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Alumni recognized with top honors during Founders Convocation

Furman University

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Four alumni were among the five individuals honored March 24 when Furman celebrated Founders Week with its annual convocation.

The university awarded honorary Doctor of Science degrees to **David Orr**, chair of the environmental studies program at Oberlin College in Ohio, and **Carl Kohrt** '65, immediate past chair of Furman's board of trustees and recently retired president and chief executive officer of Battelle, an international science and technology company.

Orr, a pioneer in environmental literacy and ecological design, has provided advice and counsel to Furman as it has developed its strategic commitment to sustainability. He spearheaded the effort to build a \$7.2 million Environmental Studies Center at Oberlin that was named one of 30 "milestone buildings" of the 20th century by the U.S. Department of Energy.

He has written four books and been recognized with the Bioneers Award, the National Conservation Achievement Award from the National Wildlife Federation, and a Lyndhurst Prize from the Lyndhurst Foundation.

Kohrt, a chemistry major at Furman who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, has given amply of his time, talent and resources to the university. With his wife, Lynne, he provided the naming gift for Kohrt Commons in the Charles H. Townes Center for Science. Kohrt Commons honors his parents, Carl and Catherine Kohrt.

Before going to Battelle he spent 29 years with Kodak, where he held several senior executive and technical positions, including executive vice president and assistant chief operating officer.



From left: Carl Kohrt, David Orr, Benny Walker, Kirby Mitchell, Tom Smythe.

Benny Walker '71, who worked for 37 years in admissions and financial aid at Furman before stepping down as vice president for enrollment in 2008, received the Bell Tower Award for his contributions to university life. Today he is an assistant to President David Shi and senior associate for the Riley Institute.

As an administrator Walker's ingenuity and creativity helped make it possible for hundreds of students to afford to attend Furman. Active in professional circles, he is frequently asked to conduct workshops on financial planning for college.

The Chiles-Harrill Award, which is presented to a member of the faculty or staff deemed by the senior class as having the greatest influence on the class, went to **Thomas Smythe** '85, associate professor of business and accounting. The award honors Marguerite Chiles, former vice president for student services, and Ernest Harrill, professor emeritus of political science and a former dean of students.

Smythe, who joined the faculty in 2001, is a student favorite because of his commitment to their well-being and genuine interest in their lives and careers. As one student who nominated him for the honor said, "He makes class fun and is always willing to make time to give extra help. He not only has enriched my Furman experience, but I now regard him as a good friend."

Kirby Mitchell '90 received the Richard Furman Baptist Heritage Award, which recognizes a Furman graduate who "reflects Baptist ideals by thinking critically, living compassionately and making life-changing commitments."

Mitchell is managing attorney for the Greenville and Anderson offices of the South Carolina Centers for Legal Justice, a state-

wide firm that provides legal services to low-income South Carolinians.

He is also a volunteer and board member with Upstate Community Mediation Center, which provides an alternative to the adversarial court process by working to resolve disputes through mediation. He chairs the board of Clubhouse Gang, Inc., an after-school program for low-income children, and is co-chair of Money Smart, a financial program for low-income adults.

In a separate program later this spring, Furman awarded an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree to **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**, president of Liberia.

Known as Africa's "Iron Lady," Johnson Sirleaf spoke at Furman April 13 during a visit sponsored by the Riley Institute and Water of Life's Global Pebble Project. She is the first woman elected to lead an African nation.

A graduate of Harvard University and a former World Bank economist, she has been recognized for her courage and commitment to expanding freedom and improving the lives of the people of war-torn Liberia and others across the African continent. In 2007 she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian award.