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## A Note from Cherrydale: Participation Matters

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**T**hree verbs drive our Alumni and Parent Engagement Office: Connect, Serve and Give. We encourage alumni, parents and friends to be active in these three areas every year, and our team constantly works on programs and processes to make it easier for these important constituents to connect, serve and give at unprecedented levels.

Today, however, I want to focus on the giving component, especially from our alumni. Please don't stop reading because you think the alumni director is going to pester you to give more. I just want to explain why alumni participation—at any level—is vitally important. And, I want to give you some insight into the annual giving process at Furman.

First, the percentage of alumni who give to Furman annually is extremely important. This ratio, a measure of alumni satisfaction, is used by *US News and World Report* to compile their immensely popular annual rankings of the top colleges and universities.

Alumni participation for Furman in the fiscal year



## Participation Matters

2015–16 was 21 percent. Our goal this fiscal year is to increase that to 23 percent. My dad always said that people vote with their pocketbooks and wallets. One can argue that this has been validated in our elections, especially national elections. Making an annual donation to Furman is your way of voting for the success of your university and our students—and for improving how we rank among the best.

Second, our alumni participation rate often plays an important role in securing grants for the university. Many foundations want to know the percentage of alumni who give annually. Once again, the number of alumni who give, not the amount

they give, is very important. Higher participation bolsters our chances of securing more and bigger grants. This funding, in turn, provides more opportunities for our students. As you can see, participation can pay big dividends.

Having dispelled the myth, “If you can't give a lot, it's not important to give,” let's examine another misconception—that tuition covers all of the costs of educating students. Actually, only 70 percent of the total cost for a student to attend Furman is covered by tuition. We rely heavily on endowments, grants and annual giving to make up the difference. In addition, 93 percent of our students receive scholarships of

some variety from Furman, yet our annual giving and endowments only cover 20 percent of the cost of those scholarships.

Without overdoing the numbers, I hope I've made a case for how important annual giving is to Furman, and how grateful we are for your participation and the impact it has. We also want you to connect and consider serving your alma mater. We will launch a new program this year to recognize and reward alumni, parents and friends who are active in all three categories: connecting, serving and giving.

We value and appreciate every gift, as well as your time and talent. Let's finish this fiscal year, which ends in June, in record-breaking fashion by engaging the Furman family like never before.

Your giving makes the Furman experience possible. Please give online at [ForFurman.com](http://ForFurman.com) and tell us why you give #ForFurman. ●

*Mike Wilson '88*

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