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Arts programs, new partnerships to enhance community ties

Furman University

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artfacts

Arts programs, new partnerships to enhance community ties

ENTERING 2012, FURMAN'S emerging partnerships with Greenville's Peace Center for the Performing Arts and Upcountry History Museum, a new plan to bolster the fine arts program, and a Poinsett Highway beautification project promise to energize the university's community ties and provide new learning opportunities for students.

Furman's fine arts programs — art, music and theatre arts — received a significant boost in December through a \$2 million grant from The Duke Endowment. The grant is the largest single gift for fine arts programming in Furman's history. Portions of the funds will be used to develop a partnership with the Peace Center and to support recruitment of fine arts students, an initiative that is included in the university's recently adopted strategic plan. An estimated 20 percent of Furman students are involved in some aspect of the fine arts program.

The Peace Center is the centerpiece of the Upstate's performing arts community. The complex, which features two theatres and an amphitheatre, hosts approximately 300 performances a year, from touring Broadway shows and concerts to children's theatre productions.

Although details of the collaboration with the Peace Center are still in the formative stages, all of Furman's fine arts departments are expected to be involved. Opportunities may include Furman performances and art exhibits at Peace Center venues, master classes with visiting artists, student internships, arts administration training, and educational outreach programs.

In tandem with The Duke Endowment grant, Furman has received \$800,000 from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support the hiring of three tenure-track professors in music and arts administration. The new faculty will bring expertise in musical theatre, musicology, and nonprofit business environments, such as arts administration; they will support Furman's efforts to increase enrollment in the arts and contribute to the university's expanded community outreach.

Furman has also reached a three-year agreement with the board of directors of the Upcountry History Museum to assume operation of the facility.



The museum, which opened in 2007, features a 100-seat theatre, four display areas, and assorted meeting rooms. It is located on Heritage Green, the former site of the Greenville Woman's College, which coordinated with Furman in the 1930s.

While the museum will continue to showcase Upstate history, President Rod Smolla says he is open to using the facility to support other functions, such as lectures and university receptions. Furman has initiated a national search for a director and formed a transition team to manage operational changes.

"We want to create more excitement about the museum," says Smolla. "This will give us an opportunity to connect to the community on many levels."

As for Poinsett Highway, the seven-mile corridor that connects Furman to downtown Greenville, the university is working with government and business planners to rejuvenate the stretch of road and develop a "Poinsett District" that would attract small retail shops, restaurants and condensed residential housing. The university plans to launch the project this spring with a clean-up of the area involving students, faculty and staff.

"It's going to take years [to complete]," Smolla says of the project, "but there is a lot of energy behind it."

Adapted from an article in the winter issue of Inside Furman, the university's internal newsletter.

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Fine arts
faculty
members



1,714

Furman
Singers
alumni
of record



20

Percent of
students
involved in
the fine arts



28,000

Square feet
in Thomas
Anderson
Roe Art
Building



110

Seats in
Theatre
Playhouse



6

Music
concentrations
music, church music,
music education,
composition, theory,
performance

