

Kara Bundy '02, Goucher College Trustee

#### LAUNCH Network Remarks

It's been hard in recent years to acknowledge that I'm no longer in the group of what the alumni office considers "recent graduates" but in preparing for today and reflecting on my upcoming 20th reunion, its putting me in my place to realize when I graduated from Goucher, most of you hadn't even been born! So certainly, I'm not here to give you advice about the best apps to use, or tell you where to buy digital textbooks or even how to navigate this building because this, along with several other buildings, didn't exist when I attended Goucher.

However, I hope you'll find that there are many universal truths about Goucher, the stretch across time and connect all alumni despite all our differences.

I'll be honest that I ended up at Goucher somewhat by happenstance. Despite attending high school just up the road at Towson High School, I was not super aware of Goucher and wasn't even looking to stay in Maryland, let alone so close to home. Since my parents hadn't attended college, they couldn't offer me much more than thumbs up and words of encouragement in my college search and unfortunately my guidance counselor didn't really spend more time with me than it took to establish that Yes- I was planning to go to college, yes, I had taken the SATs and yes, I understood that I needed to give my teachers plenty of time to write my reference letters. Back then, we received college brochures and catalogs by the stack instead of a flood of emails (in fact, my first email account was a [goucher.edu](http://goucher.edu) and we learned how to use email in my freshman seminar). I was focused on New England but a friend of my sister's who was attending Goucher happened to mention to her off-handedly that "your sister would be a good fit for Goucher." I figured, "well, he was nice enough to recommend I check it out, so I'll at least go on a tour." Well, as soon as I set foot on campus, that was it. I fell in love. My mom barely hid her excitement.

Since I didn't know much about college life outside of TV shows and movies, I didn't know what to expect but quickly started to feel at home. Some of the first friends I made, I met in the gazebo, during a freshman ice cream social and we're still close friends to this day. One of my bridesmaids started out as a co-worker in admissions. We bonded over envelope stuffing and taking turns giving tours and now our kids call each other "cousins" and us "auntie." That's just the kind of place that Goucher is- the kind of place where you find your people and make lifelong connections. I encourage you to find your people- early and often. And find your person- that professor or staff person who you can go to in the tough moments.

Some of my favorite parts of my Goucher experience were made available due to the sheer size which allowed a level of familiarity that my friends at large state universities couldn't fathom. There are people in this room who were part of my Goucher experience- like Emily Perl and Jamie Mullaney- who was one of my favorite professors. Because I knew my professors so well, Not only did they tell me about opportunities that I might not have known about otherwise- for scholarships, internships, special projects, but they also knew me well enough to trust me to do

some pretty out of the box things like creating my own major and then writing and performing a play in the black box as my senior thesis (by the way, this meant ALOT of trust since I had never taken a single drama class).

I had the opportunity to do multiple study abroad experiences and to this day one of the most impactful experiences of my life was a short term intensive with Eric Singer and Janet Shope in South Africa. In fact, there's this constant dichotomy of the Goucher experience where you're both intimately involved in Goucher life- spending time with friends, pouring over the course catalog to plot out your next semester, attending student club meetings, hanging out at the Gopher Hole and bonding in the dining hall- while at the same time your world is growing far beyond the borders of campus. Whether its through the community based learning program, internships, or study abroad- you're constantly readjusting your world view and in turn, your understanding of yourself and your place in the world. You're also constantly learning about the possibilities for your life after Goucher.

One of my favorite experiences was connecting with alumni. Whether it was meeting alumni who helped make possible scholarships that I had received, or working the crab feast or driving the golf cart during alumni weekend. I loved meeting the feisty ladies from the 40s 50s and 60. They told me those "back in my day" stories that laced together images of the prim and proper ladies sitting down together, in unison, wearing their long skirts and gloves, to dinner at the sound of the dinner bell and meeting with their suiters in the fish bowl with images of attending sit-ins and protests, circulating petitions on campus and generally being kinda badass. I loved my time at Goucher so much that when it was time for me to leave campus, I immediately found excuses to come back. I became my class' Recent Graduate Trustee and years later, joined the Alumnae/i of Goucher College board and now serve on the Board of Trustees. I'm glad to serve Goucher but its also a bit selfish. Its my own form of the fountain of youth because every time I step foot on campus, I get a rush of that same feeling I had when I was here- that feeling that I could change the world.

Now, I realize that I sound like a bit of a cheerleader. It obviously wasn't all cupcakes and rainbows. There were stressful moments when I didn't think it would be literally possible for me to finish everything that I needed to get done. There was the professor who I didn't like and argued with on a semi-regular basis. There were scary moments while studying abroad that made me feel unsafe in a way I had never experienced. There were painful conversations with close friends that forced me to interrogate my own privileges and shed my naïve belief that we're all the same and being colorblind is a thing. But even each one of those hard moments ultimately led to learning and changed my life in ways I could never have anticipated.

For your part, you have already jumped through so many hoops and lept over fires to sitting in these seats. You have demonstrated a level of resilience that is to be commended and applauded over and over again. You have lived through the twin pandemics of institutional racism and COVID and, in your senior year of high school, witnessed an insurrection in our nation's capital. Beyond the more global challenges, you've overcome personal challenges, financial hardship. Many of you were left to navigate this process on your

own. And yet you're here. You not only applied and got accepted but you got yourselves here early to share in this experience.

You are charting a course for yourselves and your families that will forever change your trajectory. Always remember where you come from. You are building a legacy. Don't forget to always look back to those who came before you, not only within your own lives but also those who knocked down walls here at Goucher to make this moment possible, and look ahead to those who will come after you.

In those moments when things are hard- when classes start, when you miss or fail an assignment, when you're looking at your schedule and don't know how you're going to get everything done, remember what you have already overcome to get here and know that you are capable of great things. And just put one foot in front of the other. And go to that person. Your person. The faculty and staff here want nothing more than to help you be successful.

I was asked to think about the advice I would give myself as a freshman- explore every part of the campus- even the horse stables and pool (I never did either and regret it. Say yes when it feels scary, but no when you need to. Don't worry so much, Take advantage of every opportunity. Have fun because you will never get this time back.

And one last bit of advice for you- next week, take some time to sit in the gazebo. If you find yourself with someone you've never met before, maybe even been intimidated by, say during work study, start a conversation. Because they might just end up being your best friend who gives you advice about what to say to a group of college freshmen as they start their time at Goucher.