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Pierce committed to students' best interests

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Pierce committed to students' best interests

As chair of the Department of Health and Exercise Science, one of Furman's most popular majors, Bill Pierce may have as many as 75 advisees at one time. But that doesn't preclude him from getting to know each student individually.

Indeed, Pierce believes the best way to advise students is to first learn about their personal strengths and abilities. Then he works with them to help determine the right academic course to follow.

"It's about stimulating the students' curiosity, engaging them in the learning process," says Pierce, a 2006 recipient of the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Advising. "I think about finding internships, research opportunities or study away programs that may suit their career paths."

HES major Jacqueline Eckert, a varsity tennis player, notes that as an advisor Pierce "goes above and beyond the call of duty, and never ceases to stay on top of everything." Pierce helped Eckert secure an internship in a local hospital — and has even found time to cheer her on at tennis matches.

As a physical educator, Pierce is passionate about promoting healthy lifestyles and the value of lifelong participation in physical activity. But finding activities that gel with the ever-changing expectations of students can, at times, be a challenge.

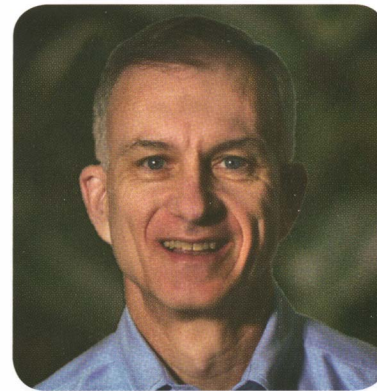
"Physical activity is beneficial to everyone's health," says Pierce. "But above all, it's fun. I enjoy helping students find that activity which they enjoy."

Pierce is the primary architect of the university's popular fitness center, located in a converted gymnasium in the Lay Physical Activities Center. Students and local residents flock to the center at all hours.

"Every evening I walk by the fitness center, and it is gratifying to see people working out, even on Fridays," says Pierce. "There was a time when this would have been unheard of. Now it [physical activity] is a priority in people's lives, and the fitness center has become a place to go with friends."

In 2003 Pierce and three of his departmental colleagues founded the Furman Institute of Running and Scientific Training (FIRST). FIRST offers a groundbreaking approach to marathon training with its innovative "less is more" 16-week training schedule.

The program has earned a tremendous amount of attention in the running community and received national and international acclaim — including articles in the August 2005 issue of



Runner's World and the Spring 2006 *Furman* magazine.

Despite all that he is involved in — training programs, teaching, community activities — Pierce still finds time to put students first. One student points to the speed with which Pierce responds to queries: "No matter what time I e-mail him with whatever question I have, he e-mails me back within minutes with an answer and explanatory response. He always puts forth the extra effort both in his office and outside of school, which means so much to us."

— JASON STRAND '04

A wider presence on the Web

As part of its ongoing effort to keep alumni and friends in touch with university activities, Furman has added several new offerings on the Web.

For highlights from recent campus lectures or to view video clips from special events, visit www.furmanchannel.com. Aside from tuning in to talks by distinguished campus guests, you can take a rollicking video tour of the revamped dining hall, watch professor Willard Pate describe her exceptional exhibit of photos from Cuba, or get tips for choosing the right college from admissions director Woody O'Cain. Future plans call for the site to include athletic events and possibly musical and theatrical performances.

Fans of WPLS, the university's student-run radio station, can now listen to the station on the Internet. Hear what's playing and click on related links at www.furman.edu/orgs/wppls. As the Web site says, "Listen online — we dare you to."

Furman magazine has also added a Web component: www.furman.edu/fumag. There you'll find selected stories from the printed publication, most of which include expanded features or links to related topics. The page offers tabs that allow you to submit news for class notes or link to the Alumni Association home page, plus a "Special to the Web" story and a survey through which you can evaluate the magazine and help to shape future issues.