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Bold dreams, big thoughts: Shi's vision set early path

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Inspiring a Campaign

Bold dreams, big thoughts: Shi’s vision set early path

When the Because Furman Matters campaign began quietly in 2004, David Shi ’73, Ph.D., was Furman’s President. The longtime historian and sustainability evangelist knew the impact the campaign could have on Furman’s story. And after it found success in December 2013, Dr. Shi took a moment to reflect on its completion.

How does it feel for you to see the campaign reach its goal?

This was by far Furman’s most ambitious campaign yet, and one of the largest ever attempted by a liberal arts university, we chose to think “big” because the boldest dreams awaken the best in all of us. In 2003–2004, as we developed the campaign goals, we thought Furman was ready to take its rightful place among the nation’s finest colleges, and we grew ever more confident in the campaign’s compelling set of priorities and goals.

What does it mean for Furman?

The successful completion of the campaign is especially timely because of the tuition crisis in higher education triggered by the recession beginning in 2008. The larger Furman’s endowment, the higher the quality of the institution and the easier it is to sustain that high quality. There are many ways to build excellence on a campus, but there is only one reliable way to sustain excellence—and that is through the University’s endowment fund.

What campaign accomplishments should Furman be most proud of?

There are so many accomplishments that it is extremely difficult to isolate just one or two. But most would agree that the John D. Hollingsworth Scholarships and the Charles Townes Center for Science were especially important in aligning the campaign with the University’s strategic priorities.

As you reflect on the campaign and your hopes and dreams for it—what held true as its major achievements?

We were able to organize and manage a campaign intended to educate people about Furman’s potential. In the process, we helped people see that every donation counted, no matter how large or small. That we attracted over 27,000 donors—alumni, students, faculty, parents, friends, and foundations—helped create a basis of support that Furman will be able to build and draw upon in many exciting ways.

#WhyFurmanMatters

Furman does not break under pressure. The refusal to give up in the face of incredible challenges and disappointments revealed why Furman’s friends are so tenacious in improving alma mater. Because Furman Matters.

—DAVID EMORY SHI ’73, PH.D.