in New Haven and I applied. They called me back and the woman said, main reason I called you back, she goes, I have a lot of applicants, but you have a Bob Lynch on your resume as a reference. She goes, I know a Bob Lynch. So I thought, Oh, this must be good. She called me back in, because Bob Lynch was on my, she didn't even call Bob Lynch, she just liked his name and knew a Bob Lynch and he got me the job, we'll put it that way. So I waited regular tables where I made my own tips.

Gus Nolan (00:15:44):

It was really our Bob Lynch that she knew?

Amy Woods (00:15:44):

She knew a different Bob Lynch. It was just a funny, she thought it was funny and a random yeah. Similarity.

Gus Nolan (00:15:55):

It's amazing how they pick people, you know how things have happened. So alright, so you're working during the summer I have all these various activities you did. Are you a Senator in and student government?

Amy Woods (00:16:07):

Yeah, I became a resident Senator. I think that was my sophomore year. The biggest thing I did, I will mention, I was an assistant for the hockey, the men's hockey program. That took up the most of my time, my remaining two years.

Gus Nolan (00:16:22):

Where you still ice skating occasionally?

Amy Woods (00:16:22):

No, not really open skating. That was about it. No. What happened was in Sheahan Hall a bunch of the guys down on the second floor, were on the hockey team, so we started going to cheer them on at the

weekend games. Well then the coach started recruiting us to do stats for them. We have five different stat charts and at home, which is the Mid-Hudson Civic Center, we did water bottles, the scoring in the box and the timer and the , the clock. We did all that. So we, my starting sophomore year to junior and senior year, we ran all the home hockey games at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center and we kept stats and we went to Nationals in 95 and went to fundraise and went to Florida with the team.

Gus Nolan (00:17:06):

I didn't know we won that much.

Amy Woods (00:17:06):

And then we did in the nineties, mid nineties yeah. Oh yeah.

Gus Nolan (00:17:11):

It didn't get that publicity that...

Amy Woods (00:17:13):

We did back then. But it's, yeah, it comes and goes. We sold out if it was free, so we can't say sold out, you know what I mean? Pack the civic center every Friday or Saturday night whenever the home game was. It was huge at that time. Yeah. Packed.

Gus Nolan (00:17:30):

When did you graduate? You graduated in 97? Okay. Then after Marist, where did you go?

Amy Woods (00:17:36):

I went home. I applied for jobs all summer. Interviewed all summer. I was looking at anything.

Gus Nolan (00:17:44):

You have a major in Communications?

Amy Woods (00:17:44):

So it's technically radio, TV, film. But I interned in television and decided I didn't like TV news. That was the point. You know, I said WTNH is in New Haven, it's close to home. So the year, the last year I was waitressing, I went down and got myself an internship. It's an ABC affiliate in New Haven, WTNH. So I interned there for the summer and decided, Oh, I don't really like this. Um, but I don't want to commute to the city. That's where the entertainment is and I don't want to move to LA. That's where the entertainment is. So I was like, I don't know if I can really get into TV film. So, I started looking at PR jobs more so, cause I feel the Marist communication degree pretty much prepares you for most communication fields. You don't need specifically to look for a job in radio, TV, film. So I applied, applied, but I also did the admissions internship. I don't know if you remember the program that, it was actually, Dave Flynn started it

Gus Nolan (00:18:40):

Yes, yes you went around to different schools.

Amy Woods (00:18:42):

Dave Flynn started it, and then it went, Jim Daly continued it. Harry Wood, they all continued all the admissions directors.

Gus Nolan (00:18:51):

Who did you say started it?

Amy Woods (00:18:51):

David Flynn, class of 64

Gus Nolan (00:18:54):

We had an article on the front page of the New York times with David and his introduction of that whole program. Yeah, I saw David in Florida about five years ago. He has that article on this.

Amy Woods (00:19:09):

So as you know, that used to take anywhere from two to four seniors train them. You couldn't take classes, you needed enough electives to do this. It's probably safe to say none of us who did the program, Chris DeGiorno was one of them, never went abroad. That's the downside. You're taking a full semester, 15 credits and giving it back to the internship program, but you're given a credit card or rental car and you work full time for Marist College. So my territory was New Jersey, a little bit of Pennsylvania and a little bit of Maryland. So as a college student, 21 years old, Sunday nights I got in a car and I drove. I was in a hotel four nights a week, came back on Friday, gave tours all day Friday and did interviews. We used to do interviews and admissions back then. So we did interviews. There were four of us. And then finish that internship up at Christmas and then went back and worked part time for admissions my last semester, senior year. So that was on my resume. That was my second internship. I had the one at the television station. Then I had admissions, well admissions, that was a full time job and I had made a lot of connections, I'm at college fairs, you know, sitting next to these schools. I got to know them really well. So when I went home that summer, I would apply for some admissions jobs and the University of New Haven had one, which is down the road from me. And Sean Kaylor knew I was looking. He said he would call when something would open up. So I applied at UNH and then Sean called and said, we have an opening at Marist, are you interested? And I said, huh, let me call you back. Now. I'm going to play the salary game. Who's offering me more? So I called UNH and I said, listen, I applied, I haven't heard from you. They said Oh, they recognized who I was cause I knew one of their counselors. And they said, well do you want to come in? I said, well first of all, what are you offering? What's your salary? And it was a little bit more than what Marist was offering, but then again, cost of living is a little more down in New Haven, it was at the time. But I thought about it more. I got to move up here and get my own apartment. My boyfriend at the time was up here, you know, as opposed to staying home in New Haven area. So I just, something made me choose Marist. So I took Sean's offer and came up here four months after I graduated. I started October 8th of 1997.

Gus Nolan (00:21:25):

Okay. Very interesting. And that's the beginning of the story.

Amy Woods (00:21:30):

I've been here ever since. Yeah. I've only had a four month break from Marist since 1993.

Gus Nolan (00:21:38):

Alright. So that's a, I have a whole thing about it and what other various jobs you have. And then I finally said, well, you did come to Marist and so you've been here. Now let's just focus on, on the Marist story. You come here to work in admissions and that's to deal with bringing student in, and you're going out on the road as well. And going to high school affairs or whatever. So you see how that operates. You're a small crew of four doing this?

Amy Woods (00:22:13):

That was when I was an intern, and then when I was full time staff, the entire department, Harry Wood was there when I first got there. But he retired shortly thereafter. Sean was given that position, so he was promoted to vice president and ultimately promoted Jay Murray to director. Do you remember Jay? So Jay's a 91 grad and he was senior assistant director. They promoted him to director. So those were my two supervisors, Sean and Jay. And there were, yeah, I want to say four of us counselors, maybe three or four of us counselors. Jeff Shantz was the transfer admission director. Kent was around for a little while until he went back to Boston. Kent was a counselor, Kent was a counselor when I was an intern. He's the one who made me do the internship. He's been pushing me to do stuff since I was a freshman.

Gus Nolan (00:23:05):

Spell his name.

Amy Woods (00:23:05):

Which one? Kent Rinehart. K. E. N. T. R. I. N. E. H. A. R. T. He's a double grad. He's got, well, he's got two bachelor's degrees from Marist from 94/95 ish. And then he's got a master's too.

Gus Nolan (00:23:21):

Okay. That's a master's is in computer science. What did he master in?

Amy Woods (00:23:28):

He was business and psych. I think it was business and psych for the bachelor's and he has an MBA from Marist. Yeah. And he's currently the XE, uh, the Dean right of enrollment is official title because Sean is the vice president for enrollment management. Kent's the Dean of undergraduate admission. Currently.

Gus Nolan (00:23:54):

It used to be simple when Harry Wood was there. And before that, you know, I mean, it was Tom Wade used to be in that office

Amy Woods (00:24:06):

Harry's, Harry's wife, Margie used to come in and she was, I don't know if it was her profession or just something she was very good at, but every year she'd come in and train the interns on how to do public presentations. We'd have to stand at the front of the room and she, you know, train us. And that was Margie Wood.

Gus Nolan (00:24:25):

Very good, so you got all this activity and this now, what, where will your head? You go on the road pretty much, don't you?

Amy Woods (00:24:35):

Currently? I unfortunately have more administrative duties than I'd like where I tend to not make a lot of personal visits, but I hold a lot of events. So my travel is mostly event based because we do about a hundred events a year around the country. Our staff,

Gus Nolan (00:24:53):

All right, that's

Amy Woods (00:24:56):

I mean those not like a lot, but it's a small office, you know, and it's all of college advancement.

Gus Nolan (00:25:01):

That's 2 a week, I mean roughly speaking.

Amy Woods (00:25:01):

So it's pretty, yeah, right. But a lot of times you get clumped into more than two weeks and yeah.

Gus Nolan (00:25:08):

Okay. And what does that involve?

Amy Woods (00:25:11):

Types of events, you mean?

Gus Nolan (00:25:12):

Well typical of those 2 a week, when you have to go to where it's going to be.

Amy Woods (00:25:17):

We, we, we try to spread it out where sometimes I would have to go myself to more than one. But otherwise you try to, our team college advancement, we try to split it up.

Gus Nolan (00:25:27):

How big is the college advancement team?

Amy Woods (00:25:27):

Oh, now we're pushing 20, maybe pushing 25, but that's new because Chris added some new staff.

Gus Nolan (00:25:38):

Where do they all live?

Amy Woods (00:25:38):

We've got most are down on our floor, but there's that whole, where MIPO used to be, you know, up on the first floor that where HRVI is, we have the left side of that office and that's annual giving and fundraising.

Gus Nolan (00:25:51):

Oh yeah, okay, I'll continue. I mean, I'm not thinking the same way when I'm thinking more alumni than advancement.

Amy Woods (00:25:57):

Okay. So alumni relations is me. I'm the executive director. I now have, which is new, two assistant directors, Donna and a new staff, Amanda, who's also a graduate. I have a clerical assistant, Debbie Gander. And that's all we have for alum.

Gus Nolan (00:26:14):

She's the receptionist.

Amy Woods (00:26:15):

Yes, exactly. That's it for alumni relations. That's more than we've ever had at the college. I also oversee the college special events. So the director of special events, which was Valerie Hall, is now Jamie Bauer. And they report to me, she reports to me. So I oversee that as well. So special events and alumni events and donor events, all are what I'm speaking about.

Gus Nolan (00:26:38):

Right. Valarie Hall has gone to

Amy Woods (00:26:38):

Donor relations. So she's with Marilyn Brandel now.

Gus Nolan (00:26:44):

Oh, so she goes to Chris directly or,

Amy Woods (00:26:49):

Which one? Valerie. Valerie goes to Marilyn. Brandel, Marilyn goes to Chris.

Gus Nolan (00:26:56):

Didn't she retire? Who retired?

Amy Woods (00:26:57):

She's trying to, we can't replace her. She at least is part time now. One o'clock. She's gone. She's out. I know she, she wants to, we just won't let her leave.

Gus Nolan (00:27:13):

I interviewed her because she was retiring, but I didn't know. She's still here. I mean, I don't know.

Amy Woods (00:27:17):

Isn't that the way at Marist?

Gus Nolan (00:27:19):

I don't go down that hallway as far as... Tell me this. We have something like 44,000 alumni, why would you say as a percentage are active? That we are in contact with? We said we sent, we sent all nine news to 44,000. I guess

Amy Woods (00:27:45):

We try. No, we have a pretty good database. We have some very good staff who are good at researching. So out of our, it's about 43,000 and change alumni in the database. There are less than 2000 bad mailing addresses. It's about 16 or 1700 bad mailing addresses that gets sent back to us. The rest are all valid mailing addresses. Granted, for some of the young alums, it's probably still their parents' address. That's the billing address, so until they change it, we'll continue to use that. So that's very good. I know from bench marking other institutions, email addresses, we typically have around 70, 75% of our alum's email addresses. They just change frequently. It's hard to keep up. So some of those will bounce back till we get the new one. We also have you as you know, have Marist.edu email addresses and until the young alums change them over, we'll keep emailing that address. So sometimes they get a little stagnant and they don't check them anymore. So until they give us their Hotmail or their Gmail, we keep using it.

Gus Nolan (00:28:51):

How do you keep up with deceased members that is to say knowing that a person is deceased. Did the family send a notice to the college or do you

Amy Woods (00:29:01):

All different ways. Yes. Family, friends. I'll give you an example of this week. One of my former classmates, he was a little bit older than me, but I was good friends with him, passed away. But late at night on my cell phone I received a private Facebook message from a fellow friend who said, just want to let you know, Hector passed away. And so I received it that way. We will never Mark them in our database as deceased until an official obituary is released and we see it. We will not take someone's word for it. So we're right now waiting for that obituary to be released. In the meantime, I've already started an email to go out to the classmates to let them know cause the visitation is this weekend.

Gus Nolan (00:29:41):

Go back to that number, is that number live 43,000?

New Speaker (00:29:45):

No

Gus Nolan (00:29:48):

I mean how many,

Amy Woods (00:29:50):

Oh, I haven't, hold on, it's on my desk on a sheet of paper.

Gus Nolan (00:29:56):

Just a rough ballpark.

Amy Woods (00:30:00):

Well, I'll tell you before the end of the interview.

Gus Nolan (00:30:05):

It will come back to you.

Amy Woods (00:30:05):

No, I'll text somebody.

Gus Nolan (00:30:06):

Oh, that's alright just yeah, we might as well be accurate. We haven't, we're so careful

Amy Woods (00:30:14):

Well it'll be inaccurate, you know, in a couple of months. As soon as...

Gus Nolan (00:30:18):

Two more pass away.

Amy Woods (00:30:21):

I'll let you know in a minute. We can continue.

Gus Nolan (00:30:33):

We interrupt this program because we're going for a data research.

Amy Woods (00:30:38):

I have it, I have it available at all times, but we can continue.

Gus Nolan (00:30:50):

Where we have been just talking about is one of the next things, changes at Marist. From your perspective of the last 20, 25 years, whatever it is, roughly speaking, your first coming here and today, this place is, has gone over a major change I would say. I mean, I, when I came it was a farm. Now it wasn't a farm when you came, but what strikes you as, as the most dramatic changes here? I mean, I say the campus, you might say the whole development of the education program, the programs, the faculty, the student body, diversity numbers.

Amy Woods (00:31:39):

I mean it's kind of a tie between the physical changes in the college as well as the prestige of the college and the how far we've come. Yes, academically and what we're producing. The people we're you know, putting out there after graduation. My perspective, I don't know if faculty has changed on, I don't know. You know, you know, I just know the ones I know.

Gus Nolan (00:32:07):

What about students? You don't have direct contact with too many of the students.

Amy Woods (00:32:13):

Exactly. Correct.

Gus Nolan (00:32:14):

But you do have a lot of contact with alumni, who were students two years ago. Has there been a major change in their attitude towards the college from your day?

Amy Woods (00:32:30):

They all, the majority still tend to love Marist. I am, I've also noticed with peer institutions we tend to have more of that than others. The majority loved their experience and love Marist and made really good friendships there. It's a very small percentage that say, don't call me, don't contact me, I want, no, that's a very small percentage with Marist. Someone recently from outside the school commented that, I forget if it was to me directly or to another Marist person, people I know that went to Marist, they have some really close relationships with their former classmates, they go on vacation together, they're in each other's weddings and it's more so than some of our peer institutions. I think it has to do with, the culture on campus. I think our housing, I think, the fact that, it's just the way we arrange our housing and the way people are living in these townhouses in the dorms and how they move each year to a new area, but together. They don't really, my friends like went to UCONN, you could live in the same dorm all four years. So you can be mixed with anybody who's in, at least with Marist, you have, there's a way you know, to it, where, yeah, and you're choosing who you want to live with and who you don't want to live with. I can't answer why there are such close relationships, but there are, but we see it because of all these people submitting news for the magazine. You know, the magazine that Leslie's producing all these pictures of weddings. I know some of the other schools have them too, but there's so many where the wedding party is all Marist graduates or I think they're going on vacation to other countries with people they went to Marist with back in the seventies. There's just some really close relationships. So I see that with the alums who are graduating. Unfortunately these younger grads are graduating with very heavy loans. So that's a little tricky where they're afraid to be contacted by our office. Now, I'm not a direct fundraiser. My job is to keep the line of communication open. And so when annual giving or development officer comes, there'll be more apt to give. So I need to engage them. So they want to give, but they're scared. They hear alumni office, they automatically assume donation, donation. So it's a hard barrier to break. So this is why we're very event oriented. We like to throw fun events and networking events and social events. So we give them a different experience.

Gus Nolan (00:34:53):

I talked to a alumni the other day, Bill Carroll, you might know he's a, he's a sixties graduate. But there's about four guys from the sixties who still meet twice a year. They come from Florida, Massachusetts, there was a time when Massachusetts was a far, far off, New York City was about as far as we went and maybe the Islands, which is Long Island. Okay. So, that part of it, the other part about the Marist growth and development, there are a lot of things, I mean the Hudson for one thing, the beauty of the campus is a second. Okay. There is a certain acknowledgement of the academic program, it's not easy to get in here. I keep saying I could not only not teach here, I couldn't even get in, because you know, allegedly, there is this, you have to have it to make it. The other part I think has changed is the financial part. A lot more students here come from families that seem to be more, better off than, than early years. I think I saw a figure like 7% of the freshman class are in the 1%, you know, the parents are well to do. Well, that has changed the character in a way. But another way I'm talking, you should be talking. But the bonding part of it, they come to the football games, they go to the basketball games, they do these, and they

have to, because the dining room provides, they don't have but they provide a way they meet their friends and make up their programs. All right. All of that said. What are some of your biggest disappointments in your role here at Marist?

Amy Woods (00:36:49):

So as a staff member,

Gus Nolan (00:36:51):

What did not happen that you wanted to happen? Certainly there's something that didn't, you didn't get a new computer when you wanted it. Did you want a bus for your activities?

Amy Woods (00:37:07):

No, we've been lucky where, you know, I'm within college advancement, so of course I have a budget line that's just for alumni relations, but I got to say, I don't worry too, too, too much about it, especially toward the end of the year because I know Chris DelGiorno and previous to that Bob West, previous to that Shailene would help find funds if I needed to do something at the end of the year. I've had supportive supervisors where, and typically the event we're trying to do is worthwhile that they've helped me to find the funds. And Dennis Murray in the end would have, you know, helped to find the funds. I haven't had to go into it with David Yellin yet, so I don't know. But, so that hasn't been an issue where if I want to do something, I will say for a while there, it was frustrating for us not to have certain technology such as how to email all of these alumni. I was using the Lotus note system to email at the time, 30,000 alumni. It was awful. But that took time. That's the disappointment at Marist, some things move like molasses, getting things passed. So we did ultimately purchase a product, which is now our current website, event registration and email. So I have all that in one. It's a very hefty investment that IT helped us with and shared with us. So that was very, very, very nice. So we continued that. We're on our second contract with that company. And that was a lot to get past because, at Marist we like to hold things internally technologically. Right. Athletics goes external and I think MIPO went external with their web, so it took a lot for them to let us do that as well. But we needed to because we're trying to raise money and we've got tech savvy alums out there and we're on an old homegrown system that doesn't offer anything. It's just not helpful. So that turned out for the better.

Gus Nolan (00:39:01):

Yeah, but it was a difficult time

Amy Woods (00:39:05):

Getting to that point, years of getting that

Gus Nolan (00:39:07):

Until the bird took place. I mean, it was. All right. What is the happiest part of it? What are your greatest achievements, if you can be so humble as to tell me, increasing your staff, getting breakthroughs into places where we weren't before?

Amy Woods (00:39:30):

We're doing a little more of that now because of the staff. So that goes together, what you just mentioned. Yes. This is a huge accomplishment to have two assistant directors. You know, when I first

came to the office, it was just the director, just my position. So I had to go to all the events and be everywhere. So the fact that we now have two new people we can break into, as Chris would call it, a tertiary market, so Texas for example, we have 500 alumni in the state of Texas. So Donna researched, reached out to people and scheduled a 10 day trip and went to three cities, Houston, Dallas and Austin, and held events in all three cities for parents of current students and alumni this past spring. And since then, we've received gifts, monetary gifts from some of those alumni. So that is a perfect example of a breakthrough that we haven't had.

Gus Nolan (00:40:18):

How about Claifornia?

Amy Woods (00:40:18):

So California is actually been easy for us because Dennis Murray was from California, so he was at all after we jumped on a plane every summer with him and we started that back in the mid two thousands and we would do new student welcome receptions because we started recruiting students out there early and now Corinne lives there full time. So we've been doing it every year, both in Southern and Northern California. So we have an alumnus, Dan Mahoney from the class of 69 who lives in Palo Alto. He hosts, at his house a new student welcome reception. And then we also do now in the LA area. So that's an easy one. But we'd love to break into, more so in Arizona and um, back into Colorado. They used to do it a few years back. And we need to do more in the Pennsylvania, Philly area. We haven't been, even though it's not that far away, we haven't been doing much down there either. Can I mention another best part? So, the college student affairs had been doing a veterans day luncheon previously and it basically was an on campus events only on campus. People heard about it and knew about it, they got a speaker, it was cold sub sandwiches type of thing. So one year I went over because an alum was speaking, so I got my first taste of it. So then, I kind of stuck my foot in it and got involved and offered to try to help get a speaker for the next year. And then I just kinda took it all over and worked with Deb DiCaprio on it, but I plan it. So it's become one of my favorite events, the veteran's day celebration. So now we do a full out luncheon free. We advertise it to all alumni, all parents, all students, all faculty, staff.

Gus Nolan (00:42:08):

And it's held where?

Amy Woods (00:42:08):

It's held in the student center, we open up all the students center rooms so we can fit everybody and get about a hundred people, every year. So it involves, the guest speaker, the ROTC cadets. So we start outside of the flag pole, so the class of 1968, sponsored that flag pole.

Gus Nolan (00:42:27):

There's a stone there.

Amy Woods (00:42:27):

Well that's different. That first there was the flag pole from the class 68. Then Paul Rinn, who was president of the alumni association for years back decided we needed a veterans Memorial on campus. And he and I worked together and we had to work with the Board of Trustees, because to get things put on this campus is not easy, especially something that's permanent, to get a veterans Memorial. So, Paul

traveled around the country during his speaking engagements, took pictures and researched what this should look like. And we got it passed by the physical plant and or the the committee of the Board of Trustees for the physical plant, buildings and grounds I think is what they typically call it. And the board, our board, the alumni board passed the writing, what we were putting on it, and we got installed in 2015 in front of the flag pole, in front of Donnelly Hall. So now we start every Veterans Day over there. We do the Pledge of Allegiance, if the singers can come, we do God Bless America, we did, we induct, we memorialized that monument that one year, but we'll start outside. Then we go in for the luncheon and we have a guest speaker every year who typically is a graduate who's a veteran. But it could be faculty, staff, could be student. Yeah. So that's, it's 100 people and it's just, that's a feel good event that will get attendees who won't go to anything else. So Mr. Spinella was in 1970 or 71 graduate of Marist, he's a World War II veteran. He went as an adult to Marist, afterward, he is about 90, 91 years old. He's not going to come to any of the other events that we do. He's not going to come to a net-workworking reception in New York City, he's not going to even come to a basketball game.

Gus Nolan (00:44:04):

Where does he live?

Amy Woods (00:44:04):

He comes. He lives across the river somewhere. He comes, he brought his grandchildren, he brought his wife, he brought his whole family for this luncheon and he was the oldest veteran in attendance. So he was invited up to cut the cake with the sword. The tradition is the youngest military member, the oldest veteran and the guest of honor, which is our speaker cut together with the military sword, the cake. And so he did that and we have a picture and he was just thrilled. To do that, and he wanted that picture afterward. So it's something, you know, that would never happen without that.

Gus Nolan (00:44:41):

It's not really a money maker.

Amy Woods (00:44:41):

Oh no, and there's no intention for it to be.

Gus Nolan (00:44:42):

No, no it's just a good PR element of, it's patriotic, it's recognizing service, you know, and it's, I mean, I'm telling you what you already know too well. Yeah. But hearing I, I knew of it. I never attended it. I'm not a veteran.

Amy Woods (00:44:59):

You don't have to be though, if you just want to go one year to hear the guest speaker, you know, and to see all the fun things.

Gus Nolan (00:45:07):

I don't have that many years left, but I will try to get there. Yeah. Alright. One last positive before I have to tell you it's over. Oh we have five minutes for sure. And then what here's the next swing. Looking at the crystal ball, where do you see us 10 years from now, 20 years from now? Are we here? I mean, will campus will it be a campus, will it be undergraduate or you know?

Amy Woods (00:45:41):

Well based on the way things are going now I foresee, you know, more graduate programs. I think the college is being very smart and deliberate about what they add to their programming. You know? Well exactly. No, no law school. But yes, medical school, they did their research, they could see what the, what the wave of the future is going to bring. It'd be interesting to see it from an admissions perspective, the competitiveness, you know, how are they going to maintain? There are less I believe population that will be going to college soon cause they're already seeing it in the elementary schools. They're already seeing the populations go down in the schools. People are having children much later and I think they're not having as many children, from what i understand. So we're going to see it in the colleges. So we have to be careful because you know, we just not have such a large pool to choose from in the coming near future. But, so that could be a little tricky. I know in college advancement, our problem is, we're graduating more than we were before. We're graduating 1500 a year now. Part of it is these new grad programs. Right. But not all the undergrad classes larger than it was. It used to be about 900. Right. For a big decade there. Then it jumped to a thousand. It's 1100. It's about 1200 right now undergraduates. And those are the ones with the college loans that are, you know, just starting out. But it is a huge chunk of the alumni population from the two thousands and above is 40, 45% of the alumni population, almost half. Those are young grads. It's very hard to engage them and solicit them. It's hard, they're not super philanthropic. It's, they see the college as wealthy. Look what we just built, you don't need my money, you just built the largest capital project ever at the college, the old Gartland Commons, the new housing, you really don't need my \$10 or my \$20. Well, yes we do, they don't realize that their participation in general, no matter what the dollar amount is going to help because organizations like US News and World Report, they're gonna use that as the ranking and they don't see that. So it's tricky. We have, we have a large population of young alums that we have to educate.

Gus Nolan (00:48:04):

How do we address the program then? You see my conflict is the campus is such a nice place and a lot of people, I mean, I've talked to Eileen, who is the president's secretary, and she talks about parents wanting their daughters particularly to live on campus, you know? And so we've had the problems before, where we'd have no room and a woman saying, you know well I'm going to call the president every day. I told you. And she says, you can and when you do, you'll get me, and she says there was no room for Jesus in the Inn and there's no room for your daughter in the campus now, but when there is room, we'll let her in. You know, that's the way it is now. But as you have indicated, the population is going down.

Amy Woods (00:48:56):

I think. Yes.

Gus Nolan (00:48:58):

But it's, I mean, they'll always be a population of youngsters out there who will be teenagers. And there's one thing about parents, they like to get them out of the house by the time they're 16 or 17, because they know all the answers, you know? And when they're 21, they're surprised how much the parents have learned in four years when they come home. You know, it's just, again, you know, I think the college will be that kind of thing if the people are there. Yeah. How about online learning though?

Amy Woods (00:49:36):

Has it really, I don't know. Have numbers grown in recent years with our online learning? Has enrollment for online classes?

Gus Nolan (00:49:48):

I have no idea. How about summer programs, are there summer programs on campus? or is that all online?

Amy Woods (00:49:49):

I don't think any more than we've had the past couple years. I do know that the online learning and that the classes that are outside of the regular schedule are very beneficial to our nontraditional students such as the adult learners. And I think that's also income for the college. You know, two of my staff in my office graduated in 2015 at 30 years old, 35 years old. They, one of them, it took her over 15 years to complete her degree because she worked full time at Marist. So the online classes were extremely helpful, they both said also they were nervous about doing the online classes. They didn't think they could learn that way, that it would not go well. And after the first one, granted it depends on the professor. They both said that, they loved it after that. So it helped them to achieve their degree. I think for folks in the Hudson Valley, if you're online, you don't have to be in the Hudson Valley, I think our completion programs are fabulous and a lot of people should consider them. For those who only have the associates or you know, dropped out of college and didn't finish, that they should seriously look into the completion programs at Marist, to get their degree. We have two in our office that are perfect examples of it.

Gus Nolan (00:51:11):

The, they have to be in the Hudson Valley to participate?

Amy Woods (00:51:15):

Only if it's on site. That's why I mentioned they can do the online from anywhere. Yeah. These two were local. They worked here. So yeah. So it worked out for them. But you could do it online.

Gus Nolan (00:51:32):

You're getting the numbers.

Amy Woods (00:51:33):

Yeah, she's out today, so I'm going to try another person. I just gotta tell her where it is. We'll see what she says. So what, so what do you see then?

Gus Nolan (00:52:05):

In terms of ?

Amy Woods (00:52:05):

You're saying 25 years?

Gus Nolan (00:52:07):

Oh I see, I think the medical school will come, you know, but I'm not sure where. I mean, Marist would fund it, will it be in Esopus, where will we put the building, you know, we have, maybe in Florence, Italy?

I mean we have three campuses, I only went to two of them, you know, but there's, there's a lot of room. Our medical school has to be associated with the college. It just can't be. So, and I understand that a Health Quest is interested in our facility, at least that's the talk. I've not attended any where that was actually discussed, but the loose word is in that category. It's one of the nice things to come here, but back to where we are now, would you say from my experience as you can go into almost any Marist office and there's a certain spirit of core that exists. I mean, I go over to, registration and I know some of the people in the registrar's office, you know, and there's a certain spirit there. I go to yours, and you know there is sometimes business but I don't have to have a lot of business to get into talk to Valerie, or talk to you, or talk to a Chris, you know. So I mean what you're feeling?

Amy Woods (00:53:39):

Marist spirit? Well I can't really compare cause I've been here for 20, going on 21 years now working.

Gus Nolan (00:53:49):

Across the campus, if you go to the athletic office, these are the same, or no, it's more serious over there?

Amy Woods (00:53:57):

No that, that's hard to compare cause you're talking a lot of part time coaches but you know, dealing with Tim Murray, his assistant, all fabulous. We work very well with them. I give a lot of credit to our housing staff. I mean those people and that's their longterm. Sarah English been here a long time for that poor woman, what she must go through with trying to place those students in housing, the mothers that she called her and the nights and the weekends. Those RAs and RDS are here living here, dealing with everyday. I give them a lot of credit.

Gus Nolan (00:54:27):

Bob Lynch lives here I think.

Amy Woods (00:54:27):

Well that man, woof. Yeah. Yeah. He's, yeah. Unbelievable. And then the financial aid area nowadays, that's gotta be very tough with the calls they're getting. You know, admissions is a, that's a pleasurable job that's you're selling the school. So, and it's easy right now to do that. It's been easy since the nineties, since I started, I knock on wood for all of them. It was an easy sell getting into the early two thousands, and I would think now, especially for starting medical school, it's a pleasure for them to go on the road and market the school. So those folks are phenomenal. I love the admission staff too. So that's a definite spirit right there. What would they just did with the conference two weeks ago, they brought 1700 people to this campus. Yeah. Never done before two organizations. I used to go to those conferences myself. Look at Sean Kaylor, I mean, look at him. He's still here.

Gus Nolan (00:55:21):

Yeah. Well he's one of our own, so let's face it, you know, we grow them, right.

Amy Woods (00:55:26):

Product of Harry Wood.

Gus Nolan (00:55:26):

Who would have supervised, the tent organization is that, you know, putting up those things, is that Sean's staff or is there an outside consultant?

Amy Woods (00:55:38):

They, it was a big team, but you have to work with the physical plant and grounds at Marist college. Did you see they took down lampposts in order to put those tents over the sidewalk, they removed Marist college lampposts and then there's an inspector because I have to deal with him whenever I put tents up, a Town of Poughkeepsie inspector has to come and approve your tent. If it's more than 20 feet. There must be fire extinguishers, No Smoking signs, EXIT signs, everything. There's a process. Yeah. We only use three different 10 companies typically on this campus, two are local and one is Durant's, which is more regional. But it's a process. Yeah. But so Deb says she thinks it's 1,331 deceased. That seems small to me, but sometimes we don't know it all either. You know, someone has to tell us.

Gus Nolan (00:56:33):

I mean, there were 12 in my class 6 of them are dead, you know, so, you know what I mean? Now you have 1400 graduating, you know, and so 20 years from now it will be a different story. Yeah. Little follow up, just talking loosely, do you have after the graduation day situation, sometimes it doesn't go well, sometimes the weather is not cooperative. Do you see a way out of this? Civic center or some other place?

Amy Woods (00:57:09):

Well, the Civic Center is no larger than the McCann center. Correct. That's why we don't go there. They're about the same size for seating. There's no larger facility, in the entire Dutchess County than the McCann recreation center.

Gus Nolan (00:57:23):

Oh that's good news. Not good news. That explains why we didn't go sooner.

Amy Woods (00:57:28):

The two options are to tent the entire campus green, which can be done for a large sum of money and they've had someone come and look and propose tenting for the entire campus green. That doesn't help in a tornado or lightening situation though, cause you're still outdoors. The second option is to go in the gym, but with multiple ceremonies. That was the backup plan. But in the end there was no thunder and lightning, it was just rain. They decided we're going to have, we're doing one. That's what the college overall decided, higher ups were just doing one ceremony, it's outside. We don't want, going inside is a lot of logistics and making people unhappy there too. We can never make them all happy but trying to do one ceremony and then clean out the gym completely and clean out the parking lot completely to get another whole group in. Yeah. It's not going to go smooth as people think, I don't get to make that decision. I mean I'm, I help on the overall commencement committee because we do the special reserve seating for alumni. So we kind of are aware of what goes on, but in the end they decided this year they were going outside, rain or shine. And I have to say, a lot of people don't realize this, the student body president is asked, what do the students want to do? And nine times out of 10, they say, we all want to be together at one ceremony, so it has to be outside, but just make it quick. They want everything shortened and that that doesn't happen. I will give the students that, the administration here does not alter their speeches. I believe the valedictorian is owed her time and she did fabulous Sierra. She was

only five minutes. She was awesome. Those other people and Schumer did awesome, tore up his speech and said, congratulations. He's done that before. But the others, I'm sorry, there was no need when I was looking out at those cold, soaking wet people, pouring, while these people are sitting on stage under a tent speaking mean, come on. Because the commencement committee will hear about it for the next couple months, angry letters. Right. Our office will hear about it for the rest of their lives, because 2002 yeah, it snowed. They try to put them in the gym. It didn't work out so well, we still, they are still angry. They will not come to their reunion, they will not give to the college and they will still talk on Facebook about how horrible Marist did. That was 2002. That's a long time ago. So

Gus Nolan (00:59:52):

It snowed though, but I mean, that was terrible. That's what led me to this question. Okay. Is there anything you would like to say to end this great interchange that we have interview, because this is going to be recorded for all time at this machine, you see.

Amy Woods (01:00:13):

Good thing it's just voice, no video. We owe you, so much for doing this, Gus. I mean, without you, we wouldn't have this forever and ever, so thank you for doing this. That list of people that you showed me earlier is pretty phenomenal. I think I know 99% of those names. So we owe you.

Gus Nolan (01:00:37):

There's about 10% of them who have passed on so we can't. Yeah. Well thank you very much.