In response to rising childhood obesity rates among the economically disadvantaged Greenville Health System (GHS) officials decide they want to develop a program to educate parents and students on the benefits of eating healthy, exercise, and getting regular checkups. But where should they begin? Should GHS partner with an existing program or start its own? What is the best way to reach parents and students? How do you measure success?

An institute recently launched by Furman and GHS will tackle these tough issues by harnessing the collective brain power of faculty and students from the poverty studies, health sciences, sociology, education, and other academic departments.

Like The Riley Institute and Shi Center for Sustainability, the Institute for the Advancement of Community Health (IACH) will serve as a hub where students, educators, and community leaders can work together to improve lives.

Too, it is an important part of The Furman Advantage, a strategic vision that guarantees every incoming student the opportunity for an engaged learning experience that is integrated with their academic and professional goals. Approximately 1,000 students (more than 40 percent of the Furman student body) are interested in healthcare related fields.

"The IACH will help us deliver on Furman’s promise to provide transformative educational experiences," said Eli Hestermann, who serves as the executive director of the IACH. "The IACH will connect these students to internships, research, and mentorship opportunities with community partners."

The institute is an outgrowth of the academic partnership between Furman and GHS, which was formed in 2014.

"The Institute for the Advancement of Community Health cements the partnership between Furman and GHS and gives our students rich opportunities for pursuing careers in healthcare," said Hestermann. "At the same time, it provides a resource for connecting community partners to a deep pool of talented students and faculty expertise."

Although IACH may involve students from a variety of majors, the institute will specifically bolster outside the classroom opportunities for the growing number of Furman students who are interested in health careers. Responding to this rising demand, the university launched a public health major and interdisciplinary minor in medicine, health and culture earlier this fall.

The announcement comes at time with GHS and other healthcare providers are embracing value-based approached that focuses on helping people stay healthy where they live and work.

"This is a great example where Furman’s expertise and the needs of the community come into alignment," said university President Elizabeth Davis. "The IACH will connect these students to internship, research, and mentorship opportunities with community partners."

The institute serves as Furman’s footprint in a new Shared Academic Health Center with GHS, Clemson University, and the University of South Carolina, and will provide more opportunities for Furman students to enter graduate and professional programs at the state’s two largest universities.

"This is a great example where Furman’s expertise and the needs of the community come into alignment."
—Elizabeth Davis

"The IACH will help us deliver on Furman’s promise to provide transformative educational experiences,” said Eli Hestermann, who serves as the executive director of the IACH. "The IACH will connect these students to internships, research, and mentorship opportunities with community partners."

—John Roberts
Vernon Robinson Cooper tried for years to get a job at Furman University. From 2004 to 2011, he regularly checked postings and submitted applications. When he finally got an interview for a custodial position, he made his objective clear: "I wanted to go to school here, and I knew I couldn't afford it otherwise," said Cooper '17. "I told him, 'I'm not here to be a custodian. I'm here to take classes.'"

Since 2011, he's done both—carrying a class load every semester while also working full-time. He's set to graduate next spring.

"I might literally be the best-paid janitor in the world if we consider the fact that I'm getting a truly world-class education for free," Cooper said.

In both of his worlds, the people who know him admire him.

"He is an enthusiastic learner, intellectually engaged ... in my view, he's a perfect student," said Michael Bressler, a professor of political science and Cooper's academic advisor. "He's the kind of person I can always count on him," said Jim Benes, custodial manager.

Cooper's college story begins when he was a student at West Florence High School, blowing off academics, convinced that he knew everything.

He moved to the Upstate after high school to be sure his girlfriend, a year older and a Furman student, wouldn't get snatched up by some college guy. He worked multiple jobs and bought a house in 2004, when he was just 21. He married Jennifer, the girl he'd taken to his junior prom for a first date and then quit smoking. When you want something badly enough, "you fight for it, you make it happen," Cooper said.

Cooper's academic advisor. "He's the kind of person you want to work with in a classroom."

But he's also the kind of employee a supervisor wants to have.

"No matter what I needed from him, I could always count on him," said Benes.

Cooper's college story begins when he was a student at West Florence High School. Cooper is an enthusiastic learner, intellectually engaged ... in my view, he's a perfect student," said Michael Bressler, professor of political science. "In both of his worlds, the people who know him admire him."

"He's the kind of person you want to work with in a classroom." Benes said.

But he's also the kind of employee a supervisor wants to have.

"No matter what I needed from him, I could always count on him," said Benes.

On his 33rd birthday in July 2011, Cooper was automatically accepted into a degree program. "I tip my hat to him, to be able to do this," said Benes.

"I might literally be the best-paid janitor in the world if we consider the fact that I'm getting a truly world-class education for free." —Vernon Cooper

A friend steered him toward the evening program and after hours of interviews and essays, he convinced the right people to take a chance on him.

Three semesters later, including at least one with a 4.0, he had earned the right to transfer into the day program to study political science and philosophy.

He goes to classes in the morning and then works a full second shift. Days are long. Study is wedged in where he finds time.

But Cooper compared it to an uphill battle like quitting smoking. When you want something badly enough, "you fight for it, you make it happen," Cooper said.

Benjamin Story, an associate professor of political science, has spent hours with Cooper both in class and in Furman’s political thought club. He said Cooper has rarely, if ever, missed a meeting of the latter.

"I wanted to go to school here, and I knew I couldn't afford it otherwise," said Cooper '17. "I told him, 'I'm not here to be a custodian. I'm here to take classes.'"

"I tip my hat to him, to be able to do this," said Benes.

"I might literally be the best-paid janitor in the world if we consider the fact that I'm getting a truly world-class education for free." —Vernon Cooper

"I’m 33 and I still don’t know what I want to do when I grow up," he said.

Meanwhile, he’s focused on caring for his floor of students, the people who know him admire him.

"He’s the kind of person you want to work with in a classroom." Benes said.
A Story of Heroes
Math professor and his daughter publish children's book about integration

John Harris ’91 loved to tell stories to his children. Mostly, he told stories about Amy, Betty, and Christy, a trio of imaginary girls he used to teach morals or lessons to his daughter, Sophie ’19. Sometimes, Sophie decided she wanted to be part of the stories and she would draw pictures of her three friends. One day, Harris heard a true story about some unsung heroes that needed to be told, and Sophie volunteered to illustrate it.

This summer, the father-daughter duo published the true story of school principal Brooks Tuck in their first children’s book, Mr. Tuck and the 13 Heroes (Regeneration Writers Press). Professor Harris joined the mathematics faculty at Furman in 2000 and serves as assistant director of the Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection while Sophie is an art major at Furman.

The book tells the inspiring story of the integration of the first school in Henry County, Ga., and how a courageous commitment to do the right thing helped to overcome fear and prejudice, stem the tide of racial injustice, and open a door of opportunity for generations who would follow.

Curtis Brooks Tuck (1938–2012) was an educator for 50 years, first as a teacher and principal in Henry and DeKalb County schools in Georgia, then as a teacher with Mercer University in Atlanta. He received a Doctor of Humanities degree from Mercer in 2010. In his commencement address that year, Tuck told the story of the 13 heroes publicly for the first time, according to Colin Harris, professor emeritus of Religious Studies at Mercer University, who also collaborated on the book with his son and granddaughter.

“Brooks Tuck was a modest man and he didn’t like to draw attention to himself,” said John Harris. “But when he heard the idea of turning the story into a children’s book, he gave the project his blessing. It’s really a story that wrote itself.”

“We hope everyone who reads the book feels the same emotions we did when we heard it,” said Sophie Harris.

Professor Harris heard Tuck’s story second-hand in the 1990s from his parents, who shared a Sunday school class with Tuck and his wife, Shirley. After some convincing, Brooks Tuck told the story with the small church group. John Harris only met Brooks Tuck in person once, in 2011, when the educator was in declining health.

Award-winning children’s book author Melissa Long ‘82 described the book as “a well-told story that beautifully explains a difficult time in our history.”

“This true story is a ‘must tell’ story that should indeed be shared with today’s youth who may know very little about any of the pioneers in the desegregation of public education,” said Jacqueline Cusseurope, associate professor of reading education at Mercer University.

A special presentation and book signing was held Oct. 12 at Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga., where Mr. Tuck had been a member for many years. The book is also available now at the Furman Bookstore and through Amazon.

W hen he was first found at the rugby stadium last Novem ber, Annie Queen wasn’t sure he would make it. The tiny black kitten was seriously dehydrated and suffering from hypothermia and starvation. He had been without his mother for five days. But thanks to three Furman moms, the kitten known as Kieran Rugby Love is now fully recovered and enjoying his new home.

Kieran is one of the success stories of the Furman Campus Cats program, undertaken by painter Annie Queen and senior groundkeeper Sheree Wright and assisted by librarian Scott Salzman.

These days, facilities services takes care of any stray critters that find their way onto campus, whether it’s a squirrel in the library or kittens in the football stadium, said Wright. With more cats finding their way to campus, the Campus Cats Program was formed to control the population. Cats are caught in humane traps and taken to Greenville County Animal Care to be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, ear-tipped, and in some cases, returned to campus to create stable colonies. Heller Service Corps Animal Interest Group’s Jessie Wheeler ’19 will be taking over the program this fall. Kittens that are not feral are taken to a foster home until they’re old enough to be adopted by a new family.

“I love getting them off the street and into good homes,” said Queen. So far, 10 cats and kittens have been served by the program. Three cats are currently up for adoption: Jane (named after the Jane Earle Rose Garden), Magnolia (found under a magnolia tree), and Delle (named after Della Sue Black in Facilities Services).

“Campus Cats: Program addresses stray problem

He’s special to me in so many ways, but the fact he’s a Furman kitten definitely makes him a part of my family.” —Jane Love

English professor Willard Pate, a longtime cat lover, recently adopted two of the Furman kittens, which she named Flannery and Faulkner after her two favorite writers.

“I’m enjoying Flannery, who is quite playful. My older cat, Nelson, is even beginning to like her,” said Pate. “Faulkner is still hiding under the furniture when he’s not eating. When I do get a glimpse of him, I can tell he’s a beautiful animal.”

Jane Love, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, lost her 17-year-old cat, Isaac, on November 23, the same day Kieran was found on Furman’s rugby field. Queen and her second mom, Cathy Frazier, helped nurse Kieran back to health and get him ready to be adopted. Love saw Kieran’s photo on an adoption flyer posted in Furman Hall. “That’s him. That’s my little black cat,” she thought.

When Queen brought Kieran over to Love’s office for the first time, he greeted her with a little kiss, a lick on the tip of her nose. “He’s special to me in so many ways, but the fact he’s a Furman kitten definitely makes him a part of my family,” said Love.

Faculty, staff, and student volunteers are needed to help operate the program. Donations are needed to assist with the cost of spay and neuter surgeries, vaccinations, and any veterinary care that may be needed. Donations of cat food (hard or soft) as well as cat litter are also appreciated. The program is supported solely by donations.

To make a donation, please send checks to Jessie Wheeler at Heller Service Corps, made payable to the Furman University Cats Program. For more information about the Campus Cat program, please email Annie Queen at anniequeen@furman.edu, Sheree Wright at sheree.wright@furman.edu, or Jesse Wheeler at jesse.wheeler@furman.edu.

—Enliah Haavie
Academic Affairs

George Shields facilitated a Q & A discussion titled “Keeping balance: Can I be a leader and a teacher at the same time?” at the 22nd Annual Cottrell Scholar Conference in Tucson, Ariz., in the session for “Understanding Academic Leadership.” Shields presented a seminar at Bowdoin College, titled “Water, Atmospheric Chemistry, and Global Warming: what do we know and how can we help?” Shields and Berhane Temelko published an article with Jeremy O. Richardson, Cristobal Perez, Simon Lobisger, Adam A. Reid, Zbigniew Kisiel, David J. Vilas, Brook H. Pals, and Stuart C. Altroth, titled “Concerted Hydrogen-Bond Breaking by Quantum Tunneling in the Water Hexamer Prism” in Science. DOI: 10.1126/science.aao1021

Art

Sarah Archino’s essay on the sculptor Virginia Macy-Moody is forthcoming in a CantyArt: Engagements with Art history this June.

Asian Studies

As part of her Fulbright re- search fellowship in China from April through August, Tami Blumenfield gave guest lectur- es at Southwestern University in Chongqing, at Yunnan University, and at the Beijing American Center, giving talks on organic farming and urban gardens in the United States at the Beijing American Center, the Diplomatic Office of the United States Embassy.

Biology

Greg Lewis, Dennis Haney, and Min-Ken Liao (in coll- aboration with Peter van den Hout from Clemson University) received a one-year grant of $28,680 from the South Caro- lina Water Resources Center at Clemson University for their proposal titled “The Influence of Poultry Rearing Facilities on Nutrient Concentrations, Fecal Indicator Bacteria, and Stream Fishes in the Upper Savannah River Basin.” This grant sup- ported research by Cullen, Carter ’17, Joalyn Staller ’18, and Utkarsh (Kumar) Mishra ’17.

Economics


English

Gretchen Braun published an article titled “The natural company of such as I am: Corruption, Purification, and Dickens’s Feminine Thymes” in Victoriania: A Journal of Culture and Literature.

Faculty News

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Earth and Environmental Sciences

Weston Driggs presented a talk titled “Different Approaches to Integrating Sustainability Across the Curriculum” at the annual Association for Environ- mental Studies and Sciences conference held in Washing- ton, D.C., in June and a second talk titled “Teaching Through Research in the Sciences: A Student Cohort Model” at the biennial Council for Under- graduate Research Conference in Tampa in June.

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Charles Tompkins, with his son, violinist Gregory Tompkins, performed two recitals this spring. The first took place at Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., in April; the second was for the Piccolo Spoleto’s Organ recital series in Charleston, S.C., at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in May. In June, Charles Tompkins served as accompanist for the Children’s Choir, conducted by Furman alumnus and New York City Children’s Chorus Director Mary Huff ’99, during the annual Montreat Conference on Worship and Music, in Montreat, N.C.

Political Science


Danielle Vinson and Patrick Ramjug’17 presented a paper titled “The Impact of Party and Ideology on Congressional Members’ Social Media Messages” at the American Political Science Association annual meeting in Philadelphia, Pa.

Psychology

“Organic or Organorexic? Examining the relationship between alternative food network engagement, disordered eating, and special diets” by Michaela Ramett ’11, Kerstin Blomquist and Weston Dripps (RES) was published in Appetite.

Sociology

Paul Kooistra published a paper titled “The Road to Hell: Neutralization of Killing in War” in Deviant Behavior.

Joseph Merry published an article with colleagues in the Annual Review of Sociology titled “Learning Beyond the School Walls: Trends and Implications.” Merry contributed a chapter to the forthcoming book, Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss.

Theatre Arts

In March, Maegan Azar was elected to the position of Secretary for the Southeastern Theatre Conference’s (SETC) Executive Committee. Azar presented a workshop titled “Exploring Literal and Essential in Physical Storytelling” at the SETC annual Convention. This summer, Azar directed Sisters of Swing for Centre Stage South Carolina.

In 2007, Furman was one of the charter signatories of the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), a collective effort among institutions of higher education to accelerate research, educational, and operational efforts related to sustainability and climate action. As part of our commitment we set an ambitious goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2026, Furman’s bicentennial anniversary.

Each year students and staff at the Shi Center complete a campuswide carbon emissions inventory to chart our progress, and slowly but surely we have been marching toward this goal. The last eight years have seen good progress as we have worked to improve energy efficiency and promote energy conservation, but the easy targets (e.g., changing out the light bulbs) have now been done. The next 10 years will require bigger and bolder innovative projects and concerted behavioral shifts toward increased conservation and less energy-intensive lifestyles for us to reach our goals.

For decades now, Furman has been widely recognized as a regional and national leader in the sustainability arena. We like to lead by example and really try to “walk the talk” so to speak. Our recent announcement of plans to install a 743 kilowatt solar farm on six acres across from the main campus entrance on Poinsett Highway stands as a testament to our commitment and transition to cleaner renewable energies. This project will not only help reduce our carbon footprint, but will also provide new learning and research opportunities for students and faculty to study the role of energy and materials in the built environment.

—Wes Dripps, associate professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences and executive director of the Shi Center for Sustainability
Bon Appetit brings healthier choices to campus dining

Bon Appetit strives to create food that is alive with flavor and nutrition, prepared from scratch using authentic ingredients.” Stocks and salad dressings are made from scratch, dried beans are preferred over canned, and very few, if any, processed foods are used. You won’t find ingredients containing artificial trans fats or MSG in the Bon Appetit kitchens.

Whole foods are used as the foundation of a healthful diet.

Bon Appetit’s primary focus is on “providing meals centered on abundant fresh produce, whole grains, and lean and plant-based proteins, prepared with minimal amounts of healthy, plant-derived fats.” They strive to make at least 1/3 of all regular menu items and daily specials healthy options. This will eventually include all campus dining including vending, concessions, and catering.

Offerings are communicated to patrons with COR icons.

Because Bon Appetit strives to prepare local and seasonal foods from scratch, it is not always possible to follow precise recipe formulas. This makes it difficult to offer nutrition information for the daily specials.

Dine well for a balanced plate.

During each lunch and dinner meal period, at least one “in balance” plate will be offered and designated with the purple COR icon. “In balance” plates will contain a generous portion of non-starchy vegetables or fruits, moderate portions of whole grains, legumes, or starchy vegetables, a moderate source of lean protein; and a minimal amount of healthy fat.

Flavors are developed through skilled healthy cooking techniques.

Bon Appetit strives to use healthy cooking techniques, such as steaming, broiling, boiling, roasting, braising, and grilling. Fresh herbs and authentic spices are preferred over unhealthy shortcuts of fat, sugar, and salt.

Foods that are local, sustainable, and humanely raised are featured.

For the well-being of their guests, communities, and the environment, local and sustainable foods have a prominent place on the Bon Appetit menu. Look for foods designated with the following COR icons:

- Farm to Fork: Contains seasonal, minimally processed ingredients from a local farm, ranch, or fishing boat.
- Seafood Watch: Contains seafood that meets the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch guidelines for commercial buyers.
- Humane: Contains humanely raised meat, poultry, or eggs. Must be certified by a credible third-party animal welfare organization.
- Vegetarian: Contains no meat, fish, poultry, shellfish, or products derived from these sources but may contain dairy or eggs.

Remember, everything in moderation

Bon Appetit strives to offer a menu that contains 1/3 healthy items, 1/3 “in between” items, and 1/3 indulgent options. Menu indulgent items are served in reasonable portions and with a healthy option. For example, pizza may be served with a salad, or a hamburger may be served with a non-starchy vegetable. Treats such as desserts, muffins, and pastries are served in small portions whenever baked goods are served. Even indulgent items can fit into an overall healthy diet.

Would you like to learn more? Visit furman.cafebonappetit.com. Sign up for “menu mall” at the bottom of the page to receive the daily menus in your email inbox.
Student Activities & Trone Center

The Office of Student Activities off to another great year! We welcomed two new staff members over the summer, Natalie Brewster joined us in May as the associate director of student activities for fraternity & sorority life. She previously worked at Franklin College (Indiana), where she served as the coordinator of Greek life and activities. Natalie is the primary advisor to Furman’s fraternity & sorority community, as well as assisting with various programs sponsored by our department.

Shane Farmer ‘14 joined our team in June as the assistant director of student activities & the Trone Student Center. Shane recently completed a Master of Education in curriculum and instruction, with an emphasis in college student affairs, at the University of South Florida. He oversees the day-to-day operations of the Trone Student Center, as well as coordinating training and support for Furman’s student organizations.

We are excited to offer some new programs and initiatives from the Office of Student Activities this year:

• The council of club leaders is a new workshop series for student organization presidents and leadership. Each month we will explore a new topic related to student leadership and successful student organization operations.
• "Five Ways To Get Sync'd" is a weekly student involvement newsletter published by the Office of Student Activities. For more information about events student organization and other events on campus, be sure to check ourSync regularly!
• Di Trivia will take place every other Wednesday evening 8-10 p.m. in The Paddock—there will be weekly prizes, plus an overall grand prize at the end of the semester.
• Our new “Movie Under the Stars” series will take place on select Thursdays throughout the semester in the Hill Courtyard. This fall we will be showing Forest Gump, Toy Story, Mean Girls, and the new Ghostbusters.
• Look for new heritage month programming throughout the year, highlighting and celebrating the numerous backgrounds and identities of members of the Furman community.

—Jessica Berkey

University Police

The Furman University Police Department has been busy welcoming new students back. FUPD and the division of student life have incoming freshmen a key tracker that will help them find their last keys! This is one of the many community policing initiatives that FUPD offers to our students.

Throughout the year officers will hold various events in student housing to teach students first aid skills, medical response, answer questions and just get to know the students better.

This month the officers are engaging an event called “Cupcakes with the Cops,” one of the favorites of all Furman students!

—Elizabeth Geer

Information Technology Services

Visitors to campus now have access to the F/U-Guests wireless network!

F/U-Guests is a new service that provides campus visitors with four hours of access to the wireless network. Guests can connect by following a few simple steps. First, guests should open the list of available networks on their device and select F/U-Guests from the list of wireless networks. Next, at the “Welcome Guest User” page, guests should complete the requested information.

A text message will be sent to the guest’s mobile device with a username and password and they will be redirected to the login page. Guests should enter the username and password, click the box to agree to the terms, and then click LogIn. After connection has been established, guests will receive a message to close and re-open their browser. Guests now have access for the next four hours!

If additional time is needed, guests may follow this process again to receive a new password and another four hours of access to the wireless network. Alternatively, campus visitors can request a guest account at the IT Service Center (phone 626-2474). A guest account, which typically expires after a day, provides internet access, but has limited access to campus services. If you have any questions regarding guest wireless access, please contact the IT Service Center.

—Jennifer Queen

Admissions

The Admissions Office welcomed four new staff members during the summer including: Chris Lemmons, the primary advisor for international admissions, Lise Ann Lee, regional (Texas) admissions counselor, Maggie Murphy, regional (Charlotte, Wisconsin, and Minnesota) admissions counselor, and Jack Walker ’11, admissions counselor.

Working in collaboration with University Communications, Admissions has unveiled a new view book. The view book is intended for prospective students and is designed to promote and enhance the value of a Furman education. The view book, coupled with the creation of The Furman Advantage publication, has been well received by prospective students and their parents. College counselors and independent counselors have also given it fantastic reviews.

The Furman Advantage has been officially unveiled to the various constituents of the Admissions Office in a series of intentional communication efforts via print, email, and social media. On Oct. 8, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost George Shields capped off the initial roll out of The Furman Advantage by presenting the strategic vision to the largest Fall for Furman attendance in history. Below are some important upcoming dates in the admissions cycle:

• Regular decision application deadline: Jan. 15
• Multicultural achievement program: Feb. 18
• Accepted student days: March 24 and April 7
• Multicultural student evening: April 7 and 8
• National enrollment deposit deadline: May 1

—Brad Pochard

WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM LAUNCHED

Twenty-two campus leaders have been selected to participate in the inaugural class of Furman Women Leading (FWL). *The unique program has been developed to help women leaders at Furman who have demonstrated successful leadership, are involved in the campus community, and have shown a willingness to help and mentor students. “The idea for FWL came about as a suggestion from vice president for finance and administration Mary Lou Merkt based on her participation in Furman’s Women’s Leadership Institute that is offered externally to women leaders in the community and beyond,” said executive director of Continuing Education Brad Becthold. “Merkt wanted to offer the program internally with an emphasis on pragmatic Furman-centric topics to further professional development for women on campus.”

The series for 2016, themed “Reflection, Transformation and Self,” features prominent female faculty, administrators, and staff sharing their successes and struggles. Session leaders will demonstrate how women can excel in all facets of their careers and how to be more effective leaders, engage in their communities, and build powerful networks.

During the second session, Cynthia King, department chair and associate professor of communication studies, examined the effective use of voice in the workplace. In the final session Dec. 3, Margaret Oakes, professor of English, will explore important questions such as, “How do we know what to say ‘yes’ to?” and “When do we decide to say ‘no’ and how to apologize for it?” Throughout the fall, these and other relevant topics will be explored in the program series taught by Sarah Worth, Virginia Gerde, Beth Pontari, Meghan Stining, Cynthia King, Margaret Oakes, Maegan Azar, and Kim Keever.


—John Roberts
What does The Furman Advantage mean to you?

To me The Furman Advantage means more meaningful and in-depth opportunities for our students to be engaged with the community, and the opportunity to really discover more about what it means to be a member of a community.

—Lorraine DeJong, Department of Education

It is in part validation of what the education department has been doing for a long time with our internships and community engagement. So we are excited about the possibilities.

—I really like how The Furman Advantage is focusing on internships and mentoring, and I think Furman could learn a lot from the education department because those activities are such a cornerstone of our programs.

—Michael Svec, Department of Education

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—Michalann Evatt, Department of Education

I think The Furman Advantage will help put us back in a lead role that we saw with the announcement of engaged learning during Dr. Shi’s inaugural speech.

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—Gary Clark, Malone Career Center

It’s a concerted effort by the university to invest time, energy, and money to ensure that a Furman student’s education goes beyond the classroom and beyond the campus.

—I think it’s a concerted effort by the university to invest time, energy, and money to ensure that a Furman student’s education goes beyond the classroom and beyond the campus.

—Casey Hawthorne, Mathematics

As part of Furman’s plan to become carbon neutral by 2026, the university recently announced that it is installing a new solar farm on six acres across from the main campus entrance on Poinsett Highway. When completed, Furman’s solar farm will be the largest solar project on a South Carolina college campus.

The 3,000-panel array, which is expected to be fully operational next February, will be capable of producing 758 kW of power. “However much energy the array produces is that much less we’ll have to buy from Duke Energy,” says Jeff Redderson, Furman’s associate vice president for Facility and Campus Services. “We expect to realize savings of around $88,000 a year.”

The land on which it will be located is difficult to develop for real estate purposes, as there’s a 30-inch Greenville Water main that runs right through the middle of the parcel. “It’s a perfect site for this type of solar system,” explains Redderson, “as we can split the array into two sections—something you can’t easily do with a building.”

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The solar farm is the biggest, boldest, and most visible project Furman has done to date. It will not only offset 5 percent of our electricity use a year and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 3 percent, but it will stand as a visible statement to Furman’s commitment to renewable energy systems.

Beyond increasing awareness of renewable energy for Furman students and the community, the new solar system presents an opportunity for learning. “I’m always interested in leveraging these projects for the student experience,” Dripps says. “We’re looking at the solar farm as one of our new learning labs.”

The capital costs for the project total $1.7 million, of which Duke Energy provided the university a rebate of $997,000. “This rebate is really what made the project viable from Furman’s standpoint,” Redderson says. Furman expects the return on investment to be eight years. Since the lifespan of the system is 20 to 25 years, that translates to more than 15 years of energy savings for the university. Once operational, the array will generate over 900 kW of power, just under the 1,000 kW maximum allowed by law in South Carolina.

“Furman wants to be seen as a sustainability leader in the Southeast,” says Dripps. “And the solar farm is a testament to the fact that we don’t just talk about sustainability, we are making financial and physical commitments to make this happen.”

—Linda Lee