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Family Ties

Siblings who go to college together often find the experience changes their relationships for the better.

**Story by Amelia Benner '09
Photos by Marc Featherly**



Although Kendall (left) and Lindsay Tasche have a lot in common, they say that their varied interests and tastes make them “not the same person completely.”

conjure up dark, childhood memories of hair-pulling and scuffles over the T.V. remote. But many IWU siblings say that the experience has helped them to see each other in a different light.

Going to college together has been an opportunity “to get to know each other as adults instead of just siblings,” says Patrick McFadden '09, whose sister Bridget '09 also attends Illinois Wesleyan.

A home away from home

Sisters Lindsay and Kendall Tasche share almost everything. They're both chemistry majors at Illinois Wesleyan, and they both work at the Center for Natural Sciences security desk. They even look alike, with identical manes of long, red hair.

But like most Wesleyan siblings, the Tasches say that they've found a balance between being sisters and being individuals.

“We're not the same person completely,” Kendall laughs.

The thought of attending the same college as a brother or sister may

For some, the decision to attend the same college as a sibling is a difficult one. For others, the presence of a brother or sister isn't an issue.

Bridget and Patrick McFadden are not only siblings, but also part of a set of triplets. They say they visited the school together, but made the decision to attend Illinois Wesleyan separately. Their sister decided on a different university.

"I knew it'd be fun to be at the same school as Patrick," Bridget McFadden says, "but I didn't want to go just because he was."

It's a situation that IWU Dean of Enrollment Management Bob Murray '82 understands well — he and his three siblings all attended Illinois Wesleyan, and all three now work alongside him at the University.

"In high school, Mike [class of '84] and I were involved in athletics and music together but we never hung out socially," Bob says. "I think our mom was surprised that we ended up at the same school."



Above, Patrick and Bridget McFadden, two of a set of triplets, say they've forged their own identities while still staying close as siblings.

When Stephanie Gorrell '11 visited the campus last year as a prospective student, something about it just seemed right to her.

"It just felt like home because my siblings were here," she says.

Her sister Courtney '08 says that her younger siblings' decision to attend Illinois Wesleyan — brother James '09 is also a student — wasn't a big deal.

"I was fine with it," Courtney says. "I wasn't worried about it in the least."

From his vantage point in the Admissions office, Bob Murray says that attending college alongside a brother or sister can be a very positive experience, but siblings of Wesleyan students need to be "honest with themselves."

"They need to be able to stand up for what they think is best for them," he said. "Going to the same school as a sibling shouldn't be the fallback option."

Family togetherness



Above, brothers (from left) Bob, Chris and Mike Murray and their sister Michele meet at the Hansen Student Center. All four work for the University. After graduating, the siblings established the William and Joyce Murray Scholarship Fund, in honor of their parents. “We knew we could never repay our parents for their very generous contributions — for 13 consecutive years — but we believed the scholarship was a start,” says Michele.

make plans to do lunch and stuff like that.”

Bob and Mike, on the other hand, spent a lot of time together playing on the same varsity athletic teams and “ended up having a lot of the same friends, which was fun,” Bob says.

“We had a close-knit relationship as teammates,” Mike says, “but also as a family.”

Now Bob works in Admissions with Michele, who serves the office as an assistant dean. Mike — who is the University’s athletic admissions coordinator and assistant football coach — has an

One of the other things the Tasche sisters share is a dorm room.

“It’s the best thing ever, because it’s not awkward at all,” Lindsay ’08 says. “It’s completely open and there’s no drama. Other than she doesn’t like my mess.”

“But I’ve been living with that my whole life,” Kendall ’09 appends. “So it’s okay.”

The pair recognize that not all sisters could share the same small quarters without at least the contemplation of bloodshed.

“We’re pretty good friends for siblings,” Lindsay says. “When I tell people I live with my sister they’re like, ‘Oh my God, I would kill my sister.’”

Most Illinois Wesleyan siblings don’t share quite as much in common as the Tasche sisters.

“I think we had separate lives,” Michele (Murray) Darnell ’88 says of her years attending college with her brother Chris ’91. Her brothers Bob and Mike also worked in the University’s Admissions office at the time.

“There were times in those first couple months when I did have tinges of homesickness and I sought Mike out,” Michele says, but “we didn’t necessarily

office just across campus in the Shirk Center. In February, Chris also joined Illinois Wesleyan's staff as associate director of Development for major gifts.

"I do get people who ask, 'How can you work with your siblings like that?'" Bob says, laughing.

"I recognize that there are very few families that could work together," Michele says, adding that she attributes their good relationship to respect and open-mindedness.

Mike believes that his ability to work and go to school alongside his siblings stems from their family life and upbringing.



The Murrays are pictured at Chris's graduation along with IWU Coach Bob Keck, now retired, who served as academic advisor to all four of the siblings.

"Most of it comes from our relationship away from IWU," he says.

At first glance, blending sibling relationships with college friendships may seem awkward. After all, most kids spend their childhood slumber parties and playdates chasing younger brothers and sisters away from their friends. But many Illinois Wesleyan siblings say they've found a balance.

"We hang out on a more social level now," Courtney Gorrell says, "whereas in high school we didn't all have the same group of friends."

At the same time, "we absolutely do our own thing socially," James says.

Sibling rivalries?

James and Courtney Gorrell took a philosophy class together last year.

"It was really nothing out of the ordinary," James says. "We'd always joke that we were competing with each other."

"I think we thought it was going to be a little more competitive than it was," Courtney adds.

Do the siblings, both business majors, ever feel that they're actually competing for grades?

"Having the same major as Courtney — if she sets a certain bar, I want to be on the same level," James says. "But it doesn't feel competitive."

Professor Doran French, who chairs Illinois Wesleyan's Psychology Department, researches sibling relationships among children. He says that competitive siblings often try to carve out

their own niche in a family by deliberately choosing to follow a completely different educational or career path than their brothers or sisters.

“Students who have come here together probably don’t have those kinds of feelings,” French says.

Another specter of childhood siblingdom is the tattletale — *Mom! He ate all the cookies! Dad, she hit me!* — but the siblings interviewed for this story say they’ve grown out of that impulse.

“Our parents will say, ‘Oh, did you see Patrick today? How’s he doing?’ but not, ‘Tell me what he did,’” Bridget says.

“They’ve always tried to treat us like adults,” Patrick agrees.

On the other hand, the siblings say, it’s not always a bad thing to have someone making sure they’re all right. “I know that whenever I go out, [James] is looking out for me,” Stephanie says. “I know he’s there, which is nice.”

Courtney said she feels protective of her younger siblings — while her brother says the same thing about his sisters.

“I guess you always feel that way a little bit,” Courtney says.

A built-in best friend



Courtney, James and Stephanie Gorrell get together to catch up at Wesleyan’s Memorial Center. The three siblings say they see each other more often socially now than they did in high school.

Wesleyan siblings say that any problems related to going to college together are usually minor.

“Professors will call me by [Lindsay’s] name,” Kendall Tasche says. “I just answer to it.”

Occasionally the confusion goes beyond the wrong name. Last winter the Business Office mistakenly combined their two paychecks — twice.

“I got my check and it was twice as big as it should’ve been,” Kendall says.

“Then the next month I got the big check,” Lindsay adds.

James Gorrell says that the only downside of going to school with his sisters is “all the corny jokes about siblings.”

For most, the downsides are far outweighed by the benefits.

“If you go to different schools you miss that whole stage of life,” Courtney Gorrell says. “This way we really get to know each other outside the family environment.

“Now I see them more as people I want to be around instead of just as siblings,” she adds. “Now they’re people to me.”

“I think we definitely grew closer together as brothers,” Bob Murray says of his years at IWU with Mike. “He was always my best friend after he came to college.”

And that, many Wesleyan siblings say, is the best thing about going to college with a brother or sister.

Kendall “kind of has to be my friend,” Lindsay Tasche says, laughing. “She has to love me.”