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Four join board of trustees; Howes appointed chair

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ice to Furman



Struggling students found care, support in Team Cloer

Since the 1970s, Elaine and Tom Cloer have been advisors, confidants and friends to Furman students struggling to cope with the demands of college life.

Tom arrived in 1974 as a professor of education and director of the Office of Special Services (now the Office of Academic Assistance). Elaine joined him as his full-time assistant in 1978, and together they built the office while providing counseling, assistance and encouragement to countless undergraduates.

Many students (and many more parents) have credited their success at Furman to the Cloers. When Tom won the Alester G. Furman, Jr., and Janie Earle Furman Award for Meritorious Advising in 2003, an administrator described him as “the person that we hear about, again and again, from grateful parents. He embodies the enthusiasm for learning, leavened with sensitivity for the individual, that helps define a Furman education for many of our students, alumni and parents.”

When Elaine won the Chiles-Harrill Award this spring for her contributions to students’ best interests, she received more than 30 nominating letters. As one said, “In her role as the organizer and voice of her office, she has personified ‘academic assistance’ to generations of students, and earned their love and respect.”

Now, however, Furman will have to find a way to get along without the Cloers. The couple decided to retire together at the end of the 2003-04 academic year.

“Team Cloer” actually began in the early 1960s, when Tom, a mountain boy from Stinking Creek, Tenn., and Elaine, a soft-spoken New Yorker, met as undergraduates at Cumberland College in Kentucky. They soon became an item, married in 1965 and, after graduating two years later, moved to Pickens County (S.C.) to begin their careers in education as teachers at Holly Springs Elementary School.

Elaine continued to teach while Tom earned master’s and Ph.D. degrees from Clemson and the University of South Carolina. When Tom came to Furman and his teaching and administrative responsibilities increased, Elaine began helping him during off hours. By 1976 she was working part time at Furman; the position became full time two years later.

While Elaine is the most recent member of the family to earn a prestigious award from Furman, Tom holds the distinction of being the only member of the faculty to have received both the Meritorious Teaching Award (he won in 1988) and the advising award. An internationally recognized expert on reading and literacy, with hundreds of publications and workshops to his credit, he was also the first South Carolina Teacher of the Year (1988).

No doubt the energetic couple will find ways to continue to collaborate in the field of education. But they’ll also have more time for each other and for family, which was scheduled to grow by one this summer with the arrival of their fourth grandchild.

— John Roberts and Jim Stewart

Four join board of trustees; Howes appointed chair

Furman will welcome four new members to its board of trustees this fall, including Nobel laureate Charles H. Townes ’35.

Joining Townes for their first terms on the board will be B.K. Bryan of Greenville and Frank Shaw ’61 of Atlanta. Jack Guynn of Dunwoody, Ga., will return for his second term on the board. Sarah Belk Gambrell of Charlotte, N.C., has been elected a trustee emerita.

The new trustees will serve three-year, renewable terms. Trustees must go off the board for at least one year after a total of six consecutive years.

Bryan is the former owner of General Wholesalers Distributors and is currently head of WKB Enterprises in Greenville, a collection of bank and real estate investments. He has served on the Furman Advisory Council and the executive committee of the Richard Furman Society. He and his wife, Frances, provided the naming gift for the Bryan Center for Military Science, the home of Furman’s Army ROTC and military science department.

Guynn, a former head of the Furman Parents Council, is president and chief executive officer of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, which serves the Sixth Federal Reserve District and has branches in Birmingham, Jacksonville, Miami, Nashville and New Orleans. Guynn is responsible for all the bank’s activities, including monetary policy, bank supervision and regulation, and payments operations. He also serves on the Federal Open Market Committee, the chief policymaking body of the Fed.

Originally from Mullins, S.C., Shaw holds a sociology degree from Furman. After attending Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, he spent his early career as a minister at churches in South Carolina and Georgia. He is now owner and president of Shaw Executive Services, Inc., a health care management company in Atlanta. He and his wife, Susan, recently established the Ernesteen B. and W. Victor Etheridge Scholarship at Furman in honor of Susan’s parents.

Townes was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1964 for his contributions to the invention of the laser and maser. He is the recipient of countless national and international awards and honorary degrees and is currently a professor emeritus of physics at the University of California at Berkeley.

William B. Howes ’59 of Flat Rock, N.C., has begun a two-year term as chair of the board. Carl F. Kohrt, Jr. ’65 of Columbus, Ohio, will serve as vice chair, and Elizabeth Peace Stall of Greenville will remain as secretary.

Board members who completed their terms of service in the spring were Hardy S. Clemons of Greenville, Frances Smith Ligler ’72 of Potomac, Md., Robert H. Lutz, Jr. ’71 of Dallas, Texas, and Leighan R. Rinker of Atlantis, Fla. Rinker served as board chair for the past two years.