



tête-à-tête

WITH THE ASSOCIATION OF BOARDING SCHOOLS

in this issue

Jamila Everett Director of Admission, The Webb Schools CA

Dave Tinagero Headmaster, St. Andrew's School RI

Daniel Gentle TABS Director of Member Relations & Association Advancement

TABS

A Culture of Perspectives

Jamila Everett

DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION
THE WEBB SCHOOLS CA



I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO LAW

SCHOOL, so I had no intention of going into the Admission field, but I worked at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at USC and just loved the connection with the students. As I was applying to law school, taking the LSAT, I thought "Hmm, this might be a different career passion I want to pursue." I love the intersection of education, psychology, business, marketing and organizational communication. Admissions provided a nice intersection of all my interests.

At Caltech I started doing a lot more recruitment on the East Coast. Actually, the dean of the school went to Choate. I remember sitting in his office, and he said, "So, let's talk about recruitment. Why are we not going to boarding schools?" I said, "What's a boarding school?"

IT WAS REALLY FASCINATING, THE HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF INTERVIEWS.

I did with high school students applying to college. But I was always seeing the end results, right? They'd talk about their high school experience and what shaped them. They were very reflective on the kinds of the experience they had and I always felt a little bit like an outsider. I wondered, what is shaping them? What is that experience really like? Especially at the boarding schools, there was always this thread of community in the way they talked about the experience.

I'VE HAD TWO MENTORS WHO I THINK REALLY STAND OUT. First, one of my first supervisors at USC, Dr. George Thompson. He was about the connection and he was very authentic. He wasn't afraid to be

himself and make himself vulnerable. I remember, he'd come to work every day – this probably wasn't the healthiest thing – but he had a box of donuts, like, every day. And a Diet Coke in the morning. What I loved about him is that he was always genuine, student-centered, available for his staff – in a way that just felt so natural. He inspired me to think about how important it is to develop a culture of trust and authenticity, and momentum and urgency. He did all of this where you didn't feel exhausted. You felt very empowered, and you felt supported. I think of him probably once a week when I have decisions and conversations with my team, because I just remember him being so patient with me and really focused on my development and growth. He's someone who just knows how to talk to people in a way that makes them feel valued.

The other person is Rick Bishoff. When I started at Caltech, he was the Director of Admissions. He was someone who didn't care about position or rank. It was all about the concept of servant leadership, and leadership coming from all different directions. I felt like he was really good at getting input from the receptionist all the way to the President, and using all that information in integrated ways. I just loved the way he really challenged the status quo. He came into an institution and wasn't afraid to make change for the better. I always admired how much he thought out his plans but wasn't afraid to take risks. That's something I carry with me. He loved change, but he always had a vision and a reason for the change. He built excitement around how to better a system. I think that you can get in a rut if you're not always thinking creatively about how to enhance your programs.

SOMETHING I COULD GUARANTEE about myself is that I'm someone who can always, no matter what, see the best of any situation or person. I see it a lot managing the staff. There was a staff member – not at Webb, but before – whom I was managing, who had a lot of good qualities, good talents, and was just making really bad choices. A lot of people in the office were focusing on the negativity. But I think there was so much positive too. Highlighting those things that made him, him, in a good way, really helped him see things in a different perspective, and gave him that motivation to turn things around.

I VISITED CUBA EARLIER THIS YEAR. The blend of the different cultures was just absolutely overwhelming to me. Our tour guide – she was African and Spanish, but also had Chinese and European influences. She spoke four languages – Italian, French, Spanish and English. Oh my goodness! There's so much beauty and acceptance. What I wasn't expecting was the very welcoming atmosphere, given the political situation. It made such an impression to have so many people say, "Well you know, it's not about our governments, it's about us. And people are people, right?" The colorfulness of the people matched the beautiful buildings and the atmosphere. I was overwhelmed with the warmth and the sense of pride they have for their culture. My heart goes out to them right now.

ONE THING I USED TO THINK, BUT NOW I BELIEVE THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE – I used to think that everyone would be able to get beyond their circumstances and do whatever they needed to be responsible and live their lives. As I've gotten older, I realize that there are so many nuances to that. I think I was a little more black

and white then. Now I live my life thinking – okay, there's one way that someone's presenting something to you, but you have no idea what's going on with them in their own personal life! Or what has led them to this moment to say something to you. People make choices and decisions, and have beliefs and opinions, and there's so much that shapes that. There's so much context and you can't judge people.

WHEN IT COMES TO THE SIMPLE THINGS IN LIFE, WELL, I LOVE GOING TO DISNEYLAND.

I used to work there! It was my first job in high school – for three years, every summer, starting at 16. Before they had California Adventure! It was really fun. I wasn't a performer. I worked in the retail shops. 20-hour shifts. The cool thing is I worked in every shop in Disneyland.

NOW, I FEEL EACH DAY IS KIND OF AN ADVENTURE

and it's just fun to wake up and see how the day will unfold. For me it's like "Wow, I get to get up and meet interesting people and have good conversations!"

THREE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS? I would say the ocean, that's my favorite. So peaceful. Mashed potatoes. Seeing acts of kindness. Can I also include family? I have the best family! I'm the youngest of four siblings and the only girl. I enjoy spending time with them. They always make me laugh...

Webb



OUR MOVE FROM NYU ABU DHABI TO ST. ANDREW'S IN BARRINGTON, RHODE ISLAND

was an opportunity that seemed to come out of the blue. My family and I were in the middle of a journey in which we sought to leave our comfort zone. While the idea of coming back to the States was always present, we had no immediate end in sight to our adventure. When I first heard about St. Andrew's we were sitting on a beach in Sri Lanka, having the time of our lives. Our sons had been to 20 different countries at that point. We were really just loving life and gaining so much perspective about the world. I remember my phone ringing and seeing a New York number pop up. It was a good friend of mine who's a headmaster. I answered hoping that I wasn't about to hear bad news from back at home. Instead I had the good fortune to hear him ask, "Have you heard about St. Andrew's in Rhode Island?" It was surreal because I was watching my family jump over waves in the Indian Ocean but feeling really drawn to what my friend had to say about this independent school in Coastal New England with the most endearing story.

About three weeks later, a search consultant called me about a head of school position in Rhode Island. When the consultant said that the school was St. Andrew's I said "Wow, that is so funny. A friend of mine just called two weeks ago...yada yada yada." After the call, my wife and I did a little research and learned that genesis of St. Andrew's begins in



1893 as an orphanage for impoverished boys. A priest by the name of Father Chapin wanted to do something about the children that he saw everywhere in the streets. Father Chapin essentially finds a young boy at a train station and, with the help of a group of people who care deeply about wanting to change the circumstances of these kids, the school was born. My wife and I looked at each other and just started talking about possibilities. The story of St. Andrew's spoke to our philosophy of equality in education. Then it turned out that the gentleman who led the search committee was actually an alum of the school. He was one of the orphans! He is a real humanist and happens to be very successful, but very unassuming and one of the most inspiring people I've ever met in my entire life. After some long talks, it looked as though our adventure was going to continue, just in a different way.

MOVING BACK TO THE U.S. HAD ITS BUMPS. When we moved to Abu Dhabi, our sons were five and three. They had never really attended American schools because they were so little when we left. Our boys had these incredible experiences around the world like finding fossils in Oman, feeding rescued elephants in Asia, and climbing around the pyramids in Cairo, but they didn't know how to say the Pledge of Allegiance. There were some steep learning curves upon our re-entry. What really got us though, was when we pulled into Barrington and there were all these squirrels running around. My sons started screaming in delight. They'd never seen such an animal! For six months, every single time they saw a squirrel, they would exclaim, "Oh, look it's a squirrel!!" as if they saw an incredibly exotic creature. Living abroad does this to you: it makes the familiar exotic and the exotic familiar.

MY WIFE AND I DEFINITELY CONSIDER OURSELVES SEARCHERS AND EXPLORERS,

and have for a long time. Before we left for Abu Dhabi and started seriously traveling, we never had the opportunity to seek adventure beyond our experiences in education. I had facilitated start-up projects in education, played a leadership role in the New York City Board of Ed, and started a very successful school in the Bronx, while my wife lead a teacher training position at well-established public school. While we relished those opportunities, NYU Abu Dhabi came about more as the by-product of our being open to exploration, as opposed to our actively searching for crazy things to do.

excellence and compassionate nurturing is tricky but if you don't seek that balance the kind of growth in a school culture is meaningless. Excellence is the end, but you also want to focus on the means.

THERE WAS A STREAM OF THOUGHT THAT REALLY GUIDED THE LIBERAL ARTS FOR A LONG TIME

– which was that you have to create spaces that enable dreaming and discourse, and conflict and dialogue. Essentially, you have to create bubbles where people can learn how to do these things, and ask questions, challenge assumptions. Then you slowly remove the bubble to test all that learning in the real world.



NOWHERE TO GO BUT EVERYWHERE

... with Dave Tinagero

HEADMASTER, ST. ANDREW'S SCHOOL RI

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I LOVED JACK KEROUAC.

His writing and his travelings were inspirational to me for a long time. There's a great quote by him, "The only ones for me are the mad ones." I loved that kind of thing. When we became open to leaving our places of comfort, we had the opportunity to meet like-minded people from around the world. We realized it was ok to be a little mad and to pursue our curiosities. We were in good company.

WHEREVER WE'VE LIVED OR TRAVELED IN THE WORLD,

we've observed some common ground rules that persist, and that span cultures and time: kindness and selflessness matter. No matter where the process takes us, the end point cannot be reached without compassion. That's really how I pursue running a school. I want my community to understand that it matters how we treat each other, how we ask each other to do things or to take the next step. We have to consider when and how we encourage kids, how we nurture them, how we challenge them, these things are just as important as any end product in running a school. The balance of seeking

I THINK THOSE BUBBLES ARE DIFFERENT THAN THE ECHO CHAMBERS THAT WE SEE TODAY,

which are much more about reaffirming our beliefs and our values. I mean the case where you just subscribe to one news outlet that continuously says, "Yes, you're right." I tend to think that the idea of creating protected time and space for kids to safely challenge each other has proven itself effective, and that the echo chamber scenario – that is often confused with that – has not. It's important to tease out the one from the other.

THREE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS? My family. Sour cream and onion potato chips. The X-Men comic books.

ST. ANDREW'S SCHOOL

10 MINUTES WITH DANIEL GENTLE

TABS DIRECTOR OF MEMBER RELATIONS
& ASSOCIATION ADVANCEMENT

I WENT TO COLLEGE DOWN IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, without knowing a soul, and without any familiarity with the area. It felt a little scary at first, but mostly invigorating. Then I did an exchange year in Bozeman Montana, at Montana State. I just hopped in my truck and drove the 36 hours, through country I'd never seen, to a place I had never been. It was so exciting. At the time, I thought Montana was maybe the last wild state, besides Alaska. I spent a lot of time in New Mexico with my family growing up, and had always heard stories and seen pictures of Big Sky country. When I finally had the opportunity to go live it, I wanted to do that.

THINKING ABOUT IT, I'M KIND OF AN OLD SOUL. Like most of us, I've been tied to a cell phone and computer as part of my job. It's great because it has afforded me a lot of flexibility to live in and visit different places while working one job. But if I'm honest, I'm most comfortable when I can totally unplug. In fact, one thing that I like about going to remote areas is that it forces you to disconnect from technology. Lucky for me, my wife, Anne-marie, shares the same love of the outdoors. We spend as much time as we can hiking, camping, and fishing.



I TOOK THE MONTH OF JULY OFF, BEFORE STARTING AT TABS. I took a trip to Wyoming with a couple buddies. We had a drift boat, a motorcycle, and a truck, and logged about 1800 miles looking for good fishing. The record winter in much of The Rockies had caused rivers to run high well into the summer, so floatable and fishable water was harder than normal to find. Some happenstance conversation with an in-the-know local, Grant, pointed us towards Pinedale. Let's just say he delivered. Sometimes little gems are found in the most unexpected places. We saw two impressive bull moose, caught lots of big, wild trout, and lost a wheel off of our boat trailer about 45 miles from a paved road. Crisis management and character building at its finest!

I THINK THE BEAUTY OF FISHING IS THAT IT TEACHES US HOW TO ENJOY EACH CONSECUTIVE MOMENT FOR

WHAT IT IS. The scenery, the sounds...the puzzle of trying to figure something out. And then sometimes, it's really about the fishing. I'll say that's usually when the fishing is good. When there's a lot happening, it's a whole different world under the water. There're insects in various lifecycle stages, all kinds. Fish will key in on them. When a hatch or emergence occurs, if the fish have any capacity left for food, they get really busy eating. If you're fly fishing, it's an exciting time because there's so much going on visually. And when you're doing everything right and it's producing, meaning you're catching fish – it's one of the best feelings in the world.

ANOTHER THING THAT I HAVE LEARNED TO APPRECIATE, is the value in good people, good authentic people who are trying to live a good life, trying to do the right thing and care about others. In the boarding school world, people like this are plentiful. That has been a real draw for me, and one reason I was interested in this job with TABS. The boarding school community is a great group of people who care about kids, are passionate about education, and who are fun to be around.

I LIKE TO SURROUND MYSELF with people from different backgrounds and perspectives. It's great to share common interests, but oftentimes people who hold different views and perspectives are the ones who bring something that I don't get in the immediacy

of my own life. I think the ability to openly discuss opposing views is something we're losing, and I hate that. We can gain so much from listening to someone else's heartfelt point of view, and we should be open to listening. It doesn't have to mean we agree, but I find that when I try to understand the world from someone else's shoes, I grow. I love hearing people's stories. That, in a way, is why I find sales and member relations so appealing – because I get to hear people's stories. I get to tell a story of my own and make a connection with someone I didn't know before, and over time that adds a unique richness to life.

WHEN I GREW UP, MY PARENTS OWNED A RESTAURANT. We had people who came in from all walks of life, and all socioeconomic groups. You name it, we had it. Looking back, it gave me great exposure to how people carry themselves, what sorts of interests they have, how they act and react in certain situations. I was able to watch how my parents, or other people who worked in the restaurant, dealt with customers. I've always been a keen observer, I guess, in interactions and responses and body language, so I got a lot of lessons in that. It teaches you how to manage expectations, I think, in a lot of ways, and how to carefully navigate people, because so much of a mood can come from something completely unrelated to you or your interaction with that person in that moment.

The other side of the restaurant was the employee aspect. As is often the case in the restaurant industry, you deal with a bunch of characters from varied backgrounds. You get to know them not only more intimately than the customers, but you have to work with them, as they have to work with you. The range of education spanned from graduate degrees to not even a high school diploma, and everywhere in between. It knocks you in the pool and you figure out how to swim, how to make it work. It was really fun, actually.

THREE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS? A harder question than it seems! I guess it depends on how you define a "thing." Most of my favorite memories are from adventures spent with friends and loved ones. I love my wife, and I love my dogs, I love my family – so much – but they're not things. I have this classic car that my dad bought back in '84. I was just in love with it as a little kid. And he gave it to me for my 30th birthday. I'm a sentimental guy, and the memories I have from childhood of that car – the smell, the sound of the engine, the feel of the ride...They're the same as

they've always been. It takes me back in a great way. It's like a time machine. It's my own DeLorean.

Given the context of this conversation, I'd be remiss if I didn't add fishing, because it is a real love of mine. Let's loop nature into that, too. So we've got my special car, we've got fishing, and I'm going to have to say the third is adventuring. If I can have all three at the same time, I'm in heaven.

