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Support, humor among Roberson's calling cards

Her ability to create a welcoming environment and encourage students to follow their dreams makes Sandra Roberson a much sought advisor in the Furman accounting department.

Students are often drawn to her sense of humor, which is apparent from the collage of cartoons and comic strips on her office door. But they soon find that Roberson, a Certified Public Accountant, has a wealth of practical advice to offer, thanks to 18 years on the audit staff at Ernst & Young and in various financial positions with the Advantica Restaurant Group.

Roberson's experience, down-to-earth nature and accessibility are among the reasons she was a winner of the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Advising in 2006.

One advisee remembers Roberson contacting people at four different firms to help the student secure a summer internship. Another recalls how, while preparing for her first job interview, she frantically e-mailed Roberson to ask what to wear — and quickly received a response filled with advice and encouragement.

"I try very hard to be available," says Roberson. "I encourage students to talk about their dreams and interests and try to help them consider how these might influence their college and postgraduate decisions."

Roberson, who competed in volleyball and track while earning two undergraduate degrees at Fairmont State University in West Virginia, also understands the pressures students feel about



fitting everything into their busy schedules. This trait is illustrated by a story from a member of the women's basketball team, who recounted her nervousness over making a junior-year change in her major from math to accounting.

"Dr. Roberson pulled the course catalog off her bookshelf and helped me map out my remaining two years at Furman," she says. "She told me which classes would be conducive to take together and which classes I should take during basketball season." Roberson also assured her that the other accounting professors would work with her schedule as best they could.

"I went into the meeting feeling a little nervous, but I left feeling very confident about my decision to major in accounting," the student says.

Roberson says she likes to dispel misconceptions about accounting and accounting majors. "I want students to understand why accounting is the way it is," she says. "It's not always black and white. It's a dynamic field that is always changing." With various corporate scandals (Enron, Arthur Andersen) making front-page news in recent years, she points out that ethics in accounting is an important issue to address as well.

But such serious topics don't prevent Roberson from having fun with stereotypes — as is evident in one student's description of the conclusion of a dinner Roberson held at her house for senior accounting majors.

"She handed each of us a gift," says the student. "We opened them together. They were pocket protectors! We all had a big laugh."

— JASON STRAND '04

B.K. Bryan, trustee and friend

As this issue of *Furman* was being finalized we learned of the death January 23 of William King "B.K." Bryan, a Greenville businessman and member of the Furman board of trustees. He was 86.

In a tribute to Bryan, *The Greenville News* called him a man of "charisma, wisdom and humor." He and his wife, Frances, provided the naming gift for Furman's Bryan Center for Military Science, and the Garden Room in Daniel Chapel is named for Frances. They have also provided major support to local charities, especially the Greenville Hospital System, whose Bryan Neonatal Intensive Care Unit bears the family's name.

B.K. Bryan served on the Furman Advisory Council before becoming

a trustee. He also chaired the Richard Furman Society. The university awards the William King Bryan Scholarship annually to students who demonstrate "entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to the community."

Furman president David Shi praised Bryan's energy and insightfulness. "He was truly one of Greenville and Furman's finest ambassadors and leaders," Shi said, "and both the community and the university are much the better for having him as a friend."



B.K. and Frances Bryan