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Analyze This! Furman Opens a New Lab that Fuses Data with Depth of Inquiry

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Around the Lake

Point by Point

Hannah Dubois '17 practicing her arguments before a Mock Trial tournament.
This spring, Furman is set to open a new finance and business analytics lab located in Hipp Hall. The lab, named in honor of Joe '78 and Diana Hurley, who were major contributors to the creation, gives students hands-on, real-time training with “big data” in business analytics for a variety of applications—finance, marketing, health care, real estate, insurance, risk management, government, and supply chain management. Students not only have access to such data, but more importantly they also learn how to interpret them in order to make thoughtful business decisions.

The lab is in response to a growing popularity for Furman’s business administration major, and in particular its innovative “business core block,” which provides majors with an MBA-level experience by emphasizing an integrated working knowledge of accounting.

**Analyze This!**

Furman opens a new lab that fuses data with depth of inquiry.

_By Lindsay Niedringhaus '07_

“**THIS LAB WILL HELP STUDENTS GAIN PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD.**”

finance, marketing, and operations. However, consistent with Furman’s liberal arts philosophy to expose students to a variety of disciplines, the lab will also be available to non-majors.

“All students at Furman will have the opportunity to work in the lab and with the data platforms available to us,” says Kirk Karwan, John D. Hollingsworth professor of business administration. “A communications studies major, for example, may take a marketing course that uses the lab to determine how online ads can be better targeted to designated audiences. Access to the lab will not be limited to business majors, and that’s what makes it unique and true to a liberal arts education.”

Jim Mabry, another supporter of the lab, as well as a Furman trustee and executive vice president of investor relations and merger/acquisitions at South State Corporation, agrees. “This will be a wonderful learning lab for all students at Furman. It’s my hope that the lab will open students’ eyes to things they haven’t been exposed to, leading them to pursue things that they don’t yet even know about.”

Mabry also envisions the lab connecting current students with successful business alumni, both through guest speakers who are brought to campus, as well as through the lab’s video conferencing capabilities. Students will have the opportunity to seek advice about the data they are studying as well as have the chance to ask broader questions regarding current events and pressing issues in the business world.
"If something big is happening in the marketplace—let's take oil prices tanking, for example—then the professor can take advantage of the lab's technological abilities and bring an energy expert into the classroom discussion," explains Maby.

Joe Hurley, founder and chief investment officer of Chi-Rho Financial, which specializes in hedge funds, believes the professional connections made through the lab will ultimately lead to positions in the business field for Furman students. But he continues by saying the lab—and the business major in general—should have a much more holistic goal in mind.

"I majored in chemistry for three years while at Furman, and then I changed my major to history. I only took one econ class," he says, when discussing his path to his current career. "But being successful isn't just about learning the facts. Communications, writing, speaking—it all plays into business."

And that's what a Furman education is all about, these advocates say—drawing connections between multiple disciplines in order to become agile in an ever-changing world.

"This lab will help students gain perspective on the world," says Hurley. "It's my hope that lessons in this lab, paired with guidance from professors and alumni, will lead students to forming values and a sense of purpose about their presence in the world."

Adds Diana, "There's the assumption that once you figure out your path, you're done. But that's far from the truth. Your integrity and morality are constantly forming, especially in the business world if you become very successful, and Furman should be the guiding compass for these students."