

**Maureen Thayer**

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed in person by Jennifer Rudolph

August 28, 2013

Massasoit Community College – Brockton Campus

**Rudolph:** This is Jennifer Rudolph, Coordinator of Public Services and Instruction at the Massasoit Community College library. Today is Wednesday, August 28th, 2013. I am interviewing for the first time Maureen Thayer, former Dean of Students at Massasoit Community College. The interview is taking place in the Louison Board Room at Massasoit at One Massasoit Boulevard, Brockton, Mass [Massachusetts]. This interview is being conducted by the Massasoit Community College library as part of the college oral history project. I want to thank you first, Maureen, for agreeing to do this.

**Thayer:** Thank you very much for inviting me. It's a pleasure.

**Rudolph:** Well, it's a pleasure for me too. We're just going to start off a little bit talking about you and how you ended up here. So if you could tell me a little bit about yourself, where you grew up, where you went to school.

**Thayer:** Sure. Grew up in Hyde Park, which is part of Boston, and I graduated from Hyde Park High and then immediately went on to Boston State College, where I received my bachelor of science in psychology. What's interesting is Boston State College is no longer; it was absorbed by UMass Boston, but the building is still there. The building—the buildings—is now the Mass College of Art. And what I also find interesting to note is that some of my staff members, some of my colleagues here at the college, also attended Boston State College: Roberta Noodell, the former Dean of Enrollment Management—I also went to high school with her. Danny Kimborowicz, who was the former registrar. Dr. Barbara Finkelstein, who is the present Senior Vice President of Faculty and Instruction, attended Boston State, and Richard Cronin, the former Director of Public Relations, also attended Boston State. So it's kind of interesting that we went to school in Boston and ended up in ah Brockton. *[clears throat]*

After I received my degree [*clears throat*], excuse me, I became married and I had a son, still have a son, Michael. He's married, and he has a little boy named Paxton, my grandson.: Unfortunately my marriage did not work out, and so in 1976, I was divorced and began to look at what type of career I could have to support myself and my son, and I was living in East Bridgewater at the time, and I decided to come to Massasoit to see what kinds of offerings the school had. I was thinking maybe business classes. Luckily, very luckily for me, I end up meeting Gerry Reese, who was then the Director of Admissions, and I had a long conversation with him, probably over an hour, and he encouraged me to apply for a position that was coming up in his admissions office. It was an admissions counselor job, and I said I would apply, and I did apply, and I was fortunate enough to work directly with Gerry Reese, and he became my first mentor here at Massasoit. He was the type that encouraged me to go back to school. He said, If you want to stay in education, you really have to go on for your master's. And at that point wasn't too sure about my capabilities and probably was lacking some confidence, but he really pushed me to do what was necessary, and I went on to get my master of education in counseling at Bridgewater State College, which is now Bridgewater State University.

And so that was very exciting to start my career here with someone who really took me under his wing so that I could do a lot of things that I probably thought I couldn't do at the time. So I went to school at night, worked full time during the day. And so I started off in Admissions, and then a job opened up in counseling, so I became a counselor, which I really loved because I got to see students' progress from the time they came in to meet with the counselors—myself included—about educational, career, personal issues, and then seeing them progress and be successful, and then graduate or transfer on to a four-year school. So that was very exciting. I really enjoyed getting to know students more in depth than I did as an admissions counselor. Then there was another position that opened up. It was the veterans position, and I became the Veterans Counselor, and that was great because I was able to work with veterans and provide tutorial services to help them be successful at the school. And then the college decided to open up a testing and assessment office, and I was on the committee that worked on that and was fortunate enough to be appointed to be the Director of the new Testing and Assessment Office.

And so we had to set up dates, and we also developed an orientation with packets, a video about the services that would be available to students. And I think one of the great things about that particular job was that I got to interact with a large variety of staff on campus. Cafeteria staff were involved because we had lunch for students. The maintenance folks were involved because we had to have the rooms set up—we had to have signs outside. And then of course we had the counselors working with the students to advise, and we had faculty who came in to advise, so it was a real great opportunity to really branch out and meet and work with more of my colleagues here at the college.

In 1985, Massasoit merged with Blue Hills Technical Institute, and I was appointed to be the Assistant Dean of Students, and I worked up at Canton for about nine years. And that was exciting because it was the first time we had been at this at this particular campus in Canton. And we offered a wide variety of programs, which we still offer, like HVAC, medical assisting, dental assisting, electronics. So it was different, and it was all in one building, which is very different from the campus down here in Brockton, which has multiple buildings. But it was a great opportunity, again, to branch out and oversee student services in another venue. And then I came back in 2001 to Brockton and became the Dean of Students, which I think is a wonderful job. There's a lot going on with that particular position. Dealing with a lot of issues from students—sometimes good issues. Very exciting things happen, but there's also a lot of problem solving and I enjoy doing that and I oversaw a number of offices. I oversaw Advisement and Counseling department, Multi-Cultural, Career Planning, CHOICES program, Health Services, Student Life, Athletics, and the newly formed Veterans Center.

**[0:6:38]**

**Rudolph:** Well, [*Thayer laughs*] that's quite a bit, Maureen. I was interested in a couple of things. I'd like to know a little about when you were in charge of the veterans section there, the veterans counselor. What year was that about?

**Thayer:** That was 1979 to 1981.

**Rudolph:** Alright. Now what kind of veterans did you have at that time. Were these Vietnam veterans for the most part?

**Thayer:** Yes, yes. Vietnam veterans, and they needed to get their checks on a regular basis, so we had to do paperwork in a timely fashion and again, as I said, we started tutorial help for the veterans—getting them back, getting them acclimated into the college setting.

**Rudolph:** Mm-hm. That's interesting because we see that all over again right now.

**Thayer:** Yes, I know. We just started our new center last year with Michael Siegel as the veterans counselor, so I felt like we came full circle.

**Rudolph:** Yes. Very interesting. [*Thayer laughs*] Also, I was interested that the variety of positions that you held here really set you up to be a Dean of Students.

**Thayer:** It was very helpful because I got to work in various departments. In fact, I left out one part. One semester I was also the Assistant Registrar, and I worked on making sure that the students who were planning on graduating had enough credits, so I worked closely with Danny Kimborowicz, former registrar. All my positions gave me an opportunity to branch out, to learn new skills, to work with different people around the campus, and I felt very, very fortunate to have had all those great experiences.

**Rudolph:** Yes, I think so. That doesn't happen to everyone.

**Thayer:** No, I was very fortunate, again, because I had two great mentors here, as I mentioned, Gerry Reese, who eventually became Dean of Admissions and then Peg Donovan, who was Dean of Student Services, and she was my second mentor here and, again, encouraged me: Yes you can do this. Had me involved with the Committee on Testing and Assessment that was brand new to the school. And I enjoyed doing something that hasn't been done before, so Peg was a great influence on me. I could always go to her for advice. In fact, I still see Peg; I saw her last week. She was down the Cape and I had lunch with her and spent the day with her, so she's a wonderful person, and I'm very lucky I still have her in my life.

**Rudolph:** Yes. That's very interesting. What was the college community like when you first came here?

**Thayer:** I started here in 1977, so the school started actually in 1976—was founded in 1966, I'm sorry. And so, when I arrived, it was only in existence eleven or twelve years. Because we were a small school at that time, a beginning school but also a small school, right? I'm guessing we probably had 3000 students at the time. Today we have 8000 plus.

So, because we were a smaller school, everybody got to know each other. In fact in the lower level of the Student Center was where the president's office was, where the Director of Counseling office is now. The Business Office was downstairs where the ARC is; Admissions was where Placement is now; Financial Aid is also down where Advisement and Counseling is now. So we had all the services that we had—we didn't have the ARC then. We had all the services in one building, in one location in the Student Center. So because of the proximity, we got to know everybody. Everybody knew all the different staff members of the college.

We've gotten so much larger now that it's not always possible to interact with our new staff members or to get to know who the faculty are. We do get notices about, you know, who was hired and so forth, but we've gotten so large, and I think that can happen to any organization. We keep growing and growing, and that's not a bad thing; it just means that we have to work a little bit harder maybe at being more collegial. Again going back to when I started, the students were very engaged. We were young; they were young. There are a lot of activities going on. Also because we knew our colleagues, we'd go out to lunch a lot of times, which probably hasn't happened in my recent job as much because we're so busy, but after work, we all go out for dinner and so forth, but that doesn't happen as much now because we don't always know all the people here at the college—who's working here. But it was a great time. I think it was a time when people had a lot of energy and we were new and we wanted to accomplish things and we wanted to be the best we could be for our students. And I still think we have that philosophy, but it was a little bit different then, smaller and knowing everybody.

[11:29]

**Rudolph:** Yes, a little bit more intimate, perhaps.

**Thayer:** Yes, absolutely.

**Rudolph:** What were the students like when you first came to the college?

**Thayer:** Most part, they were right out of high school. We did have some people that were a little bit older, but I think at that time, it was really students coming directly from high school. And I can remember numerous times, and it still happens, even when I was Dean of Students, that we'd have students who didn't do well, and they weren't ready for

college. And then they'd come back six or seven years later, and they were just so excited. They knew what they wanted to do; they applied themselves, and they were just so excited to be here. I think one of the great things about this school is that students tell other students or tell other people about how well they're treated here and how well they learn here. They're not just a number, and I think that's one of our greatest PRs [public relations] is that the students go out and tell what a wonderful learning experience they've had here at the college. So, I think in some respects, students haven't really changed all that much. We still have students, the wide variety—those who have done exceptionally well in high school, those who have not done well but really want to have a chance to further their education and do well. I think students have changed to a certain extent the way that society has changed. There's more pressure—peer pressure—we have technology, the internet, Facebook, all those types of things where people don't realize sometimes that they can say things and it's over the world in no time. And so I think students have to be more careful about that than they did years ago when they didn't have the internet. We didn't have Facebook. I also think society has changed the extent that we learned, too, that there were a lot of drug problems in all the communities—it's not just Brockton, it's everywhere. And so sometimes students must feel peer pressure, or whatever, and they get involved, and so we've had to deal with sometimes—not very often—but whatever is out in society comes onto the campus.

**Rudolph:** It's a microcosm.

**Thayer:** It is. Absolutely, yeah, yes.

**Rudolph:** I know you said that it's by word of mouth that we get a lot of our students. But are there any other ways that students come here to Massasoit?

**Thayer:** Well, one thing, I think, because we are a community college, we're in the community; we have many surrounding communities; it's proximity, proximity. And then second of all, it's affordability. We are very cost-conscious here at the college. And I think the third thing is our offerings. We have wonderful programs; we have wonderful faculty; we have great student services, so I think it's a combination of a lot of things. And I think that's still the reason why people come here today. Same reasons why they came in 1970s—because of proximity, affordability, and also knowing that they will get a great education here, whether they want to transfer on or they want to build up their skills

for work. Also it's numerous reasons why people come here, and I think that most people do find that they have a great, great learning experience here.

**Rudolph:** Thank you. Who were some of the colleagues that you remember from early days here?

**[14:46]**

**Thayer:** Oh, well. Again, because we were so small, I counted everybody as my colleague back then *[laughs]*. But to be more direct, obviously Gerry Reese and Peg Donovan. And then there was Jack Otis, who was the Associate Dean working under Peg, and he was a wonderful person to work with and for. Jim Murphy was the Dean of Students. Then I have the people that I worked with closely in the Advisement and Counseling Center were the other counselors. There was Dr. Trudy Collins, Jerry Garvin, Jeremy Moser, Jim Sullivan. Of course there's Ellen Lavarney, who was the Director of Health Services—she started before I started and is presently still here as the Director of Health Services. Don Dinuno *[phonetic]* started the exact same day that I did. He worked for Richard Murphy, who was then Director of Placement and, I as I said, started working for Gerry Reese. So we became fast friends, and he has since gone to work for Columbia Gas Company, but he hasn't forgotten Massasoit because he makes sure that every year that Columbia Gas donates several thousand dollars for scholarships for our fire science students, so he's someone, that I still remain close with him. I just saw him a couple of weeks ago; he's living down the Cape. Peter McVail *[phonetic]* was the veterans agent when I was veterans counselor.

When I was up at Canton, Dave Malone, who is presently working part time under Faculty and Instruction. He was dean of the Canton campus then. And then there were faculty people: professor Sam Burchill—I will always be indebted to him because he helped me really set up the stage for honors convocation, and we used that setup for probably ten or twelve years. And Sam was a professor of art and painting, so he had that artistic bent, and he really helped me on that. And then John Murray, professor John Murray, who taught business, also was very helpful to me. He was on the committee for Testing and Assessment, and he was a wonderful resource at that time. And I could not forget the late Laura Yellen, who was professor of English. She was a wonderful,

wonderful friend, and she was a wonderful teacher; she was advisor to the Helping Hands Club. She was also attending athletic games, no matter where they were; she was there supporting our athletes. And I miss her terribly, but I will always remember the laughs that she and I shared whenever we would get together, and so she's someone that I really, really miss. The academic deans are very important, especially in any of the positions that I held. I worked closely with the academic deans, and they were a great source of help. And also we worked when there were situations in classrooms with students, whether they were brought down to Counseling or in the Veterans Office. And off-campus, I would have to say the deans of students at the other fourteen community colleges. We would get together a couple of times a year, and that was invaluable because we would share information and share stories, I guess you could say, but also were willing to share information with one another, and that was really a big, big help. So I think you can see working in the college that everybody is willing to help, really. They're here because they want to be here; they want to work with students, and they want to work with their colleagues. So I was very, very fortunate to have many, many colleagues that I call friends.

**Rudolph:** Mm, that's quite a list of people that I even remember. [*Thayer laughs*]. What part do you feel Massasoit plays in the community?

**Thayer:** Well, the economic development, obviously. We prepare students to work in many of the businesses and organizations around Brockton and the surrounding communities. We also offer workforce development, which our Department of Workforce Development works with businesses to create particular courses for their staff, their employees. And then we have the personal enrichment classes, which I think are phenomenal. We have a huge list of types of courses that are non-credit, but they're for personal enrichment, and it's wonderful. I think we're a vital part of the community. People know about us, whether it's a student coming out of high school, the mother and father of that student, or sometimes the grandparents of that student. Every year Career Placement puts on an annual job fair, so we bring the companies here onto campus. So we play a real big, important role in the economics of the region. I think it's also interesting—I hear many staff say to me after they've gone to many different businesses or medical centers, Oh the X-ray technician who was helping me today was one of our



graduates. Or, I went to my doctor's office, and the medical assistant is a graduate of Massasoit. So no matter where we go in the region, inevitably, we end up meeting some of the students that we were fortunate enough to graduate and are now being successful in the community.

**Rudolph:** That's gratifying.

**Thayer:** It is.

**Rudolph:** Alright, let's talk a little bit about your role as Dean of Students at Massasoit.

**Thayer:** Mm-hm.

**[20:04]**

**Rudolph:** Could you tell us a little about some of the programs that you initiated as Dean of Students? I only put down a couple that I thought of: one of them was the Civility on Campus campaign. And the other one that I remember was MAM. But those were just two. You can certainly tell us about any of them. *[background noise]*

**Thayer:** Sure, I'll be happy to. A while back, I'm guessing probably around seven years ago, we had a convocation where we talked about civility; that was the theme of the day. And the concern was that sometimes our students don't always know how to be students; and therefore, they're not sure of the expectations. So we wanted to be clearer with our expectations. And so we developed promoting civility on our campus, in our campus community, and the Student Code of Conduct. So when I would talk to students at orientation, I would go over the guidelines of civility that we developed with faculty, students, and staff at the time. And we came up with ten particular rules—guidelines, we called them guidelines—for students to be more successful: how to approach faculty, how to approach other staff if you're having difficulty. And so every semester, I would put together a brochure promoting civility on our campus and that would go out to all faculty and staff. And so what it really let people know about if they found a student that was acting inappropriately but also looking at reasons why. Sometimes people are off their meds; sometimes they've had a stressful night; they might have been up all night with a baby; maybe they had to work overtime. So there are particular reasons why someone might be acting inappropriately, and how can we help that person? Maybe there are some things that the college can do either on campus with services or off campus with services. So, we've also worked very closely with the campus police, and the campus

police have always been excellent. Our philosophy is to help students learn from their mistakes. How can we help you learn from this? What could you have done differently? So, it's not seen as punitive, it's really seen as, What can we do to help you in this situation so that you can be a better student? There are outside factors in a lot of our students' lives that affect how they behave on campus. So that was one of the things that I'm very proud of is letting students know what our expectations are at the college and then putting together a brochure for faculty and staff to learn how to handle different situations.

Then the other thing that you mentioned was MAM, was Mediation at Massasoit. There were probably a group of ten of us who went through forty hours' worth of training, learning how to be mediators. And that was really exciting. We did offer mediation; we still offer it if anyone is looking for it, but it seemed to have kind of outlasted its usefulness, but we did have it on campus for several years, and if students were having difficulty with other students or other people on campus, then they could come to us, and we would try to set up—we would set up a mediation. But both parties had to agree to it. As Dean of Students, I think I've handled a lot of those cases not necessarily in the formal context of mediation but using my mediation skills to work with students who were having difficulty. And of course we do – part of my job was to enforce the Student Code of Conduct and, again, using it as a tool, not as something as punishment. However, there are times when an activity might be so egregious, that we do have to follow the Student Code of Conduct and may have to put someone on probation or suspension or very rarely expulsion. So our goal is to make sure that everyone feels safe here at that college, that it's a safe learning environment. And so sometimes we do have to follow certain codes, certain discipline decisions, in order to make sure that everyone is safe here and has a good learning experience.

**Rudolph:** I think, too, talking particularly about the civility on campus, the methods that you mentioned were things that perhaps would help that student—not just perhaps—they will help that student in their work life.

**Thayer:** Absolutely. Yes, we yes—

**Rudolph:** And dealing with any person.

**Thayer:** Yes, and we would go over that. How do you think this would be seen if this were in a work environment? So you know, we hoped that we really gave the student an opportunity to learn from the behavior. And I can recall several students coming back and saying, Thank you; you gave me a second chance. I learned. I'm now going off to a four-year school. So that's very gratifying when students come back and let you know that we did have an effect on their life—a positive effect on their life.

[25:20]

**Rudolph:** That's very interesting. I understand that you maintained, while you were Dean of Students, an open-door policy. Could you talk about that a little bit—what it is and what did that mean for your students but also what did it mean for you and your staff?

**Thayer:** Mm-hm. Yes, I fully believe in the open-door policy. We have students, as I said we now have eight thousand plus students, and sometimes they run into difficulty and they might be upset about something or something terrible has just happened. And so I'm very fortunate to have Susan Bailey as my assistant, and she would know what things really had to come to me immediately. And so if I were in a meeting or whatever, we would try to get that student in as soon after the meeting as possible. Or if I wasn't on campus, we could refer them to another staff member who could work with them. So my open-door policy was pretty flexible for all students and staff. Part of my role is to listen a great deal and also to help the person look at different avenues on how to deal with situations and give options and work with them on developing the options. And so the open-door policy is, I think, a very key part to being a dean of students; however, it also means that things that I might have had on my agenda to do are now pushed back or moved to another time or a different day. But I still feel very pleased that that was part of my philosophy that we dealt with students when things were very, very important to them, whether it be, sometimes as I said, mental illness problems; sometimes it had to do with severe illnesses that they were experiencing; some of our students were homeless, and so they would come to my office. They sometimes would go to other people's offices or talk to the faculty, and the faculty would bring them to Advisement and Counseling and bring them to Financial Aid if that was where the necessity was. So the open-door policy is critical, I think, especially in a community college where our students deal with

a lot of very difficult problems, and we're there to help them. Whether, again, it's through the services we offer on campus or off campus.

**Rudolph:** I think, too, that you're talking about your bachelor's degree being in psychology probably helped you [*both laugh*] a lot more than other deans who might not have had that background.

**Thayer:** Yeah, yeah. Thank you.

**Rudolph:** This is a question that is a personal question to me because I have always thought a dean of students job is not easy. It is a hard job. You have an awful lot of people who work under you that you supervise. You also have a lot of different areas. When you are also in charge of the graduation ceremony, to me that just is amazing that you can juggle all of these other things that we've just talked about and still have time to set up graduation as you did. And so, I wondered if you could talk about how you managed to juggle that [*Thayer laughs*] at such a busy time of year?

**Thayer:** You're right; it is a very busy time of the year because students are graduating. The students are getting ready for their finals. I also had evaluations due for my staff, which is a very important thing. I think one of the great things about working here is that everybody comes together and everyone needs to come together in order to make commencement successful and be the best night possible for our students and their guests. So I had outlines of what everybody was to do, and that would change from year to year because we inevitably have different situations happening. We used to have our graduation in the gym; we now have it under a tent, which changed so many things as far as set-up, but I think being very organized, having a timeline of when things need to be done, knowing that I could count on people that we had over a hundred volunteers from all departments in the college—all departments, and knowing that everybody wanted to have our best foot forward for the graduates. It was the best night of the year. And so even though it was a very busy time, it was also the best time of the year. I so enjoyed doing that because we would see the students that we'd worked with walk across that stage, and their families were so proud; sometimes they were the first person to go to college, so that was wonderful. So a lot of people on campus were willing to step up to the plate and volunteer, were willing to give ideas, and I'd have a big meeting with everyone but give them their instructions, and we would go over things together, How

can we improve it? and that was the thought every year, How can we make this better? And people came up with wonderful ideas. And we would do our best to incorporate them, so everybody felt that. And not only did they feel that they had a say, but they also did actually have a say in how can we make this better. There were many eyes out there for graduation. I couldn't be everywhere, and so they would come back and say, Gee, we can do this a little bit better or We thought about that. And we changed a lot of things for graduation and, again, I'm thankful for all the volunteers that made it possible. And of course my assistant Susan Bailey who works tirelessly getting all the information and the packets out to the students and mailing them out, and so we have a great crew. We have a great crew of people that make graduation possible.

[31:33]

**Rudolph:** I think I've told you this before, but I've been to many college graduations, having nieces and nephews and children and everything, but I think that I have more fun at Massasoit's than I have at the others' [*Thayer laughs*] even my own—

**Thayer:** That's wonderful to hear, Jennifer, yes. We work hard at it. We want it to be a very, very special night, and thank you for saying that. I really appreciate that—[*talking at the same time*]

**Rudolph:** I think it's special for the staff that go, too. It's just—

**Thayer:** I believe so, too, because again, they've seen these students over a period of years, period of time, and everybody is just so happy.

**Rudolph:** Yes, it is. It's very special. What was your favorite part about being a dean of students?

**Thayer:** Hmm. [*pause*] Well, there are a lot. [*laughs*] Obviously graduation to me was the best. I just enjoyed working with the students. I think it's a real privilege for all of us to be part of our students' lives. Again, they come with many different situations and problems, and we're a part of their lives. We're there to hear their good times and you love to celebrate when we hear great news, but we're also there when people have difficulty. And that was—that is one of the best things about working at the college, and people that are here love to work with students; otherwise they wouldn't be here. So, seeing student progress, seeing students grow, seeing them just be excited about education and about the information, the information that they're learning, the

experiences that they're having. To me that was wonderful. I was also a student advocate as a dean of students, so I wore many hats, one of which was enforcing the Student Code of Conduct.

The other part was also being an advocate. So when students had situations, say in a classroom, I would work closely with the academic deans, and we would sit down and more times than not, many problems that would come to my office had to do with miscommunication, misunderstandings, and so we were able to sit down in a civil [laughs] way to work out situations and come together and say, You know, we need to move on; we need to move forward, and again, my mediation skills came into play, I believe. So helping people to work through situations; I thoroughly enjoy doing that. I thoroughly enjoyed working with my staff in order to provide the best services possible to our students. One of the best moments I had, too, that I recall was when Professor Chris Ajemian had the opportunity to write a grant for American Women in Universities. And she and I worked together, and we needed to involve students, and we had six female students who stepped up to the plate. And we really got to know these six students very well, and one of them was a grandmother. She ended up going off to Washington D.C. to present a particular project, which was just so exciting to see this woman who had just come to school, and here's she's jumping in with two feet to get involved with this grant. And there were other women as well who just stepped up to the plate and really got to know each other well, but they supported one another and then they went off and they presented this particular plan, and it was just wonderful. That was one of my highlights, to really to get to know the students. There's so many things. I think of the Student Senate—I get to know the student senators quite well because I attend their meetings, and just the joy of working with students is—it's why we're here.

[35:26]

**Rudolph:** It's why we're here. It's right. It's great, thank you. Could you tell us about a special moment you remember from your time here at Massasoit?

**Thayer:** Well, one of the times had to do just recently—I will go at this one—and that is that the student senators and previous students came to give me a surprise party for my retirement. And that really just so touched me. The students had asked, first of all, that we

have a picture taken downstairs a few weeks before this. I had no idea why they were doing that. And they presented the picture of all the student senators. I'm thinking, We should do pictures at the beginning of the year. I have no idea why they're doing it. And they presented the picture to me, and that was a complete surprise. And it was really heart-warming because it came from the students and from other students who had graduated who were able to come that day, so that was very, very touching. I guess one of the others, of course, is the graduation. I always mention commencement because that's just a special time when we acknowledge the students' efforts.

**Rudolph:** Thank you. What do you see as some of the college's biggest accomplishments?

**Thayer:** Well, just recently, and it's been going on for the past few years, the deferred maintenance that our former CFO, Betty Ann Learned instituted. We have millions and millions of dollars' worth of equipment now on campus that will save us money as far as energy. And we have to keep up with the maintenance of the buildings, or else we won't have buildings to house our students. So I know that she was very instrumental in getting Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) and securing us money, so we save millions of dollars, and this is going to last for years and years to come at the college. Sometimes people don't always see these particular savings, but it is important, as I said, it's very important to maintain the school. So that was one of the things that I thought that was important for the college. Recently again, it was the biotech certificate that we now have. We now have a biotech lab, which is really state of the art, and students can go on in the STEM areas: science, technology, engineering, and math. And they can get wonderful jobs out there, but I know the science instructors are so excited about this and so that's really a huge accomplishment, I think, at the school. Obviously we have doubled our enrollment—more than doubled our enrollment since I first started here, and I think that's pretty amazing that we can still offer such quality education to 8,000 plus students and the programs that we offer, so I think those are just some of the important accomplishments of the college.

**Rudolph:** Mm-hm. Okay, thank you with that, too. These are all of the questions I have for you, but I wanted to know if there are any other questions that I should have asked you or any additional comments that you would like to make?

**Thayer:** Yes. I would like to mention another thing that I instituted here at the college was the College Concerns Team, which really gets word out to the whole college community that if they learn of a student that's having difficulty—could be stress-related, could be a number of things—if they hear of a student that's having difficulty to bring it forward to my office. I chair the committee—I chaired the committee—I keep talking in the present tense here, don't I? *[laughs]*

**Rudolph:** Well, it hasn't been that long since you've been gone, Maureen.

[39:09]

**Thayer:** So I chaired the College Concerns Team, which, as I said, helps students before things progress to a more difficult or more egregious situation. So there are faculty and staff on each of the campuses that are involved with the College Concerns Team, and we work closely with the campus police. And so I'm very pleased about that because we've been able to help a number of students before situations got out of hand. So that's an important one. I also put together a brochure that goes out to the college at the beginning of each semester, and it talks about different things to report such as if they find a student with erratic conduct or they feel isolated, and they let you know about it, or you see a decline in personal hygiene, things of that nature that we can step in. And the goal of the Concerns Team is to provide a caring, positive way of dealing with situations and to address students' behaviors that could impact the college community. Eliminate fragmented care and centralize reporting, so I'm really pleased about that, and as I said we've worked closely with Advisement Counseling, with campus police, with faculty, so I'm very pleased about that. The other thing I would just like to add that I am so proud of the way that the staff here at the college works with the whole student. Students would often go to Advisement and Counseling, they might be talking about classes, but many times, there are other issues going on why they're having difficulty in their classes, and we would be able to work with that student. Students have come to my office about something that happened, and yet we end up talking about other things, and we find that we can refer them to some of our different services and connect them with, say, the ARC—the Academic Resource Center, or walk them down to Advisement and Counseling, so that we can get the best services for them. So even though people may



think that faculty only teach, they actually help a great deal with the students outside of the classroom as well because the whole thing is to get to have students be successful, to have them reach their goals. And so in order to do that, we have to deal with the whole student, and I don't know if all colleges do that, but I think we do a very, very good job at the school, and I'm very, very proud of that—that we would reach out and find out other information about students and say that we can provide services to help them.

**Rudolph:** I think so, too. It's quite a different way of looking at the student than even when I was in school all those many years ago, [*Thayer laughs*] that we have people that students are not afraid to go to for help for one thing and that we have people on staff who now through your program recognize when a student perhaps is having a problem. They might not know what the problem is, but they know that they might be able to help somehow.

**Thayer:** About a month and a half ago, one of the custodians came to me and said that he was concerned about a particular student, and we investigated and looked into it, and so what was great about that was that the fact that the maintainer, the custodian, felt safe enough to come and some and say, Gee I'm concerned about this. And so, there's the caring, supportive atmosphere. It doesn't matter what staff on campus hears something. The cafeteria staff may hear something; front line people in all the offices might hear something; and so they are able to [*door slams*]*—they are able to come to my office or Advisement and Counseling, and we can get the student the necessary help or at least provide options for that student. So yeah, I'm very, very proud of that fact.*

**Rudolph:** Well, I want to thank you for agreeing to this interview. It's a very important part of our project that we interview people who are important to the college, and I thank you for that because you certainly are and you've opened my eyes to a number of things—not just that you did, but that we have on campus that I might not have realized either [*Thayer laughs*] So, thank you for that.

**Thayer:** Thank you so much. It's been my pleasure to talk with you today, and I really appreciate it. Thank you, Jen.

**Rudolph:** Thank you.

[43:38]

[end of interview]