

9-1-2008

Scientific Evolution: Collaboration and integration

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Recommended Citation

Dripps, Weston (2008) "Scientific Evolution: Collaboration and integration," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 51 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol51/iss2/8>

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Collaboration and integration

The completion of the Townes Center has allowed the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences to experience an amazing transition by providing us a much needed opportunity to expand our space, rethink and reorganize our layout, and upgrade our teaching and lab facilities.

Our faculty offices, formerly scattered between different floors in Plyler Hall, are now co-located in our new departmental suite. As a result, we have strengthened departmental camaraderie, become more accessible to the students, and fostered intradepartmental research and teaching collaboration through our daily interactions and discussions within the suite.

The addition of Rinker Hall has drastically increased our teaching and lab space and allowed us to use our space more sensibly and efficiently. Field and lab equipment previously stacked and stored in windowless rooms in the basement has now found a proper home in open, airy research labs that are both more inviting and informative to students. The integrated layout of our lab, teaching and research space highlights the interconnectivity of science and has made the research process more transparent and, hopefully, more enticing to students.

The renovated research labs have provided us much needed

space and equipment upgrades that already are allowing us to conduct research previously not possible, such as our recent nitrogen isotope work. The Townes Center will certainly allow us to continue to bolster our research capabilities, attract strong science students and help strengthen Furman's position as a scientific powerhouse among other liberal arts institutions.

Not only have the teaching and research facilities been dramatically improved, but the building's green design, with its energy-saving features and solar aquatic wastewater system, presents lots of great teaching opportunities for our classes in terms of environmental impact and conservation — both of which tie in perfectly with Furman's strategic emphasis on sustainability.

— WESTON DRIPPS

The author, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, joined the earth and environmental sciences faculty in 2005. He was a recipient of the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching in 2007-08.