From teaching in Princeton Public Schools to being the President and CEO of the International Council of Shopping Centers, Montclair Alumnus John T. Riordan has enjoyed a long, successful career since his graduation in 1959. While still very active at the age of 76, including his position as Founding Chair for the Dean's Advisory Council for CHSS, Mr. Riordan now graciously reflects on his time spent at Montclair State University, noting how significantly his college education impacted his illustrious career. A story that is particularly inspiring for current MSU students and alumni, Mr. Riordan's career, backboned by determination, a first-rate education, and exceptional teachers, is an example of the many possibilities awaiting MSU students.

After graduating Belleville High School in 1955, Mr. Riordan began his education at Montclair State University, financially supported by a full scholarship. Studying Spanish and French, it was during this time that Mr. Riordan received an education so exceptional, that he now attributes much of his success to the foundation it provided him. Also studying foreign languages at Montclair during this time were Protase Woodford and Conrad Schmitt, who in 2011 made a generous donation to what would later become Conrad J. Schmitt Hall. After graduating Montclair, this small group of students went on to achieve tremendous success, while later recognizing both the quality of the education they received and the impact that it had on their careers. Illustrating the achievements of the Montclair alumni within this program, Mr. Riordan notes, “At one point, virtually every single head of every American publisher that had foreign language publishing was a graduate of Montclair.”

The common link between the numerous successful alumni from this era was the excellence of Montclair's programs and curriculums. In particular, Mr. Riordan notes the profound impact that Professor Terese de Escorianza had on her students. With a first-hand understanding of Spanish history and friendships with many influential figures of the time, Professor Escorianza provided her students with an education that could not be found elsewhere. Mr. Riordan explained that while other universities had a literature-based approach to language learning that would sometimes draw attention away from the language itself, Montclair had a more practical, applied approach, resulting in students who had “down-to-earth, everyday, deep skills in the language” and in his fluency in Spanish, French, and Italian. Out of his respect and gratitude, Mr. Riordan was a prominent voice in the naming of the Teresa de Escorianza Seminar Room on the third floor of Schmitt Hall.

After graduating from Montclair, Mr. Riordan continued his education and began his remarkable career. He received his Master's Degree from Laval University in 1963, an AMP from Harvard Graduate School of Business in 1980, and a Doctorate in Humane Letters, honoris causa, at MSU. His began his career as a teacher in Princeton Public Schools in 1964, and then was a consultant and editor at McGraw Hill, working with fellow alumnus Conrad Schmitt. After working with Educational Testing Service for a few years, he went on to work at the publishing company Houghton Mifflin, where he served as Manager, Editorial Director and eventually Senior Vice President until 1982. Though initially unaware of the company's future prospects, Mr. Riordan enjoyed tremendous success as he went on to work with the International Council of Shopping Centers as General Manager, President, and CEO. Because of his success with ISIC, with whom he remains a Life Trustee, Mr. Riordan also served as the Thomas Eastman Chair of the Center for Real Estate for Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 2001-2004. Mr. Riordan was unsuccessful, however, in retiring, as he remains an active board member for several institutions, including chairing the CHSS Advisory Council here at MSU. Of his current engagements and overall successful career, Mr. Riordan states, “I'm still active. I've retired three times from various things and I still travel the world. But none of that would have been possible – were it not for Montclair.”

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