What an eventful year! We facilitated numerous vocational reflection opportunities for Furman students, faculty and staff, and the wider Upstate community. With this newsletter, we hope to share more about this past academic year and summer, as well as many exciting things ahead!

Summer Connections

This summer began with our annual program for incoming freshmen. Twenty-one students came to Furman for a nine-day residential program in June. Their activities focused on getting to know themselves, their peers, staff, the Furman community, and the Greenville area; participating in service learning opportunities at Triune Mercy Center and the Frazee Center; taking a “class” on theological perspectives on vocation from Furman religion faculty; and beginning their exploration of the Cothran Center reflective questions (see below).

• Who am I—most authentically?

• What do I believe—most deeply?

• What does the world need—from me?

If previous groups are any indication, these Summer Connections Scholars will continue to engage these questions and be an active part of the campus and larger communities through Engaged Living programs, the arts, mock trial, ROTC, Greek Life, religious life and campus ministries, student government, Heller Service Corps, Shucker leadership programs, Cothran Center events, and many other areas at Furman!
Every year we hold *Conversations* dinners in the fall and spring. At these gatherings, two faculty/staff members tell their vocational story over a dinner shared with students, faculty, staff, and off-campus guests. This year we heard from Greg Lewis (Biology), Sofia Kearns (MLL/Spanish), Min-Ken Liao (Biology), and Jason Cassidy (Associate VP of Student Life & Dean of Students).

In a separate event, Janke Klompmaker, the Art department’s fall term True Inspiration Artist in Residence, talked about her vocation as an artist, meeting with students and others at the site of her installation, “You’re Welcome, We’re Glad You’re Here.” The event was co-hosted by Michael Brodeur, an Art faculty member and a Cothran Center Faculty Associate.

A delicious meal must be especially conducive to reflective conversation, because we hosted a number of successful dinner dialogues this past year, in addition to the *Conversations* events. In October, students and faculty mingled at our annual “Picnic with a Prof” event. The rain forced us indoors, but participants’ enthusiasm was not dampened!

In February, a large group of faculty and staff participated in a dinner dialogue on “The Liberal Arts @ Work.” The conversation centered on calling and liberal arts colleges, as well as how liberal arts colleges like Furman prepare students for work. The panelists were Tim Fehler (History/Undergraduate Research & Internships), Gary Malvern (Music), Wes Dripps (Earth & Environmental Sciences), Susan Zeiger (Internships Program Director), and Margaret Oakes (English & Director of Writing Programs).

In April, we co-sponsored a student-led dinner dialogue that invited students and faculty to talk about ways that Furman can become more involved in community engagement. You will hear more about this topic later in the newsletter, as well as in general news from Furman.

To support the Cothran Center, go to furman.edu/donate.

Select “Other” designation and enter “Cothran Center Endowment” in the box.

Thank you!
In March, twelve sophomores and two Cothran Center staff members spent a week in Northern Ireland (UK) and a brief period in the Republic of Ireland during Furman’s spring break. This service-learning program is known by its acronym, FOCUS, which stands for Finding Our Challenges, Understanding Service. Earlier spring break programs sponsored by our Center traveled to Cuba, Mexico, and New York City. For the past three years, we have traveled to Ballycastle in Northern Ireland to learn from the dedicated staff and partners of the Corrymeela Community, which is a leading voice for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland—and around the world. Students heard vocational stories, participated in workshops, worked through team-building and peacemaking exercises, spent time reflecting on their own sense of calling, and traveled around the country to see sites and discuss division and peacemaking while making connections in their contexts back home.

The Center is currently working on plans to “bring Corrymeela to Furman” through upcoming lectures, presentations, class discussions, and other activities connected with a visit from some Corrymeela friends in 2017. For more information on the Corrymeela Community, visit www.corrymeela.org.

Students from previous FOCUS programs enjoy a reunion gathering each fall with hot chocolate and toast, a Corrymeela Community favorite.
Vocational Reflection | Student Retreats & Engaged Living Experiences

Pictures (clockwise from top left): students enjoying conversation and snacks at retreat; two seniors enjoying time together; a photo from our ephemeral art reflection session; and some of the students gathered for a retreat workshop session.

Students didn’t need to go abroad to reflect on what form of service may be a part of their vocation. In September, first-year students and upperclassmen joined us for the overnight Rinker Mountain Retreat at Asbury Hills Retreat Center in the mountains of South Carolina. The retreat theme was focused on “What Does It Mean to Serve?” Reading, discussing, and reflecting were on the schedule, but so were outdoor games, hikes, and a campfire featuring s’mores.

Each year, we sponsor a retreat to a Trappist monastery in the Southeast. In 2015, our Gallivan Retreat was held in February at Mepkin Abbey, near Moncks Corner, SC. For 2016, the retreat will be later in fall term. The Gallivan Retreats, designed for small groups, allow students to be part of life in a monastic community for a weekend. These meaningful retreats have been a part of our student programs for over a decade.

During the 2015-16 academic year, our Center, once again, sponsored an Engaged Living (EL) program on “Finding Your Life Purpose.” This program included fifteen freshmen who lived in a larger residential community with other EL students and took courses designed around the topic, with supplemental out-of-class experiences to deepen conversation. Furman’s Engaged Living program has received national recognition. Interest in our program remains high and we look forward to welcoming another group of freshmen this fall.

Walking the large labyrinth at Mepkin Abbey
Students are not the only beneficiaries of our programs on vocational reflection. Every other year the Cothran Center sponsors an interdisciplinary faculty seminar for a group of faculty and staff. In 2013-14, the seminar focused on “The Vocations of the Professoriate: Are We Called to Engage the Public?” It was so successful that we asked the faculty leaders to offer a second seminar on the same topic in 2015-16. This year’s participants (see photograph) were especially eager to engage the topic, because of the prominent role that community engagement is playing in the development of Furman’s strategic plan under the leadership of President Davis. We were fortunate that both President Davis and Angela Halfacre, Special Advisor to the President for Community Engagement, were able to speak with seminar participants this year.

In addition to the faculty seminar, two other programs spotlighted faculty this year. The Jim Smart Award for Fostering Vocational Exploration & Reflection was initiated this year to recognize a member of the staff or faculty who exemplifies a deep commitment to students and who encourages them to reflect seriously on their life’s calling(s). We were pleased that the inaugural award went to Judy Stuart (Education), who is pictured here with some of her students. You can visit our website to nominate a faculty or staff member for the next award.

In the fall, we convened our first cohort of Faculty Associates, fourteen faculty from different departments who have participated in student, faculty, and/or alumni vocational reflection programs in the past. They will serve as advisors to the Center, help to host events, and serve as ambassadors for vocational exploration and reflection in the wider Furman community. See below for a list of the inaugural faculty associates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inaugural Faculty Associates (Class of 2015-16)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Erik Anderson</strong> (<em>Philosophy</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Linda Bartlett</strong> (<em>MLL/Spanish</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bryan Bibb</strong> (<em>Religion</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>David Bost</strong> (<em>MLL/Spanish/English</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Michael Brodeur</strong> (<em>Art</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Teresa Cosby</strong> (<em>Political Science</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Tim Fehler</strong> (<em>History/URI</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Scott Henderson</strong> (<em>Education</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Cynthia King</strong> (<em>Comm. Studies</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Min-Ken Liao</strong> (<em>Biology</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Kristy Maher</strong> (<em>Sociology</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Aaron Simmons</strong> (<em>Philosophy</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Meghan Slining</strong> (<em>Health Sciences</em>)</td>
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<td><strong>Tim Wardle</strong> (<em>Religion</em>)</td>
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Reflection for Furman Alumni

The Cothran Center is fortunate that the Tom & Becky Hood Becherer “What’s Calling You Now?” Alumni Programs allow us to sponsor an on-campus vocational retreat for alumni every other summer, alternating with international pilgrimages. Alumni from class years spanning over 40 years registered for this summer's retreat, held July 21st-24th. The theme was “Conversations Around the Table,” focusing both on the roles that food plays in our lives, from healthy nourishment to social bonding, and on the many conversations – sometimes on difficult topics such as religion, politics, and societal problems – that friends and families share around the table.

During our Vocational Journey sessions, we heard powerful stories from David Bost (MLL/Spanish & English), Steve O’Neill (History), and Laura Thompson (Biology).

Bill Allen (MLL/French) described the rich learning experience Furman students have each May in his “slow food” course in Italy. Angela Halfacre (Political Science/EES) gave a talk on how a conservation culture developed in the South Carolina Lowcountry after the devastation of Hurricane Hugo.

Participants also attended workshops on nutrition, mindfulness, sustainability, poetry, walking meditation, finding balance, Strengths, and discussing politics with civility in challenging times. The retreat concluded with a reflective walk in Furman’s Labyrinth (picture below) and a special closing ceremony.

Next year, we will sponsor an alumni pilgrimage from Paris to the Chartres Cathedral in France. If you’re interested in this meaningful journey for alumni of all ages, please let us know, as space is limited.

What We Have Been Reading . . .

If you are looking for inspiration for your summer reading, we are glad to share ideas from our bookshelves. Charity Detox is by Bob Lupton, who delivered our Good Lecture in 2015. Leading From Within is a book of poetry and reflection published by Parker Palmer’s Center for Courage and Renewal. The Purposeful Graduate, by Tim Clydesdale (mentioned later in this newsletter), makes a strong case for including vocational reflection in liberal arts undergraduate education. Also on the topic of vocation-based education, the Cothran staff are currently reading At This Time and In This Place: Vocation and Higher Education, edited by David Cunningham. Finally, we highly recommend books that include Sorry for Your Troubles, Readings from the Book of Exile, and In the Shelter, by Irish poet and theologian Pádraig Ó Tuama. Pádraig is Leader of the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland where we take our FOCUS students during spring break.
Reflection for the Community

The Peggy & Ed Good Lecture is always a highlight of the year. The 2016 lecture was delivered by Dr. Karen Guth ’01, theology professor at St. Catherine University (MN). Her scholarly work as a Christian ethicist provided the background for her talk, “Do Ethicists Need Ethics?”

Having Karen back for the Good Lecture was a special treat for us. Not only is Karen a Furman alumna and the daughter of long-time political science professor Jim Guth, she is also a veteran of the Cothran Center staff, having served as a counselor and theologian-in-residence for our Summer Connections program for several summers.

We co-sponsored two other lecture and panel programs this year, one by sociologist Tim Clydesdale, author of The Purposeful Graduate. He believes that liberal arts colleges should encourage students to deeply explore questions of their lives’ meaning and purpose in order to prepare them well for the unknown challenges in their future in a way no subject-focused education [alone] can achieve.

Continuing our tradition of co-sponsoring an interfaith panel discussion with the Interfaith Forum of Greenville, we offered a discussion on “Religious Diversity and the US Sociopolitical Landscape.” The panelists were from three different faith traditions. David Rutledge (Religion) served as moderator. The event was well attended by students and members of the Upstate community.

Another community program offered this year was a half-day retreat, co-sponsored with Triune Mercy Center: “Learning to Live in My Own House: The Sacred Vocation of Becoming Myself.” Retreat leaders included members of Triune’s ministry staff, two Furman faculty associated with the Cothran Center, and another experienced retreat leader. The retreat was suggested, and co-led, by Elaine Nocks, one of the founders of Furman’s Cothran Center. Elaine is currently serving with the Triune community.

Looking Back & Looking Ahead

In April, the Cothran Center held a farewell dinner at the Cherrydale Alumni House for some graduating seniors who have been longtime Center friends. It was gratifying to hear them reflect on how valuable vocational reflection has been for them in understanding their values and in helping them find direction for their college lives—and their lives beyond Furman.

Just as the seniors have set their sights on the future, the Cothran Center is looking ahead. President Davis has initiated a strategic visioning process that will begin to take concrete shape in the coming year. Though still being developed, it is clear that Furman’s strategic plan will include an emphasis on reflection as a component of students’ educational experience. The Cothran Center will continue to be a part of conversations across the university about how to encourage students to think deeply and continually about the meaning and purpose of their college education and all aspects of their lives.
The Cothran Center Staff supported the second annual Dins Day in April 2016. This event helps raise support for Furman University each year on the last day of classes. Pictured from L to R: Susan D’Amato ’77 (Administrative Director), John Harris ’91 (Assistant Director), Eric Cain ‘04 (Program Director), and Relyn Rollins ’97 (Program Coordinator).

Stay updated on the Cothran Center by . . .

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Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection
Furman University
3300 Poinsett Highway
Greenville, SC  29613-4980