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## The Results Are In: Alumni Are Thriving

Elizabeth Davis  
*Furman University*

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# The Results Are In: Alumni Are Thriving

BY ELIZABETH DAVIS



As a result of this challenge-and-support experience, Furman alumni report they are thriving. In each of Gallup's key wellbeing indices – purpose, social, financial, community, physical – Furman alumni scored 14 to 19 points higher than the national average. With The Furman Advantage intentionally leveraging the strengths of the “Big Six,” we expect these scores to grow.

At the same time, our research shows that we have some work to do to build greater affinity among alumni and to prove the value of their degrees immediately. We believe part of this involves placing greater, more meaningful emphasis on career development beginning the day students arrive. We're

also working to improve the university's rankings as part of a larger strategy to increase the prestige of a Furman degree.

There is more good news. We have also learned from Gallup that Furman faculty and staff are highly engaged. In fact Furman's employee engagement ranks in the 95th percentile among higher education and in the 75th percentile among all industries. This is important, because the greatest driver of alumni engagement is student engagement, and the top driver of student engagement is faculty and staff engagement.

Among the best conduits for engagement, experiential learning, career connections, and growing prestige are Furman's excellent centers and institutes. The Riley Institute celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. We feature its namesake, former South Carolina Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education Dick Riley '54, on page 26.

Our centers and institutes – which also include the Shi Center for Sustainability and the Institute for the Advancement of Community Health – allow us to make visible contributions to communities beyond our gates while providing valuable opportunities for Furman students not available elsewhere.

This is The Furman Advantage. And I'm really excited to see how our Gallup research is guiding our improvement while confirming we're on the right path. We're well on our way, the numbers show, to becoming a national model for value, high-impact learning and proven results. ●

Commencement is on my mind, and not just because I'm preparing for my fifth here at Furman. We have been thinking a lot lately about how we prepare our students for graduation and beyond.

A year ago, we partnered with Gallup to measure engagement and quality of life among our students, faculty and staff, and alumni, and how that relates to the success and evolution of The Furman Advantage. Our first year's findings show not only the strong impact of a Furman education but also tremendous alignment with our strategic vision and opportunities for it to have an even greater impact for alumni.

Current and former students report being academically challenged at Furman,

an experience that, according to Gallup, prepares graduates well for life beyond college.

In fact, 78 percent of Furman alumni strongly agree they were academically challenged, compared with 42 percent nationally. Why is this so important? Graduates who strongly agree they were academically challenged are more than three times as likely to say their college education prepared them well for life.

Furman alumni scored exceptionally well on Gallup's “Big Six” college experiences in emotional support and experiential learning. Research shows that graduates who had these experiences are three times more likely to be engaged at work and thriving in their wellbeing. Furman far outperforms the national average. (See chart below.)

## GALLUP'S 'BIG SIX' FOR SUCCESS

■ FURMAN ALUMNI ■ NATIONAL AVERAGE

Strongly agreed they had “professors who cared about me as a person”



Strongly agreed they “had at least one professor who made me excited about learning”



Strongly agreed they “had a mentor who encouraged my goals and dreams”



Strongly agreed they “had a job or internship that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom”



Strongly agreed they “worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete”



Strongly agreed they were “extremely active in extracurricular activities”

