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## Stepping up to College

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Attending the CAC announcement were (left) Virginia McIlwain, director of strategy for CAC, Minor Shaw, trustee chair for The Duke Endowment, Nicole Hurd, founder and chief executive officer for CAC, Missy Sherburne, former chief external relations officer for CAC, **Susan DeVenny '84**, president and chief executive officer for the J. Marion Sims Foundation, and Chuck Kaylor, chief of staff for CAC.

## Stepping up to College

*A new College Advising Corps at Furman will help students chart a path to higher education*

BY JOHN ROBERTS

**F**or prospective first-generation college students, taking the next step to higher education can be a daunting prospect. There are online applications to complete. The requests for financial aid must be in order. There are countless items to check off the list.

With little help at home, many students from low-income or underserved families are forced to navigate these waters alone. The College Advising Corps, which is the Teach for America model for high school guidance counselors, addresses that need. The nonprofit works

to increase the number of low-income, first-generation college students by partnering with colleges to place recent graduates in high schools as advisers.

CAC works with 25 colleges and universities in 15 states to serve 600 high schools. Thanks to \$2.2 million in funding from public and private partners, the first South Carolina chapter of CAC launched at Furman in August. Anchor funding for the project was provided by The Duke Endowment of Charlotte, North Carolina, and the J. Marion Sims Foundation of Lancaster, South Carolina.

Four Furman graduates, **Katie Foster '17**, **Meg Hare '17**, **Sarah Moore '17** and **Caitlyn Singleton '17**, and three other qualified applicants joined the CAC this summer. All are serving in one of seven high schools in Chester and Lancaster counties.

Foster, who graduated with a double major in history and communication studies, is not settled on a career path. She'll use her time in the CAC to give back to the community and "take time to figure out what comes next."

"My father was the first from his family to go to college," says Foster. "He went



**“MY FATHER WAS THE FIRST FROM HIS FAMILY TO GO TO COLLEGE. HE WENT ON TO DENTAL SCHOOL, AND HIS EDUCATION CHANGED MY FAMILY’S LIFE IN JUST ONE GENERATION.”**

**—KATIE FOSTER '17, CAC COUNSELOR**

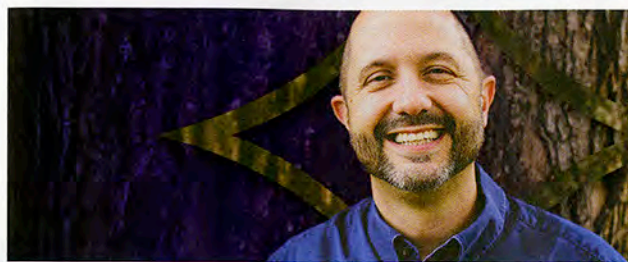
on to dental school, and his education changed my family’s life in just one generation. I hope that I can be an asset to my students and help instill a college-going culture at my school.”

As recent college graduates, the advisers can relate to the students they mentor. They live near the service area and are expected to be involved in the community.

“This initiative aligns perfectly with The Furman Advantage, our strategic vision and promise to prepare Furman students to graduate and lead successful lives, including connecting with and serving in communities around the state and beyond,” says Furman President Elizabeth Davis. “We are thankful to The Duke Endowment and J. Marion Sims Foundation for their support and partnership in the Furman College Advising Corps, and we look forward to making a difference in the lives of the students who might not otherwise consider college.”

Susan DeVenny, president and chief executive officer of the J. Marion Sims Foundation, says many students in rural counties want to attend college but may lack direction and motivation.

“We are bringing CAC to our region in direct response to a need expressed by our youth,” DeVenny says. “The college search, application, and financial aid processes can be overwhelming to students and families. CAC brings evidence-based support to our students at a time when they are making key decisions about their postsecondary futures.” ●



## THEN

*Reflection on the importance of Furman as it was*

**Back then, it was the first day of freshman week, August 1985.**

Now it is the summer of 2017, and I am returning to my alma mater with my daughter for her freshman orientation. Memories flood in. Memories that make me realize how much has changed in the last three decades.

Back then, I showed up with an electric typewriter—a high-tech marvel in the era of the Space Shuttle. Today, my daughter’s laptop has more computing power than the Space Shuttle. Back then, Starbucks was the lead character on the television show “Battlestar Galactica.” Today, it is a coffee shop in the bookstore. Back then, John E. Johns was the president. Now, a building with his name sits where the sixth hole on our makeshift Frisbee golf course used to be. In my day, we would go to the lake to watch the swamp beavers (AKA nutria). Now, they have a Swamp Rabbit Trail. What do my grandchildren have to look forward to—swamp armadillos?

Yes, a lot of things have changed. But some things are still the same. The grass still gets vacuumed more than my carpet at home. Students still get thrown in the lake on their birthday. And the swans are still mean. Really mean.

Then something surprising happened. One of my old Spanish professors recognized me—called me by name—and told my daughter stories about me when

I was a student. After more than 30 years, he remembered. I can’t even remember what I had for breakfast yesterday. But that is the kind of place that Furman is: a personalized education, wrapped in warm Southern charm. I guess that is why you can’t walk across campus without saying hello to 12 people you have never met.

Our children have grown up in a very different world than ours. They have never lived in a world with a USSR, but have never known one without terrorism. They have never had a phone attached to the wall, but never been able to live unplugged. Theirs is marked by volatility. Ours was a simpler time. In a world of exponential change, it is nice to have some things that stay the same. Among them should be a safe, supportive home away from home, where you learn to love to learn and are challenged to use that education to make the world a better place ... and where 30 years later, people will still remember your name. Now they call it “The Furman Advantage.” Then, we just called it “Furman.”

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Grat Correll '89** is a family medicine physician from Blountville, Tennessee, an associate professor at the Quillen College of Medicine and the proud father of Katy, who is part of Furman’s incoming class of 2021.