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## Meritorious advisor: Brett Barclay

Furman University

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JEREMY FLEMING

## Meritorious advisor: Brett Barclay

*A Q&A with the assistant director of continuing education, a recipient of the 2012 Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Advising.*

**Hometown:**  
Boston, Mass.

**Degrees:**  
Pennsylvania State University (undergraduate),  
Widener University (M.Ed.)

**Arrived at Furman:**  
2007

### To what do you attribute the growth of Undergraduate Evening Studies at Furman?

There's a rapidly changing job market where people are looking to make themselves more marketable, more secure in their existing position, or more "promotable." Also, we have managed to stay financially competitive through moderate tuition increases and by avoiding the addition of fees. Probably the most important factor, though, is our commitment to promoting Furman's reputation and history of academic excellence. We also enjoy exceptional support and guidance from faculty and administration — academic vice president and dean John Beckford, senior associate dean Marianne Pierce, Suzanne Summers of business and accounting, and Brad Bechtold, executive director of continuing education.

### Describe the typical UES student.

That's hard: we have a very diverse student population. What they have in common is that all have made a strong commitment to completing their degree. Most of our students are between 28 and 35 years old. More than 75 percent are married, and more than 80 percent have children. Roughly 93 percent work full time. Their professions range from accounting to finance, law, hospitality, sales, and a variety of other fields.

### What sparked your interest in working with nontraditional students?

It really stems from my experience of working and going to school at the same time. I also changed my profession after working in a different field for more than 10 years. When I was in graduate school, my research interests centered on how nontraditional students learn and how various teaching methods and emerging technologies can improve and enhance the learning process. Many of these teaching principles still intrigue me.

### As a student, did you have an advisor who was especially effective?

Dr. Rob Rager was my major advisor. Of the many lessons he taught me, one of the most impactful was that I needed to consider the development of a valid purpose for my life, and by doing so to consider my academic competencies and personal life goals as well as the career options available to me.

### What's the best piece of advice (academic or otherwise) you ever received?

Understand the process you use when making decisions. Whether the decision is academic, personal or professional, they are all intrinsically linked, so the process you use to decide in one will undoubtedly have an effect on the others. Understanding your process will help you determine the best path to take and the resources you'll need to arrive at your destination.

### What's the most common question you get from students in the advising process?

It would focus on the opportunities available after graduating from Furman. This is always a great opportunity to talk about how to market their liberal arts education — how their skills and abilities in critical analysis, problem-solving and communication make them a more valuable asset to potential employers.

### Excerpt from a letter nominating Brett Barclay for the award:

"Brett knows all UES students personally [and] works with them individually not just to craft a course of study, but to place them with professors who will work well with them. He is very sensitive to the special needs and concerns of adult learners, but does not let them use their circumstances as an excuse. He wants them to get a quality, Furman-level education, and holds them to their responsibilities."