9-1-2010

Justuses accept challenge as Young Benefactors

Furman University

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Recommended Citation


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Study away: An experience not to be missed

Since 1969, when Furman students first set foot abroad as part of a university-sponsored travel-study trip, the sun has yet to set on the university’s study away programs. Whether you’re talking traditional overseas travel experiences or internship and research programs within the United States, hundreds of students past and present have benefited from opportunities to spend a few weeks or a semester exploring Furman away from Furman. And nowadays more of them are taking advantage of the options available: the average number of participants has increased over the last decade from approximately 200 students per year to 300.

During the recently completed May Experience, for example, students enjoyed three-week travel programs to such destinations as Iceland, Australia, and Turkey. For the 2010-11 academic year they have a choice of 13 faculty-led programs to such places as Belize, the United Kingdom, China, Africa, Washington, D.C., and Columbus, Ohio, plus a host of exchange programs to such destinations as Japan, Italy, and Greece, among others.

Furman’s approach to study away is in many ways distinctive from that of other institutions because the majority of trips are led by Furman faculty. Srey Kudlah Khemski, assistant academic dean for study away and international education, “When Furman faculty are the primary travel-study instructors, we guarantee that the program’s instruction and coursework meet the university’s high standards and ensure that the academic experience merges cohesively with departmental curricula and coursework meet the university’s high standards and ensure that the academic experience merges cohesively with departmental curricula and academic experiences available on campus.”

For many students, the study away experience proves to be transforming. Jenny Adams Mooncheck ’99, an attorney in Greenville, still remembers vivid details of her winter 1999 trip to the Balkics and Eastern Europe, led by political science professor Cleve Frasier and history professor (now retired) Bill Lashey.

Mooncheck writes, “In the years since that trip, I’ve often thought how much of an art it must be to take a group of 10 or so over-confident, smart Alec college students halfway around the world for six weeks and to find that delicate balance between, on the one hand, having them to death, and on the other hand, letting them run amuck. Not only did the history we’d studied before leaving come alive for us on that trip, but the places themselves came fully alive: living, breathing, functioning, modern and complex in a way that we’d never have understood if we had stuck solely to lectures and classes.

“Our goal is to encourage (and provide the means for) even more students to benefit from a study away program. Because operational and travel costs are increasing, the Richard Furman Society is seeking to raise $10 million to endow scholarship support that will help accommodate all interested students.”

As Jessica Taylor ’07 wrote after spending winter term of her senior year in Russia, “I know that our professors were and are experienced travelers, but for many of us it was the trip of a lifetime and one from which we returned having become friends in a way that only a shared extraordinary experience can create. Friendly enough, anyway, to have forgiven Dr. Lashey for that ‘short little walk’ through the open-air market in Moscow, in February, without our coats. He was so excited to share the spectacle of the transformation of a former Soviet parade ground into a thriving capitalist marketplace it was hard to resist. Perhaps it was his boundless enthusiasm, as much as the walking, that kept us warm that day.”

One of Furman’s goals is to encourage (and provide the means for) even more students to benefit from a study away program. Because operational and travel costs are increasing, the Richard Furman Matters campaign is seeking to raise $10 million to endow scholarship support that will help accommodate all interested students.

As Jessica Taylor ’07 wrote after spending winter term of her senior year in Russia, “Expanding your worldview through different cultures and environments is an experience that should not be missed.”

Visit www.furman.edu/international to discover the variety of travel-study options available to today’s students.

Hills assume leadership role with Richard Furman Society

Robert and Margaret Platt Hill have been among alumni and strings financial supporters of Furman since graduating from the university in 1983.

The Hills, who live in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., have volunteered as class agents and served on the university’s Board of Trustees. When their son Marshall ’12 enrolled at Furman, they joined the Panama Council. Today Robert serves on the university’s Board of Trustees.

Now they have agreed to take on another major task: co-chairing the Richard Furman Society Executive Committee. The group directs the efforts of Furman’s top gift society, which consists of individuals who make annual gifts of $10,000 or more to the university.

In assuming this role, the Hills join a short list of RFS chairs who have been among the university’s most active and generous supporters: Jim Hannutck ’70, Gordon Herrin ’93, Bob Pinson ’81, Jim W 4 and Carol Nicholas ’97 Ney, and B.K. Bryan.

Since 1993, when it began with 12 members, the Richard Furman Society has grown to include 120 members who collectively donate more than $2 million to support annual operational needs, ranging from financial aid to internships and undergraduate research.

In assuming the chairmanship to the Hills, Jim Ney said, “Margaret and Robert Hill are marvelous examples of emerging alumni leaders. With their added perspective as Furman parents and Robert’s involvement as a trustee, they are exceptionally well suited to lead this effort and will no doubt lead the Richard Furman Society to even greater success.”

Contact john.kemp@furman.edu, (864) 294-1727, to learn more about the Richard Furman Society.

Justuses accept challenge as Young Benefactors

Jayda Biddix Justus says she has no doubt that her academic preparation at Furman, along with her study away internship on Capitol Hill and another internship with a public relations firm in Greenville, equipped her well for her career opportunities.

She has served as a legislative assistant to North Carolina Congresswoman Sue Myrick and as an account coordinator with Sterling Hager, a public relations group.

Justus, a 1998 Phi Beta Kappa graduate who earned degrees in history and political science, was a recipient of the Herman W. Lay Scholarship, Furman’s most prestigious academic award. Today she lives with her husband, Brent, and two children in Melbourne, Va.

In large part because of the scholarship support Jayda received as an undergraduate, she and Brent have chosen to become members of Young Benefactors, a group of 120 alumni who graduated within the last 20 years and who make annual contributions to Furman of $1,000 or more. The generosity of Young Benefactors is vital to the university’s ability to fund scholarships that support Furman students, 80 percent of whom receive some sort of financial aid.

One reason the Justuses became Young Benefactors is because they understood firsthand the importance of financial aid, particularly in today’s difficult economic times.

“The next generation of philanthropy for Furman lies on the Young Benefactors’ shoulders, and we need to accept the challenge,” Jayda says. “Brent and I strongly believe that education is the key to our future. There is no better way to put this belief into action than to make that dream possible for others.”

Contact john.kemp@furman.edu, (864) 294-1727, to learn more about Young Benefactors.

Because Furman Matters.

The Latest News from the University’s Comprehensive Campaign

Students at the ancient Roman theater in Aspendos during the 2010 May Experience trip to Turkey, where they explored early Christian and Byzantine sites.