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## Alumni unite to name lab forever for revered professor

Furman University

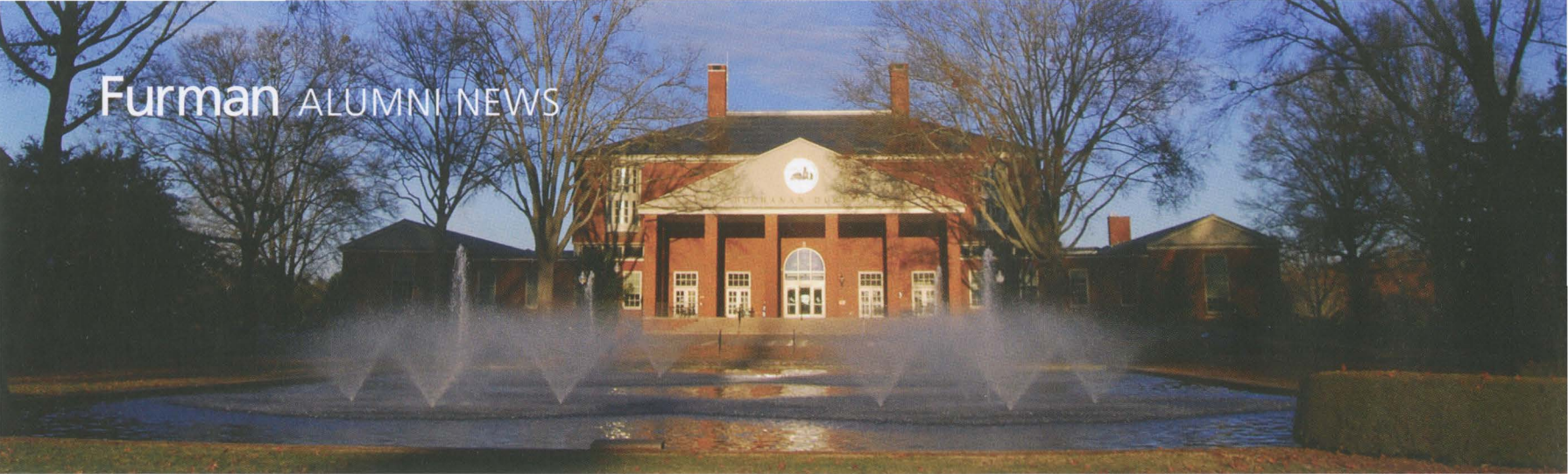
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## ALUMNI UNITE TO NAME LAB FOR REVERED PROFESSOR

If you are fortunate enough to encounter a teacher or mentor who helped to shape your future life, how do you go about thanking them?

A group of alumni from the 1970s answered that question on a brilliant October day at Furman in the fall. The occasion was the dedication of the Charles H. Townes Center for Science.

But there was a more personal reason for these alumni to be on campus this particular weekend. They came to celebrate a project of their own: naming the sedimentation laboratory in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences in honor of Wallace C. Fallaw (pictured), their late professor and friend.

After serving for a time as a petroleum geologist with Chevron, Fallaw taught geology at Furman from 1970 until his death in 1995. During his 25-year tenure, he taught 154 of the 160 geology majors from that period, as well as many other students who enjoyed his introductory, historical geology and paleontology classes.

An authority on coastal plains stratigraphy, Fallaw authored numerous scientific articles and was a posthumous recipient of the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Teaching. Students and colleagues remember him for his quiet demeanor spiced by a dry sense of humor, his "inspiring and fun" teaching style (both in the classroom and on field trips), and his love of Dickens and the music of the Ink Spots.

The idea to name the lab in Fallaw's honor began with a casual conversation between old friends Betsy Beckham Godlewski '75 and Tom Triplitt '76, director of the Alumni Association.

"Many of us owe our successful careers to



Dr. Fallaw, and all of us now see the world differently because of him," says Betsy, special projects coordinator for KSPS Public Television in Spokane, Wash. "He inspired us through his passion for teaching, his love of geology, his sense of humor, and his curiosity about the world. The opening of the Townes Center was a not-to-be-missed opportunity to recognize Dr. Fallaw and the impact he had on our lives."

It was evident after just a few phone calls that other geology alumni shared the vision for naming the lab and embraced the idea through their financial contributions. Over a period of just a few weeks, pledges for more than 50 percent of the \$100,000 needed to name the lab were secured.

"The response to our calls has been supportive and heart-warming. People are eager to support this project because it speaks to them in a very personal way," says Betsy.

For some of these former students, the Fallaw Lab project became an unexpected opportunity to reconnect with friends they hadn't seen in decades. Linda Heatwole Jacobs '74, a novelist and former oil industry geologist who lives in Las Cruces, N.M.,

enthusiastically joined the group of donors — and began organizing a mini-reunion during the Townes Center dedication.

"It has been great to reconnect with old and new friends bound by a common desire to honor such a wonderful professor," she says. "And it's nice to know that future students will see Dr. Fallaw's name on this lab and know what an enormous influence he had on us and on Furman."

On dedication day, 10 former students joined Fallaw's wife, Sallie, and son, James, as well as former professors Van Price and

Ken Sargent, plus other colleagues and friends to celebrate the Fallaw Lab. Following a toast to Dr. Fallaw and comments from Sallie, current EES professors Bill Ranson and Jack Garihan took the group on a field trip to their favorite part of the Townes Center: the rock garden.

Heads bent together over massive rock slabs from geologic "hot spots" around the Southeast as the group inspected granitic crystals, gneissic structure and the delicate outlines of ancient fossils. Fallaw would have loved it!

The Fallaw Laboratory is but a small piece of a much larger facility that will serve Furman's students for years to come. Yet it demonstrates the power of the many and shows it is possible to say thank you — with a little help from your friends.

*To contribute to the Fallaw Lab project, contact Betsy at [betsygodlewski@gmail.com](mailto:betsygodlewski@gmail.com) or Tom at [tom.triplitt@furman.edu](mailto:tom.triplitt@furman.edu). If you are interested in other naming opportunities at Furman, contact Gary Hassen at [gary.hassen@furman.edu](mailto:gary.hassen@furman.edu) or (864) 294-3691.*