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## Scientific Evolution: A seismic shift in interest

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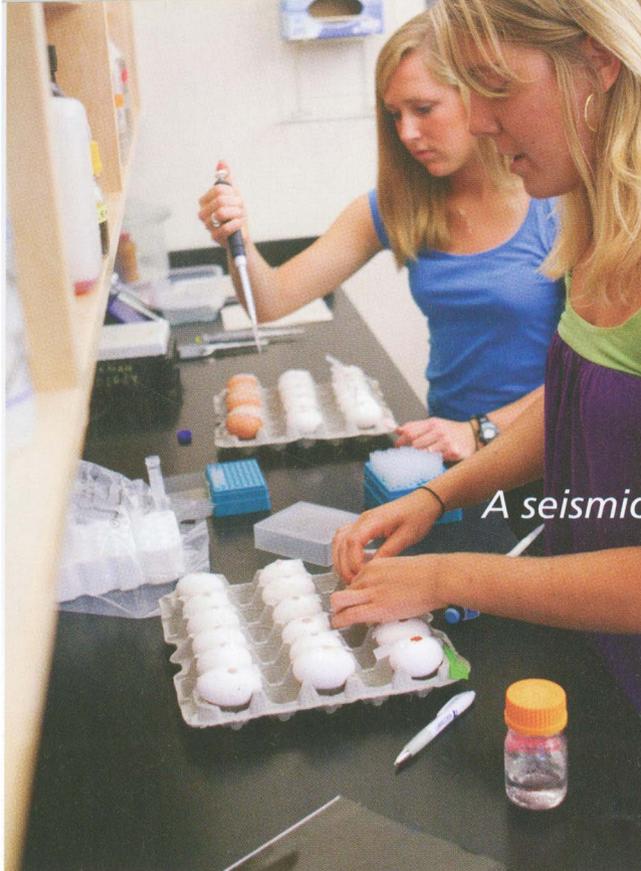
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*A 1,200-pound conglomerate with igneous and metamorphic rock fragments derived from erosion of an ancient mountain range in Brazil decorates a hallway; biology students Denise Frohlich '10 (left) and Cassie Moats '09 treat developing embryos with a peptide that induces motor neuron degeneration as part of a study of the processes involved in cell death.*



*A seismic shift in interest*

With the construction of the Townes Center for Science has come increased excitement and pride for the sciences at Furman.

Last fall I was thrilled to see prospective students touring the new buildings and to hear the tour guides talk with enthusiasm about the quality of the science courses and research. Those teaching in the glass-enclosed classrooms often look out to see groups of prospective students and their parents gathered in the hall, giving them a firsthand view of faculty-student interactions.

In the past, non-science majors taking a biology course entered the building under duress. They could be overheard talking with dread about attending class in the old building, and it was rare for students to explore beyond their immediate classrooms.

This same faction of students is now seen in the lounge areas and in faculty offices more frequently than in the past. They wander the halls, reading the research posters on bulletin boards and poking their heads into labs. As a result, they are less hesitant about science and more comfortable interacting with the science faculty, which offers us the opportunity to increase their understanding and appreciation of science.

Teaching and conducting research in state-of-the-art facilities demonstrates that science is ever new and innovative. With the Townes Center, the science departments have noticed more students wanting to remain on campus during the summer to work, instead of seeking research opportunities at other institutions.

With this increased interest will come more projects and ideas, which can only lead to more grants and productivity. Agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute want to support programs that have a record of solid research and dedication to undergraduates, and a means to attract bright, motivated students.

The sciences at Furman have always had some of the best faculty and some of the finest undergraduate students. The Townes Center has provided another means to attract these students — and another foundation upon which we can all build.

— VICTORIA TURGEON

*The author, who holds a Ph.D. from Wake Forest University, joined the biology faculty in 1998.*