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## Enacting Community

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

**A**s you may know, the bulk of this magazine is put together months in advance of its publication. For this issue, most of the stories that follow were written, edited and photographed soon after the New Year. A few pieces like this letter come in later, for various reasons, and the final design work and proofing is done in March and early April.

So, we were far along in the production of this issue when COVID-19 became a pandemic and turned all of our worlds upside-down. We suddenly found ourselves having to make many difficult decisions that changed the way we did almost everything. We moved classes to remote learning and postponed significant milestone events, including Commencement exercises. It was heartbreaking but necessary to protect the safety and health of our students, faculty and staff.

With this in mind, we thought about putting the magazine on hold – or at most, producing a digital-only version. Clearly, we decided otherwise.

Ultimately, we felt it was important to deliver a magazine that celebrates the Furman family and our achievements – reminding us of what makes this community special. In these difficult and disorienting times, our hope is that the magazine will provide some comfort and normalcy.

You'll see that we made a few late changes, including moving this letter to the front of the magazine and swapping out a planned guest column with a special note



### ENACTING COMMUNITY



*Celebrating the Furman Family  
in Difficult Times*

BY ELIZABETH DAVIS

from Allison Foy, executive director of Alumni and Parent Engagement, on page 50. Otherwise, most of the original content remains. The students, faculty, staff and alumni we feature deserve to have their stories told.

And that brings me to what I really want to say in this moment. Our Furman family have proved – in the most difficult and challenging times – to be among the most resilient, resourceful and caring people I've known.

In the face of unimaginable circumstances, we have carried on with normal operations, if in a somewhat abnormal way. I am grateful for and proud of the ingenuity our students, faculty and staff showed in adapting to new ways of learning and delivering The Furman Advantage. Because it's not just about classes. Our faculty have continued to advise and mentor students, write letters of recommendation and engage in their own scholarly

activity. Our internship and undergraduate research offices and the Malone Center for Career Engagement are finding creative ways to provide students experiences, resources and support. And our coaches are sharing amusing social media posts of their attempts to keep our student-athletes engaged.

While we all try to figure out how to adapt our lives to the challenges of our new reality, I've been heartened by the show of care and concern from the Furman family: students asking what they can do to ensure our faculty and staff are taken care of; alumni offering help to the university and to students who are in their hometowns. And so much more.

And that's what the Furman family does. We don't just espouse community, we enact community. I won't pretend that everything is fine, because everything is not fine. Anxiety about the future can be overwhelming. And I know many of you have loved ones or colleagues who have succumbed to the coronavirus. Please know my thoughts and prayers are with you.

We have challenges ahead, but we carry on because we truly believe in the transforming power of a Furman education and the Furman family. So, thank you. I am grateful for all of you and the many ways you support and represent our beloved university. Stay safe and be well. ✦

*Elizabeth Davis*