

Interviewee: Vincent Tuscano
Interviewer: Gus Nolan

October 9, 2002
MHP

Vincent Tuscano

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Erin Kelly

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

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Summary: The following interview occurs with Dr. Vincent Tuscano, a former History professor and administrator at Marist College. The interview begins with Dr. Vincent Tuscano's educational background and his transition into teaching at Marist. Dr. Tuscano reflects on his years teaching and his positions as Dean of Learning Resources and Special Academic Programs and Assistant Academic Vice-President, as well as former colleagues. The interview ends with Dr. Tuscano's hopes for the future of Marist College as well as his take on the importance of the Core in a liberal studies education.

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“BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW”

Gus Nolan (00:03): Good morning. Today is October 10th and we’re having an interview this morning with Dr. Vincent Tuscano, a retired professor in the History Department here at Marist College. The interview is part of the Archive program and is taking place in the James Cannavino Library. Good morning Vincent.

Vincent Tuscano (00:23): Good morning Gus, glad to be here.

GN (00:26): Vincent, would you please tell us your full name?

VLT (00:28): Vincent Lawrence Tuscano.

GN (00:30): Were you named after any member of the family?

VLT (00:33): Oh, indeed I was. My father’s name was Lawrence and my grandfather’s name is James.

GN (00:38): Where and when were you born?

VLT (00:40): I was born on June 27, 1939 in St. Mary’s Hospital in Passaic, New Jersey.

GN (00:46): And what about your other members of your family? Did you have siblings, brothers and sisters?

VLT (00:51): Yup, I have two older sisters, both of them are married. The oldest, her name is Antonia and the second is Jolene and I have nieces and nephews obviously.

GN (01:00): And your parents’ names?

VLT (01:02): My father’s name was Lawrence Carl Tuscano and my mother’s name was Rosalee Tantillo Tuscano.

GN (01:08): And what did your father do?

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VLT (01:09): My dad was an insurance salesman in Lodi, New Jersey which is where I was raised and spent all my life until I left for college.

GN (01:16): Let's talk about your education. Where did you go to grade school and high school?

VLT (01:21): I'm a product of the public school system of Lodi, New Jersey, kindergarten through high school, graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in 1957.

GN (01:31): Okay, let's move a little bit into your personal life. Where did you meet MaryAnne and when did you get married?

VLT (01:37): My wife MaryAnne was a student at the State University College at New Paltz and I was a teacher in Highland and we met through a mutual acquaintance and then we were married at the Immaculate Conception Church in the Bronx in 1966.

GN (01:51): And do you have children?

VLT (01:53): I have two daughters, Roseanne is thirty-three and she's currently a student here at Marist College completing a Degree in Biology after several fickle starts in other directions. The younger daughter, Vicky, is thirty years old. She has a law Degree from State University at Buffalo and a Ph.D. from the University of Buffalo and is currently in a Doctorate law program at Cornell.

GN (02:16): Very good.

VLT (02:18): So, she wants to be a teacher in the family.

GN (02:20): Alright, following in the footsteps of her father who has...

VLT (02:24): I have to call her Doctor. [Laughter]

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GN (02:26): Who once had a Degree in that way. Well, let's go back to your education. Where did you go to college?

VLT (02:32): I went to undergraduate college at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, which is a small liberal arts college associated with the Lutheran Church of America. I didn't know that when I chose it. I chose it because it looked like a nice college. It was small and intimate and it had a good reputation.

GN (02:51): And after undergraduate, where did you do your graduate work?

VLT (02:54): I went on for my Master's Degree at Saint Paul University, which I received my Master's a year after graduating from Muhlenberg. I graduated from Muhlenberg in '61 and got my Master's in American History in '62 and began to teach in the Highland High School in Highland, New York, '62 to '65. When I came to Marist, it was at Marist that I began my Doctoral work at the State University of New York at Albany.

GN (03:20): What was the step from Lodi to Highland? How did you move from New Jersey to Mid-Hudson Valley?

VLT (03:27): My mother's family, after an immigrant experience, her parents came over. They all settled, as most of them did, on the lower east side but her father was a farmer and found land in Highland. And so he moved the family up there and had a farm there. And my mother's mother and my father's mother were playmates in Sicily and so when my dad was growing up, his mother sent him up to the country to meet a paisan and he met the young woman, they married and so we have family in Highland and family in Jersey.

GN (03:58): Do you still have family in Highland?

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VLT (04:01): I don't think there's anybody... Yes, I still have a couple of cousins but most everybody is either deceased or some of the ones who are still alive have moved to Florida full-time.

GN (04:10): Is the farm still in the family?

VLT (04:12): No, they sold it unfortunately. It's divided up. It's strange to go past it now, but no.

GN (04:17): Did it have apple orchards on it?

VLT (04:19): Oh yea, it had orchards, it had a summer house at the top. In order to make ends meet, my grandparents took in borders so every summer all their friends from New York City would come up to spend a week or so in the cool air. It had an outhouse, it had the chicken. It had a barn, great barn with a horse and a cow. And as a kid it was really great growing up there, like being in the 19th century.

GN (04:41): Yea.

VLT (04:42): And it was really a lot of fun and it was interesting. They didn't have... The place that we lived in didn't have running water. It didn't have electricity so we used to pump the water from the well and we would light candles. It was quite of the older house.

GN (04:57): Very interesting.

VLT (04:59): Yea, it was.

GN (05:01): And tell me, how did you come to Marist? What was the contact?

VLT (05:03): I was teaching in Highland High School and the director of the teacher education at that time was Brother Bill Murphy. William Murphy wanted to place a student teacher there and so they asked around and some of the folks who normally

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would've taken it didn't for some reason. And I took it so I met Bill Murphy and then after that experience, an opening occurred in the Teacher Ed program at Marist. They needed someone to teach history and then supervise all of the student teachers. So, I applied for the job and I got it and so that's how I began. I think I was the last person hired as an instructor at Marist back in 1965.

GN (05:44): 1965 was the year that you arrived here?

VLT (05:47): Right, fall of '65.

GN (05:49): Okay. Well, your first assignments then were really supervising the student teachers...

VLT (05:54): Right, right.

GN (05:56): And going around to schools?

VLT (05:58): Correct. And teaching the Methods course and teaching a survey. We all took our turns teaching the basic required history course of the old core which was called America and the World. At that time, Marist still had a large student Brother population all of whom were training to be teachers and many of them were social studies teachers so it was a very busy time going to all the Marist affiliated high schools in the New York, New Jersey metropolitan area, even as far as Chicago once.

GN (06:26): Now this was a full-time position?

VLT (06:27): Yes.

GN (06:28): Okay and for how long were you involved in the Teacher Ed program?

VLT (06:31): I was involved in the Teacher Ed program for four years I believe. I went through the process, I got promoted after three years to Assistant and then an opening occurred in the History Department, full-time teaching history. And I applied for it and

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so I was given an opportunity then to become a full-time historian and my successor, the person they hired to replace me was Bill Olson. We hired him from North Carolina. So Bill took my place in Teacher Ed and I then began in earnest to do my full-time graduate work to get my Ph.D. in history.

GN (07:09): And where did you do the graduate work?

VLT (07:11): I went to State University of New York at Albany.

GN (07:13): Okay.

VLT (07:14): So, it was a part-time, I was working full-time, raising a couple of kids and I was commuting two or three times a week after open but that was part of the routine for most of the people in my co-work group, came here either without the Ph.D. or close to it. And it was not unusual for us to do this. Some folks went to New York to Fordham or St. John's and I went to Albany.

GN (07:38): Do you recall what was your thesis?

VLT (07:40): My thesis was entitled, *Since Dallas, John F. Kennedy and the American Imagination*.

GN (07:44): Strange you should remember it so clearly. [Laughter]

VLT (07:48): Yea, oh yea. You don't forget those kinds of things. It was a study of the historical writing about John Kennedy following his assassination and since that time I've followed it obviously and updated it and it became an article that I delivered at a conference. I had the thesis published, several years after it was accepted by a research group out in California so I'm in the Library of Congress. It sold three copies I think, my mother bought two. [Laughter]

GN (08:17): I wouldn't ask the question but who killed John F. Kennedy?

VLT (08:21): Oh lord.

GN (08:22): I won't ask the question. [Laughter] Moving on, what were some of your personal assignments here that you recall? When you became a teacher, you're not only a teacher, you're other things.

VLT (08:30): Oh sure, I mean we were all involved in various committees. I think one of my first committees was called Program Evaluation and that's when I began to meet people on the campus. I remember that's how I met Ed O'Keefe, we worked on that committee. And then I did some work in the Department curriculum work in the History Department. And then of course, as I became more experienced, I became identified as a member of the faculty and got elected to a variety of different kinds of committees so then everybody did committee work in those years. We had more committees than we have now. Faculty may find that hard to believe.

GN (09:09): Yes.

VLT (09:11): And so yea, those were the kinds of things I did, curriculum and program medium.

GN (09:18): Do you remember the movement from a sixty-sixty to a core? Were you here for that?

VLT (09:22): Oh yea. Yea, I voted against it.

GN (09:24): You voted against it?

VLT (09:26): Yea, I thought it was a terrible mistake because I always felt that without a core, the College had no intellectual identity. But we were all caught up in the zeitgeist of the student movements in the sixties and the idea of freedom and individual choice and it didn't take us long though, after studying the student patterns of course selection to

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realize that instead of using this flexibility to really broaden their education, they were becoming more and more narrow.

GN (09:54): And this education...

VLT (09:55): And that led to...

GN (09:56): Yea.

VLT (09:57): The attempt to revise the core and create what we now have, an expanded core of the liberal studies program. It's not as extensive as the original core that was here but it certainly was better than nothing.

GN (10:09): Who was the Chair at the time of your beginnings here?

VLT (10:13): When I was hired, I was hired by Roscoe Balch. He was the Chair but then when I began teaching full-time, there had been an election that spring and Jerry White took his place so the first Chair of the History Department that I worked for was Jerry White. Jerry was succeeded by George Skau.

GN (10:29): Yea.

VLT (10:30): And George was succeeded by Lou Zuccarello and that was the order of succession. And then Lou went on to become the Academic Vice-President.

GN (10:41): Was Dr. Cashin ever involved in your work here?

VLT (10:43): Yea, Dr. Cashin actually, well, he hired me in a sense. He was the Academic Vice-President and of course, being a fellow historian, we had the chance to talk. He was at the life when we met. I talked to him since and followed his work in western history and southern history. Yea, so Ed Cashin was the Academic Vice-President. John O'Shea was the Dean of the night school and everything else. Dean of Students was Brother Paul Stokes.

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GN (11:09): Yes.

VLT (11:10): He used to carry a bat and a helmet to keep order. [Laughter] And the President, of course, was Dr. Linus Foy, Richard Foy.

GN (11:16): Okay, changing the gear a little bit and moving into something else. It seems to me for a period of time, you had a dual role here, both as an administrator and then as a teacher. What was the genesis of that?

VLT (11:32): I was given an opportunity to apply for a part-time job called the Director of Learning Resources. They needed somebody to provide administrative leadership to the library in the media center and that's what we had at that time. And so I applied for it. Richard LaPietra was the Dean and I got the job and then that job expanded to become full-time. And then when Louis Zuccarello became Vice-President, they kept adding more and more and more and more stuff. And so I think I had the longest academic title in American college, I was Dean of Learning Resources and Special Academic Programs. The title of course was as long as salary was short. [Laughter] And then after Lou left, I was given additional responsibility and made Assistant Academic Vice-President and that's the position I held under Andrew Molloy until I left the administration to go back to the faculty in 1984.

GN (12:27): Okay, and those responsibilities involve such things as the library?

VLT (12:31): I ran, I was supervising the library staff, the media staff, the student counseling. I worked the Title II to develop the Learning Center. I ran the Special Academic program unit which was over the education programs that we had in the local area penal institutions. We had it one time, a very extensive program in six or seven

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nearby, not so nearby, facilities of confinement, prisons. And yea, I think those are about all the things. There's enough to keep you busy.

GN (13:04): Yea.

VLT (13:05): To be sure.

GN (13:06): At one time they said ten percent of the Marist student body was incarcerated

VLT (13:10): Probably, probably. And most of them were there, some were on campus and that was another nightmare. We had a successful transition program I thought. All the while we tried to keep records in. What we learned is that although the results were modest, education seemed to be the only program that had an impact on recidivism.

GN (13:29): Yea.

VLT (13:30): And it was a very sad day when the state legislature and then federal government decided to withdraw support and somehow those programs are no longer available. So, but I did that for a long time and then of course, I came to the conclusion that I had moved too far away from what I really liked, that was teaching and so I decided to make the move back to full-time.

GN (13:52): Marist recently concluded its decade, ten-year Middle States visitation. Do you recall playing a part in any of the earlier visitations?

VLT (14:05): Yea, I was the Chair of the Steering Committee. I don't remember, it was right after Dennis came, his first or second year...

GN (14:12): 1980.

VLT (14:13): 1980. So, I was the Chair of the count of the principle author of the self-study report. I was the one who had the whip dry all the committees to get their work in

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on time, coordinate the visits, so I was very much involved in that whole process. And then the second time around, I was involved in one of the committees that did work on academics and faculty development. I wasn't involved this time because of my status. While we're talking, I should go back on talking about administrative work. So I became an administrator in the early '70's. Just about the time I got my Ph.D. in history, I became an academic administrator. I left in '84, then I was asked by the new Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Mark van der Hayden to help them, to assume the job of becoming the Dean or the Chair of a new humanities division. At that point, what they decided to take English and Foreign Languages out of Communications and put them into Humanities, a much more expanded program. So, I agreed to do that for three years, which I did. And then after I left that, the other new Academic Vice-President asked me to take over the Core program for a couple of years, which I did. So, I had those three jobs, Dean, Division and Director of Core.

GN (15:26): In retrospect, what would you say are the positive and less so in those roles? I mean would you rather be a teacher or an administrator?

VLT (15:36): Oh, I definitely would rather be a teacher. I mean I always enjoyed teaching, even as an administrator I taught. Administrative work can be very satisfying when you're able to help people get the resources to do their jobs. It can be very difficult and frustrating when you're trying to get the system to respond and it's hard to get the system to respond. Because my area was always in Academics, academic development and program and the College had other priorities, you often had to fight for resources and so that often got frustrating. It was very satisfying though to help people develop, both the staff and faculty. And of course I'm very happy to have been part of two successful

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title two grants, in which we were given significant money for things like the Learning Center, which I know from nourishing and eventually supervised, and a major grant for faculty development in multimedia instruction and to really move with the library into a different kind of environment in which it was no longer a print-book variety of resources and really kind of laid the foundation for what we have today, although today's, you know, quantum leap ahead wasn't involved so much with computers as it was audiovisual technology and so on.

GN (16:55): Where was the library when you became supervisor?

VLT (16:59): When I first started, the library was in Donnelly Hall which is I think where the computers are now, the computer center.

GN (17:05): Right.

VLT (17:07): And then so one of my first jobs was supervise the move. And they moved us to Fontaine and I had to convince them that they had to fill in the floor. The old Fontaine building was the dining room for the Brothers. And there were two floors, one floor had a big hole in it and I kept saying, "You have to fill that in, otherwise we have no room for books to begin with." And so we did, we finally moved it there and that's where the library was until I guess it moved temporary quarters in what's now the Fine Arts building and then of course, this building.

GN (17:36): Yea.

VLT (17:38): So, and I think that was done when Fontaine was destroyed but when that was done I was Dean of the division of Humanities so we were all homeless for a couple of years until...

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GN (17:47): Few people have had to direct the movement of libraries from building to building.

VLT (17:51): Yea, yea. It was... Well, I insisted that we... The first time they had done it, Brother Adrian, who had been the old director, said that they used all the students, they handed the books, you know they created lines. And as tempting as that was, I simply insisted that we hire professionals so we did. We got a professional moving company, which was very helpful.

GN (18:12): Okay, you said that as an administrator, you did see some merit in the possibility of directing and getting grants for resources that's... That would be you.

VLT (18:23): Basically, I think that's how I would define, you know, the primary role of administrator is to provide the resources to people to do the job that they're hired to do.

GN (18:32): Well, you're not also capable of expanding the roles and getting more help physically in terms if more teachers or...?

VLT (18:38): Well, resources means money, it means personnel, it means space, it means equipment, all those things. You know, basically try to do that. At that point, I found myself at a level of administration where I was... I mean, you really have to think about the institution but when you think about the institution's [possibility], you forget about people. You get up four or five levels and you, if you're not careful, you can lose contact with what it's like for a secretary or a staff member or a junior faculty member. And I guess I found that to be thing that I didn't like. You become a caretaker of an organization and I've always enjoyed the interaction with people and the students and so that's why I moved back to faculty.

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GN (19:26): Okay, and that moves nicely into this next consideration, the development of the college, in terms of the faculty.

VLT (19:32): Right.

GN (19:33): The development of the committees and such things as Rank and Tenure.

VLT (19:37): Right.

GN (19:38): Did you pay a part in any of that?

VLT (19:39): I remember the discussion. It was held... It was a faculty meeting in the old Adrian building I think. There was a little lounge there and maybe there were forty people there, full-time faculty. Everybody was there and I guess it was an indicator to us that we had to create these processes. We had to formulize the process. It was really President Foy pushing us. And so I guess committees were appointed to write the language that would not only create the committees but the guidelines for promotion and tenure and evaluation and role that people would play. And it was an interesting discussion and in those days, the faculty were, far more than they are today, out of necessity probably, partners in the management of the institution. The line between faculty member and manager or administrator was not as clear as to how I always found it, so much easier to move back and forth continually between the two. I think it's far more difficult today that some of those positions have become more bureaucratized and so... But yea, I was there for the creation of Rank and Tenure and the Academic Affairs Committee and the debate on a college counsel at one time. We wanted to create that and I had often expressed the idea of a counsel in which not only faculty but academic administrators would sit so that there would be no divorce between people who made policy and people who had to carry it out in classrooms. That didn't fly necessarily. And

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then I was here of course, when after President Murray came. He was somewhat... I think chagrin to see the administrative structure, particularly the academic administrative structure, and so he really pushed through this new divisional organization. The faculty, a lot of faculty resented it because they thought it was being pushed from the top-down and it was going to destroy the firmamental integrity. And so there was some huge debates but in the end it was done and it brought about a certain level of equity in terms of the personnel and resources of the academic units. Not totally but some, some in the beginning. He made management easier so it was manageable. Yea and so I was part of that and then I think one thing led to another, there was some difficulties with contracts and so there was a time. I remember when I went back into the faculty in the mid-80's, I was shocked by the atmosphere of mistrust and anger among a number of important faculty leaders with respect to the administration. And there was a lot of tension there for a while and I felt it was unfortunate and probably a threat to the long-term survival of the College. I didn't think we could afford to do that so I used whatever influence I had to try to get both sides to understand the other and I felt that was a good position having been...

GN (22:33): In both sides?

VLT (22:34): In both sides and trying to let the faculty know that from a standpoint of view, I guess macro-management, you know, they're part of a much more complex institution and though they could think they're the most important people, you know, the janitors are just as significant, the groundskeepers... And the college is a lot more and from the point of view of the managers and of the micro, the reality of teaching individual people, meeting their needs and trying to make a difference with people and so

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on and so forth. That was an interesting time for me and I've had a chance to play that role on the Academic Affairs Committee and I became the Chairman of the faculties.

GN (23:13): Let's go back a little bit. I want to see a bridge, Middle States, when you were involved in the organization of preparation for that. What was the outcome of their visit? Were there recommendations or what did they say?

VLT (23:30): There were recommendations about allocations of resources. There were recommendations about full-time faculty size, recommendations about the way in which the financial accounting was taking place and so on and so forth.

GN (23:46): Okay. But at this time...

VLT (23:48): But they renewed our, they renewed our credit issue so there wasn't a problem there and so it was basically suggesting I suppose, in retrospect, that this institution that had been growing over a long period of time as a small informal, highly personalized college with a lot of face to face interaction had gotten to the point where it now needed to have more professional procedures and structures.

GN (24:14): Right.

VLT (24:15): And so that's one of the things that began to develop and of course when Dennis came, that was his inclination anyway because of his own background. And so we have become much more highly organized and bureaucratized. And of course, the other thing that happened to is the tremendous expansion of this area we call student services. This is part of a national trend that became in the seventies. When I first started, we had maybe two counselors. But I think that today, parents want to know that they're going to a school where there are all kinds of support personnel so we've hired lots of people to do what the faculty used to do back in the sixties and early seventies. I

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mean, faculty lived in dorms, they were mentors, they were counselors, they did all that.

That was all part of the role of finding them and now it's not and we have all these young professionals to do that. That's added significantly. I mean, we have more Vice-Presidents now than we had faculty members when I started. [Laughter]

GN (25:15): Okay. I was also going to focus on the idea that the visitation of these organizations such as Middle States does really spur you on to make a leap that you might not otherwise do as for instance, in the development of the faculty committees for promotion and tenure. And Marist today is probably a stronger place by far because of the assistance of moving people on for their Doctorates and moving people on to write and to publish and to do these things.

VLT (25:47): Absolutely. I would say that Marist is fundamentally a different place and I think the changes taking place in quantitative terms in the last ten or twelve years, physically is different. It's much larger so therefore it has to be more formalized and more bureaucratized. The campus is a stunner, it's beautiful, and we've invested what, forty, fifty million dollars into our physical plan in building and rehabilitation. And of course, the young folks that come into our faculty now all have their Ph.D.'s. Many of them already have a research track and so they're in a different place than we were. Most of us who started in the sixties were in the middle of completing all that. So it's a whole different, whole different kind of world. But the faculty on the other hand are much less involved in the management of the place. They've seen a role in more narrow terms than we do out of necessity and their focus is on their own professional development because that's where the rewards are. And those are some of the things that concern me about their struggle to maintain the balance between the demands of teaching and the increasing

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demands for what we would call traditional scholarship. That's always a struggle, particularly in a place where you're teaching four courses a semester twice a year and there are limited resources for research but that's a whole other story. Question and answer.

GN (27:17): Okay, let's go to the physical development of Marist and in your mind's view as it were, take a walk around. Where do you see the most dramatic changes?

VLT (27:29): It's hard to say anyplace where there isn't. When I came here, Champagnat Hall was just being finished. Donnelly Hall was not only the classroom building but the cafeteria was there. There were still some dorm rooms. I shared an office with five other people in Donnelly. We sat chair to chair.

GN (27:55): You had a cubicle, come on.

VLT (27:57): No, no, we didn't have cubicles. It was desk to desk in those days. There were no cubicles at least in our staff.

GN (28:03): Oh, you missed the part when we had the cubicles.

VLT (28:05): You guys had cubicles, we had desks lined up. So, you know, Donnelly was it. The North End was empty, we still had picnics there.

GN (28:13): And a swimming pool.

VLT (28:14): And there was this gigantic outdoor swimming pool which we used and that was it, the boundary. And of course, the expansion has been astonishing. And the new buildings, they had been added, particularly this library which is fantastic, have all really enhanced our external credibility on a competitive level. I think we now compete with schools that we only dreamt about competing with fifteen years ago in terms of the

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mind of the students. I think to a large extent, it is because of the physical appearance of the campus.

GN (28:47): So that leaves this next thing. What would you say are the major assets that the college has going for it now?

VLT (28:54): Oh, I think, well clearly the campus and the campus environment. I think we have retained among the people who work here, the staff, the counselors, many of the faculty, there's still this notion of assisting the students, focusing on the students as much as possible. It's an environment where students who seek help will find it and support and challenge. So, I think that those are very, very important things. We deliver small classes for the most part. People pay money to come here but I don't think a student is in a class larger than fifty here and most of the classes are in the twenties to thirties. They have a faculty who is for the most part very accessible. There are professionals to help them and so I think those are really our strengths. And of course, clearly, our association with IBM, the technical platform that we have in terms of our computing power, the integration of the computer with education, those kinds of opportunities and the professional development opportunities. One of the first internship programs grew out communications as you know of while women's contacts at CBS opened the door for a whole bunch of people. Now we have students in business, communications, and science and public opinion and political science out into the world and I think that's very attractive, that marriage, that opportunity for students to find internships in the real world to give them that experience. We got there early I think and we were very lucky. We got there before a lot of colleges.

GN (30:31): And now we have a Bill O'Reilly out there. [Laughter]

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VL (30:33): And now we have somebody like Bill O'Reilly who might have missed what we did right or wrong depending on your political point of view. So, but those kinds of, those kinds of elements at the college I think constituted real strength and we still try I think to be very cognizant of our own course in terms of our competitors. I would not want to have to pay the Marist tuition today but still, I think when you compare it to the schools that we compete with, we are in the bottom half and I think that's still very, very important to the faculty or to the people who come here. And the level of it, of financial resources that we provide, financial assistance.

GN (31:20): Look ahead. Do you think that Marist's position, 75 miles north of New York City, is going to be as significant as the lower head in technology and distant learning? Do you see a balance there?

VL (31:36): Clearly, location is important. I mean the fact that we are midway between New York and Albany, we have access to trains, planes, automobiles and are close to a lot of transportation links. We're in a demographic area where there's still lots of people of college age who want to go two, three hours away. That's all very important for us. There are indications that there's going to be a battle I think in the next ten years between those institutions providing the core distance learning. Some businesses have even, you know, kind of taken on the job of providing education and then they sell it and in response unfortunately, I think places like Marist have tried to become more business-like and so that's, you know, to be competitive but you give up some things when you do that. I don't know how significant distance learning is going to be. I think that its capacities are somewhat limited depending on the major of the student but more importantly in the subject. There's just a lot of things you can't do. The television-

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integrated systems like that... The college experience is more than simply that. There's a whole lot of other things that go into it that can only take place face to face. Nonetheless, I think the real issue is of course, how will people continue to be able to afford colleges like Marist? Will federal resources become available? Will the right offer college tuition be made more generous? Will there be an unrestricted scholarship fund for any talented young man or woman who wants to go to college to draw onto? New York has its TAP program but they're still very modest. Most states don't... There are a lot of factors in here. I think we are well positioned in the traditional academic environment. I think we're very well positioned. We're much stronger than we were. I feel confident saying the college will continue to flourish for ten years even if we don't do anything. Primarily because we have this great campus, we have a good reputation, deservedly so we've done a lot of good things. We have good technical infrastructure but as you know, technology requires money. It requires constant updating. Initial investment is just the beginning. We need to plan for obsolescence and so there's a major commitment of resources to keep it up. And so those are going to be challenges to us in terms of whether or not we are able to do what we want to do in the future but I don't see major shifts taking place in terms of business education. I think where they try, we're very limited, very limited.

GN (34:19): Okay, if you had an opportunity with your vast experience now with more than thirty years here and could go to the Board of Trustees, what would you say is one of the weak points that the college should address?

VLT (34:35): I would say that they have to remember what their core constituency is and that I think that the core constituency remains the traditional eighteen to twenty-one year old undergraduate and that we have to take care of that business. We need to make

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sure that we have adequate numbers of factors. One of the concerns I've had, I had it when I was the Dean of the division of Humanities is our reliance on part-time faculty. I believe, again part of the national norm, but when you have forty percent of your classes taught by part-timer's where many of your freshman will have the majority of their classes taught by part-timers, when you have your signature academic program, the core liberal studies program, taught a majority of those courses by part-timers, there are inevitable questions about quality, continuity. Not because part-timers necessarily are bad teachers, some are, some aren't, some are outstanding but they don't have the time, they're not connect at the neck. They're not part of the process of the institution in that institute. They're not acculturated. They're not always available and so I would say that yes, while we want to do some of these things to remain competitive, to me, that's our core. Without that, all the other things that we're into, the graduate education, professional education, this institute, that institute, the other institute, which are very nice. They get us publicity and they get us recognition. It will become irrelevant because we'll be bankrupt. We're not going to survive on the MBA program. We are not going to survive on the MPA program. We're going to survive on the traditional undergraduate enrollment and we've got to make sure that we deliver what we promised to the students and to their parents.

GN (36:26): Let's talk about the students. What would you say now about a student in 2002 versus the student you had back in '72? And how would you compare them?

VLT (36:41): Well, you know because of the work I did in administration, I have a lot of information about students and we... When I was helping to supervise the people who work in the counseling program, we distributed battery tests. And what we found is that

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our students are fairly typically the people going to college intellectually. I think that the academic profile of a Marist student is somewhat similar. Their academic orientation and comfort level with academic things is not as strong as it is in other places. I think the socioeconomic background of the college, of the students who come here is higher than it was thirty years ago. I think that in general, the students who have been coming out of the high schools, the public and private high schools, are not as academically rigorously prepared as they were when I started this. Maybe you know, I'm just an old man talking but when I started of course, we had all male students, many who were products of an old-fashioned, Catholic education and they could diagram a sentence and they were careful about all of this and had an intellectual curiosity. A lot of the students today find some of this work to be very difficult. Very exciting in other ways, some of them more creative, they're freer, they're free thinkers but I think that consistently, you know, I would describe the Marist student... Many of the Marist students are diamonds in the rough and part of what we need to do as faculty is to convince them that they're as good as we think they can be. They have to be talked into it a little bit. Although that may be changing, as the students now no longer are not the first of their family to go to College but still, I find it even among the freshman that I teach trying to get them excited about intellectual concerns, talking about what it means to be an educated person. They're pulled in a lot of directions and frankly, part of what we've done too is contribute to that. We sell ourselves higher education and Marist as part of that. Coming here will give you the certificate so you can get a good job. You know, and so these are the hot majors because this is where you're going to get the job. And so, I've had many students confess to me, "I don't really want to be in this major but I'd really like to major in X but

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my father says X, I'm going to spend twenty grand a year to major in X? What are you going to do with X? How are you going to get a job with X?" So, there's no answer to that, as you know it has been the motto of Benedictine, you know, "Work and Prayer".

You know that balance between reflection and work. We've always tried to maintain that and I think our education for the real world but I just worry that if you live and die by selling yourself as a place to get a job, it has an impact over time in terms of its intellectual legacy. That's the concern I have. They're good. Let me put it this way, they're as good as they used to be but they're different. They need, I think they need more support than they used to, basic support. I'm often astonished to realize that a lot of them, it seems to me, have never really had to take the consequences for their action or inaction before. And so, when they ask me if they can turn a paper in late and I say "Okay but you get a penalty," they're astonished that there's a penalty. You know? And so those are the kinds of things that happen but this may be just part of the fact that I'm older and they're younger and the gap between me and them is much greater now than it used to be.

GN (40:17): And some of them have been chauffeured around and have never gotten on the train. They wouldn't know how to go to New York by train.

VL (40:22)T: Yea, they're very different. They're the suburb's kids. We used to get more of the kids who... They were basically Irish-Italian kids, working class, blue-collar mother and father, streetwise, you know Bill O'Reilly, streetwise.

GN (40:34): Yea.

VLT (40:36): Bright.

GN (40:37): First in the family to go to college.

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VLT (40:38): Bright, bright but streetwise. Most of our young folks are great but like typical America's youth, they've been sheltered. And of course, Marist is a rather homogenous place so they don't get a lot of exposure. They probably come from homogenous neighborhood to a homogenous high school to a college like Marist where the flow of ideas and different kinds of people just isn't there. So, when you're a teacher and you throw these ideas at them that they've never even considered before it's like heresy and they have a hard time.

GN (41:09): Yea. One more change in direction here.

VLT (41:11): Sure.

GN (41:12): Let's talk about the chief administrator at the College.

VLT (41:14): Okay.

GN (41:15): You've worked for both Dr. Foy and Dr. Murray. Could you say something about each? Your experience with Dr. Foy...

VLT (41:23): Sure. I think Linus pointed us... He was President, of course, during very difficult times, transition from the all male Catholic school to a co-ed nonsectarian school and there were times in those years where not all of our dormitories were full and we were talking about financial exigency and we were making claims about this, that or the other thing. We had to write our procedures for firing faculty who were tenured. We had CIA students living in the dorms.

GN (42:01): That's the Culinary Institute of America.

VLT (42:03): Yes, I knew that.

GN (42:05): Just for people who will hear this in the future. [Laughter]

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VLT (42:06): I'm sorry rather the college, the cooking college up the road, not the federal organization. And I think Linus worked very hard to manage scarce resources and did it quite well. He worked and I guess because of his own background, he was used to working with a little and we got a lot out of a little. I also think that he was very important in terms of pointing us in the direction. He got us into computers very early on and he supported the work of people like Ed Waters, who then became very crucial in writing those Title II grants that saved us because it was really the Title II money we got before and after Linus left that allowed us to build the programs that became the capstones. We built the Communication program with Title II money. We built the Business graduate program with Title II money. We built the Learning Center with Title II money. We built the Education program with Title II money so there were a lot of things that we would not have been able to do without those federal grants and so he helped create that environment and make it successful. And he was very personable, it was not unusual in those days. We had a place where everybody ate called the Rathskellar. It was downstairs in...

GN (43:26): Champagnat.

VLT (43:27): In Champagnat Hall and it was not unusual to see secretary staff, janitors, faculty members all eating in the same place which was wonderful. And Linus would come and he'd sit and have lunch and you'd always have an interesting conversation about this, that or the other thing. So, it was a kind of a different kind of environment. He was very much at home and that was very personable. Then he left. I think the College had gotten to the point where at least a number of people began to feel that the leadership skills that we needed to survive for the next fifteen years were different than

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management scarce resources. We had to do something else and so a lot of people got very excited when Dennis Murray came because he seemed to have the capacity to understand what the college needed and his real strength is marketing. Dennis understood or he seems to understand what we need to do in order to tap into all those external sources of income and recognition to break through to the next level. I first met him of course when he came. After he came, I was the Director of the Middle States so we spent a lot of time together. He was very worried about it clearly. And then as an administrator and both as an Academic Vice-President and then later as the Dean, I met with him in person when I was the Chair of the faculty. I met with him on a number of occasions. Dennis is very much aware of perceptions, how attitudes can affect enrollments. I think he was, has been very helpful in making all of these other connections externally which are beginning to bring in some big bucks now that take a long time to nurture and develop, you know, the money from Kennedy or the money from, I don't know...

GN (45:26): Hancock.

VL (45:27): Hancock. Or at least a pledge of money from Hancock if the stock market holds. And then the change in the Trustees, I mean, Jack Gartland, who has been the godfather [Laughter] at Marist in a way, and I don't mean in a bad sense in terms of his largess, was really Linus' connection. I think Linus and he were very good friends. But Dennis has changed the nature of the Board and you could see now, faces of Corporate America. Dennis bet the ranch on IBM and I think it worked and he had spent a lot of money or at least overseen development of a lot of money direction and a lot very good plans at the expense of other kinds of things, not all of which I agreed with but clearly, he

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was on the right tracks saying you know, if we have an attractive campus, we have the right facilities, people will come and people will come.

GN (46:16): Build it and they'll come?

VLT (46:17): Yea, build it and build it right. Give them the right kind of environment and that's very true. But all of those things have come at the expense of other kinds of issues that, as a faculty member, I considered important and I always felt that it was too bad that the library was built last rather than first in this developing program. But libraries don't... You know, they're not sexy.

GN (46:41): Yea.

VLT (46:42): Dorms are sexy, buildings, you know, some of that kind of stuff. So that's really been his strength. Those are his strengths I think.

GN (46:50): Good. What would you say, Vincent, from your own perspective now without being too humble, is...

VLT (46:57): Without what?

GN (46:58): Without being too humble, is your own greatest contributions? Where do you think you have made your impact here? Would it...

VLT (47:08): I would...

GN (47:09): Be in teaching? Would it be in administration?

VLT (47:10): I would like to... Well certainly I would say personally, you know, over thirty years, I've taught two or three thousand people.

GN (47:17): Right.

VLT (47:18): From time to time, I've gotten feedback that suggested that, you know, that experience for them was important in shaping who they are now. And that's the

greatest thing that anybody who teaches wants to hear, that you made a difference for the better in somebody's life. In terms of the institution, I would say that the area that I think I made a contribution was in those difficult years, in the eighties and the tension between the faculty and administration is very strong, trying to remain a communicator, keep the lines open, to prevent either side from doing anything too precipitous that that would...

GN (47:54): Be disastrous.

VLT (47:55): That would be disastrous.

GN (47:56): Yea.

VLT (47:57): To the institution itself. I think that was important and I would probably think hopefully that my constant harping on the role of teaching as the learning... Not what we do but what the students learn and faculty development. I was so glad to see the center for faculty development to get off the ground, teaching. I had been trying to get that going for a while and I was delighted that we got the position to get it off the ground. But I always felt that that was something where I was able to make a contribution in terms of dialoguing, trying to remind folks that, you know, you get a Ph.D. doesn't make you a teacher. Teaching is an art and it takes a long time to develop and it needs work and thought and careful attention and support and encouragement. You just don't walk and talk fifty minutes and leave and think you're teaching.

GN (48:52): Yea.

VLT (48:53): There's a lot of things involved and so that has always been an interest to me. I've written a lot on it and tried to share my experiences with the faculty and hopefully other people have learned from that.

GN (49:01): Can you pinpoint a few memorable characters that you met here at Marist?

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VLT (49:05): Oh. [Laughter]

GN (49:06): I don't mean characters...

VLT (49:07): Yea.

GN (49:09): As in characteristic point of end of it. Who has impressed you and worked and influenced you?

VLT (49:19): I didn't know him very well because he was only here a little while but I really found Ed Cashin to be a really an ideal kind of Academician leader, a very thoughtful, very personable, intelligent... Richard LaPietra when he was Dean, again, thoughtful, incisive, articulate. Lou Zuccarello, good friend, came a year after I did. He was the Chair of the Department then he became a Dean while I was in administration. He took Richard's place. Lou's integrity, his honesty, his concern about education. I think those are important people. There's a fellow that we had who was a bit of a dreamer on the faculty. He was Mal Michaelson and he talked about teaching as, you know, as an elevated kind of activity. He was very much reflective of our inspirations in the sixties and he really worked hard at it and created a storefront operation that touched a lot of lives, people like that. Those would be among the people, I mean, there's so many wonderful people that I've had a chance to work with. Even today, the members of our faculty who really are dedicated to helping our students grow and learn and it's tough work. People don't... I don't know that unless you've done it, you really don't know how difficult and challenging it can be to be an effective teacher as opposed to, as I said, walking into a lecture and nurturing and learning, responding to student needs. But those would be among the people that I would say. I think Ed Waters, who was the Vice-President here for a lot of years was very insightful about what the college needed, what

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possibilities there were. He led the charge on Title II. He led, he helped develop a higher education opportunity program that we had here. He was involved in the Upward Bound Program. That you know, in that sense, he was very, very important I think to the institution and Lou Zuccarello told me a story only a week ago. I was at a meeting and he had a reference to Ed Waters and somebody said “Who was that?”

GN (51:31): Yea.

VLT (51:32): I just thought about how quickly people pass out of the institution, out of the institutional memory because he retired and then he passed away a few years later.

GN (51:40): Yea, right. Is there anything that did not happen that you wish would have happened? If you had another chance, would you have done something else?

VLT (51:51): I think the last thing that did come up in which I was interested in the most recent, I had become involved in something called a cluster program in which faculty actually collaborated in the sense of we all share the same students. We didn't teach our courses together but we had the same students in all of the courses. And I became very much involved in tracking that and found that to be a very powerful and dynamic way to integrate the core and to deliver the core and really help students see that education, learning, is not fragmented but things tie together. And faculty loved it because it was, you know, you had adults to talk to and sometimes we actually sat in on each other's classes. My biggest disappointment was that after developing all of this data which showed that students in clusters generally did better and stayed in college at a higher level, I couldn't convince the institution to give me the resources to make it the centerpiece of the Core and I don't know why. I wrote the whole report and I guess that was one of the things that really... I really found it to be very disappointing because I had

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spoken to so many people in the administration about it and showed them everything.

And everybody seemed to be very enthusiastic and then all of a sudden they said, well no we don't have the forty or fifty grand, whichever, it wasn't much I was talking about.

And that, we have other needs and of course I saw some of those other needs and I found that they were marketing them substitutive and here I really thought we had come up with an engine that could permeate the institution. It could really recapture the faculty a lot of the joys of teaching without some of the pitfalls of necessarily team-teaching. And for the students of course at the end of the year, the feedback we got were "wow."

GN (53:51): What type of a Core-based...?

VLT (53:53): Yea, no it was basically in the Core because the clusters originally were made up of people who taught classes in the Core history, philosophy, art, writing, and literature.

GN (54:02): Yes.

VLT (54:03): And we all shared the same students and we would meet once a week to talk about their progress and we would design assignments that connected with one another and so they could understand and see that. And I thought it was powerful. It was wonderful. It was fun. It was fun to teach. I mean...

GN (54:21): And the students felt more sense in the Core?

VLT (54:23): Sure. Just they saw more sense in their education in general. You know, they began to realize that even in a Psych major, economics is important and, you know, sociology is important and literature God forbid, may even be important, you know, to my own learning. You know that...

GN (54:38): Oh, don't push it now. [Laughter]

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VL (54:39): Well, I mean I saw that... It could be a model for Marist to deliver not only undergraduate but maybe a really dynamic graduate program, you know, and liberal learning, something like that. But again, the response is well there's not a lot of market, it's not professionally-oriented, it's not marketable and so those kinds of concerns seem to have come to the forefront in decision making and so I felt well maybe it's time for a dinosaur-like me to retire, go to Florida, play golf, and just teach and not bother anybody and so that's what happened. So that's one thing that didn't happen that I wish had happened.

GN (55:14): Okay, now as we conclude, is there anything I didn't ask you that you wished I did? Is there something you'd like to say kind of in terms for historical purposes? Let the record show that...

VL (55:29): I think let the record show probably that the history of the college has been an exceptional success story, that a merits study and consideration as to why it was success, I'm not sure I know all the answers to that.

GN (55:45): And you played a part in it?

VL (55:48): I was lucky. I mean one of the reasons I stayed here is because I was given opportunities, you know, I would never had gotten had gone to another college. It was much more free-reeling. We needed everybody in those days and so those lines were not as strong as they were and because of that we drew on a lot of strengths. And you know, if I have a concern about the future, it's that we now become ordinary. We are like so many other colleges in terms of our structure and our attitudes about work and the role of the faculty and the role of the administration. We haven't had a lot of program development here in a long time, innovative programs. We do what we do better but, you

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know, in the old days we were developing majors and this and that as you know. I mean, we were all over the place working like that to bring new things. And that energy has kind of dissipated and that sense of community and building of that. And there's a book I read which I often felt ought to be the centerpiece for Marist called *A College of Character* and that's what undergraduate education is all about, is character whatever the means. You know, the old vision of what a liberal education ought to be. I think that that's become significantly weakened here and I wish it hadn't because then it's hard to distinguish us from so many other people. I think we've had something... We had something really, really good and I don't... We were so insecure about ourselves that I don't think we appreciated it, that Marist tradition, the Catholic tradition, that caring tradition, that nurturing tradition, the strength of our liberal education, the literature, the philosophy, the history, the art, the science. We had all of that and we were struggling to survive and I don't think we realized how good we really were, what we really did. And so instead of becoming better, we want to become more like other guys and so we have and I think we've given up some stuff in the meantime. One of the things I did when I was director of Core liberal studies is I took a look at our Core and then I went to this study that had been done on institutions across the country because core became a very hot subject.

GN (58:07): Yes, yes.

VLT(58:08): Five years after we have it...

GN (58:09): Even in Harvard.

VLT (58:10): Even in Harvard and Yale, talked about sure we have a Core. And this article said these are the characteristics of an outstanding Core program and there were

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twelve of them and we had every one of them. Long before everybody else, we had them but we don't publicize that. We don't make that, we don't feed it, we don't nurture it and it's in the view of some people not sexy enough. And so, I consider that to be something that I put on the record. Of course, I may be wrong because bottom line is, you know, our record, our enrollments have never been better so maybe marketing is the key, you know, you know what I'm talking about. Just the window dressing as opposed to the other side. We'll see. Thank you, Gus. That's all I've wanted on the record.

GN (58:52): It's been a good ride.

VLT (58:53): Oh, it's been a terrific ride. I just, I am so grateful that I was able to come here with only a Master's Degree, get my Doctorate, meet all these people, learn all these things, play all these roles. It's really amazing. I look at the College now, I'm so proud to have been part of the group of people. It's interesting too. I used to tell people when I first came here, when we were young, the old guys were in their forties.

GN (59:17): Yea.

VLT (59:18): They were the oldest faculty members and now twenty years past that, I probably look like a dinosaur to these kids now.

GN (59:24): Thank you Vince.

VLT (59:25): Thank you Gus.

“END OF INTERVIEW”