

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

Lanier Brown May '78HS '80C

Senior Regional Development Officer
Carolina Women's Leadership Council
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Saint Mary's: A Family Story

Lanier Brown May '78HS '80C grew up in Greensboro the oldest of four children (three girls and a boy) raised by parents David and Suejette Brown. They felt it very important for all three of their girls to attend school away from home and take advantage of the environment a private school education provided.

Suejette and David knew of Saint Mary's from several families in the community whose girls attended and graduated, and so Lanier became the first of the three girls to enroll. She graduated from the high school in 1978 and then in 1980 from the junior college. Lanier's two sisters followed.

"It was a wonderful experience having family on campus," she says. "My sister Paige (Brown DuBose '79HS '81C) enrolled the second year I was there. Sydney (Brown Cardone '81HS '83C) came during my last year."

As a student, Lanier was a hall counselor and played on the undefeated 1976-1977 tennis team. In her senior year, she became Student Government Association president, which allowed her to also serve as the student liaison to the Board of Trustees. Lanier says the opportunity to be in a leadership role early on at Saint Mary's gave her additional confidence and skills.

"I also had the best room on campus – the large one overlooking the porch in Smedes Building," Lanier says. "It was fun to be in the middle of all the action."

Career and Legacy

After Lanier graduated from Saint Mary's, her father David began investing his time as a Trustee.

"Our Saint Mary's story is truly a family story," Lanier says. "My dad served on the Board of Trustees from 1984 to 1988. Back then, and still today, they are a working board devoted to the mission of the school and believe in the work they do – *tirelessly* – to ensure the school thrives and is here in the future."

Years later, Lanier's two nieces, Hutter Black '12 and Suejette Black '13 (Sydney's daughters) graduated from Saint Mary's. Both girls went onto graduate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They now live in Charlotte and work for Driven Brands, Inc.

After Saint Mary's, Lanier attended Davidson College and received a bachelor's degree in English. She spent her early career working for First Union Bank in advertising/marketing, becoming a vice president in the bank's Capital Management Group. Later, she felt a calling to return to Davidson and went to work in their development office for ten years as Director of the Annual Fund and Reunion Giving.

She then went to work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she has been for the past 19 years. She is Senior Regional Development Officer spearheading the Carolina Women's Leadership Council and also oversees development in the Charlotte region.

"I absolutely love what I do," she says. "My experience at Saint Mary's and the networks I have through my alma mater helped me throughout my career, and it's because of Saint Mary's that I have had the confidence and skills to succeed."

Lanier also says Saint Mary's has several advantages other schools don't. "It's the power of lifelong friendships – and I've maintained the very best friendships from my years at SMS," she explains. "And, it's also the power of networking and connection; the confidence to know you can be who you were meant to be."

For Lanier and other Saint Mary's women, the school's mission is just as relevant today as it was in 1842 and provides the solid footing one needs to start their lifelong journey in careers, community, family, and beyond.



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"Truly Saint Mary's is even more relevant today, in light of the world we now live in," Lanier says. "I so appreciate the traditions that have been kept since 1842 – things like the ring, Sigma Mu, the Marshals, the Chapel – and the Episcopalian learning environment."

Her advice to today's Saint Mary's girls?

"Immerse yourself in every opportunity you have at Saint Mary's and when you matriculate into college. Volunteer, study abroad, take an art class, try out for athletics or intramurals, rush a sorority or join a club or student organization," she explains. "These experiences are lifechanging."

Lanier also says students should take advantage of a summer, a semester or special program abroad, since they receive credit for it, and it may be the only time in their life they can experience this while still in a safety net at a university.

"As my dad said to me: 'Be a good citizen and contribute to the world.' I think if you find a way to leave your mark on the places you've been – in high school and college – you can make a difference."

Lanier is married to Jamie May, now retired from Carolina, where he was the Senior Associate Dean and Executive Director of the College of Arts and Sciences Foundation for 14 years. They have five nieces and nephews recently graduated from Carolina. Lanier serves on the board and selection committee of the Phillips Ambassadors (a program which sends students to Asia) and is involved with the Carolina Women's Leadership Council Scholarship, which the Council named in her honor in 2015. There are currently two Laniers on campus with the goal of having 10 in each class.

As the 2017 recipient of Carolina's *Mary Tuner Lane Award*, she was recognized for her outstanding contributions to the lives of women on the Carolina campus. "My experiences at Saint Mary's, Davidson, and Carolina have made me the person I am today. I truly believe in the power of women's philanthropy to change the world, and that it's important we use our voices to make an impact around us."

Lanier is also a Stephen Minister at University Presbyterian Church, a member and former president of the Orange/Durham committee of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, and an involved Saint Mary's alumna.

At Saint Mary's, she's a member of the school's prestigious Giving Circles and the Board of Visitors, a former Alumnae Council member and Trustee. She's also a member of *The Heritage Society*, having established a planned gift for the benefit of Saint Mary's. In 2017, Lanier and the tennis players of the undefeated 1976-1977 team were inducted into the inaugural class of Saint Mary's Athletic Hall of Fame.

Lanier certainly embodies the spirit of Saint Mary's women who are resilient, intelligent, resourceful, passionate, and nurturing, and who are educated to make a difference.

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