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Building for the Long Term

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Building for the Long Term

ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS SUPPORT THE WORK OF SELECT FACULTY — AND HELP TO ATTRACT TALENTED NEW PROFESSORS.

How does Furman build a great faculty? That is, how do we ensure that we attract and retain professors who will create active and engaged learning environments for the talented students who come here?

A clue to this answer was apparent at a recent meeting I attended at Washington and Lee University, where professors and administrators from more than two dozen outstanding liberal arts institutions gathered to discuss the synergy between teaching and faculty scholarship.

The participants engaged in a spirited discussion of faculty roles, but all agreed about one thing: Student learning is enhanced in an environment in which professors are energetic and committed scholars — especially when they involve students in their research. Moreover, we agreed that a key to building a faculty with such commitments is to recognize and support those whose professional accomplishments (or potential) exemplify this commitment.

An especially effective way to do this is to create endowed professorships. Resources from these endowments are typically used to support compensation and professional development for faculty named to the positions.

An endowed professorship, for example, provides funds to pay for research-related activities (summer research, travel, equipment, software, student support). The professorship also carries with it the gravitas associated with a title. It not only honors the person for whom it is named, but enhances the recipient's professional stature and ability to secure additional support from foundations and granting agencies.

Furman's 28 active endowed professorships span the gamut of disciplines, and the professional activities supported by the endowments are wide ranging. Endowed chairs also greatly strengthen our ability to attract talented new professors. Some professorships are explicitly designed to support new or relatively junior faculty and are awarded for a defined time period, thus providing support at an especially important time for faculty establishing themselves as successful teachers and scholars.

Furman professors are, in a fundamental sense, the lifeblood of the institution, for they ultimately determine how well we fulfill our mission to educate undergraduates for rewarding and productive lives. Endowed professorships are a wonderfully effective tool to ensure that we sustain and support a faculty of distinctive strength — as illustrated by the stories on the following pages, which highlight the work of three professors who hold endowed positions.

— THOMAS A. KAZEE

The author is provost and executive vice president at Furman.

To learn more about how to honor and support the work of faculty, contact susan.brady@furman.edu, (864) 294-3693.

JEREMY FLEMING (2)

Chesebro keeps the music playing

ROBERT CHESEBRO says he became seriously interested in music during his teen-age years in Stevens Point, Wis., in the early 1950s.

So what did the young man do to pursue and develop his interest? He joined a polka band — "There was a lot of Polish and German influence in the area," he says — playing clarinet, saxophone and even trumpet alongside his older brother and assorted other musicians on concertina (accordion), drum and bass.

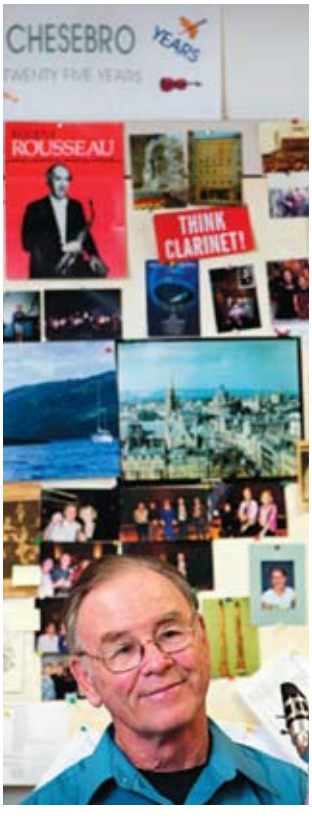
In hindsight, Chesebro says the experience was excellent preparation for his career as a professor of music. He's now in his 44th year at Furman.

"Polka music can be difficult. You really have to practice to perform it well," he says. "It helped me play better technically, and playing in the band taught me to learn music quickly." It also paid handsomely: "Two dollars per hour was good money back then."

Good enough that it helped pay his undergraduate tuition at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He would go on to earn his advanced degrees at the University of Indiana — and to join the Furman faculty in 1965. He's taught woodwinds and conducting here ever since. Among his former students: Keith Lockhart '81, conductor of the Boston Pops.

In looking back over his time at Furman, Chesebro recalls that he had only two woodwinds students his first year. The next year the number grew to 13, and the following year to 26. He credits his longtime colleague, former band director Dan Ellis, with helping him recruit: "We would go on band trips, and Dan knew everyone and would introduce me all around."

In addition to his teaching duties, Chesebro has also been a soloist with symphonies throughout the Southeast and was a member of the Greenville Symphony for 42 years, serving as its principal oboist and clarinetist. From 1972 to 1997 he conducted the Carolina Youth Symphony, composed of the finest young musicians in the area.



"It was a big job," Chesebro says of his years with CYS, "and it was a great way to get to know and recruit good music students from the area."

In 1993 he was appointed the Charles Ezra Daniel Professor of Music at Furman, a position endowed by the estate of Homozel Mickel Daniel, a patron of the arts and namesake of the Furman music building. The Daniel Chair, Chesebro says, has provided discretionary funds that have allowed him to travel, purchase music for the student quartets he conducts, and acquire software and books to support his teaching.

Moreover, it gave him the means to buy a treasured bass clarinet in 2005. He had been looking for just the right instrument for some time, and he wound up traveling to South Bend, Ind., to find the perfect fit. He has been able to use the instrument exclusively for the last few years. It will belong to the university after he retires.

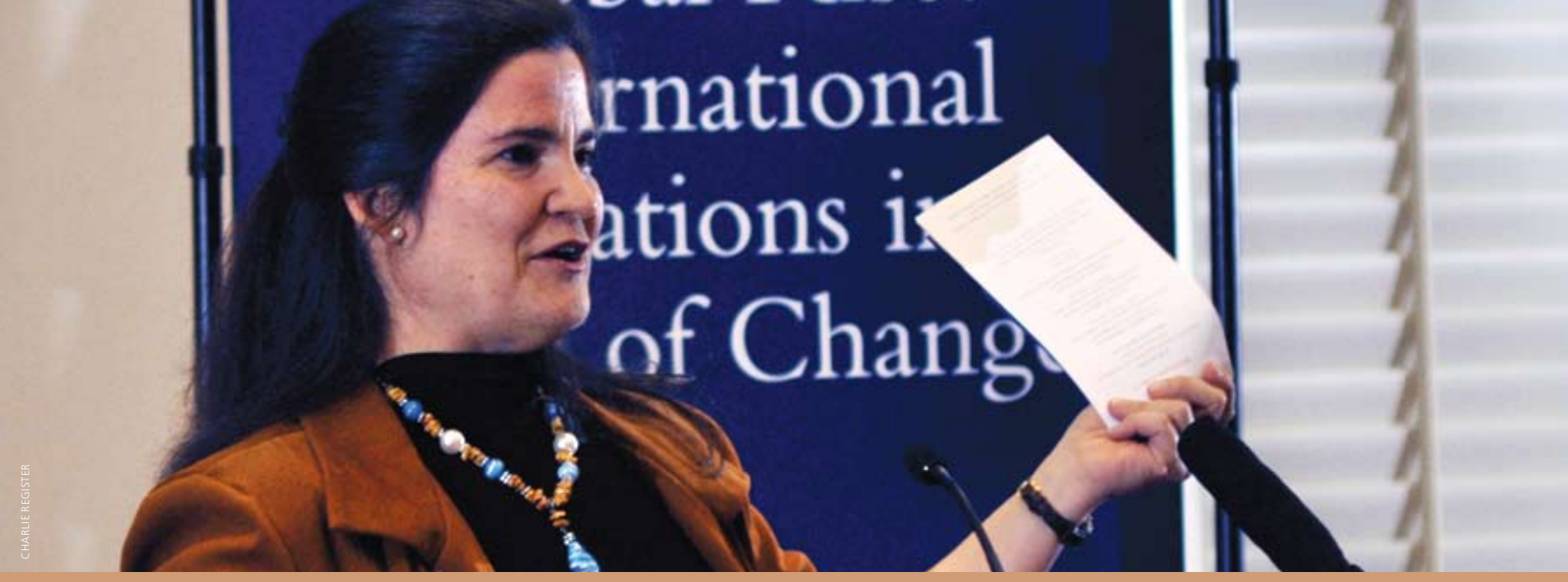
And when will that be? Chesebro admits he's starting to wind down, but he still enjoys working with students. He stays in shape through frequent visits to the Lay Physical Activities Center, and he does regular exercises for his fingers, tongue, lungs, and mouth and facial muscles.

Chesebro recently co-authored (with Tod Kerstetter '85) *The Everyday Virtuoso*, a book that describes best practice methods for young clarinetists. He continues to perform on occasion with the Greenville Symphony and in orchestras for touring Broadway shows at the Peace Center for the Performing Arts. And he is choir director at Lutheran Church of Our Savior.

He also arranges for his student quartets to perform at local churches and other community events — to give them the same kinds of opportunities he had during his formative years in Wisconsin.

"It's a great experience for them to be able to perform in public," he says before adding drily, "although you don't find that many students nowadays who play polkas."

— JIM STEWART



CHARLIE REGISTER

Kaup works to keep track of a fast-changing region

TO DATE, KATE KAUP has taken nearly 30 trips to China. She has studied the region for two decades and lived there for four years.

She's watched a once struggling nation transform itself into the fourth largest economy in the world behind the United States, Japan and Germany.

But the scene she witnessed in Beijing in July 2008, weeks before the Summer Olympic Games, was enough to amaze even the most seasoned Asian traveler.

The normally bustling Beijing International Airport was calm and orderly. Traffic in the city, gridlocked just months before, flowed efficiently. Smog that typically choked the city and its 17 million residents had miraculously disappeared.

"It was beautiful," says Kaup. "There were flowers. The sky was blue."

The next month the country that had invested nearly $40 billion in infrastructure upgrades and new construction hosted a nearly flawless Olympic Games.

"If you don't go to China for even a year, you quickly become outdated and your sources grow cold."

Four months later, Kaup traveled to Beijing again. The airport noise, traffic and smog were back.

As Kaup can testify, China is a place where changes occur rapidly, and the public face is not always the real one.

Ethnic tensions and social unrest are ongoing challenges for the country's 60-year-old Communist government, says Kaup, who holds Furman's Herman N. Hipp University Professorship. The conflicts, some of them violent, often do not generate international headlines because of government secrecy and their rural location.

Kaup, in fact, was twice forced to rework portions of this fall's study abroad trip to China after disruptions broke out in both the southern and northern regions of Yunnan Province. Kaup, who traveled to China for the final seven weeks of the program, monitored both situations by telephoning and e-mailing contacts in the regions. Ultimately, she decided to take the Furman group to China's poorest province, Guizhou, to explore minority cultures, economic development and sustainability issues.

Endowed by the family of Herman N. Hipp '35, a late Greenville businessman and civic leader, the Hipp Professorship is a three-year appointment that supports junior faculty members of extraordinary promise. Kaup, a graduate of Princeton who earned her advanced degrees from the University of Virginia, says that the professorship funds travel and research that are crucial to helping her — and the Department of Asian Studies, which she chairs — nurture and maintain contacts in the fast-changing region.

"If you don't go to China for even a year, you quickly become outdated and your sources grow cold," says Kaup, who came to Furman in 1997 and is also a member of the political science department.

A specialist in China's treatment of ethnic minorities, Kaup served a one-year term on the Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) in 2005. She was a co-author of an annual report to the president and Congress designed to help shape China policy.

More recently, she was one of 20 scholars selected by the National Committee on United States-China Relations to serve as a Public Intellectual Fellow. The Fellows are chosen based on their potential to become leading contributors to developing public policy and education about China.

As part of the program Kaup attended a four-day workshop in San Francisco in early October. There she delivered a talk on "Domestic Challenges to China's Peaceful Development." She also met with the director of the influential human rights organization Dui Hua and with William Perry, former Secretary of Defense, and she talked with investors about venture capitalism in China.

While traveling with the Furman group this fall, Kaup is doing research for a book that will examine the implementation of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, which guarantees many rights to Chinese minorities but is frequently applied arbitrarily by the government. Her co-author is He Zhengting, a former director of the Politics and Law Office of the Yunnan Province Ethnic Affairs Commission.

"Most policy studies of China's 55 minority groups look only at the conflicts in Tibet and Xinjiang," she says. "Instead, we'll visit four counties in Yunnan to interview minority leaders who have successfully utilized the autonomy law."

— JOHN ROBERTS

JEREMY FLEMING (2)

Pollard focuses on plant/metal relationship

JOE POLLARD HAS TRAVELED to a variety of locales as part of his research into the interaction between plants and metals in soil. He's visited England, Spain and Puerto Rico, collecting samples to study why and how plants absorb metals — and the potential effect that hyperaccumulation of metals in plants could have on entire ecosystems.

But while he's working on the international samples he's collected, he's also pursuing a project that requires him to take only a few steps from his office in Plyler Hall of Townes Center for Science.

Just across Furman Mall, between Daniel Chapel and Paladin Stadium, lies an ample supply of pokeweed, a native North American plant semi-immortalized in Tony Joe White's late 1960s pop tune "Poke Salad Annie." Pokeweed seems to have a particular affinity for manganese, so this fall Pollard's research and analysis class is collecting samples and examining the intricacies of the pokeweed-manganese connection.

"Pokeweed is a model system to study," says Pollard. "It grows big and fast, it's easy to harvest, and not many animals eat it.

"It's sort of like kudzu in reverse. Kudzu originated in the Far East and is now everywhere, while pokeweed is native to North America but is now found in many other countries."

Pollard, who has taught biology at Furman since 1988, believes his research into the plant/metal connection could eventually be used to battle pollution. One possible application: Superfund sites, the nation's worst areas of hazardous waste. He says, "You could plant a crop that absorbs a specific metal at a contaminated site. Once you harvest the crop, you'd have clean soil — and you could perhaps recycle the metals taken from the soil."

A Duke graduate, Pollard, who received a Churchill Scholarship to study for his Ph.D. at England's Cambridge University, is the Rose Forgione Professor of Biology. The chair was established by the estates of Rose and Louis Forgione, science majors who graduated from Furman in the late 1940s and died in the late '90s.

Pollard used some of the allowance provided by the Forgione Chair to travel to Spain last summer to collect more samples for a study he began earlier this decade. In addition, he's been able to purchase equipment for his lab and to provide support for student assistants.

The professorship, he says, serves as a kind of "protection" from the grant process. "When you apply for grants," he says, "there's always the uncertainty factor. Will it be funded? With an endowed chair, you know you'll have some funding, so it relieves some of the uncertainty."

He admits, however, that during the past few years he has not been as focused on his research as he might have liked. But the trade-off was worth it: as chair of the biology department since 2000, he was on the front lines of the planning, development and construction of the Townes Center for Science.

"This facility now gives us the space not just to pursue research, but to keep it going at all times," Pollard says proudly. "Our faculty have their own individual labs in which they can continue their research throughout the year. Before, we'd conduct summer research in teaching labs; now we can maintain our personal labs as needed."

He says the center itself, with its sustainability systems, serves as both a teaching tool and a statement to students about energy conservation. The facility's design also fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, and its informal, interactive spaces make it an inviting place to work and visit.

He hopes to see it become even more inviting in the near future. He has a vision for "something like a natural history museum," with a wide range of displays that will catch the eye and educate at the same time. "With our display spaces and technological capabilities," he says, "we have a great opportunity to take science out of the classroom and laboratory and into the public arena."

— JIM STEWART