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Top Advisor: Onarae Rice

Furman University

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JEREMY FLEMING

Top Advisor: Onarae Rice

A Q&A with the psychology professor, a recipient of the 2011 Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Advising.

Hometown: Spartanburg, S.C.

College: Wofford, Class of '96

Major: Psychology

Arrived at Furman: 2006

What attracted you to the field of psychology?

I've always wanted to know why my fifth-grade friend responded so negatively to our teacher when both he and I were called on for our mischievous behavior. In junior high, I wondered why every time I raised my hand, no matter if it were to ask a question or to be excused from class, Stanley would immediately raise his hand. And in high school, I questioned why I wanted to get the attention of a young lady (now my wife) so badly that I was willing to walk her to her third period class, every day, even though my class was on the opposite side of the school. So studying the brain and behavior in college seemed the next logical step.

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

Dr. Thomas, a friend and graduate school mentor, told me to find a topic to study that would inspire me to work as hard as I could while smiling, realizing that it's a privilege to have such an opportunity. He cautioned me to take time to enjoy any accomplishments I may obtain but to NEVER become complacent, as complacency marks the end of aspiration.

Talk about the work you've done with former NFL star Stephen Davis' Big Country Foundation.

Given the recent 10-year anniversary of 9/11, I'm reminded of how the foundation started. Stephen played for the Redskins at the time and I asked him if he would be interested in starting a foundation in the months following the tragedy. He agreed and said he wanted to raise scholarship funds for children directly affected by the Pentagon attack. I contacted the Pentagon and we started "Rushing for Remembrance," whereby individuals, corporations and small businesses donated funds for each yard that Stephen rushed for during the 2002 season. We sent limos to pick up the kids who participated, gave them premium seats at a home game, and granted them access to the sidelines before the game and quality time with the players afterward. I keep a handwritten thank-you letter from a parent in my office for remembrance. He lost his wife, who was one of the flight attendants on the flight that crashed into the Pentagon. Both of his sons were touched by our efforts.

If you hadn't gone into academia, what career do you think you might have pursued?

I might have been a sports agent. I loved Jerry Maguire!

As a Wofford graduate, do you have mixed loyalties when Furman takes on the Terriers?

I ABSOLUTELY have mixed feelings when Furman plays Wofford. The rivalry hasn't seemed to have grown all that much in recent years but when I was at Wofford, we always circled the Furman game when the schedule came out. Nonetheless, I'm in the best possible situation. No matter who wins, I'm always happy.

Excerpt from a letter nominating Onarae Rice for the award:

"Not only has he been an advisor, but an exceptional mentor as well. He has helped me understand what it truly means to be a Furman student through invaluable advice and direction. He makes himself available to students when needed and helps with time management skills, study habits and career planning. He is a person I can have a dialogue with if I need any form of advice. His commitment to advising even extended to my parents when they had concerns and inquiries about my college life, performance and transition into the student body."