

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

by Margaret McGlohon '81C

Dr. Leslie R. Marshall '06

*Associate Director, Center for Sustainable Business
Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business and
College of Business Administration at the
University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Life's Magical Journey

Dr. Leslie R. Marshall '06 may have just begun her official duties as Associate Director of the Center for Sustainable Business (CSB) in the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business and College of Business Administration, University of Pittsburgh in July, but she's been working toward this career and role for many years.

Leslie holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Pittsburgh. Her dissertation research focused on how differences among women – especially along socio-economic class lines – affect women's willingness to cooperate with one another on issues of shared interest.

"The focus on how social and economic inequality can impede the realization of more desirable outcomes factors into my current role as Associate Director of the CSB," explains Leslie. "I help leading global companies learn how to understand and evaluate the potential social and environmental impacts – both good and bad – of investing in more sustainable business practices, while also keeping an eye on the financial bottom line."

Discovering Saint Mary's

Born in Phoenix, Az., Leslie spent most of her youth in Tampa, Fl. But, in seventh grade, Leslie's family moved to Kentucky.

"That's when I learned about Saint Mary's through the Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP). When Saint Mary's and other schools started sending me information, the only packet I didn't throw away was the one from Saint Mary's."

Leslie had planned to stay in Kentucky, attend public school, and work hard on her basketball skills. "Then, I 'begrudgingly' applied to Saint Mary's thanks to my mom's encouragement."

She came to the campus during the very first Blanche Scholars weekend.

"I fell in love!" she says. "I adored the campus and knew I'd get the very best education there. I felt that the opportunities for leadership, athletics, and cultural experiences would be amazing."

Leslie also fondly talks about her days as a boarder; the close friends she still has today, and the faculty and staff who guided her and supported her.

"Where else would your basketball coach drive you to SAT prep classes, like Coach Gatoux? Or, where

Continued...



else could you find dorm faculty like the Belknaps who welcome you into their family? Or, even years later, a staff member who treats you like a friend when you visit a city like Chicago, as Kendra Dinkins has? Nowhere else!"

As a student at Saint Mary's, Leslie thrived. She played a sport every season, loved French, was captain of Sigma-Mu, served as class president in the 9th grade, and was the Executive Student Government Association's president during her senior year. She was also salutatorian of her class and the first basketball player in SMS history to score 1,000 points.

As a national merit finalist, Leslie then went to Denison University as a scholar athlete. There, she was a member of the varsity women's basketball team until a knee injury sidelined her. During her junior year she participated in Model United Nations and found an interest in international policy.

"I wrote my senior honors thesis on the politics of international intervention in the civil wars in East Timor and Kosovo," she adds.

Leslie received a Critical Language Scholarship from the U.S. Department of State and afterwards traveled to Indonesia to learn the language. "It helped me build on my knowledge of the regional context behind the war in East Timor," she says.

Building on Life's Lessons

After completing an undergraduate degree at Denison, Leslie enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh. "There, I had the opportunity to live in Uganda and Lebanon and also conduct research in both countries," she says.

While working towards a Ph.D. at Pitt, she met a colleague with similar interests.

"We co-founded a consulting business called, The Research Group for Sustainable Impacts (RG-SI)," she says. "Our company values inclusion and sustainability in problem-solving around shared community and organizational challenges. As a women-owned business, to us, this means actively assessing issues of diversity, equity, social responsibility, and feasibility throughout the course of a project or intervention. This also includes working to understand the potential long-term and possibly unforeseen or unintended impacts of policies or programs. We bring this sense of self-awareness and reflexivity to every project we take on."

As a team of independent research consultants, trained in advanced qualitative and quantitative research methods, including experimental research design, data collection, program and impact evaluation and advanced statistical analysis, their work lies at the intersection of academic debates and applied policy research.

"We use this skillset to help organizations and communities assess, evaluate, and problem-solve through a sustainable lens," she explains.

Leslie says her life's journey has been somewhat magical and there was a series of very fortuitous meetings and events. "Some of the life lessons I learned while working abroad include never knowing what relationships you will build with others, unless you're open, respectful, and truly try to understand the place you're visiting."

When traveling abroad, she says, "You need to study and take time to understand the culture, why things are the way they are, and to be kind."

Continued...

Leslie was able to find local partners in her research efforts because she worked hard at building relationships and showing respect and gratitude for others. "Maybe it was by chance," she says. "But, the research wouldn't have happened had I not been open to genuinely getting to know others."

One story she shares took place while in Uganda. "Over many months, I built a professional relationship with a young man who owned and operated a motorcycle taxi service. Eventually he invited me to meet someone from 'his village.' It turned out *that* someone was a candidate for the National Parliament of Uganda!"

Leslie was invited to join him on the campaign trail and recorded her observations as part of her research. "And, he ended up winning!"

What the Future Holds

Leslie hopes to connect with other Saint Mary's alumnae, businesses, and individuals with like interests and those who could use a partner like RG-SI.

"If someone needs (or has) expertise in sustainability, diversity, and/or inclusion, I would love to be in touch," she says.

As for what she does for fun, Leslie says she enjoys volunteering and her advocacy work at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. "I donate my time to facilitate English conversation classes as part of the educational programs at the library," she explains. "I also help the library evaluate the success of its language programs by designing and implementing surveys for participants."

She also loves being outdoors and experimenting with new recipes. "I'm also a bit of a bourbon and scotch aficionado," she says and laughs.

As for her advice for today's Saint Mary's girls, she says: "Take advantage of your time at 900 Hillsborough Street to make the most of creating meaningful relationships. The resources offered are incredible at Saint Mary's, so I hope students embrace the fantastic opportunities they have to make a difference, while also being mindful of how uncommon this experience is."

Saint Mary's alumnae like Dr. Leslie R. Marshall '06 graduate with the skills, knowledge, and integrity they need for success. Whether furthering their education, pursuing professional careers, raising their families, or leading as volunteers, or impacting the global world, our alumnae are agents for positive change. Leslie's story demonstrates the abilities Saint Mary's women have to do big things and we're glad to share her story.

###

© 2019