

6-1-2000

## Tried & true

Glen A. Halva-Neubauer  
*Furman University*

Charlie Register  
*Furman University*

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### Recommended Citation

Halva-Neubauer, Glen A. and Register, Charlie (2000) "Tried & true," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 2 , Article 7.  
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol43/iss2/7>

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**Internships may be the oldest engaged learning activity on campus, but they remain a popular method for students to examine their academic and career interests.**

In 1996, few had heard the term engaged learning, save perhaps the architects of Furman's strategic plan.

While the university community was familiar with internships and undergraduate research and the new importance being placed on the use of technology in the classroom, the connections among these activities remained unrecognized. Finding a term that encompassed all of these activities and declaring it to be the centerpiece of the strategic plan was the primary charge of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Four years later, engaged learning is engrained in the university's psyche as the defining characteristic of a Furman education. The university has described engaged learning as a problem-solving, project-oriented and experience-based approach to the liberal arts. True to the vision of its progenitors, engaged learning takes a holistic approach — it emphasizes a variety of activities rather than concentrating on one or two, recognizing that engaged learning takes different forms in different disciplines. Building on the cornerstone of the flagship Furman Advantage Program (which had developed strong undergraduate research and internship programs) and on the university's study abroad offerings, engaged learning expanded to include service learning, a technology initiative, and active learning in the classroom.

This commitment has been backed with resources from the university and with generous donations from The Duke Endowment and the Hipp family of Greenville. In 1996, the Furman Advantage Program supported 30 research students; today, it funds 40 students. During the same period, the number of Furman Advantage interns increased from 20 to 30. Student stipends for both programs also increased. Additionally, new programs to support engaged learning opportunities for minority and high-ability students were established. In 1998, the Christian A. Johnson Center for Engaged Learning was created to coordinate and champion engaged learning activities on campus.

The strategic plan has focused Furman's resources on engaged learning, and the Class of 2000 was the first to see it move from periphery to center. The vignettes that follow showcase the significant role that the oldest engaged learning activity on campus — the internship — had in the undergraduate experience of five students and the impact the internships had on their career plans.

— **Glen A. Halva-Neubauer**  
*Director, Christian A. Johnson Center  
for Engaged Learning*