



*Education That Transforms. Communities That Flourish.  
Connections That Endure.*

### **Vision Statement**

*The Furman Advantage guarantees every student an unparalleled education that combines classroom learning with real-world experiences and self-discovery. This integrated four-year pathway prepares students for lives of purpose and accelerated career and community impact—demonstrating in concrete terms the value of a Furman education.*

### **Executive Summary**

Boldly embracing a new iteration of our historic mission, Furman University is transforming the educational experiences of our students—and setting a new standard in higher education—delivering to the world thoughtful, self-confident graduates dedicated to building community well-being through self-discovery, civic leadership, and personal and professional success in their chosen fields.

### ***Education That Transforms***

This transformative educational experience is **The Furman Advantage**: a university experience unlike any other, rooted in the liberal arts and sciences and reimagined to focus more intentionally on preparing students for lives of purpose, fulfillment, and accelerated career and community impact in a diverse, global world.

Many universities claim to offer a unique educational experience, but student surveys show that very few schools deliver on this promise. By building on our existing strengths and innovative pilot programs already underway, Furman University is carving out a space that sets us apart: a personalized educational experience that provides **lifelong value for every student**.

What distinguishes our program is that it integrates a **guided journey of self-discovery** into a **personalized academic path** and tracks both progress and outcomes. Going forward, each student will embark on an individualized, coordinated, four-year pathway of academic study, self-reflection, and mentorship by a diverse network of experts that corresponds with project-based and community-centered learning, career exploration and internships, faculty research collaborations, and immersive global experiences.

This **dynamic education** model will create a set of interconnected student experiences in which each year builds on the year before, reinforcing the unfolding process of intellectual growth, self-knowledge, cultural competence, and professional preparation.

Furman's program will prepare students to **live and lead in a complex, global world** by demonstrating the power of diverse experiences, identities, and cultures. By learning from differences and from commonalities, students will gain a new set of tools for navigating the world.

An **innovative, team-based advising model** will provide a diverse community of expert mentors to help guide students along this path. We also are building best-in-class tools to track this trajectory, providing every student with a robust portfolio of their academic and co-curricular experiences—tangible evidence for prospective employers, graduate programs, and parents of their **unparalleled progress and outcomes**.

Through **greatly expanded engaged learning experiences** that connect classroom work to meaningful research, global study, professional practice, and projects that have direct community impact, students will benefit from both our intimate campus environment and a **university with infinite horizons** that span from local to global.

### ***Communities That Flourish***

The Furman Advantage will foster **thriving communities**—communities on campus that actively engage our students, faculty, and staff, as well as communities in South Carolina and beyond.

Our concept of community **starts at home**. Our intimate campus and commitment to the success of every member of the Furman community means we support one another to give our best, every day. We believe that an inclusive community that celebrates and engages difference creates the space we need to learn and develop new ideas. And then we expand that concept **far beyond the boundaries** of campus, advancing the wellbeing of the diverse communities in Greenville and around the world.

The Furman Advantage is redefining community engagement, creating an innovative model of **community-centered learning**. Furman students will join forces with faculty, staff, alumni, and community members to explore and address real-world problems, responding directly to community needs while **discovering what works**.

An array of interdisciplinary, **public-facing institutes that coordinate with a wide array of campus and community partners** will build on the classroom experience by facilitating research, internships, and collaborative projects that drive community impact and generate knowledge that will be **applicable and scalable** to communities and organizations locally and around the world. They will provide students with unique access to networks and connections, opening doors and creating career opportunities.

To support this work, Furman will create and fund appropriate organizational **structures to support** all of Furman's community-facing work, identifying needs and opportunities for partnerships, enabling external partners to connect with the intellectual capital of the university, catalyzing innovative new efforts and approaches, and providing infrastructure and coordination across campus.

### ***Connections That Endure***

With this bold set of initiatives, we aim to become the **model for what the world needs today from a university**: a center of learning that reinvigorates the notion that the private good of educated individuals must inevitably accrue to the public good of community well-being.

Our faculty, staff, alumni, and community members will guide students on a personalized trajectory that helps them discern **their calling** and discover deeply satisfying careers, address critical social issues, and improve the well-being of their communities.

The power of this journey will come from our ability to move forward as a **connected community network**: embracing and seeking out diversity of talent, experience, perspective, and identity as we work together to prepare our students to enter a complex and ever-changing world.

At a time when the world needs leaders who can cross divisive boundaries to create shared progress, Furman will develop graduates who can **work across differences** and who are able to apply their broad knowledge of culture, history, and human experience to **both lead and collaborate**.

By intentionally integrating classwork, mentorship, and experiences with self-reflection and discovery, The Furman Advantage will **contribute to a better society**, creating the next generation of thoughtful leaders prepared to make a lasting impact.

We have the opportunity to create a university without boundaries and commit to a new kind of experience for **every single student**—an educational experience driven by passion and guided with purpose, preparing the next generation of leaders, better than any other institution, for a successful and meaningful life.

# **The Furman Advantage: Context**

## **Our Rationale**

Since its founding in 1826, Furman University has strived to fulfill a dual mission of academic excellence and a commitment to the larger world, first as an academy and theological institution, and later as a nationally recognized private university with a rigorous liberal arts and sciences core. In the past two decades, this mission has found new expression as the university embraced an innovative and robust program of engaged learning that augments classroom-based academic preparation with research, internships, and opportunities to study away from campus, exposing students to broader realms of learning. In addition to our focus on traditional undergraduate students, Furman has further embraced a public mission by extending our educational resources to lifelong learners, ranging from our youngest learners in our Child Development Center to the more than 2,000 adults participating in our Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Furman.

Our history and present situation are playing out against a backdrop of recent national conversations about higher education, characterized in part by new expectations for colleges and universities to be even more attuned to societal needs, more accessible to an increasingly diverse populace, more inclusive and welcoming in climate, more active in nurturing student development, and more accountable for measurable results. The nature of the discussion is at times consumerist and often in tension with the expectation for institutions to support the overall comfort and well-being of students, both while on campus and in preparation for a healthy and thriving life. For Furman in particular these dueling paradigms threaten to undermine our belief in the profound role that a liberal arts and sciences education can play in preparing leaders, professionals, and involved citizens. In the world's conflicts and in the recent breakdowns and loss of trust in global institutions, we see today more than ever the importance of producing broadly educated graduates who understand the power of diverse perspectives and are able to collaborate for the benefit of society.

In this moment we see an opportunity to launch a bold set of initiatives to become the model for what the world needs today from a university: a center of learning that reinvigorates the notion that the private good of educated individuals must inevitably accrue to the public good of community well-being.

Drawing on a wellspring of history and proven success, we look confidently to the next iteration of our mission and make a bold promise to our students and the communities we serve: Furman University will provide each and every one of our students with an unparalleled educational experience guided by a community of experts from within and outside of the campus, united by the aims of cultivating educated, confident, and successful leaders who are focused on addressing critical societal issues and dedicated to improving the well-being of their communities.

The argument for creating a new type of college experience is compelling:

- A national 2014 study of college graduates by Gallup and Purdue University found that students whose college experience included faculty mentorship and relevant professional practice connected to classroom and project-based learning were the most likely to be positively engaged at work and to be thriving in all aspects of their lives. Yet **only 3 percent** of those surveyed strongly agreed that they had experienced all of these elements during college.
- In his book, “The Purposeful Graduate,” Tim Clydesdale evaluated the effect of Lilly Endowment-funded programs that engaged undergraduates on the question of purpose across 88 campuses and noted that “what parents and citizens seek, and educators promise, are college graduates who flourish, that is, young adults with positive goals for the short and long term, who show independence, responsibility, and active engagement with the community.” He found that alumni who engaged in purpose exploration programs during college were **far more likely to be satisfied** with their lives across a range of issues.
- According to two 2016 studies on career preparation (Stockton University; McGraw Hill), 71 percent of college students said that planning for a rewarding career is “extremely important,” but less one-third of recent college graduates said they felt well prepared by college for a job and career. **More hands-on practical experience**, such as internships, is one of the most important ways students say colleges can add greater value to their experience.

There is a **significant unmet need** for a university to introduce a holistic model that ensures its students graduate with experiences and skills to be successful, to contribute to the broad well-being of society and of the communities in which they live, and to enjoy lives of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment.

A small but growing number of schools are addressing these gaps by attempting to develop a more integrated learning experience, but they have struggled to ensure a consistent experience for all students over all four years of college. Some colleges have focused on living-learning communities, undergraduate research, or preparation for careers, while others have targeted community service and engagement. Few schools, if any, have been able to fully integrate these student experiences from classroom to co-curricular activities.

Fewer still have bridged the widening gap between the academy and the broader community in more than superficial ways, missing an opportunity to connect the humanistic ideals of education with the democratizing effects of community engagement.

We believe Furman is distinctively positioned to achieve our goal of preparing students for lives of purpose and self-reflection, professional success, and civic engagement, **combining the intimacy and personalized attention** associated with small liberal arts colleges and

the **breadth of opportunities and connections** associated with large universities. In so doing, we will build upon our areas of strength:

- A **pioneering foray into engaged learning** that has been refined and fully unified within our curriculum over the past two decades, a model that has been studied and adopted by many other universities seeking to augment classroom teaching with related intellectual experiences;
- A **distinctive approach to international education**, with nearly half of the student body participating in faculty-led study-away experiences in more than 30 countries that immerse them in the language, culture, business environment, socio-political history and current issues of their host nation;
- Longstanding **excellence in undergraduate research**, which allows Furman students to engage directly in research with faculty and present their findings at conferences;
- A nationally renowned **commitment to sustainability** led by the David E. Shi Center that extends far beyond conservation to encompass cross-disciplinary learning in the sciences (social, natural and physical), public policy, humanities, the arts, and community engagement;
- The Richard W. Riley Institute's innovative and **far-reaching work in public policy**, education, and youth leadership in South Carolina, and its influential role in diversity training for nearly 1,800 of the state's corporate, nonprofit, and civic leaders; and
- A partnership with the Greenville Health System, Clemson University, and the University of South Carolina to develop a shared academic health center that will educate health care professionals and foster research and partnerships that **strengthen community health**.

Each area of strength provides nearly boundless opportunities for intellectual and scholarly exploration. Perhaps most importantly, each also provides environments inside and outside campus for students to test their creativity and problem-solving skills among a diverse community of experts whose knowledge, inclination, and achievement make evident **what it takes to get things done in the world**.

These experts include our faculty, Student Life and other professional staff, and Furman alumni, as well as business, civic, and community leaders from Greenville and beyond. Together they create a **coalition of mentors** and provide an educational experience that exposes students to expansive definitions of talent, an appreciation for the complexities of pressing societal issues, the value of collective effort for innovation, and a deeper understanding of the interconnected nature of our world.

Furman University is poised to embrace a **bold and exciting new iteration** of its historic mission, transform the educational experiences of its students, and deliver to the world thoughtful men and women prepared to lead in a diverse, global world and dedicated to the work of building community well-being, both through civic leadership and through personal and professional success in their chosen fields.

### **Our Approach**

Furman will create a **new type of university experience**, rooted in a strong liberal arts and sciences foundation, and reimagined to focus more intentionally on preparing students for lives of purpose, fulfillment, and accelerated career and community impact. Through an individualized, coordinated, four-year pathway of academic study, self-reflection, and mentorship that corresponds with project-based and community-centered learning, career exploration and internships, faculty research collaborations, exposure to different perspectives, and immersive global experiences, students will benefit from both intimacy and scale, residentially based on one of the most beautiful campuses in the world and actively extending their experience into our communities in South Carolina and beyond. In developing this holistic experience, we will create a diverse, empowered, and networked community of faculty, students, alumni, and partners unlike any other.

This approach will encompass every department and area of the university, with each department developing its own distinctive expression of the vision in accordance with the goals of its faculty and students. The Furman Advantage builds on and reinforces the strategic priorities articulated in Vision 2020 and advances our current institutional strategic priorities for articulating our story, building our reputation, and establishing our competitive value; for strengthening the engagement of our students with their academic and co-curricular experiences; for enhancing our commitment to Greenville and society at large; for expanding the depth and breadth of alumni engagement; for seeking out and embracing the value of diverse experiences, perspectives and identities; and for instilling a strong sense of inclusion, pride, and community among all who care about Furman University.

## I. Education That Transforms

A Furman education begins with academic inquiry that is both broad and deep, encompassing the history, philosophy, and cultural context that enriches significant ideas and breakthroughs in every field of human endeavor. Our teaching is designed to turn our students into creative problem-solvers who are able to navigate complexity and connect disparate ideas. To this foundation we added Furman's **pioneering approach to engaged learning**. The Furman Advantage began as a highly successful internship and research program, one of the few in the United States that directly funds student internships and research each summer through competitive fellowships. Based on surveys administered at graduation, approximately 80 percent of our students participate in one or more internships, research under the guidance of a faculty member, and/or study away by the time they graduate.

Expanding and redefining The Furman Advantage means we will now guarantee that **every student at Furman** will be able to engage in real-world experiences throughout their time on campus and beyond, connecting their scholarly work in the classroom to professional interests and developing both competence and confidence in their individual and societal purpose in the world. By bringing the campus and community together to work in tandem with our students, we will create a web of enriching experiences and meaningful relationships that help students realize their potential and achieve their aspirations. We will demonstrate that smaller, highly interactive classes coupled with relevant complementary experiences, exposure to different perspectives, mentorship by a diverse community of experts, and an expanding network of alumni and community contacts can produce greater skills, self-knowledge, and more personal, intellectual, and professional opportunities for our students throughout their lives.

To that end, Furman has reimagined The Furman Advantage, developing a holistic four-year program that integrates the deep exploration of a major area of academic study, our reinvigorated engaged learning model, undergraduate research, life-changing global experiences, and extensive preparation for their chosen career or graduate study. This **dynamic education model** will create a path of interconnected student experiences in which each year builds on the year before, reinforcing the unfolding process of intellectual growth, self-knowledge, cultural competence, and professional preparation. These experiences will provide students with an essential portfolio of skills, resources, and relationships leading to measurable outcomes for students, for the campus, and for our community. Moreover, students will have a better understanding of and capacity to articulate the value of their Furman experience to employers and graduate and professional schools.

This work will build on and integrate Furman's many existing resources for student success. New and complementary programs will emerge as this work progresses and as we are able to track effectiveness through data and targeted scholarly research.



**The Furman Advantage will reinforce and strengthen the foundation of a strong liberal arts education by:**

- **Maintaining the academic excellence and intellectual exploration for which Furman is known:**

A challenging liberal arts education prepares students to live well and meaningfully. At Furman we believe it is essential to engage all students in a wide range of human thought, perspective, and culture to help them have a basis for thinking imaginatively, questioning assumptions, assessing problems systematically, working across differences, and adapting with well-informed thoughtfulness to societal and environmental change. We also believe that students learn the most when they are challenged, are able to overcome failure and setbacks, and learn how to solve problems in an environment of both creative discomfort and expert support.

- **Building a diverse community of students, staff, and faculty from a range of backgrounds, identities, and experiences to foster a dynamic and challenging intellectual climate**

Building a diverse intellectual community on our campus is not optional in the 21st century. Not only must we prepare students to enter a world in which the ability to deal with difference is fundamental to their success, but we also know from a growing body of research that students who learn in a diverse educational environment are more likely to have a positive experience while in college and to be more satisfied after graduation. The Gallup Purdue study in 2015 reported that college graduates who interacted with people from different backgrounds on a regular basis in college are more than twice as likely to say their education was worth the cost. They are also more likely to be engaged and fulfilled at work. In order to build the most effective environment for teaching and learning, Furman is committed to increasing the diversity of our faculty, staff, and student body. We also must ensure that students who can benefit from a Furman education are not prevented from participating due to race, class, identity, or any other artificial barriers that serve to limit talent and opportunity.

- **Providing students with the cultural competence to live and lead in a diverse, complex, and global world:**

Students will enter a world that is considerably more diverse than most of them have experienced before coming to Furman. To succeed in the 21st-century classroom, community, or workplace, students must be able to understand the problems, opportunities, and realities of people who come from different backgrounds and have had different experiences than their own. They must also comprehend our connectedness with other societies through the problems and opportunities that we have in common. The Furman Advantage contributes to the development of this cultural competence through classwork and programs that engage students with diverse and international communities on campus and in Greenville, the region, and abroad.

- **Providing greater support for teaching excellence and strengthening the role of faculty mentors**

Our unwavering commitment to the primacy of the liberal arts and sciences, with small classes, cross-disciplinary opportunities, and uncommon access to excellent teachers, advisors, and mentors, ensures that our resident undergraduate students are part of a close-knit and engaged community of faculty, staff, alumni, and other students who are committed to their personal growth and success. We believe that high-touch, individual interactions combined with relevant opportunities for exploration and independence are crucial to the development of these young adults. Furman faculty are personally committed to the success of each student, supporting them while at the same time encouraging them to take ownership of their individual journey and goals. The Furman Advantage will invest in the development of our faculty and staff to continuously improve their teaching and advising and to support students with a level of personalized attention that distinguishes Furman from other universities.

- **Creating greater opportunities for self-reflection and self-discovery**

We further believe helping students discern their particular intellectual strengths, their vocational interests, and a sense of calling in the world also is a critical aspect of liberal arts and sciences education at Furman, preparing our students for personal, intellectual, and career fulfillment. Robust new first- and second-year programs will instill lifelong habits of self-reflection and examination of personal strengths, reinforced by an integrated and team-based advising/mentoring system of faculty, Student Life professional staff, and alumni. This approach has already been examined in a recent report on the first- and second-year experience and in pilot programs begun in 2015, and will be further strengthened by data gathered through the Resiliency Study funded by The Duke Endowment.

- **More effectively connecting co-curricular experiences to classroom learning**

Faculty and staff involved in student development outside the classroom challenge themselves to continuously advance knowledge and engage students in the process of discovery and independent thinking. This strong foundation prepares our students to be nimble in a complex and uncertain world, engage comfortably with difference, and develop intellectual confidence and creativity in solving a wide array of problems. Students are taught to think critically as well as to consider the consequences of their decisions: the question of “why” they should do something rather than just “what” and “how.” Furman is distinctive in being able to offer this purposeful approach, intimacy, and personal attention—the hallmark of a small liberal arts college—embedded in the scale and breadth of a larger university. That scale will enable The Furman Advantage to provide an ever-expanding set of curated opportunities to put students' critical-thinking skills to work in real-world settings, allowing students to link classroom learning with their potential impact in the world.

**The Furman Advantage will build a dynamic education model, creating a four-year path that drives students toward a life of success, fulfillment, and impact by:**

- **Expanding engaged learning to guarantee that every student engages in real-world experiences**

Students will have an extraordinary array of opportunities for service and meaningful contribution that link back to their academic and professional interests and experiences. This extension of engaged learning will build upon and expand areas where Furman has historically been strong: opportunities for students to conduct substantive research and present their findings, broad support from the faculty and the Rinker Center for unique study-away experiences around the globe, and the faculty's commitment to mentor students and sustain lifelong relationships. We will create tools and training for faculty, staff, and alumni mentors and student peer mentors to better support students across the continuum of exploration and experiences.

- **Creating an innovative team advising model that better supports students and connects them with appropriate opportunities for engaged learning**

Under a model that coordinates academic and co-curricular advising, students will begin their program with an assessment of their strengths and interests, with the goal of mapping their classwork, internships, study away, and community-centered learning experiences to their career aspirations. The team will encompass faculty, staff, and alumni who will work together on the student's behalf and will offer guidance at appropriate times along the student's four-year journey and beyond, weaving student experiences into an integrated pathway and creating a seamless web of support.

- **Developing a broader and more diverse community of mentors on campus, among alumni and in the community**

To complement the team advising model, we will cultivate a broadly diverse community of experts, actively connecting students with employers, civic leaders, and alumni mentors for career exploration, internships, real-world projects with community and global impact, and other relevant experiences on the path to a professional career or graduate study. As students are learning from this community of mentors, project participants will in turn gain valuable knowledge and experiences from their work with Furman students and faculty.

- **Better tracking student experiences in real time to ensure we live up to the promise for every student**

Supported by funding from The Duke Endowment, we are developing innovative new methods for students to collect, make sense of, and share with mentors and employers their pathway of educational experiences and the resulting skills they have developed. As a

result, students will develop a portfolio for documenting what they have gained from their Furman education. These tools will also improve our ability to gather and assess timely data so we can track student participation and ensure we are living up to our guarantees for the student experience as a whole. The data we gather will inform faculty research on student learning and outcomes, allowing us to develop models and approaches that can be shared with other universities.

## II. Communities That Flourish

Furman University is made up of many interconnected communities. Students enter a campus filled with committed faculty and staff who believe deeply in the mission and in their responsibility to support **the journey of each individual student**. And our students also enhance our community by the many experiences, perspectives, and talents they bring to campus. After they graduate, Furman alumni take these ideas and experiences with them to communities across South Carolina and around the world. The impact of our alumni is measured both in their commitment to make their communities better and in the successful careers they chart. Furman works to help our students discover that sense of purpose and the deep satisfaction that comes with living in a diverse community and contributing one's best to make that community work effectively for all.

Our concept of community begins at home. Our intimate campus and commitment to the success of every member of the Furman community means we support one another to give our best, every day. We believe that **an inclusive community that celebrates and engages difference** creates the space we need to learn and develop new ideas. And then we expand far beyond the boundaries of campus to advance the well-being of diverse communities in Greenville and around the world. The Furman Advantage will redefine community engagement by building an **innovative model of community-centered learning**. A key element of The Furman Advantage will be an array of interdisciplinary, public-facing institutes, through which faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members will join forces to explore and address real-world problems.

Institutes of this nature may be found at larger universities, but Furman's approach will be distinctive because the institutes will be woven deeply into the student experience. Some universities, primarily those focused on research, are effective at identifying community need and producing focused projects that have impact and get public attention, but do not connect very well to the student experience, especially at the undergraduate level. Many other colleges and universities create plentiful opportunities for student-focused community engagement but typically do not have good organizing structures and often are not driven by community need. As a consequence, their efforts are diffused, do not have significant or sustained impact, and do not advance the reputation of the school. Furman's model of community-centered learning aims to change this by integrating the best aspects of existing models and building upon them to create a new and needed approach.

To support this work, Furman will create and fund appropriate organizational structures that enhance all of Furman's community-facing work.

**The Furman Advantage will create an innovative model of community-centered learning with five key components:**

- **A campus environment that models for students what it means to actively learn from and contribute to diverse civic, professional, and personal communities**

Students come to Furman from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences: rural, urban, global, with unique identities and from differing socioeconomic circumstances. They benefit from an international faculty and staff whose breadth of expertise and perspective represents an opportunity for tremendous learning and growth. When our students graduate, they enter communities and workplaces that are in nearly every instance more diverse than the places they came from. At Furman students will participate in a multitude of communities while learning how to engage in environments beyond their comfort zone.

- **Community partners** in Greenville and beyond **who will identify challenges and opportunities that can especially benefit from The Furman Advantage**

The Furman Advantage will build upon the classroom experience by facilitating collaborative projects that incorporate research and programs to drive community impact. Projects will be derived in partnership with civic leaders and community organizations, matching Furman's strengths with community needs. These efforts will foster sustained partnerships and build trust among community leaders, organizations, and those who benefit from the work. Although not the only outlet for our contributions, Greenville will be an important area of focus. Because of the city's size, proximity to our campus, and its enthusiasm for civic partnerships, the opportunities will be plentiful and the barriers low. Organizations like Greenville Forward, Ten at the Top, Live Well Greenville, and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce will provide important connectivity, advocacy, and support for ambitious ideas and projects.

- **Furman faculty, whose scholarly expertise and dedication make them ideally suited to lead off-campus projects** locally, regionally, and globally that are **focused on community needs**

Furman faculty members conduct research that contributes knowledge and solutions for community issues ranging from hunger and homelessness to public safety and community health. Members of the faculty also bring together experts in particular fields and foster community discussion and learning through lectures, opinion essays, and conferences. They organize community-based projects and support students directly as they undertake research, work in internships, and volunteer service in the community.

- **Furman students, whose problem-solving skills and career opportunities will be transformed by their involvement in community-centered projects and networks**

This model of community-centered learning will create deeper and more meaningful experiences for students, enabling them to do work that is needed and has impact, and to develop enduring relationships in the community. The skills developed at Furman can be applied to community engagement anywhere and will travel with students for a lifetime. While at Furman, students will connect to a vital network of campus, community, and alumni experts and mentors that help them to prepare for and contribute to the world

beyond Furman and open up a wider array of career opportunities. These new and expanded linkages between community organizations and Furman faculty and students will expand the knowledge of all participants. As students are learning, the faculty and community partners also will grow their understanding through exposure to new perspectives, research, and project outcomes.

- **Improved structures to support new programs and partnerships among Furman and external communities**

Furman's public-facing institutes and community-centered infrastructure will foster long-term relationships between Furman and our many existing and potential partners. They will leverage and coordinate the many efforts already underway, and will provide critical support for a more ambitious set of programs and partnerships. The creation of these enhanced structures also will bring attention to Furman's efforts and will serve as an important signal about the university's priorities and commitment to our surrounding communities.

**The Furman Advantage will create and fund appropriate organizational structures to catalyze and organize Furman's outward-facing work by:**

- **Expanding the network of relationships and resources that we can integrate into the student experience**

Creating community-centered organizational structures will allow us to leverage and support the important work already underway in existing programs that engage with and benefit the community, all of which provide greater opportunities for student internships and future employment. These programs extend Furman's educational programs and knowledge to the broader community, and they allow community members to contribute directly to the success of Furman programs and particularly to the learning experiences of our students. Many of these efforts—in particular arts and music programming and Furman Athletics—also attract visitors to Greenville and are part of a thriving cultural scene that creates economic benefit for the broader region.

- **Strengthening the university's connectivity and engagement with Greenville, the broader region, and the world**

Furman's future is yoked to the well-being of Greenville and South Carolina, and both the city and the state represent a tremendous opportunity for our students and faculty—and Furman itself—to have both immediate and lasting impact, economically, culturally, politically, and socially. Greenville and South Carolina have strong business and civic leadership and willing partners who will be essential to addressing these issues. Furman has been one of these partners, providing hundreds of community programs, research projects, partnerships, and service activities in Greenville, across South Carolina and beyond. We believe we could be an even stronger engine powering Greenville and South

Carolina, helping the state to make measurable progress in areas such as education, community health, and sustainability.

- **Growing Furman's external partnerships and creating economies of scale**

Furman's enhanced community-centered infrastructure will create a central hub for Furman's community engagement work, serving as the connective tissue between Furman and the community. Staff will develop and nurture relationships with community stakeholders, identify community needs and opportunities for partnerships, and enable community leaders and external partners to connect with the intellectual capital of the university. Furman students and faculty will be deeply engaged in the range of community-centered programming, enabling a range of experiences and community mentoring relationships for students.

By partnering across campus and community entities, Furman's new community-centered infrastructure may serve as a(n):

- Catalyst—sparking innovative new programs and partnerships;
- Convener—gathering participants from diverse sectors to examine thematic challenges and work toward solutions;
- Manager—organizing projects that match Furman's expertise, assembling partners, and identifying and coordinating resources;
- Consultant—connecting the expertise of Furman faculty and students with outside organizations that can benefit from their knowledge;
- Analyst—keeping an inventory of efforts, tracking and reporting progress, and surfacing trends and themes;
- Promoter—broadly disseminating discoveries and successes to inspire future progress; and
- Incubator—leveraging the synergies and enrichment of Furman's various centers, institutes, and programs.

These roles become even more critical as a complement to new and expanded public-facing institutes and expanded community-centered learning opportunities for all of our students.

**The Furman Advantage will launch an ambitious set of interconnected, public-facing institutes to focus our community engagement efforts and impact through:**

- **Conducting projects that have direct relevance and payoff for Greenville and other communities in South Carolina and around the world**

The institutes will build upon the classroom experience by facilitating research, internships, fellowships, experts-in-residence, high-powered guest speakers, and collaborative projects that incorporate research and innovative programs to drive community impact. They will integrate community partners, faculty research, and student engagement around a few key topics, ensuring the work is sustained and has lasting



impact. Once the topics have been identified, the institutes will build teams to work in a more directed way to identify solutions, put those solutions into practice, and study the results so we have confidence that the efforts are working as planned.

- **Creating tools, methods, models, and approaches that are scalable**

The projects Furman undertakes will allow faculty to build models and approaches that can be applied in other settings, because we have confidence in them. And efforts and discoveries in South Carolina and around the world can be brought back to Greenville. A new joint Sustainability Sciences and Asian Studies program being offered to students of both Furman and Yunnan Minzu University in China is an example of scaling our strengths to communities beyond our immediate vicinity and bringing value back to campus. These permeable gateways can be a superhighway for community engagement and innovation everywhere, underscoring the world-embracing foundations of a Furman education.

- **Focusing the Richard W. Riley Institute, David E. Shi Center, and newly formed Institute for the Advancement of Community Health on increased student and faculty engagement with communities**

The Institutes will benefit from and seek out external partnerships with relevant organizations as well as interdisciplinary work with faculty and academic departments across the university. They will competitively fund grants for research projects that support collaborations among faculty, students, and community partners. The institutes will establish relationships and make an impact not only locally in Greenville, but also across the state of South Carolina, the United States, and around the world. Through this work, the institutes will provide Furman students with unique access to networks and connections opening doors and creating career opportunities.

- **Identifying additional areas where community need and Furman expertise overlap, and launching new institutes over time to address these opportunities**

New institutes will be created in areas where Furman has historically been strong and where there is faculty expertise and interest, significant community need, and productive partnership opportunities. Additional institutes will be defined and focused with input from faculty, students, community leaders, alumni, and philanthropic partners. Institutes will interact across multiple academic departments, commit to opportunities for student learning, pursue promising areas of scholarship and research, connect to areas of community need, and have natural community partners. They will provide both curricular support and co-curricular programs. Their work will contribute to expert knowledge and ideally will create linkages across the institutes and produce programs and approaches that are scalable.

### III. Connections That Endure

This inspired plan flows from Furman's successful history of engagement and the strategic priorities that have emerged from new leadership, deeply engaged faculty and staff, and a re-examination of the goals of Vision 2020. With this bold set of initiatives, we have the opportunity to introduce the world to **an educational model that builds a better society**. To do this, we must move forward as a connected community network by articulating a shared set of core values and embracing and welcoming a diversity of thought, identity, and experience that better prepares students for future success. Furman is committed to helping a new generation of students uncover their calling and discover both deeply satisfying careers and their tremendous potential for positive impact in the world. We have the opportunity to create **a university with infinite horizons** for every single student—to create an educational experience driven by passion and guided with purpose, preparing them better than any other institution for a successful and meaningful life.

**This bold, new vision will demonstrate the relevance and value of a liberal arts education and will establish Furman as a model for a transformative student experience by:**

- **Making real the citizenship promise of a liberal arts education, graduating students who appreciate difference, value community, and are prepared to make a lasting impact**

Through guided self-reflection, community-based projects, and global learning experiences, Furman students and alumni will be uniquely well prepared for career success and meaningful contribution to their communities. At a time when the world needs leaders who can cross divisive boundaries to create shared progress, Furman will develop graduates who can work across differences and who are able to apply their broad knowledge of culture, history, and human experience to both lead and collaborate. This commitment by a private university to the well-being of its community and to the world can help make tangible for students and community alike the humanistic ideals of a liberal arts and sciences education.

- **Ensuring that communities have access to expertise, ideas, and projects that meet real needs**

Furman will be a leader in producing people, programs, and ideas that fuel community well-being by ensuring that the ideas we produce also are disseminated widely to the community members and groups who can benefit from them. We will engage community leaders and policymakers so that the projects we undertake are born of real community need and are relevant to those we seek to serve. And when we discover approaches that work, we will share those widely so they can inform new programs and policies.

- **Building a set of data and research expertise that will inform best practices across the academy**

As the university develops methods to more effectively track student experiences and community-centered learning, the combination of new and expanded data sets and richer, more in-depth student reflections will provide a treasure trove of information to feed faculty research and scholarship on student learning and the outcomes of specific experiences. Research and analysis by our scholars will give Furman a platform to widely disseminate knowledge and best practices and to serve as a model for other universities.

- **Extending community impact through educational programming for all ages**

In addition to being known for excellence in traditional undergraduate programs, Furman offers educational programs to a broad spectrum of lifelong learners, all of which flow from the wellspring of the liberal arts and sciences. For example, since 2003 the Riley Institute's Diversity Leaders Initiative has educated nearly 1,800 civic and community leaders around South Carolina in the theoretical and pragmatic value of actively cultivating a broad spectrum of talent, ideas, and experiences in the workforce to ensure opportunity, access, sustainability, and growth. Bridges to a Brighter Future is a nationally recognized program that promotes college access and success for local high school students whose potential outdistances their circumstances. We will continue to invest in and grow these programs and others demonstrate the tangible relevance of liberal arts and sciences education, extend Furman's community impact, and expand the community of experts to students of all ages.

**To achieve our ambitions, we must move forward together as a connected community network:**

- **Living up to our ideals by welcoming and embracing diverse identities, experiences, and talent**

The power of a Furman education will be most fully realized when we ensure that students from around the state, around the region, and around the world can benefit from the experiences we offer. We are committed to recruiting a diverse student body and to reducing barriers erected by race, identity, religion, experience, income, disability, and other characteristics that often divide people. It is not sufficient simply to enroll students from diverse backgrounds; we must also create opportunities for meaningful engagement and encourage the exchange of differing viewpoints. We must foster the development of a community of experts within our campus that welcomes each and every student to contribute their best ideas and simultaneously challenges their assumptions. This diverse student community further requires a diverse group of faculty and staff to teach, mentor, and challenge them. In creating and supporting an empowered community of students and mentors, we will demonstrate our values—characterized by community spirit, continuous improvement, and shared aspirations.

- **Engaging faculty, staff, students, and the broader Furman community in an inclusive process as we work collaboratively to chart Furman's future path**

We will support this work with effective administrative structures, appropriate incentives, and sufficient staffing and programmatic resources to scale up successful programs and ensure that promising new approaches can be sustained over time. New and better systems for inviting and tracking student participation and for assessing outcomes will be important, as will feedback from students, parents, employers, and community partners to help us calibrate and ensure we are living up to our goals. We must also expand the visibility, reach, and impact of Furman to a broad array of stakeholders. To be successful, we will need the commitment and deep engagement of the Furman community—faculty, staff, students, alumni, and parents—as well as the engagement and support of the community of experts beyond our gates.

- **Using The Furman Advantage as both an opportunity and an imperative to activate and engage our alumni, broadly defined**

Our alumni are the most compelling ambassadors of the Furman experience and represent the broadest reach of our intellectual capital in the world. We need them to challenge us, support us, and participate in our programs. We will broaden the definition of the alumni community and strengthen allegiance and engagement among those who have participated in the Riley Institute, Bridges to a Brighter Future, Undergraduate Evening Studies, Center for Corporate and Professional Development, and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. And by demonstrating a compelling vision and broad impact, we will motivate our alumni to make Furman University a top priority for their philanthropic support.

- **Engaging the philanthropic community as a critical ingredient in carrying out this work**

We believe this ambitious vision will be inspiring to foundations, corporate and civic partners, and individual donors. We will demonstrate to our funding partners how their investment in Furman will transform the experience for our students while simultaneously advancing the well-being of Greenville and communities across South Carolina and around the world.

What we envision for our future will take time. It will be every bit as challenging as our past two-decades work designing, implementing and refining the engaged learning model. Those experiences, and many others in our long history, are evidence of courage, conviction, and persistence. And because of them, Furman today stands on firm footing: a leading university and a diverse center of learning tempered by the lessons of its history, graced by the virtue of its people, and animated by hope for a bright future.

***This is Furman's moment.*** Furman is worthy of our dedication, and deserving of our best effort. And if we are successful, we will become a new model for what an American university can be: an institution that dares to imagine itself as an exemplar of the public good and our nation's democratic ideals, dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, the holistic and lifelong development of our students, and the value of collaborative effort in achieving community well-being.