

THE Webb SCHOOLS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 6, 2021

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Vivian Webb School Celebrates 40th Anniversary

CLAREMONT, CA – Vivian Webb School alumnae shared stories of inspiration, friendship and personal discovery that ranged from playing new sports to defining career paths during an Aug. 5 virtual celebration of the school's 40th anniversary.

"I'll never forget the inspiration that I got at Webb to do things I would never have thought about doing before," said Dr. Julia Salas Woertink '99, one of four alumnae panelists representing each decade of the school's history.

Woertink, a research and development director with Dow, shared how Coach Dan Pride urged her to play basketball as a freshman – a game she had never played before – after seeing that 6-foot student tower over her classmates. During the very first game, the team's star center broke her ankle and Woertink had to go in.

"A few years later, I co-captained the team and I played in college, and to this day I use those lessons," she said.

Ariel Fan '10, founder and CEO of GreenWealth Energy, said she discovered her passion for environmental advocacy in her very first week at Webb. She gathered plastic bottles for recycling during her freshman retreat, launched the school's first green club and advocated for preservation of rain forests. Today, she has turned those interests into a career focused on environmental protection and sustainable living.

"Webb really gave me the platform to explore my interests, but I didn't really realize at the time that that this where it started," she said.

Jana Sims '03, a vice president with Morgan Stanley, recalled how she and a dance partner drew on their diverse talents in a performance competition.

"Our minds worked differently, but it was perfectly compatible. She was a trained dancer and really great, and I was more of an organic dancer and would just feel music. She would watch me and re-teach to me what it was that I was doing, because I would never remember. We were able to put together a really beautiful piece," she said.



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“It reminded me of Webb in general of people coming together with different perspectives and different skills and how do we best put these together to make something beautiful.”

Speakers also reflected on how they might pursue interests at Webb if they were to enroll as first-year students today.

Karen Greene Robinson '88 said she would have jumped even more deeply into Webb's theater program since the construction of Webb's Copeland Donahue black box theater in the early 2000s. She works as a secondary theater and film specialist for Los Angeles Unified School District.

“I absolutely would have been involved in the theater program,” she said. “That was hugely formative for me.”

Woertink, who was a day student during her first year, said she would become a boarder immediately.

“I do wish I had started out in the boarding program. I got so much out of it. It's so rich in terms of the community, the friendships and relationships I made at Webb. I'm married to a Webb alumnus,” she said. “It's such a gift that stays with me to this day.”

Sims said she loved living in the Hutch dorms on the lower campus but would want to experience living in Jones or Appleby dorms on the upper campus to experience own unique dynamics.

The virtual celebration opened with remarks from The Webb Schools trustee Christina Mercer McGinley '84, P '12, '16, one of the original 34 students to enroll in the school on Sept. 11, 1981. She welcomed all guests and shared a video greeting from the founding head of VWS, Ann Longley, all the way from Cornwall, England.

The alumnae panel was moderated by Alumni Council President Kathy Fredrich '02. The themes of leading through service and giving back to the Webb family were prevalent throughout the evening.

The panel discussion was followed by a social hour shared by more than 60 event attendees, including current and former faculty and staff, trustees, VWS parents and alumnae from the classes of 1984-2020.

