New system boosts Development efforts

Furman University
Gift from Wylie estate bolsters endowment for mathematics

C. Ray Wylie, Jr., a distinguished professor and scholar who chaired the mathematics department at Furman during the 1970s, made a substantial financial contribution to the university upon his death in 1995.

Now Furman will benefit from yet another major bequest from the Wylie estate.

The most recent gift of $875,000 will create the Wylie Mathematics Endowment, which will “enhance student and faculty professional experiences” in the Department of Mathematics. The university received the final distribution from the estate following the death of Wylie’s widow, Ellen Rasor Wylie, on January 24.

The latest bequest increases the total value of four different Wylie programs to $3.5 million. Wylie established three of the programs — the Mathematics Scholarship, Mathematics Tournament Fund and Scholar/Athlete Scholarship — prior to his death.

Wylie Scholarships in Mathematics are worth up to $10,000 per year. Recipients have a mathematics/verbal combined SAT score of at least 1350 or an ACT score of at least 32. This fall, Furman will have 26 Wylie Scholars.

The Wylie Mathematics Tournament Fund provides permanent funding for Furman’s annual mathematics tournament, which attracts high school students from throughout the Southeast. The Wylie Scholar/Athlete Scholarship benefits students who demonstrate outstanding academic ability and who participate in varsity athletics.

“From the time the first Wylie Scholars in mathematics came to Furman in 1980, Ray and Ellen Wylie have been deeply committed to the support and enhancement of the students, faculty and programs in the department,” says Marty Cook, chair of the math department. “This gift will ensure that the Wylie name continues to be synonymous with Furman’s commitment to attract and develop the very best mathematics students possible.”

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Ray Wylie earned bachelor’s degrees in mathematics and chemical engineering from Wayne State University and a Ph.D. from Cornell University. He taught at Ohio State University, the Air Force Institute of Technology in Ohio, and the University of Utah before joining the Furman faculty in 1969.

He chaired the mathematics department from 1970 to 1976 and retired in 1978 as the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of Mathematics. He received the university’s Bell Tower Award in 1986. Furman awarded him an honorary Doctor of Science degree in 1994.

A lifelong fitness enthusiast, he became active in the Senior Olympics after his retirement and won a number of medals in National Senior Olympics competitions. In 1994 he was named upper South Carolina’s male senior athlete of the year.

He was the author or co-author of nine textbooks, three volumes of poetry, two collections of logical puzzles and many scholarly articles.

Ellen Rasor Wylie, a native of Laurens County, S.C., earned degrees from Winthrop and Duke and taught mathematics at Winthrop, Flora MacDonald (now St. Andrews Presbyterian College) and the University of South Carolina. A scholarship fund at Winthrop is named in her honor.

In 1982, Furman presented Sullivan awards for humanitarian endeavors to Ray and Ellen Wylie.

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In an effort to better serve Furman alumni, students, parents and friends, the Development Office recently improved its technology systems.

The department is now equipped with "The Raiser’s Edge," a software program produced by Blackbaud, a South Carolina-based firm. "The Raiser’s Edge" will allow Furman to serve alumni and friends more efficiently and accurately.

Although converting university data and gift information has been a tedious process, the new system will allow the Development Office to process gifts more quickly and securely than ever. During this transition time from the old system to the new, Furman greatly appreciates your patience and apologizes for any delay you might experience in receiving gift acknowledgments or mix-ups in the university’s mailings to you.

If you would like to submit new contact information or a mailing address change, or if you have questions or concerns regarding your recent gifts, please call data coordinator RaeNae Nay at (864) 294-3488 or e-mail her at raenae.nay@furman.edu.