

TWO WOMEN, ONE COLLEGE, ONE RESULT: SUCCESS!

by Michele Tinker, Director of Annual Giving

The possibilities for headlines are endless. “Small town girls make good.” “Sisters find success on opposite coasts.” But the most accurate headline could be “Internships shaped sisters’ futures.” Whatever headline you slap on it, it still makes a good story: Two sisters, raised in rural northwest Ohio and graduated from Defiance College, find professional success and fulfillment on opposite coasts.

Charlotte Eble Beard '00 and Mary Eble Ballantine '01 grew up in Sherwood, Ohio. Charlotte attended DC because she found the Defiance community and the community atmosphere at the college appealing. Charlotte had been admitted into a large state university but found DC to be a better fit, and, she contends, “It was one of the best decisions I ever made!”

“I lived on campus all four years,” Charlotte explained. “We had a little senior wing in Whitney – I loved campus life.” Charlotte got involved in a lot of activities and organizations on campus, including the business club, student government and the Fort Defiance Players.

When Charlotte was a sophomore, her sister, Mary, entered DC as a freshman. “Not because I was here, but in spite of me being here!” she explained. Mary concurred, very clearly remembering conversations with her parents about not going to Defiance College. However, when a scholarship was offered, “the math won,” as Mary put it. DC was financially the smartest choice.

Charlotte began working in public accounting at the age of 19 when she started an internship the summer after her freshman year at the accounting firm of Steyer Huber Associates. “I really loved being encouraged to test the waters career-wise,” Charlotte says of her internship. It was a positive experience, and she stayed with the company for six years.

But she reached a point where she was ready for a change. She applied to join the Peace Corps and also began researching jobs in cities across the country. Her one rule: She had to know at least one person in the city where she was applying. A random call from a recruiter connected her to a small company in Sacramento, California, and she accepted a position as controller in 2003. “I’m not usually an impetuous person, so it was a surprise to a lot of people when I moved to California.” She recalls that making the move was hard, especially since she had never lived outside northwest Ohio before this. But it was wonderful, too. It ultimately led to what she calls her dream job with Apple, and it’s where she met Nick Beard, a videographer to whom she is now married. She and Nick live in Sunnysvale where they enjoy all the natural beauty the Bay area has to offer.

Charlotte is a senior manager at Apple and describes her responsibilities as supporting the supply chain, “getting parts from Point A to Point B.”

“I am so fortunate to be among the peer group I get to work with,” Charlotte explains. This position also involves international travel, which she considers to be a great benefit. This past year, Charlotte joined the Defiance College Board of Trustees, where she sits on the finance and audit committee. “DC played a huge part in my success, and I am flattered and honored to reconnect with the college and the community and to give back.”

The balance between classroom experience and life experience is significant, Charlotte believes. Both she and Mary traveled to England and spent several weeks studying at Oxford University, what Charlotte called an amazing, life-altering experience. “Having the chance to live in another culture is so valuable,” she believes.

At DC, Mary Eble Ballantine pursued a self-defined major of comprehensive social science, with an eye to continuing to law school after graduation. She credits Defiance College with exposing her to leadership opportunities not necessarily available at a larger school. “Because the campus was so intimate, I saw I could take advantage of these opportunities. I think I would have drowned at a larger school.” One of her leadership experiences was serving as president of the Gamma Omega Kappa sorority and taking the chapter national with Tri-Sigma.

She also held a job throughout college at the bookstore, which she feels taught her about business and being a woman in business. It was great being in the center of the energy of campus, she remembers, and she felt the experience sculpted her.

But what she called a game changer was having the opportunity to travel – both in her study abroad opportunity at Oxford, and along with touring with the choir. It was a chance to see places she’d never been, places that as a little girl in Sherwood Ohio, she never imagined seeing. “Amazing!” she recalls.

A summer internship with an insurance company led Mary to a job at State Farm Insurance after college, and she ended up loving it. “I encourage students to do internships, even if the internship isn’t in their field. My career was directed by it.”

She shared this career insight and real-life information on salaries and managing credit with students when she spoke at DC’s Senior Success Day in 2013. She told the students to take a job, work hard and work their way up to a career. “Both Charlotte and I had that path. If you can go in with the right attitude and the right work ethic, you can build your way to the



In large photo, Charlotte (left) and Mary sightseeing in London. Insets from over the years.

position you want.”

Mary now operates the top producing State Farm Insurance Agency in the state of North Carolina. She says that while working in the Cleveland area, she heard many people in the insurance business bemoaning the fact that much of their business had moved to North Carolina. A light went on for her, and she and her family relocated to Charlotte.

In addition to operating her insurance agency, Mary keeps busy with her two children, ages six and eight. Her personal passion is running, and she still loves to travel. Fortunately, it is another benefit of her job that she cherishes.

Charlotte and Mary may live on opposite coasts but they stay in touch, texting and calling frequently and managing to get together a couple times a year.