

A GIFT OF REMEMBRANCE

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Michelle Blake, Classes of '00/'16G

The **Pauline L. Cushion Scholarship** was the University's first scholarship for undergraduate evening students.

"My mom would be humbled ..."



Photo by Jodie Andruskevich

Michelle Blake '00/'16G followed in her mother's footsteps by attending Rivier University as an undergraduate and later returning to pursue her MBA. She describes her education at Rivier as a real-world education. "I love learning, and I loved the diversity I found at Rivier," says Michelle. "The professors are supportive and knowledgeable, and they offer so much insight into their own experience."

A love of learning and commitment to education runs in the family. Michelle's mother, Pauline L. Cushion, entered Rivier at age 45, with three children, a husband, and full-time job. For her, earning a college degree had been a lifelong goal; a goal she was determined to achieve, obstacles or not.

"Perseverance is the word that comes to mind when I think of her," Michelle says, when asked to describe her mother. "She was a very strong and determined person. Perseverance seems to be such a small word to begin to even describe her drive."

Diagnosed with melanoma while earning her degree, Michelle's mother lost her courageous battle with cancer in May of 1995, one semester short of graduation. The University recognized Cushion's example of perseverance and achievement by awarding her degree posthumously in 1996. As their tribute, Michelle and her family created the Pauline L. Cushion Scholarship at Rivier University.

Truly a community effort, Michelle shares the tremendous effort required to start the scholarship. "We had bake sales, car washes, and raffles. Hundreds of people—friends, family, colleagues, and our church community—contributed to making this scholarship possible. Just as my mom was driven to pursue her education, we were driven to honor her memory in a profound way."

Michelle, like her mother, is an example of someone with drive and passion. She is involved in numerous volunteer efforts while pursuing her dream career of working in corporate philanthropy.

"My mom would be humbled that we are making a big deal about her. She never wanted to be in the spotlight," Michelle tells us. "Yet I hope that bringing attention to our efforts will inspire others to contribute to Rivier University and support its many scholarships, making it possible for other students to follow their passion."

The University is honored to be entrusted with a scholarship in Pauline Cushion's name and hopes that her legacy is an inspiration to all. ■