Shaner leaves legacy of leadership, strong teaching

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DAVID SHANER may have “retired” as Herring Professor of Philosophy and Asian Studies at the close of fall semester, but he is moving to an even more time-consuming and demanding job that he has created for himself.

He will continue his management consulting work, helping American businesses retain and increase American jobs — a worthy cause if there ever was one. He has consulted for Duracell, Gillette, JW Aluminum, Ryobi, and Owens Corning Composites, to name a few, and has helped them to better understand the correlation of workplace happiness, retention and profit.

He leaves quite a legacy at Furman. Most people on campus have heard the tales of the philosopher who barely sleeps (he only “breathes”), eats one meal a day, served as a deputy sheriff, was Olympic Valley USA ski team material, is an Aikido master, and could pin any one of us on the floor with a single arm sweep.

The legends are true, but even better is the reality that we’ve seen every day. Since joining the philosophy faculty in 1982, David has been a caring teacher, a prolific writer and editor, and a leader and role model for faculty and students alike. He was philosophy department chair for 15 years, during which we grew from four full-time philosophers to eight.

He was also one of the founding members of Furman’s Asian Studies department, now a vibrant program. And he brought the Place of Peace, a beautiful former Buddhist temple, from Japan to Furman — an undertaking that involved fundraising, consciousness raising, and five years of hard work.

We will miss David’s leadership, strength and wit. As one of his former students — I took the introductory philosophy course from him in 1990 — I know firsthand the impact of this dedicated and caring teacher. I would not be in the department without him, and I would likely not even be a philosopher.

The power of good teaching is the real legacy that he leaves for all of us.

— SARAH WORTH

The author, a 1992 graduate, is chair of the philosophy department.