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Next: Reflection on Furman going forward

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Another way Furman can help is in counting homeless people. Sounds straightforward, right? However, we have people who are homeless today and pick up a job, make enough money to stay the night at a motel, and aren't considered homeless for that night. Tomorrow, they're in a shelter and homeless again. If they're "couch-surfing" they're homeless in the broadest definition of homelessness, but by Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards, they're not homeless. It's hard to wrap your brain around the issue when the definitions are inconsistent.

HUD does a census of homeless people once a year, and Furman students and faculty have always volunteered to help with this vital project. This year we've officially identified about 600 homeless people in Greenville. We know that's an undercount, probably by another 600. With the school system, we know that 1,089 kids were coded "homeless" at one point last year. And some of them live in a motel. So by the school system's definition, those kids are homeless. By HUD's definition, they're not. Those are the realities.

How can we best connect with the community?

TM: My priority is to create community among people. Especially people of all walks of life. Somehow, when you spend time with people who are different than you, traditional structures crack. A lot of times people show up at United Ministries thinking they're the host and they turn out to be the guest. If you leave as the host, you missed an opportunity. Sharing hospitality is what it's all about. ●



Hannah Wheeler '16, a post-baccalaureate fellow in Furman's Collaborative for Community-Engaged Learning, spoke with friend and mentor Tony McDade about how we can better partner with our neighbors in under-resourced communities.



NEXT

Reflection on Furman going forward

The Furman Advantage promises every student a personalized four-year pathway to graduation.

But what helps a student articulate what their path will be, and how do we ensure they thrive along the way? Far too often, I hear graduating seniors say the words, "I survived Furman" rather than "I thrived at Furman." This failure-prevention versus success-promotion mentality means students view the college experience as demands and challenges rather than opportunities for growth.

To ensure students get off to the right start, Furman has been working to help them understand the importance of doing well during their first two years. New student orientation in the summer has been reenvisioned to emphasize that the first year of the pathway involves a lot of exploration and discovery, while the second year offers more focused examination and decision-making, with dedicated guidance by advisors and mentors to help students make meaning of their path. Students learn the importance of developing a thriving-versus-surviving mentality and how that mindset can help them be more resilient.

I am most proud to be part of a group of faculty and staff who are developing Pathways, an innovative model featuring intentional advising and mentoring at crucial points during a student's first and second year in college. Pathways is designed to provide students with a seamless transition to college, while

engaging in self-reflection that allows them to understand their development and make meaning of their college experience.

Students are assigned to small advising cohorts and meet once a week for 50 minutes during each of their first four semesters. During these sessions, they are guided by their advisor through targeted modules designed to address various college transition issues. These cohorts allow students to discuss their concerns in a community where struggles are shared and uncertainty is celebrated, while also helping them explore their interests and talents as they determine their path. Students are connected by advisors to high-impact experiences like internships, study away and undergraduate research.

Over 90 percent of all colleges and universities feature a first-year experience, and an increasing number are starting to develop intentional programming to support students during the second year of college. With Pathways offered to every student by fall 2020, Furman will be a national leader and the first university to feature an intentional, integrated two-year experience that uses advising and mentoring to provide guidance and support for all students. This is what's next.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brad Harmon '97 is the assistant dean for the first-year and second-year experience.