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A Note from Cherrydale

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just had a feeling when

I drove onto Furman's campus for the first time as a sophomore in high school. Even as a professional writer almost two decades later, I can't even fully put it into words. I would look at other possible colleges, but something kept drawing me back to Furman each and every time.

It may have been Furman's undeniable beauty that hooked me, but the more I learned about it, I knew it was the perfect place for my liberal arts education. I wanted a small school with close relationships with faculty and staff that would enhance my education, instead of just being a face in a sea of hundreds. What I left with was not only my degree but a family and support system that's continued nearly 12 years after my graduation.

After I decided upon a political science major, Danielle Vinson, professor of politics and international affairs, became my adviser and continued the same role well after I graduated. I took every single class she taught – Media and Politics, Congress, the Presidency – all of which are incredibly relevant to my career today. She was also my adviser as editor of *The Paladin* and helped me weather turbulent stories and pursue political coverage that's unique to South



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national politics for NPR.*

Carolina every four years. We still continue to email about the news of the day, and I've often turned to her for advice, as I'm considering a career change or just wanting to talk.

Professor of Politics and International Affairs Elizabeth Smith's Women in Politics class proved especially prescient in covering recent politics, including a record number of women joining the United States House of Representatives and the first woman nominee

of a major political party. John Armstrong in the Department of Communications Studies convinced me that taking his broadcast journalism class was important, despite having my heart set on a career in strictly print journalism. Now having worked in multiplatform environments in radio and TV, I'm glad I listened.

Without help and guidance from the political science department in pursuing internships and

getting grant money to help with living expenses, I wouldn't be where I am in my career now. One internship in D.C. with *National Journal* magazine led to a job offer right after graduation and set me on a successful path in the competitive world of political journalism. That's one reason I was so happy to see the launch of *The Furman Advantage* – a formalization of everything I had experienced at Furman to help students pursue opportunities outside of the classroom.

When I was finally secure enough in my career to think about giving back to Furman financially, it was an easy decision. My professional goals wouldn't have been possible without the ways Furman professors had invested in me, along with the internship opportunities and foreign study I had access to along the way. I currently give back monthly as a donor to the political science department, the undergraduate research and internship fund and to scholarship support, so that a new generation of Paladins can have the same wonderful experiences I did, not only at Furman but after graduating. Every time I've been fortunate to come back to campus and talk with students about their plans and goals and experiences, I know I've made the right decision. ●