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## From the President

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

“NO MAN IS AN ISLAND,” wrote the poet John Donne. Nor is any great university.

It is easy, and tempting, to think of Furman as a “bubble.” Indeed, the phrase “the Furman bubble” is part of the lexicon and lore of this place, a phrase sometimes used as a positive — to connote the beauty, tranquility, safety and security of the campus (all wonderful attributes) — but more often uttered as a critique.

The time has come to burst the bubble and do all we can to push Furman out into the world, and invite the world into Furman.

As we consider Furman’s past, present and future, we must cipher into the mix the accelerating swells and swirls that surround us. Furman must now think and act globally, politically, culturally and economically.

We recruit students, faculty and staff from around the world. We send students and faculty on study abroad programs to Asia, Africa, Australia, South America and Europe. Furman feels the impacts of political upheavals, such as the Arab Spring; of economic uncertainties, such as the sovereign debt crisis in Europe; of natural calamities, such as earthquakes, hurricanes or tsunamis.

On the American scene, Furman is affected by our national culture, politics and economics. It will matter whether President Obama or Gov. Romney is elected president, or which major party controls the Congress, or who is appointed to the Supreme Court. It will matter whether the economy recovers or regresses. It will matter whether employment figures move for the better or the worse, or whether markets ascend or decline.

Closer to home, Furman is inextricably intertwined with the future of South Carolina, the Upstate, and Greenville. If our region makes progress in education, health care, jobs and the environment, the rising tide will raise our boat. If the region suffers, Furman will suffer as well in attracting the best and brightest students, faculty and staff.

Furman is also part of a broader system of American higher education. Here, too, the times they are a changin’.

Since 1986 tuition costs nationally have risen 500 percent, more than four times the rate of inflation. The Great Recession that began in 2008 is now extending into a Great Slowdown — and Great Reckoning. Real income for most families across all levels of society has declined. The housing market has not recovered, and will not anytime soon. Unemployment remains stubbornly high. Families, businesses, lenders — everyone is increasingly skittish about the accumulation of debt. And consider this stark fact: a family bearing the full cost of sending a child to Furman for four years must now pay more than \$200,000. That is more than the median price of an American home.

Something’s gotta give.

We offer at Furman an extraordinary, enchanting, magical educational experience. We nourish the mind and the spirit in a gorgeous setting. We have a brilliant and passionate faculty and staff, dedicated to the growth and development of the whole person. We have a storied and robust Division I athletic program.

But all this diamond brilliance, all this value, will dissolve to naught if we are insular, isolated and indifferent to the forces around us. We must find a way to be affordable. We must find ways to be more efficient, more attentive to the economies and opportunities offered by the Internet and new technologies, more incisive and persuasive in projecting our message into new and traditional markets around the nation and the world.

We cannot wait for the bubble to burst on us. We need to burst it first, with innovation and creativity, reaching out to the world that beckons.

Over the course of the 2012–13 academic year, our trustees, faculty, staff, students, parents and alumni will ask searching questions about the future of higher education, and how to best position Furman to prosper in making wise, creative and bold decisions to secure our place within that future. In the great tradition of the liberal arts, let us be guided by the wisdom of the ancient Greek historian Herodotus: “He is best who, when making his plans, fears and reflects on everything that can happen to him, but in the moment of action is bold.”

— ROD SMOLLA