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## Commitment Breeds Courage

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## Commitment Breeds Courage

*The Furman Advantage paves a pathway to success.*

**T**his past fall, we launched The Furman Advantage—our promise to provide an unparalleled education that combines classroom learning with real world experience and discovery. Combined with mentoring and reflection, The Furman Advantage creates an individual pathway to success for each and every student.

This promise takes courage. In turn, it delivers the same. Our vision guides faculty and staff as much as it creates a purposeful structure to ensure students have the education, experience and courage needed to take on life beyond graduation. It is our North Star.

The painter Pablo Picasso said it well: “Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.”

The Furman Advantage builds on our tradition of excellence, intentionally combining our outstanding liberal arts and sciences education with guaranteed engaged learning opportunities and enhanced advising and mentoring, all integrated and tracked in a four-year pathway with an “exit plan.”

This is amplified through our institutes and centers, like the Riley Institute and Shi Center for Sustainability and our newly formed Institute for the Advancement of Community Health, which raise Furman’s national profile and connect students with faculty experts and community members to explore and tackle important issues.

Combining and connecting the elements of The Furman Advantage creates an educational path to launch our students into lives of purpose, which takes many forms, including successful careers. Those who have satisfying and rewarding careers are more likely to live lives of meaning. And we know jobs are an important outcome for students and families who are considering Furman.

In fact, in the most recent Gallup survey, 88 percent of incoming freshmen in colleges of all types and sizes across the country said that getting a “good job” was a critical factor in their decision to enroll in college. At the same time, only 11 percent of business leaders agreed strongly that colleges are equipping students with the 21st century skills needed to be successful.

In this regard, the Gallup-Purdue Index Study identified key, critical undergraduate experiences that relate to positive outcomes. The 2016 report was clear: “The research (in this study) is designed to provide a road map for continuous improvement, focusing on those outcomes prospective students expect to achieve as a result of obtaining a bachelor’s degree, including a great job and a great life.”

This research shows, in fact, that graduates who were “emotionally supported” and who had “experiential and deep learning” in college were more likely to be engaged in their work and thriving in all aspects of their lives. Yet only 14 percent of the graduates surveyed had experienced all three indicators related to emotional support:

- At least one professor who excited them about learning.
- Professors who cared about them as a person.
- A mentor who encouraged their goals and dreams.

And only 6 percent had experienced all three indicators related to experiential and deep learning:

- A long-term project that took a semester or more to complete.
- An internship or job where they applied their learning.
- Highly engaged involvement in extracurricular activities and organizations.

Not surprisingly, of those 24 percent who reported having none of these experiences, only 5 percent felt they were pre-

pared for life. Conversely, of the 3 percent who reported having all six, 85 percent of them felt prepared.

I’m proud that the 2016 Gallup-Purdue report highlighted in its first page the work that Furman is doing through The Furman Advantage to provide “the key collegiate experiences identified through this research.” We’re on the right track, and people are noticing. Such recognition gives us confidence as we work to fully realize The Furman Advantage. We’re off to a good start. Since its launch, we have implemented a number of supporting initiatives:

- Developed and promoted a Personal Financial Literacy seminar for seniors that attracted more than 100 students
- Increased stipends and housing support for the Summer Research Fellowship Program.
- Launched a new career support model, “Customized Connections,” linking career services and students with faculty, alumni and other mentors.
- Launched the Institute for the Advancement of Community Health, a collaboration with the Greenville Health System that makes Furman unique as a liberal arts and sciences partner in an academic health center. (See page 22.)
- And, we’re weeks away from launching the first version of the four-year pathway tracking and reporting system.

While this is a clear sign of our progress, we know we will have to continue to test, assess and adjust as we move forward. “There are no secrets to success,” said Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State and retired four-star general. “It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.”

The Furman Advantage is ambitious. This is our time, and it is time to make clear the power and impact of a Furman education. Yes, it will be a challenge, but I know we can do this because of our tradition and because of great alumni and friends like you. *You* are, in essence, The Furman Advantage.

Warmly,

