

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

Britt Carl '04

Director of Student Success
High Point University

Confidence. Joy. Passion. Saint Mary's alumna Britt Carl '04 exudes all three. Her journey of self-discovery was founded in the confidence she built as a Saint Mary's student, the joy she experienced in opportunities she took, and the passion she developed later in life serving college students.

Creating Lifetime Connections

Britt grew up in Cary, N.C., with her sister Ciara '00 and their parents Greg and Velencia Carl. Her journey as a Saint Mary's girl began even before she officially enrolled as a 9th-grade day student in 2000. That's because in 1997, her sister Ciara was recruited by the head basketball coach to play on Saint Mary's basketball team.

"I practically grew up at 900 Hillsborough while Ciara was there," she says. "Our family came to every basketball game, and I got to know her friends, teammates, and some of the faculty and staff."

High school can be a scary life transition for teens, but Britt saw how Ciara and her friends grew academically and socially during their time as students. So, when it came time to decide on her own high school journey, Britt felt Saint Mary's was the right place. Of course, it didn't hurt that her best friend since the 2nd grade Nia Triantis Gillespie '04 also decided to come to Saint Mary's.

"I remember our first day," Britt explains. "We carpooled from Cary into Raleigh, and my mom made us get out of the car at Saint Mary's in front of Smedes to take a photo. We still have the photo!"

Britt has great memories: having a "boarding experience" with friends by staying overnight on a weekend, being academically challenged and choosing to take both honors and AP classes, and building lifelong friendships and connections with faculty and staff, including English teacher Stephanie Bishop Williams '90HS and residential staff members Margaret McGlohon '81C and Emily Smith '01.

Over time, she used her newfound confidence to try many new things, including leadership opportunities and the arts. Before Saint Mary's, she hadn't been comfortable exploring her artistic side or given thought to becoming a student leader. Here, she found both a passion for painting and a natural ability for leading people.

"The kind of learning environment Saint Mary's provided helped open me up to explore areas I wasn't strong in and to expand my learning outside of the classroom," she explains. "Today, we call it experiential learning, but Saint Mary's was already doing that as a newly created, four-year high school."

Britt also tried out for and played JV soccer for one year. She joined the yearbook staff and learned about editing and publishing, was a member of Beacon, and became involved in event and activities planning – including the Grove dance ("Get Your Grove On") – and was elected student body president her senior year.

Britt recalls being scared to give her speech in front of such a big audience, but she looked out into the crowd, saw her dad and all the people who were there to support her and who had helped give her the confidence to try. It was impactful.

"Saint Mary's helped me create lifetime connections that have moved beyond just the four years I was here," she says. "The school gave me the foundation for who I am, the confidence I needed, and a voice, all the while helping me build the knowledge that I could achieve anything I set my mind to."

Building a Career

After Saint Mary's, Britt went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"Saint Mary's prepared me academically and socially for college in ways other schools couldn't have," she says. "In some ways, my UNC experience mimicked that of my Saint Mary's experience, because I



got involved in leadership and in Greek life by joining a sorority. I did this because I did it at Saint Mary's and had built the confidence within myself through those experiences."

In her junior year Britt realized she wasn't sure what she wanted to do as a career.

"I was a little bored. Though I was getting a degree in Exercise and Sports Science, I knew I didn't want to be a physical therapist the rest of my life," she explains.

Having confidence in herself helped open her mind to considering an alternate career with the same degree. Someone suggested to her that she think about a career in higher education. She'd had extensive on-campus involvement and loved working with students. It changed her career path.

After graduating, she applied and became an admissions counselor at Mary Baldwin College in Virginia. Later, she was promoted to Assistant Director.

"Once again, I knew I wanted more, including moving beyond an admissions role and into another area. Because Saint Mary's taught me to 'go for it,' I decided to pursue a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration."

Britt went back to school and finished her degree at the University of Louisville. While taking an academic advising class, she discovered a new interest and realized she could explore opportunities in higher education as an advisor in a college setting. After completing her degree, she began a job search back in North Carolina to be closer to home. She applied for and was offered a position in 2013 at High Point University as a Success Coach, one of six, in the newly created Office of Student Success.

The office oversees the transition and success of first-year students (freshman). Here, Britt found a great mentor and advocate in the former associate dean of the department who helped her grow as a professional in the field and who reassured Britt she was ready to take on the new role of Director of Student Success in the summer of 2018. Britt has excelled at her job and it has become her passion.

"I approach my job like the student is a member of my own family – much the way I was treated by faculty and staff at Saint Mary's," she says.

Working with 18-year-old, first-year college students has confirmed what she felt while she was a student: learning must be fun in order to be engaging.

"Saint Mary's has always provided experiential learning, even before the phrase was coined. And, it has always had terrific teachers and gave so much to our family that I want to give back," she shares.

Today, Britt serves on Saint Mary's Young Alumnae Advisory Board, representing the voices and interests of fellow young alumnae. She's also a consistent donor to Saint Mary's Annual Fund and makes it a point to attend regional alumnae events and Reunion Weekend. In fact, her class is having their 15th Reunion this year.

"I hope we get a big turnout. We had such great experiences and created amazing memories, that I hope our girls will get back together and make even more!"

Britt Carl '04 certainly embodies the spirit of Saint Mary's, and we hope you'll join her and her family in giving back to Saint Mary's School this year.

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