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## Now: Reflection on Furman as It Is Now

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**Top:** Meredith Schosky '17 discusses options for the project site with a resident during a visioning workshop.

**Bottom:** Furman students tour the project site with members of the Washington High School Alumni Association to learn the historical context of the land and explore options for commemorating the school.

would be for this open space and then articulate that vision to the county.”

Launched in 2009, the May Experience program offers students the opportunity to enroll in an intense three-week course. From sports psychology to the geology of Iceland, the subject matter of the two-credit-hour courses varies. Approximately 600 students participated in a May Experience class this year.

The expanded Furman Advantage, launched this fall, greatly increases the opportunities for students to work on issues of importance to communities in Greenville, SC, and beyond. The university’s strategic vision includes a commitment that every Furman student will be able to participate in projects that

apply their classroom knowledge in a real-world setting.

“This is much more than community service,” said Angela Halfacre, professor of political science and earth and environmental sciences and special advisor to the president for community engagement. “We are creating a new model of community-centered learning, where students, faculty, and community members can work side-by-side to tackle problems of real social importance and social impact. Everyone will be learning together, and as we discover what works, we can put that into practice in communities across the region and around the world.”

Throughout the month of May, students in Cohen and Winiski’s class gathered information, talked to community



## NOW

### Reflection on Furman as It Is Now

I have willingly, blissfully, terrifyingly, and exhilaratingly lost control of my life.

I know this statement might be jarring to hear. Perhaps you may want to encourage me to embrace my own self-agency, which, like a muscle, has strengthened with three years of liberal arts education. Perhaps you see my confession as an act of surrender or even a declaration of apathy, complacent and defiant in the face of an increasingly competitive job market. For a moment, I encourage you to put these reactions aside.

Like many Furman freshmen, I first arrived on campus with a carefully crafted “life plan.” My plan would revolve around political science, with the aspiration of a career in law or public policy. I structured my first few months at Furman with perfect efficiency, saturating my schedule with as many policy courses as possible. I found comfort in the security and sense of belonging that came with my chosen “path”; however, I could not reconcile this comfort with the fear that my actions were deeply manufactured. I longed for joy and for purpose; I longed to be excited by the unknown; I longed to better understand my community and myself.

Little could I have predicted that I would come alive in the practice room of Furman’s music building. What first began as part of a requirement for a small, non-major music scholarship (I was asked to take voice lessons and participate in a campus

choral ensemble) soon became my outlet for self-expression on campus. I found joy in creating and lifting up beauty, and for the first time in my life, it was my own inexplicable exhilaration—and not the prospect of a career—that drove my actions. On a whim, I decided to add music as a second major, and began to chase fulfillment in all of its spontaneity.

If my first year at Furman taught me how to plan less and feel more, my next two years at Furman taught me how to see life through the lens of loving others. As a sophomore, I became involved in the leadership of EROS (Furman’s LGBTQ+ organization), and became connected with a local Baptist church. Through these experiences, I became passionate about the potential for faith communities to act as a tool for love and social justice. Now a rising senior, I have begun to explore the possibility of attending seminary and pursuing a career in chaplaincy after graduation.

I share my Furman journey not to criticize those with plans, but to defend the pursuit of happiness and knowledge as good in itself. It is true that I have lost control over the path my life will take. In this loss, however, I have found freedom and purpose.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Emma Zyriek '17** is a music and political science major from Bel Air, MD.