

Resolution on the Retirement of
Marian Connor
Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education

Adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

May 16, 1994

Marian Connor was born in Cambridge. Marian currently resides in Cambridge. She plans to retire in Cambridge. Lest you think that she has been living her life in an ancestral home with a flinty old maiden aunt, let me set the record straight.

Marian received her B.A. from Emmanuel College, majoring in English and defying all sound principles of a liberal arts education by taking all her electives in English. She did not complete any math requirement.

Marian went on to graduate school after having her two sons, Michael and Brian. She earned an M.Ed. at Boston State and taught for a year at Haverhill High School. In the pre-Stanley Kaplan days, she studied for GREs during February vacation and was admitted to B.U.'s English Department with a teaching fellowship, which she used to teach English composition and a seminar in autobiography.

Marian's initiation into the real world of higher education commenced with a two-year stint at the newly opened Roxbury Community College, where she chaired the English Department for a year. Having led, by her own admission, a fairly sheltered existence within a predominantly white society, it was a tremendous emotional experience. The school was new, the students were enthusiastic and non-traditional. The median age of the freshman class was 30. Marian recalls teaching in an old automobile showroom and eating lunch in Muslim Temple #11.

To gain administrative experience, she took a job with the Massachusetts State Department of Education in a division dealing with people with disabilities. It should not be viewed as particularly significant that the switch from teaching to

administration allowed time for work on her dissertation. "The Abyss and the Star: The Poetry of Herman Melville" was completed during a six-week stay in Vermont in a room without a telephone.

Marian's Tufts career began in 1977, when she was hired to work half-time in the English Department and half-time as one of three people in the new Preceptor Program. Marian's particular preceptor responsibilities were to arrange SPIRIT-type activities and enrichment for commuting students through the Commuter Resource Center at 120 Packard Avenue. The Preceptor Program was short-lived, but Marian's career at Tufts proved to be not so ephemeral. Then-dean Nancy Milburn hired her as an associate dean to head the Continuing Education program, while continuing to teach in the English Department. When Howard Solomon became the first Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Marian reported to him and later, under David Maxwell, became Dean of Seniors, the position she currently holds. She also served as acting Dean of Undergraduate Education for a semester. Her early work with continuing education students has blossomed into the directorship of the Tufts Resumed Education for Adult Learners program, where she admits, teaches, counsels, and otherwise nurtures some of our most outstanding students.

Marian has never been a complacent person, settling in to a well-defined job. Rather, she has always stretched her intellect and her interests. In the late 1980's she co-led a 5-session mini-series entitled, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Body Image and Self-esteem in Fiction by Women." More recently, an interest in working with adults to help them read better has led to taking a class on teaching English as a Second Language at B.U. She uses her new skills by regularly assisting teachers in ESL at Somerville High night school.

So, what do you say about a dean who retires? If that dean is Marian Connor, you can say a great deal. Marian tells me that her husband, Bill, is astonished at the stories she brings home, mostly about the topics of conversation at our fabled lunches. "We would never talk about that stuff at M.I.T.," he says. Well, M.I.T. doesn't have Marian to disinhibit lunch-time discussions. Within the madness that often strikes our office as students collide with rules and deadlines, I can count on Marian to give me a firm fix on reality. Her sensitivity to student needs and concerns is unquestioned, but she has a well-developed B.S. detector that

seldom fails to separate the genuinely aggrieved from the slackers. At her retirement reception, I was struck by the devotion of the many past and present REAL students who attended, each eager to give me advice about a successor. All this advice seemed to be prefaced with, "Well, of course there's nobody like Marian." And it's probably true that her successor would be unlikely to participate in a 2:00 a.m. painting of the cannon with her REAL students.

Marian's goals for retirement are modest--to write fiction, but not poetry--of which she stands in awe; to spend more time with Bill, her sons and grandchildren; and, of course, to continue to hang out in Cambridge where she's on a first-name basis with the good people in Wordsworth.

Be it resolved that this resolution be spread on the minutes of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and that a copy be sent to Dean Connor.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter C. Swap, Dean
Undergraduate Education