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Major award

Furman University

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Major award

Leighan Rinker, former chair of board, receives honorary degree

The highlight of the university's opening convocation September 15 was the presentation of Furman's highest award, an honorary degree, to Leighan Roberts Rinker.

Rinker, who chaired the Furman board of trustees from 2002-04, received an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree for her work as an exemplary educator and philanthropist who has donated her "time, talent and resources to improving the lives of young people." A graduate of the University of North Carolina, she did graduate study at Florida Atlantic University, which presented her the Outstanding Graduate Student Award in 1989. In 1997 she earned a doctorate in educational leadership.

Active in civic and community organizations, she is the founder and executive director of Beginnings of Palm Beach County, a preschool facility affiliated with Palm Beach Atlantic

College. She received the Champion of Higher Independent Education in Florida Award in 1998.

She and her husband David first became involved with Furman as members of the Parents Council. Three of their four children — Traci Rinker Miller '89, Chris Rinker '94 and Allison Rinker St. John '96 — are Furman graduates.

Leighan was elected to the board of trustees in 1997 and soon became a leading advocate for the renovation and expansion of the James B. Duke Library, which was completed over the summer. The Rinkers are members of the Richard Furman Society and founders of the Partners scholarship program.

At the convocation, President David Shi welcomed back the returning students and once again greeted the 730 members of the Class of 2008, who had arrived for Orientation the previous week.



Leighan Rinker

Thirty-eight states are represented in the new class, with students from South Carolina (214), Georgia (127) and North Carolina (84) making up more than half of the group. Eighty-two of the first-year students finished either first or second in their high school classes, and almost 100 members of the class are legacies who have had a sibling, parent or grandparent attend Furman.

Open-air affair

In the biggest event in the brief history of the Furman Amphitheater, everything came off without a hitch October 7 when Boston Music Award recipient Howie Day and Grammy Award-winning bluegrass band Nickel Creek appeared in concert. An estimated crowd of 1,750 was on hand on the beautiful fall evening to enjoy the music and the spectacular setting, and the performers responded by rocking the house.

