

## Dr. Vanessa Murphy: A Bishop State alumna and more

Dr. Vanessa Murphy has been a student, an educator, a beauty queen and a cancer survivor. She credits much of her success in life to her time at Bishop State Community College.

“Not only did I enjoy my time as a student at Bishop State, but the confidence and foundation I received helped me achieve all that I have accomplished today,” said Dr. Murphy.

Graduating from Bishop State was only the beginning of a long relationship with the two-year college system for Dr. Murphy. She transferred credits toward her bachelor’s degree in English to the University of Mobile, then called Mobile College. She returned to her alma mater to serve as an English tutor and became an academic advisor.



“It was a great feeling to come back to the place it all began. Not as a student, but as a teacher and advisor,” said Dr. Murphy. “I am a huge advocate of the two-year college system and was honored to be able to give back.”

Dr. Murphy continued her education and earned a master’s degree in counseling from Alabama State University in Montgomery while serving as a tutor at Bishop. After leaving Bishop State a second time to pursue a career in clinical counseling, Dr. Murphy entered a national pageant and won Ms. Plus USA 1997. She was also one of the four winners from the 1,500 contestants for a model search with BBW Magazine that year.

During her reign, she graced the pages of magazines such as *Marie Claire*, *Belle*, *Glamour* and *Ebony*. She also appeared on *The Rolanda Show*, and *Entertainment Tonight* to name a few. Finally, Dr. Murphy walked the runways in major fashion shows of designers such as Anthony Mark Hankins.

“Basically, I became a national spokeswoman for plus-size women. During the 90’s, women were just beginning to understand how to be happy with their body types,” stated Dr. Murphy. “Everyone can’t be a size 2, but we can be healthy at any size.”

During and after her reign, Dr. Murphy’s passion for counseling and the two-year college system continued. She worked as a Counselor for Jeff Davis Community College in Brewton; then joined Trenholm State Technical College as Director of Student Support Services located in Montgomery. In 2006, she felt it was time to return to Mobile, and began working with Faulkner State Community College.

Dr. Murphy faced one of her greatest challenges. In 2005, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. But even cancer would not stop her long pursuit of success.

While undergoing chemotherapy, she was able to complete her doctorate in psychology.

“I continually draw on the lessons I learned at Bishop State to help me to get through all the events in my life,” said Dr. Murphy. “I tell all of my students when you go to a two-year college – you get all the opportunities you need to get to know people, and most importantly, you get to know who you are. And you can take that and go anywhere.”

Dr. Murphy will always consider herself a life-long alumna of Bishop State. She recently attended the inauguration of President James Lowe and continues her relationships with friends and faculty at Bishop State as an employee of the Alabama Community College System. Dr. Murphy is the only child of Mrs. Ethel Mitchell Murphy, also a Bishop State alumna, and the late Mr. O. Von Murphy.