



Melora and Davis Turner Q&A

Tell us a bit about how you chose to attend Webb.

Davis: For my first two years of high school, I attended a public school in Murfreesboro. My parents were concerned about the quality of the education I was receiving and made the decision that I would go to Webb for my final two years of high school as a boarding student. My younger brother, Rusty, was already a day student at Webb in the middle school. So, I can't say that I "chose" Webb (that choice was made for me), but once I got to Webb it quickly became my second home.

Melora: At the first mention of Webb by my parents, I was not interested. As a somewhat rebellious teen, I assumed they just wanted to send me away to a boarding school. It was not until later in high school that I realized I was not being challenged and that I could be a day student at Webb, which would be a much better fit for me. As a result of this, I made the move to Webb my Junior year.

Who were your Webb mentors?

Davis: My first year at Webb as a Junior, I roomed with Buck Matthews who was a senior. He helped me to adjust to the boarding school life. Also, I had played football and gone to school with Henry Huddleston who was also from Murfreesboro. Henry had already been a student at Webb when I arrived and he also helped in the adjustment to life in a boarding school.

Melora: Ben Alexander was a teacher who pushed me to new levels. His class was the first class I attended when I transferred in and I was convinced that I would never come out of it alive. When I doubted myself, he encouraged me and let me know that I could flourish.

What are two of your most memorable Webb events/times as a student and/or as an adult?

Davis: My Junior year I went with a group from Webb to France and Belgium. That was my first overseas trip and my first exposure to a foreign culture. Then my Senior year, a group of 23 Webb students went to New York City as part of an AFS short-term exchange trip. I stayed with an Irish Catholic family with 10 children on Long Island. Living for a week with the O'Connors was like being in another world from my life in Murfreesboro and Webb. As much as New York was a culture shock to me, I think it was more a culture shock for the Long Island students when they came to Bell Buckle to visit.

Melora: Well, I did marry someone from the class ahead of me, so that has to be my number one! As much as I enjoyed attending Webb, I feel some of my most memorable times have involved reuniting with classmates and friends every few years throughout the past 40 years. Every time I am with these people, we re-live our time at Webb and our friendships have grown stronger as a result. I thank Webb for putting these people in my life.

What were the components of leadership training that you gained at Webb?

Davis: Living with a diverse student body in a small community like Webb, I learned to resolve conflicts, communicate effectively, build relationships, and work together with others. I also learned the value of honor, integrity and character that Webb instills in its students. Webb did not have a course in leadership training; everything about Webb was leadership training.

Melora: I believe that you cannot be a leader unless you believe in yourself first. At Webb, my teachers encouraged me and let me know that I could accomplish anything if I tried hard enough.

How have they impacted your Webb leadership roles as an adult?

Davis: Webb provided the foundation for me to continue to build on – in college, graduate school and throughout my career. Webb's tradition of declamations and my involvement in drama at Webb gave me self-confidence and self-awareness that serves me today when I speak in public or give a presentation at work.

Melora: I try to encourage others in the same way that I was encouraged by Webb leaders/teachers. I learned from them that a good leader builds people up instead of breaking them down.

Where did you go to college, and what did you think you were going to do as a career at the time you left Webb?

Davis: I graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. When I graduated from Webb, my career path was uncertain so I pursued a liberal arts education double majoring in economics and political science at UNC. I then went to Vanderbilt University and got my MBA and JD. Since graduating from Vanderbilt I have been primarily a healthcare attorney working in-house with hospital companies in the middle Tennessee area.

Melora: I attended the University of Tennessee and began as an English major (another nod to Ben Alexander.) While I was in college, my mom had surgery. It was while caring for her that I had the realization that nursing was the career that I wanted to pursue.

What are some of the other benefits of a Webb education that enhance your business and personal success?

Davis: I learned how to be a critical thinker and good communicator at Webb that served me well in college, graduate school and in business. The world has changed so much in my lifetime and the rate of change is increasing. Therefore, something in vogue today may be obsolete tomorrow. But if you are a critical thinker with good communication skills, you will be prepared for what is to come.

Melora: Integrity, honor, confidence, and leadership are the characteristics of a Webb education and they are invaluable in all aspects of life.

How do those Webb characteristics, values and strengths translate to current students?

Davis: I don't think you can overemphasize the foundation of honor, integrity and character that Webb instills and how that foundation can transform a person's life. Also, the emerging

voices program gives students more confidence in their communication skills and helps them to become leaders in college and in life beyond college.

Melora: The above characteristics are timeless. They are as valuable today as they were in Sawney Webb's days.

Have you always followed Webb's progress since you graduated?

Davis: Yes, I became class agent for my class about 10 years after graduating and am currently on my second stint as a member of the Webb alumni board so I have been following Webb closely as a result.

Melora: Yes. However, I am a fairly new follower of the Webb basketball team...Go Feet!

Can you discuss your family's strong bond to Webb?

Davis: Melora and I are a rare Webb couple so that alone creates a strong bond. Giving to Webb has been a priority to us our entire marriage. Together with classmates and friends of my younger brother, Rusty, we have established a memorial scholarship in his name to enable more students to board at Webb.

Melora: I was the only person in my family to attend Webb but as previously mentioned, I married a member of the class of 79. In addition, my brother-in-law, Rusty Turner was a very proud graduate of Webb. Rusty's time at Webb was some of the happiest of his life. Honoring that family bond to Webb is very important to me.

Why do you give so generously to Webb?

Davis: Webb has been a blessing to me and my wife. In turn, we want to be a blessing for others. I want to ensure that Webb has the resources and facilities to continue to turn out "tireless workers" and "accurate scholars" as the old Sawney saying goes.

Melora: I am so thankful for all that Webb has given me and the best way to say thank you, is to give generously so that others can receive all that Webb has to offer.

Why is the Webb Fund vital to Webb, and why are you willing to serve as co-chairs?

Davis: It has been said that an annual fund is "the heart beat of an institution." The Webb Fund enables Webb to have the resources and facilities to hire and retain top faculty and provide Webb's diverse student body with a world-class education to develop their highest potential. The Webb Fund provides unrestricted dollars for the school's current operations and accounts for approximately 6% of Webb's annual budget. All Webb Fund dollars are used during the year in which they are received to enhance current programs. The strong and unique features of a Webb education are not covered by tuition alone. I agreed to serve as co-chair of the Webb Fund because I want to keep Webb's tuition as affordable as possible while also helping the school admit students who, due to the lack of adequate financial resources, would not otherwise be able to receive a Webb education.

Melora: The Webb Fund is needed to enhance the areas of financial aid, faculty compensation and general operating expenses of the school. Tuition doesn't cover everything that is needed to provide such a quality educational experience. I want to make sure that today's students get the very best that Webb can offer and I am willing to work to make sure they do!

What are some of the recent Webb advancements that you consider notable?

Davis: The completion in 2016 of the Residential Village with two new 20-bed dorms, Meadows Hall and Wendel Haynes Hall, and the Dorothy Powell Elkins Student Center. Webb's athletic programs recently seem to have taken off – especially its basketball program. Successful athletics helps to build good school morale.

Melora: Campus improvements, increased endowment, student diversity, stellar faculty and staff, just to name a few!

What are some of the visions you have for Webb?

Davis: I would like to see Webb continue to grow its enrollment, especially its boarding population, and at the same time increase its financial aid budget. Down the road, I think Webb may need to build some more dorms and perhaps a new performing arts center.

Melora: As we enter our 150th year, I hope the Webb Fund is more successful than it has ever been and I hope to see our endowment, enrollment and financial aid continue its upward trend.