

**Sean Kaylor**

Marist College  
Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by William Dougherty  
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

**Interviewee:** Sean Kaylor

**Interviewer:** Gus Nolan

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**Summary:** Sean Kayor talks about why choose Marist and how his time here shaped his career as the head of Admissions. Kaylor talks extensively about the evolution of where Marist recruits its student body from and how many students it takes in a year. Kaylor's long career at Marist allows him to have an excellent perspective on where the college is going and where it has come from.

Gus Nolan (00:00):

Today is Wednesday, August 2nd, and we're doing an interview for the Marist College Archives. And we have the great happiness, having with us. Sean Kaylor, who is the Vice President and Director of College admissions. Sean is a longtime Marist in many ways, as you'll hear. Hi, Sean, how are you?

Sean Kaylor (00:20):

I'm well. How are you?

Gus Nolan (00:22):

Good. Sean, in a few sentences, could you just give us an overview of your early years, where you brought up to grammar school and neighborhood and family?

Sean Kaylor (00:34):

Sure. I was born in New Milford, Connecticut, and lived in Washington, Connecticut for, I guess until I was in fifth grade. And then my parents moved to Mystic Connecticut, and that's where I went to middle school and high school. I went to St. Bernard's High School in Montville, Connecticut, probably at this point, most well-known for the casino that's , in that neck of the woods. But it was a great place to grow up. And I started searching for colleges and narrowed it down to a handful.

Gus Nolan (01:10):

Okay. Back up, all you went to high school in St. Bernard? Bernard's?

Sean Kaylor (01:14):

St. Bernard High School.

Gus Nolan (01:15):

They had a high school there too. Okay. Yes. Was it big, small, middle?

Sean Kaylor (01:19):

About 1500 students. Okay.

Gus Nolan (01:20):

That's a good size. More than standard. St. Ann's were always familiar with, 1200 was kind of it. In high school, did you do any activities? Did you play sports? Did you do anything?

Sean Kaylor (01:32):

I did. I played football for a couple years until I hurt. I got hurt and I couldn't play anymore. Then I did track, I did the pole vault.

Gus Nolan (01:40):

Oh.

Sean Kaylor (01:41):

And I was also treasurer of my senior class.

Gus Nolan (01:46):

Okay. Family members. Are you, siblings?

Sean Kaylor (01:50):

I have, well, it was my parents and one sibling. Okay. Her name is Eileen, and she is a Marist alum as well.

Gus Nolan (01:57):

Oh, okay. Fine. Okay, moving on. Let's talk about colleges. You said you were looking for some colleges. How did you find Marist?

Sean Kaylor (02:08):

As part of the college search, really? Excuse me. I started out looking at quite a few Yeah. And narrowed it down to a list of about four or five. And in the end it was between Marist and La Salle and St. Joe's University, down in Philly, yeah, and UCONN, of course, that was in state for me, more affordable for my parents and Marist. And when I came to open house for accepted students and saw the beautiful campus, that's when I decided this was the place for me.

Gus Nolan (02:44):

Give me a year. When was that?

Sean Kaylor (02:45):

So that would be the spring of 1986?

Gus Nolan (02:49):

86? Correct. Oh, okay. And you say beautiful campus, but, it was not anything like it is today, Lowell Thomas was up, I suppose.

Sean Kaylor (03:01):

Lowell Thomas was just being built, finished. No, you're right. It certainly was not the campus it is today. Yeah. But it still had the beautiful, the Hudson, you know, Hudson River was there. And the campus itself was beautiful. And, and to be honest, the people were extremely friendly. It just had a nice feel to it. That's something that hasn't, that hasn't changed over the years, even though the physical plan has, has gotten much better.

Gus Nolan (03:27):

Okay. And then you must have lived on campus, I suppose?

Sean Kaylor (03:31):

Yeah. So I decided to come here, and then the fall of 1986, I moved in. I lived in Leo Hall on the fifth floor. I think it was Room 520. I'm not exactly sure. laugh. Every move in day, I go up there to see who's living in my old room.

Gus Nolan (03:49):

I See. Yeah.

Sean Kaylor (03:50):

Which is fun. But yeah, Leo Hall freshman year. And then, I was undecided in terms of a major, but I was leaning toward computer science or business or psychology. So, I dabbled a little bit in each and, ultimately chose business.

Gus Nolan (04:08):

You did.

Sean Kaylor (04:09):

And minored in psychology. And then, you know, sophomore year, I then...

Gus Nolan (04:15):

Who was on the business faculty, there was Jack Kelly here?

Sean Kaylor (04:17):

Jack Kelly was the Dean. Correct. And, is May Force. She has a, a new last name at this point. But she was my advisor. She was fantastic. And actually, she's the reason, why I got into admissions.

Gus Nolan (04:34):

I want to get to that in a second. At Marist though, did you participate in activities and what were they?

Sean Kaylor (04:41):

I did. So and, just to revisit the housing thing again, sophomore year I lived in Champagnat on the eighth floor. And then my last two years were spent in the town, the Foy townhouses.

Gus Nolan (04:53):

Oh they were up then?

Sean Kaylor (04:54):

A1 and A5.

Gus Nolan (04:55):

I see.

Sean Kaylor (04:56):

But yes, I did, I was pretty active on campus. I was a member of the crew team for four years, and I was captain my last, my junior and senior year. Yep. So that kept me pretty busy.

Gus Nolan (05:09):

Did you start crew here or did you have crew back in high school?

Sean Kaylor (05:12):

They didn't have it at my high school, but I did row over the summer a little bit before I came here.

Gus Nolan (05:18):

I see.

Sean Kaylor (05:19):

And I liked it. And then I met the coach when I showed up here and I got hooked, so.

Gus Nolan (05:25):

Yeah, yeah. It, I admire people who do that because there's real discipline. I mean, between the road work in the morning and the rowing and I read that the open boat or whatever it was, the boys in the boat, you know?

Sean Kaylor (05:39):

Yes. Yeah. That's a lot history there. Yeah. No, it was, it was great. It kept me physically fit and mentally sharp, but it also gave me structure.

Gus Nolan (05:49):

I see. Yeah.

Sean Kaylor (05:50):

To make sure I was managing my time appropriately. So, it all, it worked out well. Yeah.

Gus Nolan (05:56):

Were you a B+ student? A student? Or I'm C+, as you know.

Sean Kaylor (06:03):

At Marist. Yeah. I was like a B minus. I wasn't setting the world on the academic world on fire.

Gus Nolan (06:09):

Okay. Yeah. No, there would be time for that laugh. Yeah, there's another aspect, or somewhere I saw that you became an intern in admissions. Is that true?

Sean Kaylor (06:20):

It is not actually. I, although we had a very robust admission intern experience here for many years, started by Dave Flynn. I did not participate in that, only because I was so involved in the crew team. And I was captain, so I just didn't have time to do anything else.

Gus Nolan (06:39):

To go on the road and do all that other stuff.

Sean Kaylor (06:41):

But it was funny how I ended up in this career,

Gus Nolan (06:44):

Go back into this year. Yeah. You mentioned Dave Flynn. I met him in Florida at, he lives in the, where everybody lives, the,

Sean Kaylor (06:57):

Northern Florida, right? Yeah.

Gus Nolan (06:59):

Yes. In Florida. And he mentioned though, I brought up to him, and he confirmed that the New York Times on one given Sunday printed an article on the front page about recruiting at Marist. Okay. And it had to do with that in beginning of the program was sending students out to represent the school. You're familiar with that?

Sean Kaylor (07:25):

I am, yeah.

Gus Nolan (07:25):

Oh, yeah. Okay.

Sean Kaylor (07:26):

I think I pretty sure I saw the article and there might be a copy in my files back at my office.

Gus Nolan (07:33):

Well, it's on his wall in his house, so I want you to know that. So...

Sean Kaylor (07:37):

That's great.

Gus Nolan (07:38):

He made the New York Times. Okay, moving on. After graduation, what did you do?

Sean Kaylor (07:47):

So, right before graduation, it was February of my senior year, and my advisor, Ismay Force called me into her office and said, all right, so what are your plans after graduation? And I said, you know, I haven't solidified those yet. Yeah. But I may move back to southeastern Connecticut with my parents and apply for some jobs at Pfizer, perhaps in their human resource department. And she said, well, that sounds like a nice plan. Yeah. Have you talked to your parents about this? And I said, no. She said, well, you might wanna, maybe they don't want you back,

Gus Nolan (08:21):

[laugh].

Sean Kaylor (08:22):

And I, of course, I laughed,

Gus Nolan (08:24):

You can't go home again.

Sean Kaylor (08:25):

I know [laugh]. But she said, you know, maybe you should look into admissions work. I've gotten to know you over the years. You love this place. You might be a good ambassador. So go talk to Harry Wood, who was the vice president at the time. And I did, and Harry is an ex-Marine, and he used to see me running hills in the morning and rowing. And so I think he respected that part of my life. And we ended up talking. And the interesting part was he, a couple weeks later, basically offered me a job starting in July, after I graduated. And I said, that's great. So I called my parents, told 'em I got a job, and the rest is history. So is Ismay Force is really the one who encouraged me to go talk to Harry Wood in admissions to see what...

Gus Nolan (09:19):

Did you live in Connecticut or did you get an apartment here?

Sean Kaylor (09:23):

No I just moved out of college housing and moved. I forget where I was initially, but yeah, I lived locally.

Gus Nolan (09:29):

Okay.

Sean Kaylor (09:30):

Yeah. So it was, the interesting part of it was he had two people in his office leaving to go pursue other opportunities. One of them was Chris DelGiorno who is now the Vice president for Advancement. So, in a sense, Chris left and I took his spot, and now we're both serving here as well. So.

Gus Nolan (09:53):



That's, I never heard that, but I'm glad I did. You stayed there, admissions, and obviously you must have liked it because you've been there for a good more almost 20 years now, I guess, longer.

Sean Kaylor (10:06):

Then that, ain't you?

Gus Nolan (10:07):

Yeah, and so, well, tell me about the early years when you, it's much different now, I suppose, as things do change, but when you started, how big was the recruiting team?

Sean Kaylor (10:23):

Oh, small. Less than a handful of people who actually went out and recruited, plus the interns. So maybe five to eight of us total, maybe, maybe less. Anyway, it was a very small operation. We were based outta Graystone where the president, lives and occupies now. And our whole operation was there. And the president was on the top floor.

Gus Nolan (10:48):

Yeah. That was Dennis Murray?

Sean Kaylor (10:49):

It was Dennis Murray, yes. And he would actually come down through the office and meet with some of the students on his way to meetings. So actually worked pretty well. It made a nice impression. But it was a small operation. We mostly recruited in the Northeast. Certainly, the tri-state area, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, where we got most of our students. But the applicant pool back then was probably 2-3000. And we probably enrolled a class of about 700. And the 1990, and then it just gradually started to increase over the years.

Gus Nolan (11:30):

Okay. That's a point I want to get to. What do you think of, well, how did it increase? Was it through publicity? Was it through the sending out of surveys? Was it sending out, visiting the schools? More of that and talking to student body and,

Sean Kaylor (11:50):

I think a combination of all of those things. I think what was happening on campus with the physical plant was, was helping, what some of our alumni were doing and success of some of our alumni, helped. I think the visibility that the basketball team with Rik Smits, gave the college in the late eighties certainly put us on the map, the Marist Poll.

Gus Nolan (12:18):

Oh yes.

Sean Kaylor (12:18):

And some of the work the faculty had done. So all of that stuff was important, but the critical piece from an enrollment standpoint was we had to get them to campus., our main charge as it continues to be today, because we don't have the reputation of Harvard.

Gus Nolan (12:36):

If you see this place, you want it, absolutely. I can live here.

Sean Kaylor (12:40):

Absolutely. You come and you go on a tour and you listen to the people, and you meet some folks, you know, usually jumps pretty high on the student's list when they leave. So that was our main goal. And I'll tell you, one of the most important things we did was because we wanted to get people to campus. You know, Monday through Friday is what we usually had open. And I went to Harry Wood, probably my third year in. And I said, geez, we're missing out on an unbelievable opportunity. We should open on Saturdays. So, we did. And then a few years later, when I became director, we opened up on Sundays as well. Cause the weekends are when families can travel. Otherwise, you're working, you have school, you have activities. So, we've been open seven days a week in the fall, six days a week in the spring. And now, this is the first summer we've opened Saturdays as well. So, we're six days a week in the spring and summer, and seven days a week in the fall. So, it's a really a continual operation to get people on campus to take a look at this place.

Gus Nolan (13:51):

How do you explain us getting into the major publications, 50 best colleges in the Northeast, and, what, what's the dynamics and genesis of that? Do they come here?

Sean Kaylor (14:04):

I think it evolved over time. You know, so as our applicant pool grew, as the awareness of the college had grown, and as our brand had improved and expanded, our reach for students that expanded, you know, our applicant pool grew from the early days when I was here, in the early nineties, from 2-3000 to, you know, over 10,000 every year this year hitting over 11,000. For the third time in, in the school's history. So, you know, clearly the brand is strong enough to start attracting people from farther and farther away. So you have more awareness. You have a continued physical plant enhancement, and you have faculty doing great things, publications, etcetera. You have alumni doing great things. You have our peers starting to recognize that we have made great strides over the last couple decades and have repositioned ourselves among others.

Gus Nolan (15:11):

I wanna say something about that too. But in this development kind of thing, well, just on that now, where we are with Sienna, Manhattan, Iona, Fordham, you know, they, are we in the same pool?

Sean Kaylor (15:29):

Yes and no. So when we, when I first started in the nineties, we, we overlapped a lot with Sienna and Iona and, and the like. And now if you look at our top 10 overlap schools, Sienna, Iona,

Manhattan, none of those schools are on there. It's Villanova, it's Providence College, it's Loyola University in Maryland. It's Fordham. So the schools that we compete head to head with now are much stronger. Villanova is on there. I think I mentioned them. So it's been fun to watch as our reputation has improved as the applicant pool has improved, as the quality and diversity of the students coming in has improved as our, rankings and all these guides. Have improved and inclusion into the Princeton top 50 colleges that create futures. So I think all of that is recognition of the hard work that everybody here, faculty, staff, students, alums, have, have put into this place.

Gus Nolan (16:41):

Yeah, just a few words on the alum, when you started the alum was maybe 5,000 or 10,000, or I mean, there were, there were seven in my graduating class. Okay and we were just brothers. You, we don't have, we had less than a hundred in the alumni. And then the first years, I remember Bill Moran was one of the first to graduate from the, we opened up to lay school, you know? I had got him as a student at St. Sanderson at, so [laugh] interesting thing about him. When he graduated, he had a degree in English, you know, and he left and he went down to IBM and to apply for a job. I said, what can you do? He says, I'm a Renaissance man. I can do anything [laugh], but what he can do for us, he taught Catholic high school for the next two years, you know, and he started then going into business and, accounting. And, and then he was hired by one of the big companies, and they said, you're kidding. Why do you want me? He says, because you one of the few people who can write and explain numbers. Which, where the English degree came back to his benefit, you know. But, I just thought I'd throw that in as one of the alumni, now 40,000 alumni

Sean Kaylor (17:55):

Big. Yeah. Big number makes...

Gus Nolan (17:57):

A big difference. Yeah.

Sean Kaylor (17:58):

It does. And I mean, they, their success and their contributions back to this place are gonna be, are critical for us, now and in the future.

Gus Nolan (18:08):

Yeah. On this last point about change in Marist and development and so on, one of the best selling points, we mentioned location. How about programs? How about [inaudible]? How about, you know, they must fit into the mix.

Sean Kaylor (18:27):

They do. So if I, if I gave you, my top few location is critical. You know, we're very well positioned, not too far from Route 84. Close to New Jersey, Connecticut, and, and basically all parts of the Northeast. And obviously the beauty of the region and the campus itself are, are second to very few. So that's one. Two is the programs we offer, you know, there's a nice range ranging from liberal arts to social sciences to business. You know, so I would say it's, it was to

Marist benefit, not just to be a liberal arts institution, that we're grounded firmly in the liberal arts and people learn how to think critically and read and write and communicate, but having the pre-professional type of programs like business and communications and other programs like that where there's a lot more interest and demand, perhaps a lot more jobs. Out there, especially now, I think it was critical to Marist's continued success. The third thing I would say is the people. So even when this place in, in the mid-eighties when I arrived Didn't look like it does now. It was the people that helped convince me that this was the right place to be. And it was people like Ismay Force, who took the time to get to know me and understand where I might excel, , and point me in a direction. And I mean, once she pointed, I went. And the rest is, has been great, great ride, but it's people like that who make a difference.

Gus Nolan (20:27):

Yeah. One other point though that has to be fit into this, well, actually two, the first is the pool of students drying up in the Northeast, or we now have to go west of the Hudson. And out to, I mean, I've heard people question, why do we send a football team to California, you know, 90 guys and two parents and, you know, but then you point out that, we have 90 students from California here.

Sean Kaylor (21:03):

Yeah. More than that now. Well, this demographic shift that we're experiencing, which is really hitting the Northeast hard in terms of the number of students coming out of high school is fewer and going on to college. And the ones that are coming out are much more diverse than they were in the past. So, we saw this coming, and we came up with a long-term strategy to expand our footprint outside of the Northeast. So, we did a lot of research and, and found different pockets throughout the us, where the students had great mobility. They, they didn't mind leaving their state and traveling far to go to school. And they also were of a certain socioeconomic profile where they could afford the experience 'cause although we're less expensive than many of our private competitors, we're still a private school that, that's pretty expensive. So, we've identified those pockets, and then we executed a plan, and some pockets didn't work out as planned. And some did California being one of them, So much so that about five years ago, I think we had hit the peak of what you could do, sending someone out from the office to cover it. And that's when we moved Corinne Schell out there permanently and made her director of West Coast admissions. And she covers all of California and Hawaii,

Gus Nolan (22:34):

laugh Hawaii.

Sean Kaylor (22:36):

Tough. I know. It's a tough assignment. But she's done a fantastic job. And we've gone from, she's 15 years ago, having two kids from California to bringing in probably 70 students a year between California and Hawaii. I mean, that's a significant amount of students. And we've had similar success, not quite as big in Minnesota, and parts of Florida and other cities that we've identified. Around the northeast.

Gus Nolan (23:11):

There's a college in Minnesota called Collegeville St. John's College in Minnesota.

Sean Kaylor (23:16):

Yeah, I've heard of it.

Gus Nolan (23:17):

Yeah. My brother's there. [laugh], is that right? Yeah, he's a retired Benedictine, but he Yeah.

Sean Kaylor (23:22):

Division three football,

Gus Nolan (23:23):

Right? Yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. And they, I don't know if that coach retired, but he was traditional himself. How do you explain the international acclaim that we would have? I mean, we don't send people to China, to Japan, do we?

Sean Kaylor (23:38):

We do. Now we do.

Gus Nolan (23:39):

Oh.

Sean Kaylor (23:39):

So for a long time, I think the Marist culture or our approach to internationalization was sending students abroad. Yes. Which wasn't as popular as it is now back in the eighties, but it evolved over time. And now, as you know, over 50% of all the graduating classes have studied abroad, which is fantastic. But there's a difference between sending our own students overseas and actually enrolling students from overseas to stay here for four years. You know, we dabbled in it in the nineties a little bit, and quite frankly, we just, Marist wasn't ready. We weren't ready as an institution for a great deal of international diversity. We didn't have the support structures in place to take care of these kids once they got here. But again, that changed, and I saw the opportunity. And that's when, Joe Giacalone, who's now the executive director of International Admission. He had a great passion for international admission and recruitment. So, and he was, he's a great spokesperson for the college and a great alum. So, I wanted to, you know, tap into that. So, we started down that road and he kind of coordinated it. We were seeing some moderate success. And then, as you know, we hosted that big international school counselor conference, ACAC back in 2013. And that brought, geez, almost 1200 international school counselors from all over the world here for four days, They lived on campus, they ate the food, they saw the river, they had a fantastic time.

Gus Nolan (25:28):

You planted the seed [laugh],

Sean Kaylor (25:29):

The seed was planted. And needless to say, we have then since followed up with regular visits to all these places. We have now one other person reporting an alum, , who we hired, who was from Hawaii originally, who spent his first year in our, at the Florence campus. He is an assistant director now under Joe, between the two of them and a few other people on campus who help out occasionally with travel. We probably cover four or five continents and a bunch of different countries on tours and high school visits. And so we enrolled, I think, about 50 international students in the freshman class this year. Really? So it's great. It's really exciting.

Gus Nolan (26:16):

A question, I don't know if it, how appropriate to ask it, but, it has to do with this, how do we manage to keep or to develop the diversity that we have? Is this a, is it luck of nature? Is it, you know, there has to be some monitoring that's going on, and, a few words on that, if you can.

Sean Kaylor (26:40):

Sure. No, it, well, one, it ties directly into the demographic shift. There's more, a greater diversity of students coming out of high school pursuing college. So we're kind of helped on that front naturally. However, it takes a lot of effort on the admissions side to, the same as it would for geographic diversity or academic quality, is you have to target certain students in certain geographic areas, or from certain schools or within certain majors. And then you have to do a good job of communicating with them, you know, over a couple years. 'cause most of the students start their college search probably the end of their sophomore year, beginning of their junior year. So you, you've got two or three years worth of communicating to do with those students as they move through the process. So when we identify certain populations that are institutional priorities, like maybe technology majors one year, maybe students of color. Maybe international students might be business majors or liberal arts majors, or history major. You know, it could be whatever the college is interested in trying to expand.

Gus Nolan (27:58):

What about male or female?

Sean Kaylor (28:00):

Yep. We do that too. Yeah. Same gender balance is important to us as well. Yeah. Now, the numbers nationally are working against us. It's 60:40 Coming into college. So we're kind of swimming upstream there. And because we don't have an engineering major, we lose out on a lot of men immediately, , that, so our academic programs do hurt us to a certain extent on that front. Yeah, but we've...

Gus Nolan (28:27):

But we have baseball.

Sean Kaylor (28:28):

We've added some programs, [laugh], we've added, sports communications, athletic training, some of the computer programming, and gaming. And now cybersecurity is in the, you know, being explored. So a lot of those are, are heavy on the criminal justice. A lot of those are heavy

on the, on the male side. So we've tried to control that gender balance through marketing and recruitment, and also program academic programming,

Gus Nolan (29:02):

Turning the focus on, on you. In the time that you've been here, you had many experiences. There's two categories, just a few words. What were some of the problems or disappointments that you had? Or can you, there must be something that you, you wish didn't go that way? [laugh].

Sean Kaylor (29:23):

That's a great question. You know, I've been extremely fortunate here. I graduated from Marist, got a job right outta school. And three years later, I was promoted to associate director. A year after that I was promoted to director of admission. And I was 25 at the time. Four years later, Harry Wood retired, moved back to Albany. And I threw my hat in the ring for the vice president job in 1998. And I got that, I forget maybe 10 years after that.

Gus Nolan (29:57):

How did you have study through this? You have an advanced degree in something here, do you not?

Sean Kaylor (30:03):

I am close. Alright. Well, I never finished. I haven't had time.

Gus Nolan (30:07):

You went to school though. I mean, when did you, did you go here?

Sean Kaylor (30:10):

I, well, I actually started at the University of Florida, and there was a master's degree going on there. And I took a break and they actually did away with the program. So I couldn't finish it. And I actually started the MPA here, and I think I'm three or four classes away from finishing that. And it's on my to-do list. But because I continually was promoted. And then of course I started a family. It's just hard to find the time.

Gus Nolan (30:39):

No responsibilities. Yeah.

Sean Kaylor (30:40):

But, and then when I was vice president for enrollment, actually the first job was Vice President for admissions and enrollment planning. And then 10 years later, in 2008, I was actually, afforded the opportunity to take on graduate and adult undergraduate enrollment as well. So they changed the title to Vice President for Enrollment Management. And then just recently this summer, President Yellen added marketing and communication for the institution, under my umbrella. So back to your original question, I've been so lucky that I've never been,

Gus Nolan (31:25):

But you had a business here before you started. I'm not gonna marketing and, and were,

Sean Kaylor (31:29):

Yeah. I was a business major. Psychology, everything I learned here. I've put into practice, which is nice. It's nice to be able to say that. But disappointments, you know, there have certainly been a few along the way. I would point to...

Gus Nolan (31:45):

Yeah I was just saying probably some students you thought were gonna come, don't come. Sometimes...

Sean Kaylor (31:49):

That happens every year, and I've learned to live with that. Because there are other great ones fill in their spots. But, I would say one of the disappointments was, it took longer than I thought to improve things on the graduate side. That was a challenge. That was a big challenge. And some of it was just cultural. We are predominantly a traditional undergraduate institution. So, when you look at what adults need and what graduate students need online or on the ground, it's just different. And, and we weren't set up to do that. So, part of that frustration, maybe it's a combination of disappointment and frustration, is I could see where we needed to go, and I...

Gus Nolan (32:43):

Some of the people didn't want to go there.

Sean Kaylor (32:45):

[laugh]. That, that is certainly part of it. And I was unable to get us there. But I think on the grad side, we're there now and now we're adding new programs that have a lot of demand, like the physician's assistant program, and soon the doctorate of physical therapy and the new accounting program. So those are gonna help tremendously.

Gus Nolan (33:06):

Is all that gonna be under your umbrella?

Sean Kaylor (33:08):

Well, the programs aren't, they're under the schools.

Gus Nolan (33:11):

No. Yeah.

Sean Kaylor (33:11):

But yes.

Gus Nolan (33:12):



admissions?

Sean Kaylor (33:13):

Yes. Yep.

Gus Nolan (33:15):

You always have a committee that has to look at the registrations,

Sean Kaylor (33:20):

The graduate side? Yeah, so that functions a little differently. Some, it's really up to the graduate program director. Some of them give us the criteria and allow us to make the decisions. And they just say, you know, send, let me check off and approve. But you do all the work, which is fine. And others like to own it themselves. And we just help them move things through the process, and they do the interviews and make the decisions. So it really depends.

Gus Nolan (33:51):

Turn the page with some of the best things you've had. What would you say is, you know, three maybe at the high points of your career?

Sean Kaylor (34:01):

Being appointed vice president in 1998 was huge. Admittedly on paper I probably wasn't the most qualified, but Dennis Murray, President Murray gave me a chance. Something that I will always be grateful for. That would be one. Two is just taking a look at when I started in 1990 to today, and seeing how the college has evolved, and grown and improved. And, like you probably do, you take a look around and...

Gus Nolan (34:35):

I can't believe it. How did this happen?

Sean Kaylor (34:37):

Yeah. It's amazing. Well, it happened because of people like you and a lot of other folks long before me. But I look around now and I say, geez, you know, I've actually been around long enough. I had something to do with this. And it, and it gives me a great sense of pride. So those are the two things. The, geez, there's so many. The third is probably just getting to know a lot of the students while they're here. And seeing them in the door and welcome, welcoming them on opening day. And then in getting to see them,

Gus Nolan (35:11):

Four years later.

Sean Kaylor (35:12):

Walk over the stage, you know, get their diploma and just that they had as good of an experience as I did. That just, you know, gives me great pleasure because I loved it so much, and I want them to love it so much. And when they do, and most of them do, it just makes me feel good. So.

Gus Nolan (35:34):

Yeah. There must be some training period you put through your staff. I mean, there's a certain quality of spirit. I don't know, maybe one breeds off on the other, like brings in like, or whatever, you know, there's a certain tenor to the whole operation down there. Is there a session? Is there a learning session? Or do you go to a review session and to keep them bright and clean? You know.

Sean Kaylor (36:01):

laugh A lot of training. You know, the first, the first thing is I like to think that I hired good people. Like Kent Rinehart, the Dean of Admission, and Joe Jacqueline and Brian Atfield and, and Lisa Magella. And I could go on and on. But they're all good people. They've hired good people. And one of the things that I prefer, especially if it's a position where they're out recruiting is, I prefer that we hire an alum. They lived it here. That's one side of the training you don't even need to do. 'cause they lived here for four years. They loved it. They had a great experience. They're different majors or from different geographic areas. So that's kind of the first thing is if you're out recruiting and you have, you know, I prefer to hire alums. I see. If they're not alums, you know, I'd like them to get a degree here and master's or whatever. But I think we all, we all run at a certain speed. You know, I hired people who are as ambitious as I am, and they, they want to keep improving. And I think they've hired the same. So it is, it's weird. Now, we just hired a young man who just graduated, walked across the stage, and I think, my God, it's he's 2017.

Gus Nolan (37:28):

History repeating itself here. laughs.

Sean Kaylor (37:31):

And he's starting and I'm getting older.

Gus Nolan (37:34):

Oh well, it's hard to prove that. laughs I am watching the clock because I just have so much I want to get to you on. And or the next is, you have to explain that we talked about the development of campus. Tell me how in the world we're putting up four new dormitories. You know, is this your doing or is this what Dennis is doing? Or is this the Ford's doing? I mean, Champagnat doesn't look that bad. I mean, how come we have to do so much more?

Sean Kaylor (38:05):

I think the part of the challenge is, was that when you look at the whole entire student body, because we're pulling people from farther and farther away, the size of our traditional commuter population is pretty small. So everyone, 90, probably 96%, maybe more of the freshman class require housing. And many of them are coming from overseas or the West Coast. So they can't even go home on break. So, you know, it's a 24/7, 365 day operation now. Anyway, what was happening was our overall student body was growing. Right. And the percentage of students who live in housing was shrinking. Cause we didn't have enough. So to, there was a huge demand. All the students that we had at the hotel, that was costing us a lot of money. I, you'd have to talk to John Pia about how much. .

Sean Kaylor (39:06):

But we were paying more than we were bringing in. So that was a loss. In addition, there were a lot of kids off campus who wanted to be on, who weren't even in the hotel. So we studied that very carefully and, and determined, well, geez, if we build these, they will come. Because they're here already and they pay for themselves because they're bond issued. So the bonds over time, you know, they'll pay for themselves. And quite frankly, when you're selling a four year experience, everything matters. The physical plant, the faculty where you're gonna sleep and eat. All that stuff is critical. And having facilities like that, when people walk by, they're like, wow, this makes, it makes a huge impression.

Gus Nolan (39:55):

Yeah. The other part, I just have to interject a few things that I've learned about this, students have changed. Too many have come from having their own bedroom. To sleeping with another, it's not exactly, you know, what they had, you know, growing up. You know, so that has to be part of it. And then the woman, Riley told me this story about some mother who just wanted her daughter on campus and said, well, there's no room, I'm gonna call her president every day. She says, you're gonna get me every day. You know, because I answer for the president. And she says, well, I just want, she says, woman, there was no room for Jesus in the inn, and there's no room for your daughter, but when there is room we'll let her in. You know, so I thought this business of people in the town, in the city, in the hotel, you know, and they look here, why can't I be on campus?

Sean Kaylor (40:47):

Exactly.

Gus Nolan (40:48):

Yeah. I guess that explains it more than,

Sean Kaylor (40:51):

And what was happening was all the transfer students were living in the Residence Inn. So, when you're trying to attract as high quality and diverse student incoming students for transfers as freshmen, but you send them down to the hotel. You know, it's hard for us to bring in high quality kids when they don't have the same amenities. So it did impact our ability to bring transfers.

Gus Nolan (41:18):

Well, yeah. There was a time when they wanted to be off campus. They don't want to be off campus anymore.

Sean Kaylor (41:23):

No. I mean, well, listen, it's safe, right? It's safe on campus. The facilities are really nice. They all study late, so they wanna be able to walk to the, the. Listen, we've, we've created this ourselves. It's a product of our success. Kids wanna stay on campus. Which is fantastic. So, we're just

providing, we're meeting the demand. And quite frankly, even those aren't gonna meet the demand. We still have people out in the community who would like to be on campus.

Gus Nolan (41:54):

Wow. Let's look into the crystal ball. Where is Marist 10 years from now? Will it be here? Is there a challenge that, you know, I mean, do, is the future general and oh one college, do they need four years of college? They on campus, I mean, off campus learning, computer courses? Where does this fit in?

Sean Kaylor (42:20):

I think it's a combination. I think the way I see us marketing a Marist degree in the future is the kind of all roads lead to Marist. Meaning, affordability and access are critical issues right now. So I think the way we need to position it is, listen, you want a four year program, traditional on campus, you can do that if you can afford it. And if you have the appropriate grades and credentials, if you can't afford it, well, there's other ways you can transfer in, right? You can come in after one year of community college, save some money. You can come in after two years. But I think looking into the crystal ball, that's only one piece of it. I think we could start adding some online opportunities for pre-college, giving them credit for that right. Perhaps at a slightly reduced rate since they're not on campus using the facilities.

Sean Kaylor (43:24):

But then you couple all that with accelerated bachelor master's programs. I think that is gonna be important to people. So if they know, let's say, let's say, they, they do the first year in a community college, save some money. And then they come here for four years and the three years, the first three years, or finish your undergraduate degree, and the last year is, and senior year you would take a few graduate courses and then one year of graduate study and you're out.

Gus Nolan (43:59):

With a masters. Yeah.

Sean Kaylor (43:59):

Right. So I think that's how it's gonna evolve. And of course, the online aspect or component of that is gonna be critical cause I don't think all of it's gonna be in the classroom like you and I were used to. I think a lot of it is going to be driven through technology. So sometimes it'll be face-to-face, sometimes it won't, you know. But I think it is gonna change. I think we're still gonna be here. I think that we've, we're doing a good job. There is demand. We've got successful alumni and students are happy. But, if we don't stay on top of our game, we may not be here too much farther after 10 years. You know? It is, It's a tough.

Gus Nolan (44:44):

Yeah, yeah. Especially if the state probably starts paying tuition too, you know.

Sean Kaylor (44:46):

That's not helping.

Gus Nolan (44:47):

Yeah. Okay.

Sean Kaylor (44:48):

It's a tough environment, but I think Marist is positioned well.

Gus Nolan (44:52):

Yeah. Lastly, is Marist worth the investment? It costs 50, \$50,000 a year. 200,000 at the end of it. You may not have a job. Should I go to Marist? What do you say to that?

Sean Kaylor (45:10):

Yes. It is a tough question. The first thing I tell people is, well, it depends on who I'm talking to, but only 15% of this population, the traditional undergraduates pay the full freight. Meaning the rest of the 85% receive some sort of discount. That discount may be in the form of a need-based grant from the college, or a scholarship of some kind, whether it's academic or athletic or music. So rarely is someone paying the full vote. The full vote. That said, even if you're getting a discount, and they do range from minimal discount to quite a big discount. It's still expensive for most people. It's still a stretch for sure. Is that stretch worth it? I think so. I think, you know, when I compare us to most of the state schools, you look at the physical plant safety, the outcomes of our students, the retention, just the amenities that we provide and the faculty and staff that are very, it's a close knit community.

Sean Kaylor (46:18):

We, we care, we care about what happens here in the student success. The alumni are a tight knit group. So I think when you take a look at what you're getting for that money compared to what you would get if you went elsewhere, I do think it is worth the money. And as I mentioned before, Marist is pretty well positioned in terms of its private competitors. In terms of tuition, room and board, you know, we're probably, in the 30 that we track, we're in the bottom third of that school. And most of those bottom third we are far superior to in terms of reputation. So,

Gus Nolan (47:00):

And also, I guess the quality of life that you would have here. You know, and you talk about safety as one of them. I don't know how we managed to be free of some of the other problems that colleges have a drug and rape and this and that. I can't say we're innocent entirely. Right. But certainly, it's, it's not an issue at the time.

Sean Kaylor (47:24):

Thankfully. No. We've had very few incidents over the years, related to the, all those, you know, tough challenges that you've just mentioned. But you gotta give credit to Deb DiCaprio, and her team housing, all that, their staff. But the bottom line is,

Gus Nolan (47:44):

Security is around as well.

Sean Kaylor (47:45):

Security does a great job. So, you know, you gotta give credit to all those people who, who execute that every day and deal with those challenges. But the bottom line is, I think Dennis Murray deserves a ton of credit. There's no question that he set up a culture to be, cognizant of the small details, you know, make sure you take care of the small details.

Gus Nolan (48:10):

Oh, the lawn laugh.

Sean Kaylor (48:13):

Right. Some we all laugh about, but I think in general, that that culture that he created here with a lot of other people's help, has positioned us extremely well and created a great experience for students. So.

Gus Nolan (48:29):

Okay, we could go on with lots of other things about the talent, the students coming in and the music program and so on, but, I think it's, honoring your schedule. And let me just say, is there anything I didn't ask you, you would like to say about this interview?

Sean Kaylor (48:50):

No, it was my pleasure. And I'm just curious, how many people have you interviewed for this?

Gus Nolan (48:56):

Okay. I'll end now and I'll give you the list.

Sean Kaylor (48:59):

Okay, that's fine.

Gus Nolan (49:00):

Yeah. I think you're like 90 something.

Sean Kaylor (49:02):

That's fantastic. And what is your plan with this?

Gus Nolan (49:07):

Well, when they say, I went to Marist, I taught at Marist, they pay me to stay home with the retirement, but I still come. So when they put up the gate and say, you can't come anymore, it starts on the other page. But that's...

Sean Kaylor (49:30):

So much history here. And you've heard it all. Most of them.

Gus Nolan (49:34):

Yeah, I taped it. You've heard most of it. It's on discs.

Sean Kaylor (49:38):

That's great. So what is the end game?

Gus Nolan (49:41):

The end game is when, I don't have anyone else who is interested to come in and, you know, they are, now I don't, I had, there's like five alumni that Amy Woods has asked me to interview. I sent them notice. I didn't hear from them. But that's okay. Sometimes people don't get the message, or I don't send it out correctly, but something goes wrong, you know. But, well even you, I had to shake, you had to find my email in your.

Sean Kaylor (50:14):

I know.

Gus Nolan (50:14):

So I'm glad that you did find it, because I thought, well, you have a busy schedule, but this, I think it's important.

Sean Kaylor (50:22):

It is, and I'm happy to contribute and if you need me to come back, if you think of anything else, I'm happy to do it.

Gus Nolan (50:26):

I don't know if I'm gonna live that long, but laugh,

Sean Kaylor (50:30):

I did see a few other people who've, who...

Gus Nolan (50:34):

Who passed on.

Sean Kaylor (50:35):

Come and help you twice. Yeah, that too.

Gus Nolan (50:37):

Oh yeah. It some like Foy and...

Sean Kaylor (50:39):

Well, that he has a lot of great stuff.

Gus Nolan (50:42):

That was, he's, and I, Lee off to Dennis and one of the things, so, you know, that's another...

Sean Kaylor (50:50):

Is he in there yet?

Gus Nolan (50:51):

No, not yet.

Sean Kaylor (50:52):

Oh man. You better set aside a couple days for that.

Gus Nolan (50:54):

But, yeah, but Lee did in the magazine thing, well, in one of the, okay, I should shut this off because we're just battering away. Can you see there what? Stop, right. Yeah. I guess that's it.