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The evolution from 'graduates' to 'alumni'

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Furman United challenge enhances scholarship fund

THE FURMAN UNITED PROGRAM, which provides financial support to students facing unexpected financial hardship, has completed its third year. Since the program's inception, more than 200 Furman students have received direct support from the fund. For many it has made the difference in their ability to remain at Furman.

Furman United was established by the university's board of trustees with the help of a generous lead gift from trustee Peace Sterling Sullivan of Miami Beach, Fla. As the program enters its fourth year, its reach continues to expand.

Earlier this year the Daniel Mickel Foundation of Greenville announced a challenge: If an alum who had never made a gift to Furman would make a \$25 donation to Furman United, the foundation would provide a matching gift of \$125. Additionally, if any alum made a gift to the program at the leadership level of \$1,000 or more, the foundation would match that gift dollar-for-dollar.

The response to the challenge has been so positive that Furman United, which began as a two-year effort focused solely on scholarship assistance, is now able to support students in such areas as study away, internships and undergraduate research.

The Daniel Mickel Foundation's history of support for Furman also includes grants to the Center for Vocational Reflection (Lilly Center) and the Heller Service Corps.

To learn more, visit www.myfurmangift.com.



The evolution from 'graduates' to 'alumni'

A YOUNG FURMAN GRADUATE approaches the empty wall behind her new work station and eagerly taps the nail into place, then hangs a hard-earned diploma for all to see as a testament to a job well done. Her pride in graduating from one of the finest liberal arts institutions in the country is evident.

Is this where the story ends? For some, yes. Their fond memories fade, and connections are lost.

But for others, their new lives outside the Furman bubble mark the beginning of a journey to becoming something more than graduates: alumni. As alumni, they take on a mantle of pride and support best described by the following actions:

- They share their experiences at Furman with other young people who are interested in a liberal arts education. They encourage them to apply, discuss opportunities for scholarship assistance, join the Furman Alumni Network to help interview prospective students as a part of the admission process, and are willing to serve as mentors to students.
- They attend Furman-sponsored events and return to campus for a visit when possible. They keep in touch with Furman friends and maintain the ties formed through shared experiences.
- They cheer for the Paladins on the field of competition and believe that purple always makes a great fashion statement.
- They understand that Furman is bigger than any one idea, policy or personality, and they support the university's liberal arts tradition.
- They make an annual gift to Furman. They understand that participation in annual giving is important, and that current Furman students benefit from their support as much as they enjoyed the benefits alumni gifts afforded them as students.

It doesn't take much to become an alum. Consider picking up the mantle of "alumni" and wearing it with energy, pride, and the full knowledge that you are part of a place that thrives on — and deserves — active alumni participation and engagement.

— PHIL HOWARD

The author is director of donor marketing at Furman.