Furman's investment in him compels young alum to respond in kind

Nancy Melton ’05
Furman University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol51/iss1/12

This Article is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines. For more information, please contact scholarexchange@furman.edu.
Steve Buckingham admits that when he applied to Furman almost 10 years ago, he didn't know much about the university, its academic reputation or the quality of the student body. But after visiting the campus, he was convinced that Furman was the place for him.

In fact, he didn't apply to any other college. And Furman was glad to invite him to join the family.

By the time he graduated in the spring of 2003, he had captained the university's nationally ranked Mock Trial team, been elected to Phi Beta Kappa, earned a degree in political science and attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Mexico, where he had the opportunity to meet world leaders, including then Secretary of State Colin Powell. Buckingham was also invited to deliver the Commencement address at graduation.

He went on to attend law school at the University of Richmond. There he distinguished himself in the classroom, was editor-in-chief of the Law Review and, upon graduation, received the Law Faculty Award.

He says, however, that his proudest moment came after his law school graduation. During a ceremony recognizing the success of two other Furman alumni who were then first-year students, the dean of the law school remarked that the honorees were the latest examples of the fine tradition and reputation that Furman graduates have established at Richmond.

Buckingham went on to pass the South Carolina Bar exam, then served as a law clerk to the Hon. James R. Spencer, Chief United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia, for the 2006-07 term.

Buckingham is now back in Greenville, where he is an associate with Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP, practicing in the areas of business and commercial litigation, class action defense, consumer finance litigation and products liability defense. This summer he is a temporary law clerk to the Hon. Henry M. Herlong, Jr., United States District Judge for the District of South Carolina, after which he will resume his practice with Nelson Mullins.

Of his work, Buckingham says, “The practice of law is mainly a business. But every now and again, you get to do things to help others that few people can. In those situations, you can put yourself into the grander scheme of our system to see where you fit in and how you can use that system to the advantage of the interest you’re protecting and promoting.”

To him, the legal profession represents a call to service: “There are so few things that matter these days. But one thing that will always matter is people having a fair opportunity to resolve their disputes peacefully.

“This country could survive without either an executive or a legislature. It would crumble without a judiciary. It’s the only thing that stands between civility and anarchy.”

Buckingham is quick to credit Furman for much of his success. “Furman is great at teaching you how to think for yourself,” he says. “Other colleges focus on learning the opinions and facts presented by others, but at Furman you engage in a higher level of analysis. You learn what you believe, and what is true and accurate.”

With his return to Greenville, he has become an active volunteer in the community and at Furman. He is a member of the board of directors of the Rape Crisis & Child Abuse Center, and he is a coach for Furman’s Mock Trial team.

He continues to support alma mater in other ways as well. Inspired by the $400 million “Because Furman Matters” campaign, he pledged an annual gift that qualifies him for membership with the Young Benefactors and the Presidents Club, for donors of $1,000 or more.

“Furman matters,” Buckingham says, “for so many reasons. Furman invested so much in me. I feel compelled to give back.

“A large part of who I am is because of other alumni who gave their time to help with my development. I’m helping those who are now where I once was.”

— NANCY MELTON ’05
Associate Director, Annual Giving