

## **Carolyn Sherry 2008**

### **Tell us a few things about yourself (family, job, things that bring you joy).**

I have a two-year-old so that's like first and foremost, and you'll probably hear him running around upstairs. He definitely is a big one, and that's without really saying. I really enjoy yoga; I love to travel, so I really miss that. I love to entertain, and you know have people over, and that's really great. Then my career has been at least partially a source of joy for me. I lead a team of people at Vanguard, and I've actually worked here for 12 and 1/2 years, and it was my first job out of UVA, and I stayed there and enjoy having very challenging and interesting work that I think is important. So, there's a summary.

#### **1. What is your UVA story? How did you decide to come to UVA?**

So I was from Arizona — I grew up there, and I visited UVA when I was a sophomore in high school in 2002. So I applied early decision, and I was wait-listed and so then I only applied to schools around there. I was devastated, and I was like “oh my gosh” and then only applied to schools that were on the common application, which at the time was just like you submit the same application to multiple schools, and so then luckily I remember like February or March I found out that I got into UVA, and I was thrilled and I really loved UVA. I had a great experience in dorms. I met so many friends in dorms, actually like two of my sole closest friends like I met in dorms so I really loved that first year.

##### **a. What did you do when you were a student at UVA?**

And then I was actually an RA on Grounds and was definitely close to my residents. So I was an RA my second year in new dorms in the building that was demolished and then I was what we called Head resident of Woody which I do believe is still standing, and then I was co-chair of Resident staff my fourth year, and I lived in an apartment in Daphne, and I really love the experience. I was also on the Arts and Sciences Council. I was an American studies major, which was super competitive at the time — I don't know what it's like today, but it was only 30 people in it every year.

##### **i. Were women encouraged or discouraged to join extracurriculars and were some more welcoming than others?**

I really loved the people in my major and how small it was and how all the professors who were teaching different things were really great, so I really enjoyed all that time. My classes never really felt discouraging. I discovered I liked working out was a good way to manage my stress and I liked workout classes like and got into like a few different workout classes with the AFC, and I feel like I loved the culture and working out at UVA and never felt discouraged from it. Because I was a resident staff member, I went to this late summer Leadership training. I don't

know if they still do that but like most women were very much encouraged and were pretty prominent in terms of leadership of those groups. I was never in Greek life or like Guides — which were two big ones — so I don't know culture as far as those go. But I really never felt like there were any barriers to entry to the things that I wanted to do and Resident staff especially I think was like you know pretty Progressive and welcoming and many of the Deans and faculty who led us where women. So I never felt any barriers.

## **ii. Greek life experience?**

I wasn't involved in Greek life, and I really self-selected my friends so I didn't want to be around that, which I talked a lot about already.

### **2. What is your favorite UVA memory?**

My favorite memory — there's a lot — I actually had a really cool moment, so I forgot this happened until just now. I was a student member on — this would have been around 2007 — there's a capital campaign going on, and I had an internship with a chair of the capital Campaign Committee, and so she gave me a position as the student member. And I went to have a meeting in Charlottesville, VA with all the members. Most other members realize they left all over if they were coming in and there's going to be a dinner and I ended up sitting across the table from John Castillo, who was the President of UVA at the time — and for a long time, for like 30 years — and all he wanted to do all night with like only talk to me and hear about how things are going and what things are like in class and what I was studying and what things are like on Grounds and it was really like a lovely conversation and evening. It was just like this really special moment of like I don't know just feeling like my voice mattered to him and being kind of in the right place at the right time to learn from him so that was a really great one. And then the other — you know I feel like there was just fun, a lot of fun times with different friends of mine.

### **3. What was a transformative moment for you at UVA?**

My last year — I went into my fourth year, my second semester and I decided — I don't know why I decided this, but I was like “I'm getting all A's” this semester. I was like I normally get an a-minus — like 95, but I went in to set out and do it, and I did it and I worked really hard to do it, and I was in some like really tough classes and but I really really worked, and that's like another memory that I had because I think in my first semester I got like two C, which like never happened to me in my life. I had no idea how much harder school was in college and so seeing that progression was like really good memory now.

### **4. What was the most challenging thing about UVA?**

It's just such a high bar, and I think the most challenging thing is classes — they were hard, and when I actually started working and even in grad school — nothing has been that hard. So I went

to Dartmouth for my MBA, which sounds like that should be hard, right? It wasn't. It was not nearly as hard as they were at UVA, so classes were definitely hard, and then I think some elements of social life were hard. I never really got into the frat scene, and I think that I kind of rejected that culture, which like now that feels very easy and natural to me. Like I don't do things or like try to participate in things that are not for me.

**5. Tell us about a woman/women at UVA who inspires you – now, or during your time on Grounds.**

So a really great leader on Grounds was Angela Davis — she was a professor in the English Department, and she was the Dean of students for residents here, but she's like a great person. I don't know if she's still teaching or anything, but if so, I would take her class. Since I was a chair resident staff, and she was the dean, I would work with her a lot — especially my last year and she just a really great thinker and push your thinking on ways, and I just had several conversations with her both during when I was in school and even like soon after like I had this weird job thing right after school. I got it in 2008, so just like I still like to think about some of the things that she's taught me so she was definitely one, and then really like just several very strong female friends from UVA, and I have several great women professors.

**a. What relationships did you form with other women and did you find it easy to make those connections?**

I think that's really important because you have to have women in positions of authority and like leadership to believe that you also can do that, so yeah you know the friendships I had when I was there are more defining — I would just meet a girl, and we'd be friends, and you know those relationships last.

**b. What was the presence of women's groups and movements on campus like?**

I mean I don't know if it's still called Swag — like studies in women and gender courses. I took several and really enjoyed what I learned from them. I don't think I actually learned much about women's issues outside of class. There were obviously sororities — there were women's like musical organizations and there were other organizations, but I wasn't part of it. I think the place where there was the most thinking or engaging on issues of gender where only in class.

**c. How many courses did you take at UVA that were taught by female professors? Could you talk a little about the courses they taught and the kind of diversity that the courses and the prof(s) represented?**

I think I talked about this some, but it was a solid mix like I never felt like I ever had issues with only men professors or only women professors. Like I think it was even. My classes were like normal.

## **6. What were your experiences with sexism or misogyny on Grounds?**

I think that I never experienced anything like that. I remember like a few years ago when the Rolling Stone thing came out, and I know that's been discredited or whatever, but I remember getting in the conversations with people from UVA and they were like that could never happen. But like that definitely happened. Maybe not to her, maybe not like in the exact story she told — but that definitely happened. I have no doubt in my mind that it happened. And it was interesting that I was so clear on that because I think that tells you things that are similar under the surface of the culture at UVA. I think also like the racial tension on Grounds is something that is — I don't know about today — but then it was simmering under the surface and not really like acknowledged to some extent and you could have some conversations about it but like not really in any real way and there were you know, there were still things happening. Like I was from Arizona, so like moving to the South from Arizona, like people had Confederate flag bumper stickers on their cars and like that wasn't even a conversation then. There just weren't any conversations like the me too movement then, you know. And I just watched — I don't know if you watched the Britney Spears documentary — but all of that was happening to her when I was in high school and college and I don't remember — I didn't think much of it. But today, the way she was treated in the media — like there's clips from multiple interviews where grown men were asking her about her boobs and like asking her about if she was a virgin or not — like that would never fly today. But that was just normal then. So I don't know — I'm just like I think that in that way UVA can be like a microcosm of society and also to some extent it's a good old boys club of like not really policing racist and gender structures, but I didn't feel like I experienced that day to day, and you know so it's this that is the hard thing to reconcile.

## **7. Was there an open LGBTQ+ presence when you went to UVA?**

There was, but I'm sure it's very stronger now. So when I was at UVA, I definitely like had gay friends and acquaintances at UVA but it wasn't many, but I would imagine there was an organization somewhere that's what I was thinking earlier in like terms of being in microcosm of society. But, I didn't know anyone at UVA and we weren't talking about transgender people — plus I never met any lesbians at UVA. I'm sure they must have existed — and actually I take that back Dean Davis was a lesbian, so I did know one, but as far as other students, I never met any that were openly out. I think there was more social acceptance of gay men, but we never talked about nor did I know that someone was like transgender — that was like not regular the discourse as it is now, which I think is a good improvement, and I really didn't know lesbian classmates. So I definitely remember it being a point of conversation and making safe spaces for people with different sexual orientations specifically, and it was important to me to seek out one of these stickers. The safe space stickers were a really big deal.

## **9. Did you feel pressured to go into a certain field or avoid a certain field during your time in college?**

I did not feel pressure to go into a certain field. I do remember people being like with American studies majors, you know, what are you going to do with that. The big choices were kind of like a lawyer or teacher, and I didn't know what to do either of those things, so I stumbled into my field with the financial services company. I didn't take math — I didn't take Comm School classes, and I feel like those are probably some reasons why. When I was in business school at Dartmouth, it was mostly men in my business school — like 75% — which is really weird because at UVA I felt at the time it was like 50% women, and so I just never really felt like you knew you were isolated in that way.

**a. Did you notice a disparity in the population of men and women in your major?**

I look at pictures of us, and like a lot of men, but it is also a good bit of women, you know. I don't think it was a major difference. I think it was pretty split.

**b. Do you know of any efforts your institution has made since you graduated to make their classes more inclusive?**

You know, I'm not really sure. I know it's obviously better and different — I don't know what it's like today — but like I think it's probably a pretty even split.

**10. What was relationship/hookup culture during your time at UVA?**

I mean like we would go out you know on weekends. I feel like looking for people to make out with like usually for me at least, so you know there was actually a hookup culture. I think that from having conversations with some of my friends who were in Greek life like it was much bigger for them and it was like there was a lot more for them.

**11. Was there any talk about consent and respect on campus? If so, do you think it was thorough/helpful?**

I remember things like 1 and 4 and take back the night being pretty big movements on campus and pretty big light points of discussion and those of course are like focus with light more on the aftermath of people being assaulted. Consent was like inherent in those groups, and I think one of those like the trainings for Resident staff and things like that but then rape wasn't like the buzzword that it is now, so like the kind of the coaching to all people and especially men to be proactive wasn't really a thing then. I think that this is so problematic in our society, like much more of the responsibility I think when I was inside was like running — women like don't walk home alone, and like people were more focused on the language. Like what was she wearing, what was she doing at the time — it's like there's no, you know there's nothing you can do that like makes it your fault for being assaulted, so I feel like it was especially like resident staff was

a bit more like aware and thoughtful about these types of issues, so I feel like I heard about it simply because I was an RA, but it wasn't like mainstream.

**12. What was the media / newspaper coverage of women's issues and/or sexual assault?**

I don't really remember it. I mean obviously there was Rolling Stone, and that was infamous and dismissed and it got really ugly you know.

**13. What was your journey after leaving UVA?**

I would say I kind of fell into my career at Vanguard and that's held several positions and they sent me back to business school. I moved from Arizona to Pennsylvania and I got an opportunity to work in Japan for a year 2 years ago, so it's been really — I actually feel like that I have and like a lot of things, like I became a much better writer at UVA than I was before I left. Writing is the secret sauce skill, and it was a much better student right from that. Like I said, business school was kind of okay. But like UVA — just having that degree on your roster, it opens doors for you. It's a highly regarded school. And like I do feel like I mostly studied history and anthropology, like that doesn't have too much to do with mutual funds but I studied and I enjoyed it, and the critical thinking and problem solving and writing really applies and I think it applies to whatever you do. I'm glad I didn't push myself to go to law school or something because I think I would have just hated it a lot. I think finding my career in a more holistic way was better for me.

**14. Is there something you learned at UVA that you apply to your life now?**

Yeah, like the writing. Write, write, write. No matter what you do, like I said, it really just applies to everything, and if you're good at it, like people are going to read it you know.

**15. What does the UVA alumnae community mean to you? How have fellow alumni affected your life/career/journey?**

So I love being an alum. I was on the young alumni Council for a while — for like 6 years. I haven't been on for probably about five years now. I made a few additional like really great UVA friends through that. And even one of my closest friends here at my job was from UVA, but we didn't go to school together, but like at my work like they're probably about 20 of us and in normal times we like to get together and do something. When I moved back Arizona for awhile, the Phoenix Club was kind of like an instant connection — it is a quick way to like accelerate that connection that you have with them, so I like it in that way. I was supposed to go down to Charlottesville in November but covid got too crazy, so I haven't been down probably since my reunions — which is almost three years ago, but I love that I feel I could come back to form a community when you move to a new place and I'm like I said the friends I made there I kept. Several of my closest friends are UVA students.

**16. In your opinion, what is the legacy of women at UVA?**

I really don't know the answer to that. By the time I was there 30 years later, which is not that much time really, like women students were running the show. I said like in those leadership trainings, I'd imagine it was probably 70% women, so I think there's a lot of women who've been very impactful at UVA and that for women students — I mean I'm interested if you think this is still there, like our student body president was a woman like several other leaders of organizations are women, so I think you may have a strong ability to know and become really impactful women leaders, and I think that that's a pretty big legacy. But, that legacy isn't untroubled in that I feel like women have done those things at UVA in spite of knowing what the history of the place is. Like that you know it's only been since 1972 or whatever but what are you to do? Like blatant sexism isn't super clear, but it's there some. But, I mean that is a plus because that type of stuff really slows you down.

**17. If you could impart a piece of advice to a female student on Grounds today, what would you tell her?**

I would say to study what you love and don't worry too much about your job. I think that the types of people who end up being students at UVA are very like “here is my path and I'm going to get it.” I think living like that gunner lifestyle is not sustainable for most people — 95% of people — and even if it is sustainable it's not feeling joy or doing what you love. So I would say my biggest piece of advice is to study what you love and trust that if you show up and do your best things are going to work out. I have had this weird career that I never have planned out, but I really enjoy it, and I really like what I do and business school wasn't on my radar when I was an undergrad. I wasn't like — how do I get to business? Like I wasn't even thinking about it. So if you can let yourselves figure it out as you go rather than try to find what the right path is — like when I when I was graduating was most people in my major were going to teach or go to law school and like neither of those things were really what I really wanted to do and I'm glad I didn't force myself into until things were right.

**18. Is there anything related to women's history at the University that you would like to learn more about?**

I feel kind of bad saying this, but I feel like I've got the general picture, and I'm not really interested in much else. I would caveat that with saying there's not much about the University's history that's particularly interesting to me right now. I think that what I notice — like the most other people is as you get a bit older, you become much more interested in the history of specific things and I enjoy that, but I feel like I've got a good picture and story of the history of the University, and there's not like specific things I want to go deeper on. But that's generally not just about women's history — it's just in general.

**19. What do you think the biggest difference was in terms of your experience at UVA and what is going on now in 2021?**

I think that the biggest difference will be like several of the social issues we've already talked about being more part of like a day-to-day discourse rather than like a niche topic.