Karen Parks '83, PhD

“Academically, Furman prepared me for a master’s degree, a PhD, and a Fulbright scholarship at La Scala, the world’s most prestigious opera house. In performance, it prepared me to sing in 12 languages in 15 countries. It also prepared me to teach at a university in Atlanta, then in Greenville’s performing arts high school, which I attended from age 13, and now at New York University. The entrepreneurship I learned at Furman enabled me to found my own business, Ottimavoce, Inc., which provides masterclasses in six genres of music. I am thrilled to see my students succeed on Broadway in The Lion King, in opera, in film, and in venues throughout the country.”

Karen Parks is a professional soprano and professor of voice at New York University. She received her doctorate from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship for voice to study with Maestro Gabriele Psani at La Scala in Italy.

Tricia Morgan Carswell was the subject of an interview last fall for FACE of Nashville by Style Blueprint. She talked about her family and her time as a Furman student, her busy career as a professional fundraiser; her volunteer role as president of The Women’s Fund; what she likes about living in Nashville; and her favorite restaurants, vacation spots, books on her bedside table, beauty products, and fashions.

The South Carolina State Library’s Center for the Book selected How I Became a Pirate, a children’s book published in 2003 by Melinda Brown Long of Greenville, to represent the state at the 2013 National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., in September 2013. The book is the state’s selection for the National Book Festival’s “Discover Great Places Through Reading Map.” Each state selects one book about the state or by an author from the state that is a good read for children or young adults.

Mike Phillips has the “largest collection of telephones,” according to the Guinness Book of World Records. Guinness shows that his collection, housed in Greenville, had consisted of 1,135 telephones in 2011. Phillips and his wife, Mary, started the collection in the early 1980s with a Superman statue telephone produced in a limited number. The collection includes race cars, musical instruments, candlesticks, animals, cartoon characters, one-of-a-kind, recognized business brand novelty phones, and others. Some of the phones have special ringer and movements, with the potential for hands-on interaction by children.

1983 University of Central Missouri President Chuck Ambrose was honored last September by Missouri Governor Jay Nixon for his contributions to what the governor has termed a “national model for strengthening the ties between what students learn in the classroom and the skills they will need in the workforce.” He received the Governor’s Economic Development Advancement Award. The award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated significant leadership in the implementation of an innovative and highly effective action designed to address critical economic needs within local, regional, and state business. Ambrose was honored for his leadership in the creation and implementation of the Missouri Innovation Campus, an initiative that attracted the attention of President Obama and resulted in him visiting UCM in 2013.

Gregory Butler of Las Cruces, NM, has been promoted to full professor in the department of government at New Mexico State University.

J. Ligon Duncan III has been named chancellor and chief executive officer of Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, MS. He had been the John E. Richards professor of systematic and historical theology at the school and the senior minister of First Presbyterian Church. He is the president of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and was president of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals from 2004–2012. He will continue to serve as senior minister at First Presbyterian Church until the end of the year.