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Debra Mooney

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Thomas Kennealy

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McDonald Library, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio

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Thomas Kennealy: 00:00:02

Good morning. My name is Father Tom Kennealy, and I'm the University Historian at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Today is Tuesday, April the 16th, 2019. With me is Dr. Debra K. Mooney, who has graciously agreed to be interviewed today for Xavier's Archives Collection of Oral Histories. First of all, let me give you some background on Dr. Mooney. Dr. Mooney graduated from the University of Washington in 1985 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. She earned a master of science in psychology from the University of Idaho in 1987, and a doctorate of philosophy in clinical psychology from Southern Illinois University in 1993. In 1999, Dr. Mooney came to Xavier University, where she first served as the wellness coordinator in Xavier's Health and Counseling Center. In 2002, she moved from the Health and Counseling Center to Ignatian Programs, where she served first as the associate director and later director. From 2007 to 2009, she was the associate vice president for the Division of Mission and Identity, and in 2009, Dr. Mooney was appointed Xavier's chief mission officer, heading the Center for Mission and Identity. In 2017, she was named vice president for Mission and Identity. In addition, since 2009, she has served as the founding director of the Conway Institute for Jesuit Education.

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Thomas Kennealy: 00:01:55 First of all, Debra, welcome, and thank you for so kindly agreeing to do this interview this morning, and I suppose you might as well start at the beginning, where were you born and where were you raised?

Debra Mooney: 00:02:07 I was born in Libertyville, Illinois. My father was a first-generation college student getting his master's degree in engineering at Northwestern. He was an Evans scholar. That's where I was born, I have no memory of that, because he took a position at Boeing, headquartered in Seattle at the time, and so, that's where my memories are, so I feel like I was almost born there, born and raised. As you heard in the introduction, went to school there from kindergarten through undergraduate school at the University of Washington. While I was there, I was a student athlete. I was a swimmer.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:02:48 Oh, good for you.

Debra Mooney: 00:02:48 And I think that's an important part of my identity.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:02:50 Sure, absolutely.

Debra Mooney: 00:02:51 Certainly life skills.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:02:53 Yes, yes. And I understand you are married.

Debra Mooney: 00:02:56 Married.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:02:56 And you have three children, and about to celebrate your 30th wedding anniversary.

Debra Mooney: 00:03:00 That is correct.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:03:01 Congratulations.

Debra Mooney: 00:03:02 Thank you.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:03:02 I hope you're planning to celebrate in a proper manner. Possibly visiting Europe is that

Thomas Kennealy: 00:03:07 ... in the schedule?

Debra Mooney: 00:03:07 Yes.

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- Thomas Kennealy: 00:03:07 Good for you.
- Debra Mooney: 00:03:07 Yes, thank you.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:03:10 Throughout your college years, your academic focus has been on psychology. How did you become interested in that subject?
- Debra Mooney: 00:03:20 I think, even as a young girl in junior high and high school, I especially enjoyed health. I liked learning about who we are, and our bodies. I started thinking about that. I was taking elective classes in psychology and doing well, and my mother, at one point, naively said, maybe you should major in psychology. I say that, "naively", because that had never occurred to me. But as I started looking into what it took to be a psychologist, and what was the position, it was not as popular at the time as it is now as a major, as a discipline. In high school, you would never know people saying, I want to major in psychology. It was a very young field. I had no introduction to it, certainly not a class in high school, and just found that I really enjoyed it. It was one of those that I liked studying, I like the content, so I specialized in clinical psychology, and, interestingly, within that specialization, I focused on health psychology.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:04:20 Yes. After completing your doctoral studies in '93, you did practice as a clinical psychologist for several years. What positions did you hold during that period?
- Debra Mooney: 00:04:32 I was working in a very rural area, Carbondale, Illinois. While it had a university, it was a significantly underserved community, so I did a little bit of everything, which really prepared me to do various things at a university. I actually was a therapy instructor for the doctoral students after I got my degree. I was doing a post-doc as well in counseling. I was working in community mental health, also doing supervision with psychology residents in prison, and the child and family services as well. Working in a rural area, you wore a lot of hats. So much so that I was the only woman practicing and available outside of community health in the whole county during the day.

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- Thomas Kennealy: 00:05:26 Interesting.
- Debra Mooney: 00:05:26 Yeah. Some of the women faculty had practices at night, but during the day, so it really underscores how underserved the area was.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:05:34 Yes, yes. And your first position at Xavier, you served as the wellness coordinator in the Health and Counseling Center. What were your responsibilities there?
- Debra Mooney: 00:05:46 Interestingly, they were what I made them. And I say that because I was a 50%-time psychologist and 50%-time university wellness coordinator. But what that was, people didn't know. So much so that I was asked that multiple times during my own interviews for the position, because the campus seemed to know that they wanted a wellness coordinator, but they didn't know what that quite meant. It was a strategic initiative at the time. If there were any extra funds at the end of the year, people could submit for special programs, and so, this was a position that was for that. I focused on, specially, in particular, initiatives in health that intersect with student populations, so, alcohol use and tobacco. Did a number of programs for that. We have helped students to not smoke by the time they're 21. The chances of them smoking at all are extremely low. Worked on a couple of Ohio State Grants for that. And the same with alcohol use. Did a program encouraging parents to continue speaking to their son or daughter while they went to college about their alcohol use, and actually received an award for that program.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:07:06 Oh, good for you.
- Debra Mooney: 00:07:07 The Golden Apple Award for Wellness.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:07:09 Very good. Good. Good. And I'm sure dealing with students in that particular area, students come to you, probably, with anxiety, stress, and that type of thing. Were those significant issues in your days there in the Center?
- Debra Mooney: 00:07:25 Yes. And certainly they can impede enough that it causes challenges in studying, but oftentimes, it's the

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nervousness around academic performance that exacerbates that, so it's kind of a chicken-or-egg situation, and to be able to help people manage their anxiety, which can sometimes turn into depression pretty quickly and easily if it's not managed, that's first and foremost in helping them to be able to get their degree. And live a healthy lifestyle.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:08:03

At the same time. Yes.

Debra Mooney: 00:08:04

Yes. Because what they will learn in counseling to help them complete college will help them for the rest of their life.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:08:13

And then, in 2002, you left the position there in Health and Counseling to become the associate director of what was called, at the time, Ignatian Programs. How did this change come about? Rather significant change from Health and Counseling over to Ignatian Programs.

Debra Mooney: 00:08:33

Yes. That was a very significant change for me in that working at a university, even though I did a lot of things in Carbondale, I was still highly connected to the University there. I always imagined being a university psychologist. My husband had accepted a job at University of Cincinnati. This position came up at Xavier to be a psychologist, and I really thought that I would be retiring at the Health and ... at the time, yeah, Health and Counseling Center.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:09:07

We're certainly trained to do that. That's right, yeah.

Debra Mooney: 00:09:09

I was certainly trained to do that, and the work is very rewarding on many levels. But I was serving on the Ignatian Programs Committee. Father George Traub was heading a committee to help educate faculty and staff about the Jesuit identity of the University, and the person that's place that I took at the Health and Counseling Center had been on the committee previously, and since I was a wellness coordinator, think of it as mind, body, spirit, I was a fitting person to be on the committee. When I was on the committee-

Thomas Kennealy: 00:09:49

This is the committee that Father-

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Debra Mooney: 00:09:50 Traub.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:09:50 Traub set up.

Debra Mooney: 00:09:51 Yes.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:09:51 What was its purpose?

Debra Mooney: 00:09:53 The purpose was to help him ... he had been asked by Father Klein to engage the faculty and staff in the Jesuit Identity.

Debra Mooney: 00:10:01 With the decrease in presence of Jesuits, we needed more faculty to be steeped in that. Xavier started pretty early, in the 1980s, but he realized he couldn't do this by himself. We, I think, met, talked about how to engage new faculty, what might be some ongoing programs. Out of that came Manresa, AFMIX, and the like. But he was also looking for an assistant director. He wanted to take a sabbatical, wanted to work with someone, and I was very intrigued by that. That was one of the first things, as I was sitting on the committee, he was talking about his hopes and dreams for this person, and I was excited for him, and so, every time I'd see him, I'd ask, how was his search going, and one day, he scheduled an appointment with me, and I had no clue why he was wanting to meet with me. I never put the two of those together. But we met in my office at the Health and Counseling Center, he invited me to think about serving with him as the director--assistant director.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:11:12 He would be director, you would be associate director-

Debra Mooney: 00:11:16 Exactly.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:11:16 ... of Ignatian Programs, okay.

Debra Mooney: 00:11:17 Exactly. And then, the plan was, he would go on sabbatical, that person would be acting director for the year, and then, when he came back, he'd be director for the year. That changed, but before we get there, I can remember afterwards, because I'd even told my husband I had no clue why Father George Traub would want to talk to me, so I called him up,

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and I said, just, that I had been invited to think about working with him in Mission Identity, and I said to my husband, I'm flattered, but, of course, I'm going to say no. And my husband said, "why?" And every time I told him a reason why, there was a reason why that reason not to might be helpful. And useful. I am not a typical person that you would think. I was still very new to the University. I'm not Catholic. And I'm not a theologian. Which, for all those pretty major reasons, at first blush, would be counter-intuitive to this position. We ended up doing just as planned, although, when Father George Traub finished his year sabbatical, he decided, go ahead, you stay director, keep going, I'll just continue with mine. That's how the title happened. It wasn't originally...

- Thomas Kennealy: 00:12:50 You became associate rather than ...
- Debra Mooney: 00:12:53 I think I went assistant, associate, and then, when I was acting director, it just stayed director.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:12:58 Stayed director. I see, all right, okay.
- Debra Mooney: 00:13:00 And then, as the restructure started happening over time, director became associate vice president of the division, and then ...
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:13:07 Well, clearly you worked a great deal with Father George Traub.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:13:11 ... and got to know him very well.
- Debra Mooney: 00:13:12 Yes.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:13:14 Tell us about him, and his work, and how it was working with him.
- Debra Mooney: 00:13:20 Well, Father Leo Klein, at the time, was a visionary. He saw that there was going to be a need, in a couple of decades, ever-growing, for an expanded understanding of Jesuit Identity across the University, and he engaged Father Traub to be the head of that. Father Traub was an excellent person to do that, because he was a very engaging man, a very humble man. He wore his humility very strong, but that helped people to connect with him and be helpful to him in

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the intentions that he had. In some ways, he developed leaders in mission by saying he needed help in developing leaders in mission. Just the other day, there was someone that was speaking that new him, and his health had been pretty frail the last decade, so many of the newer faculty and staff don't know him as well as those that have been here longer, but one of those faculty members that did, just recently, had said that he really saw Father Traub as a mentor to him, and had helped him to learn how to be a mentor to the students that he took on Alternative Breaks just recently. That's the kind of man he was.

- Thomas Kennealy: 00:15:06 He certainly suffered from ill health over the years. It seemed to be one thing after another. But he understood the Jesuit identity, probably, as well as anyone, at the time.
- Debra Mooney: 00:15:19 He did, and he knew how to communicate that-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:15:21 Can get it to others-
- Debra Mooney: 00:15:22 ... to others.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:15:22 ... which is just as important.
- Debra Mooney: 00:15:23 Yes. Yes.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:15:26 But he's also the author of several important books in this whole area of Jesuit education. Tell us about those.
- Debra Mooney: 00:15:31 Yes. Well, he apparently was at a conference with Father Leo Klein, and there was a faith tradition, and I can't remember, it might have been Methodist. It was like a Methodist reader. It was a book. And Father Klein had said, wow, maybe someday there will be a Jesuit reader. And so, George, which he let us call him, or had us call him that, so I will call him that as well, he decided to make that happen, and he edited a book, the Jesuit Education Reader, and the Jesuit Spirituality Reader, and it was a collection of foundational documents on those topics that continue to be used to day in leadership formation programs

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across the country. But even more important than that was his *Do you Speak Ignatian?* book.

- Debra Mooney: 00:16:35 Or booklet.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:16:38 Which has gone through many editions.
- Debra Mooney: 00:16:40 Which has gone through many editions, and that stamp is on each one of them.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:16:41 One of them, yes, that's right, he counted every one.
- Debra Mooney: 00:16:43 He didn't put just the latest, that's right. That was in 1997, was the very first one, and what happened with that is, he had put together definitions of Ignatian terms, and not just, what does Cura Personalis mean, or magis, not just the Latin word, but others. What is social justice. More recently. What is God. And someone working here at the University took it to a conference to share with people, and it was so popular, they came back and realized people at this conference wanted more copies of it, and so, Xavier decided to make it a more formal booklet and make it available to, not only people here at Xavier, but others, and it has now withstood the test of time. It's not only shared in higher ed, but high schools, parishes, retreat centers, and the like.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:17:41 It's even been translated into Spanish, I understand.
- Debra Mooney: 00:17:45 It had been translated in Spanish early on in its editions. It has changed so much, and the person that did that original one left it, so actually our own Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco is making a Spanish-language version of it that should be out here, probably, in the next semester.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:18:06 Oh, good. That'll be the most recent edition, then.
- Debra Mooney: 00:18:07 Exactly. Exactly.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:18:09 [both laugh] Yes.
- Debra Mooney: 00:18:09 Exactly.

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- Thomas Kennealy: 00:18:10 The term Jesuit identity keeps coming up, Deborah. What does that term mean, as you understand it? What did it mean to Father Traub, what did it mean to Father Klein?
- Debra Mooney: 00:18:21 Well, I think it's hard to talk about identity without talking about mission, and if we think of the mission as the purpose, the purpose of higher education, then we might ask the question, what is, specifically, the purpose of Jesuit higher education? And I think that's where we get to the Jesuit identity. What is distinct about Xavier as an American university, a Catholic university, a Jesuit-Catholic university, as it's said in Ohio. And, specifically, I think, at Xavier, we've come to know it as the gifts of our Ignatian heritage, or through that terminology, the gifts of our Ignatian heritage, which came out of Discernment Group One, which was a group of people that Father Graham charged with thinking about the future mission identity at the University, and out of that came the gifts of our Ignatian heritage, which we think of as reflection, discernment, solidarity, and kinship, we added kinship. Service rooted in justice and love. And magis, Cura Personalis. I think that's all of them.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:19:49 Yeah. But certainly the issue becomes a little bit more complicated in more recent years as the number of Jesuits has declined very significantly. And I guess the real challenge for the University, how do we maintain this Jesuit identity with fewer and fewer Jesuits? Certainly, it's going to be the key role of faculty and staff, as well, to do that. And I guess that's where your job comes in.
- Debra Mooney: 00:20:17 That's exactly my job. How do we maintain understanding of the tradition and understanding of the value? How do we respect and embrace the different ways that people animate that tradition? A tradition that dates back 500 years. Which is really the purpose of what used to be Ignatian Programs and is now the Center for Mission and Identity.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:20:47 When you moved to Ignatian Programs in 2002, the program was administratively a part of what Xavier called the Division of Mission and Identity, and Father Klein was its vice president, if I'm not mistaken.

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You've talked about Father Klein, but obviously he was the person who had the vision to put all this together. What was he like, and what was it like working with him?

- Debra Mooney: 00:21:13 Well, he was a visionary, and he was pretty detail-oriented.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:21:17 He certainly was. I remember that well.
- Debra Mooney: 00:21:19 Yes. But I have to say, he didn't push that on other people, which is very nice. He appreciated, you got to know him. He felt pretty strongly about things, pretty particular about things. But could be open to understanding different ways of being and thinking about things. I think that really worked. He certainly saw the vision and the need for the whole area, and the division. He certainly selected Father George Traub as someone who was detailed, and as particular as he was. That he embraced my selection in this position, I think, tells you about that style. No, it was interesting, I was at a meeting relatively recently of representatives from the Province Ministries here in the Cincinnati region, and someone had said how they remembered him, decades ago, talking about the importance of networking within various ministries, and within, even, higher ed network, Jesuit network, but also, the various ... he always saw that and tried to do what he could, as much as possible, in his leadership here at the University, and within the province.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:22:44 And certainly exercised a great deal of influence throughout the American assistance in this area. One of the first projects undertaken by Ignatian Programs was the Manresa orientation program for newly-hired faculty and staff, and continues to this day. What is the Manresa orientation program, and how does it work?
- Debra Mooney: 00:23:06 The purpose of Manresa is to help our newly-hired faculty and staff understand what it means to be working at a Jesuit-Catholic university. And I think we do that in a way that is especially effective. For one, we invite faculty and staff together to understand that, and our orientation is specifically about Jesuit identity.

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And I think that's a very unique across the Jesuit network. We take that for granted here at Xavier, but that is something that's special that's been happening for decades. I think what's also helpful is that, while Father Graham gives an opening presentation at the president's welcome luncheon, which invites all the new faculty and staff to the lunch to meet him, to meet the cabinet, but also, then, to hear about, what is this Manresa program, and they will hear from me, they will hear from Joe Shadle, the Director of the Center, but equally so, if not more so, they'll hear from other people, talking about how they bring the mission to life.

- Thomas Kennealy: 00:24:27 Other faculty, other staff. Yes, okay.
- Debra Mooney: 00:24:29 Other faculty and staff, yes.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:24:29 Talking to them.
- Debra Mooney: 00:24:30 Talking to them. About how they have done it. It's one thing to have the chief mission officer talk about the mission statement. It really means something different to have a professor in political science who's a Muslim man talk about, what does Xavier's mission statement mean to him in his work at the University?
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:24:50 I presume this program is very early in the school year, then.
- Debra Mooney: 00:24:55 Very early.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:24:55 And how long does it run?
- Debra Mooney: 00:24:56 There's two options. One is off-campus, it's an overnight retreat where many of our faculty and staff come and help cook dinner, serve dinner. Not only do they get the presentation, including from the provost, and from other Cabinet members, and, as well, from people from all across the University. There's also a three-part lunch program for those that might find it difficult to be away from family and life responsibilities overnight. Anyone that's been hired in the last 12 months is invited.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:25:31 Is invited to participate.

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- Debra Mooney: 00:25:33 Yes, yes.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:25:33 Good. Another very successful program has been the AFMIX, which as I understand, stands for Assuring the Future Mission and Identity of Xavier. People use the expression, but I'm not sure they all know exactly what it means.
- Debra Mooney: 00:25:49 They don't, yes.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:25:50 Tell us about AFMIX. I know it's been a very successful program. How does that work, and what are its goals?
- Debra Mooney: 00:25:55 Yeah. Another one of our goals at Manresa is to let people know that they're welcome at the University, that their differences are appreciated, and the mega-message is, knowing that they might be interested and excited to learn more. Because that next program, for most people, would be AFMIX. Which is a two-year program that meets during the fall and spring semesters, and the idea is to become even more deeply steeped in the identity. There's an introduction to the founding of the Society, the values, the founder himself, there's a focus on prayer, a reflection in the sermon that second semester. The third semester is an introduction to the spiritual exercises and Ignatian spirituality in the smaller group. There's always been over 30 people in each cohort, but that third semester is broken into smaller groups, and then the fourth semester is, what does this mean to me and my work? It is supported now by an endowment from the Gasiewicz family, Phil and Beth Gasiewicz. And it is one of our most foundational programs.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:27:14 How many cohorts have you now graduated from the program?
- Debra Mooney: 00:27:17 That's a good question. We just celebrated 20 years, so that would be 10 cohorts.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:27:22 Cohorts. Good for you. And this, of course, builds on the Manresa orientation program.
- Debra Mooney: 00:27:28 It does.

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- Thomas Kennealy: 00:27:28 It's designed to.
- Debra Mooney: 00:27:29 It does. Especially for staff, because ... or tenured faculty, because we have another program for our faculty. But I did want to mention, about AFMIX, Sheila Duran was in the very first cohort of AFMIX, she has facilitated, co-facilitated, or deeply helped every other cohort since then. This year, we especially recognized her support of that program as she received the inaugural Father George Traub Award for Exemplary Service to the Mission Identity of the University for her work with that.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:28:18 That's good. And, in 2004, the Ignatian Programs introduced the Ignatian Mentoring Program, which, as I understand, it builds yet again on the work of AFMIX. Tell us about the Ignatian Mentoring Program.
- Debra Mooney: 00:28:31 The Ignatian Mentoring Program actually is an AFMIX-like for faculty.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:28:36 Oh, okay.
- Debra Mooney: 00:28:37 Because of the time commitment of AFMIX, we wanted to make sure we didn't step on the toes, you might say, of the time that new faculty needed to develop their research program, get their teaching classes together, many of them being new to that particular faculty...
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:28:56 And working toward tenure, too.
- Debra Mooney: 00:28:58 Working towards tenure, and their service, and all that. But we didn't want to wait five or six years to engage tenure-track faculty, because they would already have developed their professional identity, and, if the Jesuit identity is really going to be strong at the University, it's going to come through ... if our students are going to experience a Jesuit education, they're going to experience it through the classroom and the through the faculty. The Ignatian Mentoring Program came about, initially, with a grant from the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts. And our proposal for that, which we received, was to pair our newer faculty with our senior faculty. Those early years, they were faculty who had participated in

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AFMIX, actually, that first cohort especially. They were already tenured, they had been at the University for a while. Nowadays, it is our Ignatian Mentoring Program mentees who now have become mentored.

- Debra Mooney: 00:30:00 But they're paired up, they talk about, what does it mean to be teaching at a Jesuit university, what is Ignatian pedagogy, as it relates to that particular faculty member's interests, faith, spirituality, discipline, in whatever ways they see it fitting. They meet for a year, and, at the end of that year, they write up how they think of their courses and classes and/or research in a way that is very Ignatian and Jesuit. They share that, we recognize that, the celebration of excellence. That has been very effective. Many of them talk about that in their tenure dossiers, the importance of that. In mentoring programs, you always hear that it's important for the mentors as for the mentees. I think, for this one, it's especially true, because it's the first time many faculty will truly be a leader in mission. They now are-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:31:00 Okay. Not just sitting and listening, but actually-
- Debra Mooney: 00:31:03 Exactly.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:31:03 ... taking a leadership role.
- Debra Mooney: 00:31:04 Exactly, exactly.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:31:05 In 2007, Father Leo Klein resigned as president of the Division of Mission and Identity, and a number of significant changes occurred in the division at that time. Could you tell us about some of those?
- Debra Mooney: 00:31:20 Yeah. Before I go that, I forgot I want to always do a shout-out to the Xavier Jesuit community, who endowed that program after the Lilly first year.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:31:31 Oh, yes, this is going back to the mentoring program.
- Debra Mooney: 00:31:34 Yeah, exactly.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:31:37 Oh, okay. An endowment from the Jesuit community.

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- Debra Mooney: 00:31:37 Yes. That program will be in perpetuity, just as AFMIX-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:31:41 We have to give them proper recognition.
- Debra Mooney: 00:31:43 We do, we do. We do. An interesting shout-out, too, that one of the mentees in the first cohort was David Mengel, Dr. David Mengel, who is now dean of arts and sciences-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:31:55 ... and Sciences.
- Debra Mooney: 00:31:55 ... so, that really shows, when the learner becomes the teacher, the full learning circle has occurred, so there we go. He's pretty significant for the success of that program, a model for that. Yes, so, in 2007, it was decided that it made sense to structure what was currently a division, to maybe restructure it in a way that matched Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach's call for the service of faith and the promotion of social justice as getting-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:32:37 Now, who was Father Kolvenbach? Perhaps we should explain to our hearers.
- Debra Mooney: 00:32:40 Superior General of the Society of Jesus, the world leader.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:32:44 Of the Jesuits.
- Debra Mooney: 00:32:45 Of the Jesuits.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:32:46 Residing in Rome, yeah.
- Debra Mooney: 00:32:47 Residing in Rome.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:32:47 The big boss-
- Debra Mooney: 00:32:48 The big boss.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:32:49 ... as we Jesuits say.
- Debra Mooney: 00:32:49 That's right. The big guy. None of us met personally, but we know of his calls.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:32:53 We know about him when you hear from him, yeah.

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- Debra Mooney: 00:32:54 That's right.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:32:59 And you were going to say something about a-
- Debra Mooney: 00:33:01 Yes. And so, the restructure idea was that what was currently Peace and Justice Programs and Campus Ministry would be combined to be the Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:33:14 And they moved out, then, on their own, so to say.
- Debra Mooney: 00:33:19 Exactly. They moved out, or they moved into Student Affairs, so that, because those offices were focused on students, it made sense for them to be housed, both literally and figuratively, with other student-focused groups. And then, that left Ignatian Programs, and so, that became the Center for Mission and Identity, reporting, then, to the President. As a way to strengthen the focus on making sure that the faculty and staff understood the Jesuit identity of the University.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:34:02 It was an administrative adjustment.
- Debra Mooney: 00:34:04 It was.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:34:04 The two groups that were really working with students moved to Student Development, and then Mission and Identity became a group that reported directly to the President.
- Debra Mooney: 00:34:14 Exactly. It was very administrative, there was no personnel changes.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:34:20 About that time, then, Father Graham appointed the Discernment Group Number One. You mentioned it earlier. Perhaps you could talk about it a little bit more in detail, because I think it was at this point that it played its important role.
- Debra Mooney: 00:34:34 This was happening at about the same time, or there was talk about this, they were talking about, how might people work together across campuses? He gathered folks that represented the Brueggeman Center, diversity, theology, and Ignatian Programs, at the time. It was headed by Father Jean Carmichael.

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Also representative from Interfaith Community Engagement, from the Community Building Institute. And the idea was that we would experience things, and I was part of that, so I say "we", we would experience things in a much lighter way than the Jesuits would in formation, or as they were considering being a Jesuit. We were going to engage in education, in Ignatian spirituality, and the spiritual exercises in a individual way, an introduction to them, and an immersion trip that we took together.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:35:45

Oh, a trip of some kind.

Debra Mooney: 00:35:46

A trip.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:35:47

And the entire group went on this trip, okay.

Debra Mooney: 00:35:50

Yes. And, out of that, we were thinking about ways that we might network, or what kind of structures, what might the future be. As a group that met like that over time, you can imagine we had some pretty grand ideas. About the time that we're getting ready to share them is when we have the financial crisis of 2007 and 2008, and we pretty quickly know that those grand, pretty high-price tag ideas were not going to happen, nor should they. But, in our writing, we had, in the introduction, developed this concept of the gifts of Ignatian heritage, and that was really quite just a little part of our writing, it was part of the side, we never really thought about it, but, as others read it, they really connected with that, including the trustees, particularly the Jesuit Identity Committee, and they have encouraged us, and continue, even the new trustees, when they start hearing about the gifts of the Ignatian heritage, they continue to emphasize the importance of that as a communication tool and a way for people to really be able to really understand, what does this all mean? So much so that I have to now remind people that that is not a worldwide or historical way of talking about the Jesuit identity. That's how we do it here at Xavier.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:37:18

And this was incorporated into the report.

Debra Mooney: 00:37:21

It was incorporated in the report, yes.

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- Thomas Kennealy: 00:37:22 I see. And that's how it became read and studied.
- Debra Mooney: 00:37:22 Yes. Yeah. It was how we were communicating it as a group-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:37:27 At the time.
- Debra Mooney: 00:37:29 ... but it became the takeaway.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:37:31 Yeah, from the entire Discernment Group Number One, yeah.
- Debra Mooney: 00:37:34 Exactly. Exactly.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:37:34 And, in 2009, then, you were named the chief mission officer of the University, and the head of the newly-created Center for Mission and Identity. A woman being Xavier's CMO.
- Debra Mooney: 00:37:47 That's right.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:37:49 How does that feel, and what's it like?
- Debra Mooney: 00:37:52 That was another admission that was rather rare at the time. I was probably the second woman, I believe, Chief Mission Officer, and there was only two, even in 2012. I was looking at some data over the time. Right now, there are seven out of ... unfortunately, this week, we now, from 28 to 27 Jesuit universities, with the disaffiliation of Wheeling. Interestingly, half of the current mission officers in the province are women. The Upper Midwest Province has often been ahead of trends, and I think that's true for that. I have to say, it's an honor, it's an honor to be in this position for the University, for the network. I haven't noticed it to be any different as a woman than I think it would be as a man, but it is noticeable, and it is remarkable, being a rare woman. There was actually a conference of representatives from Jesuit schools about a year ago on our campus, and they had asked me to come in and say hello, and afterwards, someone said, they just couldn't imagine the mission officer being a woman, it surprised them so much. And again, we take that for granted here, but at other places-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:39:19 It's not so, yeah.

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- Debra Mooney: 00:39:20 It's not so, yeah, that's right.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:39:22 Follow up question. How do you see the role of women in Jesuit higher education?
- Debra Mooney: 00:39:31 I think it's particularly important, and it might seem simple, but if half the world is women, and half of our universities, in fact, more so, are women, I think it's important, not only as role models for other women, but also for men, as we learn to work well together. I think, in that way, it's important. I've actually been asking women ... I should say, the last couple of years, I've been focusing much of my energies on supporting women in leadership, in mission-conscious leadership. I've been, actually, surprised at how well that has been received, and how of interest that has been to women. Even though it is 2019, there's still a need for it.
- Debra Mooney: 00:40:27 And so, I've asked women, what do they think might be helpful to the network? It's not just my opinion, I've been asking over the years. And I guess it's not surprising, but the top two answers to that question have been opportunity and presentation. Having women in positions, they will specifically say. They'll also say, having mentors and mentorship. And then, the other thing is education and dialogue. I guess that doesn't surprise us, when I ask people that work at a university, that they would say education and dialogue, but I think sometimes, just as I might have thought that maybe we don't need to be thinking about gender quite as much as we might have in the past, I think it's still there, and women and men appreciate the ability to talk about it.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:41:18 I've heard about the women's salon, and I knew you've been very intent on that. Could you talk about that? Explain it, what exactly it is.
- Debra Mooney: 00:41:29 I used salon in the definition of the early renaissance. A salon, meaning to educate or to please, which is the same purpose of poetry, and I think the style is very Ignatian, although I don't emphasize that it's about Jesuit identity. I've actually offered it to women in Cincinnati business. They wouldn't have known otherwise. But the process is giving just a bit of

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information, and then inviting women to reflect on their own experience. And it's really amazing how much insight people have, just in having the invitation to think about that. For instance, even inviting women to think about how they learned to be a woman, a leader, a woman leader, based on their experiences with their mother, father, or parent figure. And sometimes they have insights that they hadn't gained without being asked specifically. The salon focuses on questions like that, like socialization, what do they see as their own strengths, how do they build on strengths? How have they experienced stereotyping, who are their models? To think about that for themselves, and then to learn from other women in a large group, and in a small group, and just having the opportunity to talk about that.

- Thomas Kennealy: 00:42:57 Now, is this a group that meets on campus here, or a larger Cincinnati community? A group of women gathering to discuss these issues, or ...
- Debra Mooney: 00:43:08 The very first one was a province gathering of women. Women represented the six universities-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:43:15 The Chicago province of the Jesuits, or ...
- Debra Mooney: 00:43:16 And Wisconsin. The six.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:43:17 And Wisconsin.
- Debra Mooney: 00:43:18 The upper Midwest.
- Debra Mooney: 00:43:19 The new ...
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:43:20 The new ...
- Debra Mooney: 00:43:21 Yeah, the coming together.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:43:24 ... Midwest province. That's right.
- Debra Mooney: 00:43:24 And, in fact, that was one of the reasons why. And Campion College in Canada. We call it a North American conference. We would joke about that. But it was two half-days, and actually, I think it did start with a retreat on campus. It was three hours, the very first one, but those 12 women asked to do it again.

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And so, I first facilitated that with Sandy Richtermeyer, who was associate dean at the time. She was also director of faculty programs and mission identity, which is a position that is, I think, unique to Xavier. It's been very important in helping faculty, peer-to-peer education. She was in that position, we facilitated one for women, they wanted more. We realized, wow, that might be something of interest, and so, as she has left the University, I've carried that one. I've offered it in one-hour, as short as in one-hour as a sampler, and as long as two days, depending on the group and their interest and purpose.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:44:31 But then, eventually, it moved from just a Xavier project to one of the entire province, Jesuit province?

Debra Mooney: 00:44:38 We did one for the province.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:44:39 I see.

Debra Mooney: 00:44:39 I've done it with women mission officers of the AJCU. I've done it in Cincinnati with businesswomen. I've done it at the Higher Learning Commission.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:44:48 I see. Even outside of Jesuit and-

Debra Mooney: 00:44:49 Even outside.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:44:50 ... university circles.

Debra Mooney: 00:44:51 Yup.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:44:51 Good. In addition to the projects we've talked about already, what are some of the other activities of the Center of Mission and Identity?

Debra Mooney: 00:45:02 A very significant one, I think, started under Father Traub as well, and it's called WISE for short. It's an acronym for Wisdom and Integration through the Spiritual Exercises, which really came about, really, as a play on the Seeking Integration Wisdom document that was affirmed by the Board in 2014, and it focused on how we saw our Jesuit Catholic identity. The WISE group, then, was a group meeting for faculty to meet weekly over the academic year and experience Ignatian spirituality in a very significant

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and deep way. That occurred in 2017, the academic year 2017. This past year, two of the participants in that group co-facilitated it for a next group of faculty, and that was Evan Clark and Linda Schoenstedt, who is the current director of faculty programs, took it over after Sandy Richtermeyer, and this particular group was faculty of color. It was especially meaningful and, I think, profound group this year. But I think that's a wonderful legacy that Father Traub has left, to engage faculty in Ignatian spirituality.

- Thomas Kennealy: 00:46:27 Was this some kind of a year-long retreat, or ...
- Debra Mooney: 00:46:31 They meet during the weekday. This year's group, this semester, met Mondays for an hour and a half.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:46:39 And more discussion, or faith sharing, or a combination of both?
- Debra Mooney: 00:46:44 Combination of both. They have a short reading, and it follows the flow of the spiritual exercises. And then they have sharing as they get together.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:46:57 And that's WISE.
- Debra Mooney: 00:46:57 That's WISE.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:46:57 Which I think stands for Wisdom and Integration through the Spiritual Exercises.
- Debra Mooney: 00:47:00 Exactly. Exactly.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:47:02 Anything else by way of activities that you'd like to mention?
- Debra Mooney: 00:47:07 I would like to mention the work with Xavier Trustees. That's near and dear to my heart. It was the very first thing that Father Graham invited me to think about once I became chief mission officer, and he asked me to think about a cohesive, ongoing educational program for trustees. It was going to be a two-year program, and here we are. I realized it's ten years later this year as well. The Conway Institute is ten years old, and our work with trustees is ten years old as well. But, in meeting with the chair of the Jesuit Mission Identity Committee, who is still the chair, John

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Maydonovitch, he had said, the very first thing when I mentioned this, he said, no books. And whenever I've been asked, I have been asked a lot now to share this work across the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, I met with folks that were developing a program for the secondary education, I've met with those in the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, who have actually emulated the style, they just developed a program that's going to be starting this fall, but I always mention, because it made us think about how we were going to do an educational program without books, which ended up being beautiful, because it was very Ignatian, then.

- Debra Mooney: 00:48:35 It follows that same style that I just mentioned for the salons, which is, give our trustees a bit of information that's important and significant, then invite them to reflect on, what does that mean to them in their work as a trustee? The most recent, and they love having a short four-minute video, reflection question, and discussion. The most recent is Ignatian governance based on Father Sosa, the current Superior General, world leader, called for renewed governance, and in the style that isn't just for men of the Society of Jesus, but in all the ministries, which includes discernment, networking, and collaboration.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:49:22 And I'm sure nothing is more important or essential to the University than making sure the Board of Trustees is well-informed. It's certainly important to train the faculty and staff, but the Board of Trustees perhaps most of all, and that's where the program would come into play.
- Debra Mooney: 00:49:38 It does, and they have embraced it quite strongly as well.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:49:42 Good, good.
- Debra Mooney: 00:49:42 And that really came again as Father Graham, there was discussions about that, and he was quick to capture that and say, let's do it.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:49:50 Under your leadership, the Center has introduced an excellent web-based resource on Jesuit education. Prayers, quotations, insights. I've used it often myself.

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Tell us about Jesuitresource.org. How'd it get started, and what is it you aim to achieve by it?

- Debra Mooney: 00:50:11 Yeah. That founding was in 2007, am I putting my years on that right? It's important, because, at the time, websites were still rather new, wasn't sure if it was going to go in the way of the 8-track tape, where it would be here for a year or two and the next thing would happen. But there was a need for a place to share information that was different than what Boston College would have, which was some very sophisticated, scholarly theological writings they kept on their website, but those seemed to be useful especially for those earning master's or doctoral degrees in theology. We also had Creighton University, which still has their spiritual-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:51:06 Excellent sources, yes.
- Debra Mooney: 00:51:06 Excellent source on spiritual exercises. It continues, to this day, to be used. But there was still a need to be able to understand Jesuit identity in a way that was user-friendly for that group of people that weren't getting master's or doctorates in theology. And proposed it to Father Graham, who was an early understander of the importance of that. Websites were so new, at the time, that our own folks weren't going to be able to develop it in the style that they knew it. Our marketers here. So, they helped us connect with an outside agency. Father Graham needed to give the approval for funding, because, at the time, it was significant, especially for something, you don't know how it's going to take, but, my goodness, it has taken off more than we ever expected. It has grown in reach, every year-
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:52:07 How many countries of the world do you think you connect with?
- Debra Mooney: 00:52:11 We are over 200, and every time we think about that, we wonder how many countries in the world there are, because we know it's pretty close to a low 200, and we've been hitting 200.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:52:21 That's amazing.

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- Debra Mooney: 00:52:22 The most common, of course, is the United States, followed, kind of surprisingly, by the Philippines, which we find very interesting, that that is always in the top few. Canada. The United Kingdom. Australia. India. Nigeria. South Africa. Kenya. And Malaysia. Those are our top ten, as of this past year. Prayers are the biggest sought-after resource, followed by the Life of Ignatius Loyola.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:52:53 Interesting. Yes. Well, it certainly reaches the entire world, and that's the power of the Internet, too.
- Debra Mooney: 00:52:59 Yeah, exactly.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:53:01 In 2009, you became the founding director of Conway Institute of Jesuit Education. We mentioned it earlier, but I'd like to talk more about it. What is the Conway Institute? Who's responsible for it, and what does it do?
- Debra Mooney: 00:53:18 Bob and Ruth Conway founded the Conway Institute. Bob had been a trustee here, and also one of the earliest, I believe he's the second trustee that was head of the Jesuit Mission Identity Committee. He graduated as a student in 1949. He was a captain of the football team, he was head of the student body. He eventually earned the Alumni of the Year Award. But, in his work as a trustee, and certainly in heading Jesuit Identity, he wanted to help the University in perpetuity, in a way, and so, the Conway focuses and supports faculty-specific activities and programs. Helping faculty to understand the Jesuit identity. He helps them go to conferences, network, programs, those on our own campus. Our faculty, for instance, that participate in WISE, receive a stipend, because that is above and beyond their typical activities, and that comes out of the Conway Fellowship. Another significant part of that is the Conway Faculty Fellow, where faculty apply each year, they are selected by a panel of faculty to do a program or an activity, a scholarly activity, that would animate the mission identity in the University, and possibly beyond, in ways that are significant. That is the Conway Faculty Fellowship.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:55:00 And this would be an endowed-

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Debra Mooney: 00:55:00 It is.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:55:00 ... institute, then.

Debra Mooney: 00:55:02 It is.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:55:02 By Bob and Rita Conway.

Debra Mooney: 00:55:04 Bob and Ruth, yes.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:55:05 Ruth. Yeah, yeah. Good. Future plans for the Center, and for the Conway Institute. Would you like to talk about those?

Debra Mooney: 00:55:13 Yeah. I think that ... some future activity ... I should say that I think one of the things that our style and philosophy is to always be updating, and changing, and preparing. Even though AFMIX is in its 20 years, for example, it's never the same, every two years. And so, I think the answer is, we're going to be changing some things, maybe not even in ways that we know it right now. But one of the things I think is significant is expanding on the idea of the network. The current provincial office, which includes the head of the province, which currently is Father Brian Paulson and his assistant in Jesuit higher education, which is Father Dan McDonald, they have been very active, I think, under their leadership these past five years, five-plus years, as the provinces were merging. But in connecting with and helping the schools connect with each other.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:56:30 Oh, the various Jesuit Universities.

Debra Mooney: 00:56:32 Exactly.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:56:32 Working together.

Debra Mooney: 00:56:33 Exactly.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:56:34 Okay. Which would be ... about five or six in number in this province, wouldn't that be right?

Debra Mooney: 00:56:41 Six, yep.

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- Thomas Kennealy: 00:56:41 Yeah, six. Yes. Which would be Marquette, Creighton, Xavier, Loyola, Mercy, and John Carroll.
- Debra Mooney: 00:56:49 John Carroll.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:56:50 John Carroll.
- Debra Mooney: 00:56:50 Chicago. Yes. Just this semester, just last month, we, Xavier, kicked off what is now a province initiative, which is recognizing people who have done a significant educational program so that they can animate the mission in ways that are fitting for them. And the award is the Province Ignatian Educator of Distinction.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:57:22 Educator of Distinction.
- Debra Mooney: 00:57:25 Yes.
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:57:28 This will be a province-wide award, then.
- Debra Mooney: 00:57:30 This will be a province-wide award. The idea is that it might be hard for something to initiate at the AJCU level, with 27 other schools, but we could probably do that with six. I think the province is actually imagining it being, potentially, at the assistancy level. In fact, Father McDonald has already said that other provincials and provincial assistant offices have been calling up. But I think that's really exciting and novel, and I'm happy to say that I think Xavier was a big help in making this happen. This has been something that was discussed, and it was nice to recognize people. Just this past month, those that had completed AFMIX and the WISE program are some of the very first ones that are being recognized. And, over the summer, we'll be grandfathering the rest in, looking at it as ...
- Thomas Kennealy: 00:58:24 Has the award been given out as yet?
- Debra Mooney: 00:58:28 In fact, Father McDonald came to the Celebration of Excellence. We, Mission and Identity, every year, host what we call the Celebration of Excellence. We start the year with Manresa, we end with the Celebration of Excellence recognizing those that have participated. One of the things about mission activities is that they

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are all voluntary, which is important. We need to make sure that we meet the needs of both the University and the individuals doing it. I think that helps us keep the quality up. We always like that they're voluntary. Sometimes people say, oh, you should make it mandatory. Our philosophy is, let's make it good, let's make it of interest to people.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:59:06

So it will attract.

Debra Mooney: 00:59:07

So it will attract. And not have people sitting, arms crossed, why do I have to be here? Instead, they're, I want to be here, I raised my hand, I want to be here. So, anyway. Yes, our first ones, and Father McDonald was so excited, he adjusted his schedule so that he could come out and hand out the certificates at that first-

Thomas Kennealy: 00:59:26

Very good.

Debra Mooney: 00:59:26

Yes. Yes. I think that's going to be something that will go down, I believe, in the history, as we look back on Mission Identity across the province, as well as the national network. In fact, someone, and maybe it was Father McDonald, has said, he goes, we're going to look back on this and say, why weren't we doing this sooner? Because it just makes so much sense right now.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:59:48

That's right. Well, and I think it makes sense for the Jesuit institutions of the province to work together.

Debra Mooney: 00:59:54

Yes.

Thomas Kennealy: 00:59:54

And they should in other areas, but certainly this would be preeminent, I would think.

Debra Mooney: 00:59:59

Yeah. In fact, someone said, just as we had anticipated, but to have it happen so quickly, even at the reception of the Celebration of Excellence, I had people coming up, saying, if I did this, does this qualify? But then, someone else opened up their folder, with their certificate in it, and they were surprised to not see the chief mission officer at Xavier's signature, or the president at Xavier's signature, but instead it was the signature of the

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provincial and provincial assistant. It also communicated that it is larger, that we are part of a network-

Thomas Kennealy: 01:00:30

That's right.

Debra Mooney: 01:00:30

... and that their voluntary time has meaning beyond our campus.

Thomas Kennealy: 01:00:38

Is there anything else you'd like to add before we conclude our interview today, Debra? Anything I forgot to ask about and you'd like to put in here?

Debra Mooney: 01:00:46

I don't think so. Thank you very much.

Thomas Kennealy: 01:00:48

I think we pretty well covered it, very good. This concludes our interview, but before we do so, I want to thank you for a very interesting and informative history. This will be valuable to us, and we're very grateful for your taking the time to do it.

Debra Mooney: 01:01:01

You're welcome. Thank you. My pleasure.

End of Interview

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