

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

by Lauren E. Gerber

Emily Smith '01

*Associate Director of Admission
Saint Mary's School
Raleigh, N.C.*

At Home at Saint Mary's

Emily Smith '01 not only graduated from Saint Mary's, she also became a member of the school's professional staff. "I started working at Saint Mary's School in October 2005," Emily says. "Then, I became a full-time member of the residential community during the 2006-07 school year."

She says she has very fond memories of her time as a student. "I'm a 'from the cradle' Episcopalian, so I loved and still love the Chapel and chapel services. I also served as an acolyte at Saint Mary's." Emily was senior class president and an admission tour guide, as well.

She also played varsity volleyball and varsity basketball for four years, varsity softball for two years, was an athletic trainer for varsity soccer for a year, and received the athletics award in her senior year.

"Most of my best friends also came out of my involvement in athletics," she says.

Emily recalls watching the Cold Cuts perform for the first time as a 9th grader, which was the group's last performance under that name.

"I have a lot of favorite campus places," she adds. "As a student, it was Bacon Gym, Chapel, Third Floor Holt Hall in the day student lounge, and the Grove. As a staff member, the Chapel, Smedes Hall – where my office and home are located – the Grove, and the Hannah Smith Quad behind Smedes are my favorite places today."

She says the Quad is where all the "action" happens: faculty walking their dogs, students throwing a softball/lacrosse ball, faculty children playing with students, people walking from East Park to Penick Hall, and now lots of construction with the new Bell Tower Pavilion and permanent Cruickshank walkway going in. It's also where the 175th Gala was held and where you might see students with large telescopes studying the constellations on clear evenings.

"It's THE place to be and be seen; it's a social area for faculty and students, and on a pretty day, you can't beat being out there with the rest of the community," she says.

Emily recalls having wonderful teachers and great friends as a student. "My parents, and Saint Mary's, afforded me academic rigor, safety, fun, care and concern, being known, athletic opportunity, comfortable discomfort, the courage to lead, and challenge – things I couldn't get at my local school options because of size, location and resources."

She also says she loves having the opportunity to continue to be in a position where she can build



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upon her Saint Mary's experience. "Today, it's my school, my work, my home, and I'm happy to have continued my relationship with such a wonderful institution."

Living and Working on Campus

Emily says that she always said she'd love to come back to work at Saint Mary's after college, and she did just that.

"I worked at Saint Mary's summer camps from my junior year in high school until I started working at 900 Hillsborough Street in 2005. It helped me to stay in touch and up-to-date on what was happening on campus."

She says she chooses to stay at Saint Mary's because she believes that "meeting girls where they are and helping them to grow into their best selves is something I really enjoy doing, and it's something I owe Saint Mary's for all that they did for me."

She also believes in the "greatness of girls" and likes thinking that "I might play a very small role in growing these girls to be whatever they want to be and help them to do whatever they want to do."

Today, Emily is the Associate Director of Admission for Saint Mary's School and says she enjoys working with prospective families.

"I love sharing with them all that I know and love about Saint Mary's," she explains. "I know my experiences as a student and as a member of residential life help me to best communicate with and earn the trust of these families. I also love to build relationships, so being given the opportunity to meet new people – prospective families, school counselors, educational consultants, alumnae, etc. – and share my relationship with them and knowledge of Saint Mary's, I can't think of anything better."

She also values the relationships she's built with the students, faculty, alumnae, and friends of Saint Mary's while working here over the years. And, she really likes her colleagues in the Admission Office.

"We work so well together, and we're always working toward being better as a team for Saint Mary's and as members of the Saint Mary's team. I appreciate all our community does to support us in our work – every member of the Saint Mary's community is crucial in the admission process, and they add so much knowledge, warmth, happiness, honesty, excitement, truth, creativity and care to our work. It's what truly sells Saint Mary's."

Emily also says she's inspired in her work by today's Saint Mary's girls who go on to graduate and begin their collegiate, professional, and personal lives.

"I believe the programming at Saint Mary's today becomes more and more relevant, exciting, challenging, and interesting. I was at Saint Mary's during a major transition, the closing of the college, and a number of programmatic things changed in order to continue being mission-aligned and really focus on what high school girls needed," she recalls. "I think the ability to keep longstanding traditions and mix them with new ones is important, and Saint Mary's continues to do that well."

Today, Emily is also advisor for The Beacon, a senior honor organization which seeks to recognize those girls who "shine a light within our community, but in a more unassuming way." Emily herself was a member of this club during the 2000-2001 school year.

"It's fun to see something that has been around since the 1940s still adding to our community."

Emily also believes Saint Mary's use of all that its location offers continues to grow and improve, just as the community does. "Raleigh is changing, so we are able to send our girls out more and more to take

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advantage of relationships with community partners, art exhibits, internships, great local restaurants, shopping, museums, concerts, sporting events, cultural festivals, and so much more.”

She also says how impressed she is with what young alumnae are doing out in the world.

“I know it’s because of Saint Mary’s that they have the confidence to go out and get what they want,” she says. “They leave here with the ability to advocate for themselves and others; they have the confidence to share their voice; they know they have a network of Saint Mary’s women who support them in all they take on; and they leave us feeling prepared for what lies ahead in college, career, making friends, serving their communities, and much more.”

A Desire to Give Back

Alumnae are also very important to Saint Mary’s and her success according to Emily.

“I love seeing alumnae on campus, or whenever I’m out on the road,” she says. “What’s interesting is that you can take our youngest alumna and oldest alumna, put them together in the same room, and they will talk to each other like they are still Saint Mary’s girls – it’s like you’ve taken them back to sitting in class and talking about the day’s assignment, or dropped them off at Char-Grill for a shake with friends. It’s sort of magical in a way.”

As an alumna herself, Emily also knows the importance of supporting her alma mater so that today’s Saint Mary’s girls can have the same and even better opportunities than those students who came before them.

“I love to be a champion for things and people I believe in, and I believe in Saint Mary’s School and her ability to change a girl’s life,” Emily shares. “I know that by giving to Saint Mary’s Annual Fund, I can help the school to cover the needs of our students that tuition simply doesn’t cover. It is important for our growth and success to continue to improve our physical structures and create current programming, to be able to hire faculty and staff who truly have a passion for serving our students, and more specifically know girls; and to help make it possible for girls with a strong desire to attend Saint Mary’s to have the opportunity to be a part of our community. I hope my giving to the Annual Fund helps Saint Mary’s reach her goals and stay relevant. It’s my duty as an alumna and staff member.”

Emily also enjoys being on the road with her colleagues in the Development and Alumnae Office, attending joint events and gatherings across the region. Often, she travels alongside Saint Mary’s Alumnae Director, Margaret McGlohon ’81C.

“I’ve known Margaret since I was a senior in high school,” Emily says. “She was a tremendous help to me in the planning of the senior sleepover and following senior day in 2001. I didn’t know her, and she didn’t know me, but she jumped right in to help a very uncertain, unorganized and big idea-ed group of teenage girls make something as simple as a senior sleepover become the very best sendoff we could have.”

She also says Margaret gave Emily’s name to Margaret’s brother and sister-in-law as a possible babysitter for their small children during Emily’s time at East Carolina University. They’ve also been partners on the Smedes Monday night duty team as part of residential life for several years.

“I served on the young alumnae advisory board under Margaret’s guidance, and we have been in faculty/staff group dance numbers and group spirit week costumes together,” she shares. “We’ve traveled with friends and colleagues for fun, and we took a group of Saint Mary’s students to Ethiopia. The admission team always counts on Margaret to chat with families during admission events, and sometimes she just drops by to see if she can be of any help.”

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As for their collaborations on the road, Emily says, “We work to combine efforts in certain cities during recruitment and alumnae travel seasons. Margaret has always been a champion for me in my work at Saint Mary’s, and she makes all our jobs easier because of her organization, institutional knowledge, thoughtfulness, leave it better than you found it attitude, and care for Saint Mary’s. If we all worked to do our jobs as Margaret does hers, we couldn’t lose.”

Saint Mary’s alumnae like Emily Smith ‘01 graduate with the skills, knowledge, and integrity they need for success. Whether furthering their education, pursuing professional careers, raising families, or leading as volunteers, our alumnae are agents for positive change. Emily’s story demonstrates the abilities Saint Mary’s women have to do big things out in the world, and right back here at 900 Hillsborough Street. We’re glad to share her story.

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