

A TRIFECTA OF *Leadership*

*CALS women take the
lead on campus*

By Karen Brasher

T HREE SENIOR WOMEN demonstrate what it takes to reign in academics and leadership at MSU. The paths that led each of them to the people's university are varied and yet still centered on family. The three, all students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, represent a trifecta of leadership on campus.

Anne Marie Currie is a biochemistry major with a pre-dental concentration. In addition to serving as president of the Chi Omega sorority, she is homecoming's Miss MSU and serves as a university recruiter.

Victoria Vivians is a human development and family science major and affectionately known as the 'Queen of all Courts.' She was elected as the 2017 Homecoming Queen and is an all-star student athlete on the nationally-ranked women's basketball team.

Tyler McMurray is an animal and dairy sciences major and MSU Student Association president. She has led the organization with style and grace, opening seats at the table for an inclusive governing body.

These student leaders who rise early and work late will graduate in May 2018. As they approach the finish line, preparing for diverse careers, they represent the leadership found in so many of the students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences that embody the true spirit of Mississippi State.

Anne Marie Currie

CARUTHERSVILLE, MISSOURI NATIVE, Anne Marie Currie, grew up in a tiny town along the Mighty Mississippi in the boot heel of Missouri. Her ties to State were paternal. Her father graduated in business administration from MSU and loved his time in college.

When selecting a school, she knew she wanted the sense of community, which defined her hometown but wasn't sure which colleges would provide such a place. She visited three universities before making a decision, all about equal distances from home: Mississippi State, the University of Alabama, and the University of Missouri.

"The feeling I had when I walked onto MSU's campus, one of welcome and hospitality, was overwhelming," Currie said. "I truly felt that people at MSU were here to help me.

Currie said there was a sense that everyone at the university wanted to help her succeed as a student and prepare her to go out into the world and help others. She said the big draw was that the university made her feel like a person instead of just a number. The family connection mattered, too.

"Of course, when I made the decision to attend MSU, my dad was thrilled to bring out his cowbell," Currie laughed.

When Currie arrived on campus, she knew she would be active in the university's community. She joined the student association, worked as counselor in the new maroon camp, and served as an orientation leader. During her academic career, she became a member of Chi Omega sorority, serving in numerous leadership roles including as the organization's

president this year. She is also in the honor societies Lambda Sigma and Mortar Board. She was asked to serve as Miss MSU for homecoming, a selection based on an interview process. Plus, there is the rigor required for a biochemistry degree complete with challenging classes and labs.

"Being here at Mississippi State and in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, you are constantly being poured into and provided outlets and resources to use," Currie said. "That level of support and engagement has paved the way for an amazing experience."

She begins her day early with a morning devotional and a run. Her sorority sisters joke that she is the first one up in the house every morning. After breakfast, she dashes to class, then to a host of labs and meetings. After that, she hits the books, oftentimes until midnight. Then she gets up the next day and does it all over again. She says that rigor is preparing her for her next challenge: attending the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry in Memphis this fall.

Currie says choosing MSU is the best life decision she has made thus far and the memories she's made here will last a lifetime.

"The little moments of college, the late night ice cream run, grabbing a quick bite, or going for a walk with friends is something I'll miss as I make the transition to dental school," Currie said.

And the busy schedule has definitely been a balancing act for Currie.

"Being sorority president has been like a full-time job that's not listed as a job," Currie said. "You never know what is going to come across your desk, whether



it's someone that needs a friend or a helping hand, logistics with the university, philanthropy events, or resolving a need within the national organization."

She says the responsibility has definitely kept her on her toes and been an amazing leadership experience in both leading her sorority and as an orientation leader.

Currie has found that the opportunities afforded students is one of the many things that sets Mississippi State apart.



“It is empowering to be able to make a difference,” she said. “It has truly been an amazing time. While I am excited about the future, it is sad to be leaving campus.”

When she does return to campus, she says she will visit her favorite place, the Drill Field.

“When you walk from Dorman Hall, where I spend a lot of time in class, and then you walk onto the Drill Field and you see Lee Hall, it has to be my favorite image of campus,” Curry said. “It’s like

you can feel the history of Mississippi State in that space, you see the diversity on campus, and you can picture the cadets that once performed drills there. When I am in that space, it makes me so proud to call this my campus. We have the prettiest campus, I think it is because we are an agricultural school, and I am so fortunate to have been able to go to school here and call this place home.”

Seniors Anne Marie Currie of Caruthersville, Missouri, and Nicolas D. “Nick” Harris of Millington, Tennessee, are Miss and Mr. MSU 2017. Currie, a biochemistry/pre-dental major, and Harris, a communication/public relations major, are presented during halftime of the MSU vs. University of Kentucky homecoming football game on October 21, 2017. (Photo by Russ Houston)

Victoria Vivians

A HEAVILY RECRUITED STUDENT ATHLETE from Forest, Mississippi, Victoria Vivians's path to Mississippi State was centered around family. Not so much the family at MSU, but her own family, her parents and siblings.

Vivians has a large family and all cheer for her boisterously from the stands. MSU women's basketball coach Vic Schaefer jokes that there will be 100 season tickets available when she graduates.

The All-American athlete made her break out in eighth grade when the college scouts first took notice. By the end of her junior year she had narrowed the choices to four universities: Florida, Louisville, Kentucky, and Mississippi State.

"The first three schools had more NCAA tournament appearances and Mississippi State had a losing record in the SEC and had missed the NAAs that year," Vivians said. "However, in the end, it came down to family, particularly my brothers and sister, because MSU was closer to home."

Little did she know that a family awaited her at Mississippi State, a family of athletes and children. As a human development and family science major with a concentration in youth studies, Vivians is surrounded by children, both in her internship in the School of Human Sciences' Child Development and Family Life Center and the numerous bulldog fans who look up to her, literally and figuratively.

"I love kids and have lots of nieces, nephews, and small cousins. Kids are attracted to me for some reason," Vivians said, when describing why she chose

her major. "It seemed like a natural fit to work with kids."

At 6'1", she towers over the young students that attend the center and she knows that they look up to her in more than one way.

"It is an honor to be a role model and mentor to the kids but it is also a lot of pressure, knowing that they are always watching me," Vivians said. "I try to remember to always do the right thing, make it a habit to do the right thing, because if I mess up, the kids will see it. A little bit of pressure doesn't hurt."

This semester Vivians interns in lieu of classes, a final requirement of the human development and family science major. Her day begins early, arriving at the child development center by 7:30 each morning. After a few hours of work, it is off to basketball practice, which generally lasts three and a half to four hours. She then returns to the center in the afternoon. She readily admits that she likes to go to bed early.

Vivians has racked up numerous awards for her prowess on the basketball court including First Team All-America honors from USA Today, four C Spire Gillom Trophies as the best women's collegiate basketball player in Mississippi, a finalist for National Player of the Year honors, named to the AP all-SEC team, among myriad others. As a high-school student, she scored a national-record 5,745 points and had earned her own exhibit at the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum.

However, perhaps her greatest challenge was running for the 2017

Homecoming Queen, an elected position. It was a far reach for the self-described shy homebody from Forest, MS.

"It was outside of my comfort zone to run for homecoming queen," Vivians said. "I didn't think I would win, but I thought, I am just going to try it. Besides being in the NCAA Championship over the last two years, homecoming is one of my fondest memories of my time at MSU. It was something different that I went for and I got it."

Trying different things is something that Vivians embraces that has helped shape her into the leader she is today. While comfortable on the court, she quickly points to her community service that has built leadership skills in her that will last a lifetime.

"I am a positive person and I try to approach each opportunity in that way," Vivians said. "Working in the community, no matter the task, gives me the chance to embrace different people and share my optimistic outlook. It also lets me get others involved that might not otherwise serve."

As for future plans, Vivians' desire to be drafted in the Women's National Basketball Association became reality when she was selected to play for the Indiana Fever.

And when she returns to campus, you will find her at the Junction or the Drill Field, her favorite places at MSU.

"I love the scenery, the buildings, the stadium," Vivians said. "Those are my favorite places on campus."





Victoria Vivians, the 2017 Homecoming Queen at Mississippi State University, is escorted by her father, John Vivians, during halftime of the MSU vs. University of Kentucky homecoming football game on October 21, 2017. (Photo by Russ Houston)

Tyler McMurray

FLOWOOD, MISSISSIPPI NATIVE, TYLER MCMURRAY, strongly considered the University of Mississippi for her undergraduate studies. Her older sister Erin was at Ole Miss, and being the younger sibling, Tyler wanted to follow in her footsteps.

She had no ties to Mississippi State. Her father is from North Carolina and her mother is from Arkansas, they met at med school in Missouri and both landed jobs in Jackson before Tyler was born.

On a spring visit to Mississippi State during her senior year of high school, McMurray knew she had found her home.

“The interactions that I had with students, mostly freshmen, sealed the deal for me,” McMurray said. “They were so kind and welcoming and when I got home I told my family that I belonged at Mississippi State.”

“It also occurred to me that MSU was the best fit since I wanted to go into veterinary school,” McMurray added.

She started out in biology but quickly changed to the animal and dairy sciences major for the hands-on experience and pre-veterinary concentration.

McMurray is an active campus leader, serving in the Chi Omega sorority and as president of the MSU Student Association. She has been involved in the student governing body throughout her academic career. She has been a campus recruiter for four years, volunteering as a Roadrunner for the Office of Admissions and Scholarships. She





Tyler McMurray
in front of
the Colvard
Student Union
on the campus
of Mississippi
State University.
(Photo by Russ
Houston)

is also in Lambda Sigma honor society, and worked as an orientation leader.

A day in the life of Tyler McMurray begins early when she gets up and works out with friends at the Sanderson Center. After breakfast, it is off to class in the Wise Center, where all of her classes are held this semester. After lunch, it is meetings until 9 p.m.

As president of the MSU Student Association, McMurray has office hours so that students can come by and visit and express their concerns. While office hours are not a requirement for the Student Association, the executive board felt that it was important to make themselves available to students.

McMurray also has laboratories, part of the heavy science curriculum in the animal and dairy sciences major. She confesses that she is somewhat of an early to bed, early to rise type gal, preferring to save homework and studying for the weekend.

As MSU Student Association president, McMurray is most proud of the work by the executive board to extend the membership on the senate. While it has been talked about for many years, the Student Association, under McMurray's capable leadership, offered a seat at the table for a diverse group of students.

"The senate has always been run by students in fraternities and sororities but Mississippi State is the most diverse school in the Southeastern Conference and our senate was not representative of the unique voices across campus," McMurray said. "We, as an executive board, worked with senators to change our constitution to create organizational seats. The organizational seats allowed students who may have been underrepresented to have a seat at the table. Those organizational seats fall into 11 different categories including cultural, political, religious, international, and recreational, among others."

Now, anyone who is in an organization within these categories is qualified to run for a seat in the senate.

"The change gave populations on our campus a guaranteed voice in the senate,

which is supposed to be representative of our student body," McMurray added.

She said she initially worried the measure wouldn't pass since it would take seats away from fraternities and sororities. That turned out not to be the case.

"The entire Student Association came together because they knew that this was for the betterment of the university. Passing the bill was a very cool moment," McMurray said.

The change brought a lot more debate, however, it has made the Student Association much more productive and more inclusive, McMurray added.

McMurray plans to attend veterinary school upon graduation. She has been accepted to both Auburn University and Mississippi State. While she has always wanted to be a vet, her interest has shifted somewhat to the policy side of veterinary medicine. Trying to figure out which school will be the best fit for her projected career path has been tough.

Auburn has a dual degree program with a master's in public health and a DVM, however, she is true maroon, so she has decided to pursue her vet degree at MSU.

The consummate recruiter, McMurray convinced her younger brother Nathan to attend Mississippi State, although her sister tried to persuade him to attend the University of Mississippi. McMurray quickly brought him to MSU for a campus visit and now he is a junior pursuing a chemical engineering degree at the land-grant institution.

Her favorite place on campus happens to be the same place where she first realized that Mississippi State would become her home, the Chapel of Memories.

"The Chapel of Memories was the very first place I visited on campus and the place where I fell in love with Mississippi State. That is where I had so many interactions with people, where I realized these are the people I want to be around and this is the environment in which I want to thrive," McMurray said. "On that first visit, all these students were gathered there playing music and hanging out and that's when I knew that Mississippi State was where I belonged."