

The Furman Advantage

Announcement/Press Conference – 11:30 a.m. Oct. 5, 2016

Michael C. Riordan, President and CEO of the Strategic Coordinating Organization for the Greenville Health System and Chair of the Furman Board of Trustees

Good morning. I'm Mike Riordan. I am the President and CEO of the Strategic Coordinating Organization for the Greenville Health System, and I also have the privilege to chair Furman University's Board of Trustees. It's wonderful to see all of you gathered to celebrate with Furman University on this beautiful fall day.

At the Greenville Health System, we can see the impact that Furman makes in the world through its talented and eager students, through the expertise and energy of its faculty and alumni, and through its longstanding ties to communities in Greenville and beyond. The City of Greenville is a treasure, and Furman is one of its brightest jewels.

That is why I am so excited to be here today for an announcement about how Furman will expand opportunities for its students, extend the mentorship and engagement of its faculty and alumni, and deepen its connections to the community.

To make this announcement I am pleased to introduce Elizabeth Davis, Furman University's 12th President.

Elizabeth Davis, President

Mike, thank you. You have been a terrific supporter of Furman University through your service on our board and through the opportunities you have created for our students at the Greenville Health System. A bit later in this program we will hear from one of the students who has benefited directly from our GHS partnership.

Thank you to everyone in our extended community—students, staff, faculty, alumni, parents, donors, and community partners—for joining us on this very special day. I would like to acknowledge members of our Board of Trustees, who have provided leadership for our strategic vision. We also have with us today David Shi, President Emeritus of Furman University, and Carl Kohrt, who ably served as Interim President. Your tireless work helped to forge the path that makes today possible.

My warmest welcome to Rhett Mabry, President of The Duke Endowment, and Susan McConnell, Director of Higher Education and Human Resources. Minor Shaw, Chair of The Duke Endowment Board of Trustees, is one of our speakers today, and I want to thank them as well as other members of The Duke Endowment board and staff who are with us today. Finally, I would like to recognize distinguished government officials including Furman's own Dick Riley, former US Secretary of Education; special guests from the offices of US Senator Tim Scott and Congressman Trey Gowdy; and many other state and local officials. We are grateful for your service.

When I think about Furman University, I think about an institution with nearly two centuries of history in Greenville and in South Carolina. I think about our academic excellence and our consistent ranking as the top university in the state. I think about the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the way they put students first even as they are advancing knowledge. I think about the fierce pride that our entire Furman community—students, faculty, staff, and alumni, including alumni of programs like OLLI and the Riley Institute’s Diversity Leaders Initiative—feel about this place and the doors it has opened for them.

But I also think about the questions that students, parents, and policymakers are asking about the purpose of college. I worry about the trend away from a broad-based education to one that is narrowly focused on career skills. I think about the competition we face, and the growing concerns nationally about cost, student debt, and most of all value.

With the launch of our new vision, we are here to boldly and definitively answer the question: What is the value of a Furman education?

Furman is transforming the college experience—redefining a liberal arts education to deliver value immediately, and for life.

Today, we are making this promise to *every* Furman student: You will have an education that prepares you, better than any other university, for a successful and meaningful life.

Furman pioneered the idea of engaged learning, but now we’re taking it to another level.

Going forward, we are committing that *every* Furman student will have opportunities for relevant, real-world experiences, integrated into their academic studies.

These experiences will combine our liberal arts and sciences education—classroom learning that is both deep and broad—with immersive, hands-on experiences in the community, career explorations and internships, faculty research collaborations, and global study.

Our new model of community-centered learning will put students to work on projects that have real impact in the community, expanding their network of mentors and teaching them what works in the world. These projects will be informed by areas of pressing community need, leading to direct and lasting benefits for communities in South Carolina and around the world.

These student experiences will be personalized, integrated, and intentional. That means that each and every student at Furman will be able to explore their strengths and passions.

Each student will have an individualized, four-year pathway that connects their experiences in and out of the classroom, across all four years—creating a superhighway to launch them into their lives after college.

This is our ambitious vision for Furman University. We are calling this promise to our students The Furman Advantage.

In a moment I will say more about the ingredients of The Furman Advantage. But first, I want to explain why the promise we are making is so hard to keep, and why I am confident we can do it.

In 2014 and again this year, Gallup and Purdue University surveyed recent college graduates across the country. They found that students who experienced faculty mentorship and relevant professional practice, connected to classroom and project-based learning, are the most likely to be positively engaged at work and thriving in all aspects of their lives. Yet only 3 percent strongly agree that they experienced all of these elements during college.

The fact is that most schools don't deliver the experience we are promising, and they simply can't. They are too big, too complex, or their culture prizes research over mentoring students.

Furman is one of the few places—perhaps the only place—that can do it for every student.

Our strong track record of engaged learning means that today about 80 percent of our students report having had at least one engaged experience. But we can do better. We will expand what we offer so that every single student can pursue an out-of-class experience that is tracked and integrated with their academic and professional goals.

Another reason we can live up to this promise is our supportive campus culture. Our faculty and staff are dedicated mentors, committed to the success of each student. We can deliver an integrated experience for every student with a wealth of opportunities not available at smaller schools, along with a level of personal attention that larger schools cannot achieve.

And today I'm excited to announce one more reason why I'm confident Furman can live up to this promise to our students.

I'm delighted to tell you that The Duke Endowment has committed 47 million dollars to help us launch The Furman Advantage.

This is one of the largest gifts ever in the history of Furman University. It is an incredible gift for a university of our size, and it will transform the student experience. The Duke Endowment's gift includes a 25-million-dollar grant that will expand student access to research, study away, internships, and community-centered projects. Their grant will support new tools to track our students' experiences and better connect them to outcomes. It also includes more than 22 million dollars for student scholarships, announced last fall.

The Duke Endowment has a long history of supporting Furman and initiatives that strengthen education and contribute to the wellbeing of our community. To be sure, we will need to find additional partners to fully achieve our grand vision—but we could not even attempt this without The Duke Endowment's help. I am enormously grateful for the vote of confidence they have given us.

And now let me tell you what The Duke Endowment gift is launching, and *how* we are going to deliver on our bold promise to students.

We begin by seeking out students from diverse backgrounds, and we welcome them into a community that respects each person and celebrates difference. This is important, because the world is changing. We owe it to our students to prepare them for the diverse communities and workplaces they will enter.

And then we lead them on a journey of discovery. Our liberal arts and sciences foundation allows them to explore the breadth of human knowledge. We have long valued student reflection at Furman, and now we will connect it more strongly to each student's program of study. Already we are piloting tools that help our students identify their strengths and find their calling.

Next we surround our students with a community of mentors—faculty, staff, alumni, and community leaders who are invested in their success. We are creating an innovative, team advising program to better support students and integrate the different parts of their Furman experience.

The heart of The Furman Advantage is the four-year pathway. This will integrate co-curricular experiences with classroom work and help students chart a course from their interests and skills to life after college. It will help them identify *which* experiences and relationships will be the most valuable in moving them toward their goals.

Furman's four-year pathway is our innovative approach to connect the dots between the classroom, mentoring relationships, and engaged learning. As a Furman parent, I would also highlight the four-year piece! Increasingly, students in college are taking 5 years, 6 or even more to graduate, which increases cost and debt. At Furman, our goal is for all students to finish in 4 years, which makes a Furman education an even greater value. The Furman Advantage will make sure they are on track to do that.

The Duke Endowment support is allowing us to ramp up the number of engaged learning experiences. We are guaranteeing that every student will have at least one; ideally they will have multiple experiences that connect to their academic program and prepare them for careers and community impact.

It's not enough to simply provide *more*. We also are building tools to track each student's experience, so we can make sure we are living up to our promise for every student. Armed with these data and student reflection, we can better measure outcomes—the connection between specific experiences, academic and career success, and personal wellbeing. Every university is struggling to do this well, and we believe we can be a leader. Equally important, students will be able to demonstrate to graduate schools and future employers the skills they have gained through The Furman Advantage.

Furman already is a leader in providing our students with opportunities for significant research with faculty. Our study-away program takes students on faculty-led immersions into the business, politics and culture of more than 30 countries. We place students in a

growing number of internships, and this year we piloted an alumni mentors program to expand those opportunities and leverage the connections of Furman's more than 30,000 alumni.

Our model of community-centered learning is another exciting part of The Furman Advantage. The Riley Institute and Shi Center for Sustainability have extended Furman's reach into Greenville, South Carolina and beyond, and we are building on those successes. Our burgeoning partnership with the Greenville Health System is creating even more opportunities for students—in fact, Furman is the only undergraduate liberal arts institution that is a partner in an academic health center.

We will expand these programs and launch new ones where the needs of the community and Furman's strengths overlap. The result will be a set of public-facing institutes that bring students, faculty and community members together to tackle issues of importance to the community. The solutions we discover can be put into practice across South Carolina and around the world.

This is The Furman Advantage. It is a promise to our students of an unparalleled education—one that prepares them for lives of purpose, success in their careers, and the ability to contribute to their communities.

It is also a promise to our community—that we will increase our engagement and deploy our students, faculty, and staff in partnership to make a lasting contribution.

And now I am pleased to introduce Minor Shaw, chair of the board of The Duke Endowment. Minor has been a generous and committed civic leader in Greenville and South Carolina, and we are honored to have her with us today.

Minor M. Shaw, Chair of The Duke Endowment Board of Trustees

Elizabeth, thank you for that warm introduction and for inviting me to speak today. I commend you for your leadership in developing this inspiring vision. The Furman Advantage will dramatically expand opportunities for your students and it will make Furman an even bigger contributor to Greenville, South Carolina, and the world.

The Duke Endowment's founder, James B. Duke, believed in the power of education to energize communities and transform lives for the better. He also believed deeply in the value of communities acting together to shape their destinies. The Duke Endowment's grants have honored his beliefs, strengthening communities in the Carolinas through programs that nurture children, promote health, educate minds, and enrich spirits.

One reason I am excited about this vision for Furman is that it combines two of our highest priorities: education and community wellbeing. Your model of community-centered learning will distinguish Furman University. Many universities engage the community and others have community-focused research, but it not often that they are knitted together. As you launch projects that are guided by both faculty expertise and community need, and as you create opportunities for students to be right in the middle of the action, you will be building something truly special.

The Duke Endowment also looks to make a lasting impact by funding programs that can be replicated, and by holding ourselves and our grantees accountable for results. One appealing aspect of The Furman Advantage is your commitment to gathering data and using what you learn to scale up your efforts. This is something that universities everywhere are wrestling with: How do we know we have made a difference in the lives of our students?

With the seed money provided by The Duke Endowment, Furman will develop better ways of tracking and assessing the student experience. You will be able to use what you learn to design experiences that will do the most for students' future success: in their jobs, in their lives, and in their communities.

It's exciting to think about Furman learning how to tackle community challenges in a way that can be duplicated elsewhere. That will greatly increase your impact.

The Furman Advantage, the future of Furman and that of Greenville are yoked together. On behalf of The Duke Endowment, I thank you for your commitment to Greenville and to the region, and for preparing your students to lead lives that are successful, certainly, but also meaningful.

And now I would like to introduce George Shields, Furman's Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

George C. Shields, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Minor, thank you for your enthusiastic support of Furman University and our vision for the future. We would not be able to launch The Furman Advantage without The Duke Endowment's generous funding. It will make a huge difference in the lives of our students and in our community.

I am speaking today both as the senior academic leader of Furman and as a representative of the faculty. I am relatively new to this campus, having arrived in July. That gives me some credibility as someone who has seen the view from other universities.

One thing that struck me right away in my interviews, and after I arrived on campus, is the degree to which the Furman faculty are committed to our students. Faculty members have personal relationships with their students and they spend a great deal of extra time working to ensure each student has a satisfying and rewarding experience. Every faculty member has multiple stories about the students – now alumni – who they stay in touch with and continue to mentor years after graduation. In addition, staff members act as mentors in ways that go beyond their job responsibilities.

So The Furman Advantage builds on our strengths and our identity. The promise we are making today to provide an extraordinary experience for *every* student comes out of very hard work by the Strategic Vision Advisory Council, a group of faculty and staff from across the campus. The faculty as a whole voted unanimously last month to endorse The Furman Advantage. That vote represents our faculty's commitment to deliver an excellent

education that prepares our students to pursue fulfilling careers, contribute to their communities, and find purpose in their lives.

The best testament to the value of a Furman education is our students and our alumni. You will now get to hear from two very inspiring young people.

Our first speaker will be Mahmood Syed, a Furman senior majoring in biochemistry who will graduate next spring. Because of his experience here, Mahmood is considering a career in medical research and surgery.

Next you will hear from Alyssa Richardson, who graduated in 2012 and has just accepted her dream job as U.S. assistant attorney for civil rights in South Carolina. Alyssa credits the mentoring and experiences she had here for preparing her for this role.

Our two speakers certainly represent the best qualities of Furman. They also represent Furman's promise to our students that they will each have access to the same kind of life-changing experiences and dedicated mentors that opened doors for Alyssa and Mahmood.

Please welcome Mahmood Syed.

Mahmood Syed, Furman class of 2017

Thank you Dr. Shields. I want to also thank The Duke Endowment for their continuing support of the student experience at Furman. For me, Furman has provided substantial

opportunities to participate in internships, research, and mentoring both on and off campus.

This last fall I shadowed in the anesthesiology department at Patewood Memorial as part of Furman's Clinical Observation Program. This experience, made possible through a unique partnership between Greenville Health System and Furman, allowed me to observe a surgery in real life. There was no computer monitor standing between me and the wince-inducing knee replacement surgery I watched. Believe me, it was more real than anything I had seen back in the chemistry lab.

The surgeons, of course, were not affected by the gory realities of surgery. In fact, they were having "Grey's Anatomy"/"House"-type conversations throughout the process. It took them just an hour. A few hours later the patient was standing and already working on walking. It was an incredible experience and I learned so much that day. Now I'm thinking about combining my interest in medical research with surgery as a career option.

On campus, I have had the privilege of working with some of the brightest chemists in the field, participating in several summers of research with Dr. John Wheeler and his wife, Dr. Sandra Wheeler. This past summer I completed an independent research project with Dr. Greg Springsteen. My time with the Wheelers broadened my career horizons. They taught me to think like a scientist. My time in Dr. Springsteen's bio-organic chemistry lab added new layers to my understanding. He pushed me to expand my intellectual limits by prodding me to pursue an independent project with little help. I view the Wheelers as a second set of parents. They nurtured, supported and provided me with sage advice. If

they're the parents, Dr. Springsteen is the cool uncle with excellent advice and mentoring who's always down for intense ping-pong matches – and the inevitable injuries. Overall, the attention I received from the Wheelers and Dr. Springsteen pushed me to strive for excellence in whatever I pursued.

At its core, Furman excels in building strong, substantive relationships between students and mentors. The small, intimate campus allows mentors to get to know many of their students on a deep, personal level. They learn their strengths, weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies.

Furman faculty partner with students to help them chart unique paths that encourage and guide potential. I experienced this, and I am excited to know that these kinds of opportunities for learning and growing experiences will be expanded to include all students.

I'm pleased now to introduce Alyssa Richardson.

Alyssa Richardson, BA'12, U.S. Assistant Attorney for Civil Rights in South Carolina

Thank you, Mahmood. I get so excited when I hear incredible stories like Mahmood's, because I think such experiences can and should be the experience for every Furman student.

My name is Alyssa Richardson, and I am a 2012 Furman graduate. I am also a 2015 graduate of Harvard Law School, and I have just accepted a position in the South Carolina U.S. Attorney's Office to prosecute civil rights violations.

I am incredibly excited to be back on campus, not just to try the new Tupelo Honey at the Trone Center ... but for this huge announcement. I am so thankful to The Duke Endowment for their commitment to The Furman Advantage and the kind of experience I had at Furman. It was a dynamic, engaging experience that prepared me for a meaningful life and left me saying, "I love my alma mater; Furman changed my life."

Now, just to back up for a minute, I didn't arrive on campus singing Furman's praises. People like to joke that Furman's beautiful campus reminds them of a country club. Let me tell you: I'd never been to a country club. I'd never ridden on a golf cart. I'd never flown on an airplane. I'd never left the country. I have to admit, I felt out of place when I first got here.

But that's the beauty of a place like Furman. The diversity of people and experiences enriches us rather than divides us. One of the first people I interacted with at Furman was Cathy Stevens, a program director with the Riley Institute. She was warm, friendly and inviting but, I thought, over the top! She barely knew me and already was suggesting internships I should pursue, fellowships I should apply for, extracurricular activities I should try.

And there I was, a kid from rural Dillon, South Carolina. My parents sent me to Furman with one objective: get a great education. I interpreted that as, keep your head down and excel in the classroom. But, according to Cathy, that wasn't the way "engaged learning" worked!

What Cathy and so many other mentors instilled in me was the value of a Furman education was more than academics. Sure, rigorous academics is a given. But the true value of a Furman education is having access to resources that allowed me to pursue my passions outside the classroom.

And so I followed Cathy's advice. I went to Hawaii with the Riley Institute to study economics and trade relations. I went to Ottawa and worked with a member of the Canadian Parliament to pass legislation. And I traveled all over the country to compete in mock trial tournaments.

And each time I got back to campus I would say two things: Wow, I'm incredibly jetlagged ... and, I never thought I would do these things. I never thought I could *afford* to do these things.

But through Furman's internship fellows program, through the Riley Institute, through the support of alumni and donors, I had these dynamic, engaging experiences that changed my life.

Today, I know that I was incredibly fortunate to have these opportunities, these mentors, and the alumni connections. That's why I'm here today.

I said it before, and I'll say it again: I love my alma mater; Furman changed my life. It wasn't just being introduced to law or getting incredible legal internships. It was the intangible education, too – the soft skills that a kid from rural South Carolina just didn't have. I learned to speak up *before* being spoken to. I learned to be confident in my answers. I learned to be confident in my *questions*. And most importantly, I learned that help and support was always available if I asked – and even when I didn't.

Today, Furman is expanding these opportunities on such an ambitious scale that *every* student will get the kind of experience I was fortunate enough to have. The Furman Advantage – along with the support of The Duke Endowment – will ensure that scores of students leave this place saying: I love my alma mater; Furman changed my life.

Thank you.

Mike Riordan

I want to thank our speakers for helping us to see the impact Furman has in the lives of students and in the community. I truly believe The Furman Advantage makes Furman a model not only for liberal arts institutions, but for all of higher education. I commend President Davis, the faculty, the staff and leadership of the University for your far-reaching vision and your laser focus on the value you deliver for students. And I too would like to

express my gratitude to The Duke Endowment and to Furman's many partners for helping to make this vision a reality.

My thanks to all of you who joined in this event today, both in person and those who tuned into our live web feed. And now it is time to celebrate! You are all invited to remain for a picnic and festivities on the mall. Thank you.