

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile Series

by Margaret McGlohon '81C

Mary McGranahan Moss '74HS

Partner

moss + ross

Making an Impact in the Place You Love

Mary McGranahan Moss '74HS is living her life by "making an impact in the place I love" which just so happens to be her company's vision. For over 30 years Mary has made development work her profession and passion, be it in support of institutions like colleges, universities, and independent schools or working with non-profit organizations.

Developing Self-Confidence and Friendships

Mary credits her parents' determination and their "knowing what's best" for her arrival at Saint Mary's in the fall of 1972 as a junior boarder.

"I have to admit, I wasn't thrilled with the idea of attending Saint Mary's!" she says and laughs. "I loved my classmates and friends in Durham and didn't really want to leave."

Like many alumnae who share their stories, once here Mary fell in love with Saint Mary's and the girls who lived on third middle Smedes. She and her roommate Marsha Hardy (Smith '74HS '76C) lived together in one of the three-girls dorm rooms during both years of high school.

"My outlook soon changed," Mary recalls. "It was the combination of the all-girls atmosphere and our faculty who demonstrated they truly cared and who didn't hesitate to invest in me and other students."

Mary soon became a very focused student and over time built her self-confidence.

"The bonds we made as friends, be it on dorm, in the bowling alley of the new Bacon Gym, in the classroom, or when we were 'campused' together; those are the reasons why I think our high school class of 1974 has maintained such close-knit ties to each other to this very day."

After Saint Mary's and like many other graduates in those years, Mary enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). "I absolutely loved my four years majoring in Political Science and time spent with other Saint Mary's girls – old friends and those newly made!"

Post Carolina, Mary shared that she developed work and study ethics at Saint Mary's, which helped foster her confidence. Because of that self-assuredness, she embarked on a journey to Philadelphia after college. While there, she enrolled at the Institute of Paralegal Training and received her certificate. For three years, she worked in Philadelphia as a corporate paralegal in one of the country's largest firms.

"At the time, I'd hoped to attend law school, but life has a way of changing course, and other doors opened for me."



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Seeking Her Own Path

Mary took advantage of new opportunities presented, which is one of the messages of advice she hopes is passed onto today's Saint Mary's girls.

"I thought I had a plan in place, but unbeknownst to me, the path I was on veered elsewhere and that led me to the success I have today," she shares. "So, don't worry if plans change midstream. See where it leads you."

Mary relocated back to Raleigh in 1981 and reconnected with Bill Moss – *her spouse of now 37 years!* Her lifelong friend, Susan Ross, encouraged her to take a position with Duke University's Central Development Offices. "She convinced me, and I became the very first full-time employee to running 'Dialing for Duke' telethon."

In 1985, Mary was hired by Durham Academy where she served as the Director of Development. After nearly five years there and returning to the Duke Cancer Center for a while, Ravenscroft School (Raleigh, N.C.) became central in her family's life. All three of her sons – William (34) married and the "father of most perfect granddaughter," John (33), and Alex (30) – attended there.

"It was a natural transition for me to move from Durham Academy to Ravenscroft where I stayed to lead their development office for 11 years," she explains. "I built so many wonderful relationships with parents and students, and later with alumni."

In 2001, Mary got the call to return to her alma mater, Saint Mary's School. "I was offered the position of Associate Head of School, which meant I oversaw the offices of Admissions, Communications, Development and Alumnae Relations. It was a wonderful time."

Mary reflects with affection of her work as a staff member and of the "wonderful group of leadership volunteers" who served on the Board of Trustees. "I also had an outstanding team of colleagues, and it was such a pleasure to be at Saint Mary's with Theo W. Coonrod as Head of School who was a role model," she adds. "Being at Saint Mary's was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, and I felt privileged to have been able to give back to the place that meant so much to me as a student and an alum."

Mary served during the 2010 Beyond Imagination Capital Campaign (BICC) and helped transform Saint Mary's into the best independent college preparatory high school it could be for both boarding and day students.

Mary's path was about to veer again, however.

"Leaving Saint Mary's was bittersweet," she says. "When you work at a place you love, with people you love, leaving is very hard."

But, she'd realized it was time to branch out on her own and partner with her childhood friend, Susan, who'd helped Mary start her early career in development at Duke. "The time was right for us to solidify a professional partnership, so we teamed-up and started our own company, moss + ross."

For the last 10 years, the firm has focused on strategic counsel for non-profits and served within the Triangle region. When the duo recently celebrated their 10-year anniversary, they reflected on the growth their company experienced during that time. In fact, one of their largest clients is Mary's other alma mater, UNC-CH.

"We're now a 20-person firm, seven of whom work full-time," Mary says. "And, we're a 'soup to nuts' operation focusing on a broad spectrum of services, from general fundraising for annual, capital, and other fundraising campaigns to executive searches."

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She's also proud of their most recent growth into working with faith-based organizations and providing interim leadership and fundraising solutions.

"We take a team approach with all our clients," Mary explains. "And, there's such a personal spark of joy every time our clients succeed."

Forever a Saint Mary's Girl

Mary recently came back to Saint Mary's for her 45th reunion in May and celebrated with her classmates. "The weekend was so very special. Being back in the place that helped shape me into the person I am today was incredible."

Mary was also excited to reconnect with graduates from the college class of 1974 who were "such great role models" for Mary and her high school friends.

As she reflects on her time and the network of Saint Mary's women in her life, she hopes to encourage today's Saint Mary's girls. "Take time to invest in your academics. Though you don't have to make straight-A's, concentrate on applying yourself and doing your best. And, don't forget to soak-up the wisdom of your teachers and the content of what they're teaching and you're learning."

Mary also wants students not to take lightly the friendships made during their years at Saint Mary's. "The relationships you create and nurture during high school will always be part of your life, and you never know when this incredible network of women will help you later in life. Saint Mary's women are everywhere, in every industry, in every region, and you have an instant connection to them because of Saint Mary's."

Mary's life work is also her passion, and she further hopes Saint Mary's students prepare themselves not only academically but seek out their own passions. "Look for mentors and influencers, and also help others and remember to give back as a sign of appreciation for those who have helped you."

At Saint Mary's, Mary remains connected by not only attending reunions and regional events, she is also a member of the school's Board of Visitors, an ambassador for Saint Mary's in the community, and a consistent donor to Saint Mary's Annual Fund. "As an alumna and a development professional, I know the importance of supporting my alma mater with an annual gift, and also the importance of promoting Saint Mary's in the community."

During her seven years at Saint Mary's School, Mary developed annual development action plans that resulted in gifts of over \$21.5 million, including back-to-back \$1 million Annual Fund totals. Her department received nine national and regional Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) awards in fundraising and communications. She helped coordinate the strategic planning process, and she coordinated two critical school strategic positioning studies, twice retooling all admission and communication materials as well as the web site. During her seven-year tenure, school enrollment increased 28%.

Today, Mary resides in Raleigh with her husband Bill, an attorney at Smith Anderson Law (who is also a member of Saint Mary's Board of Visitors). She is also an active community volunteer and has been a volunteer consultant with numerous schools and nonprofits. Now at the pinnacle of her career, she has no plans to start slowing down, though one day she hopes to spend more time in Atlantic Beach.

"But, I'm not done yet!"

Mary McGranahan Moss '74HS embodies the spirit of Saint Mary's women who are resilient, intelligent, resourceful, passionate, and nurturing, and who are educated to make a difference, and we are grateful for her support of Saint Mary's and her community at-large.

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