I learned about Furman’s TESOL program through a flyer sent to my school. Since I was interested in cultural diversity, I attended a meeting to hear speakers from Greenville County’s ESOL program and Furman. I was excited to discover that with only a few months of graduate coursework, I could expand my knowledge and meet the needs of students who speak limited or no English.

The TESOL program at Furman is the best in the state. Knowledgeable professors and small class size create an environment where inquiry and discussion flourish, and instructional strategies that I learned have made me more confident as an educator.

Everything I learned at Furman could be immediately applied in the classroom. I could try a new game, activity, or lesson with my students and then discuss the results with my Furman professors and peers. As an ESOL teacher, I constantly use concepts that I learned in the TESOL program. I promote an inclusive environment, informing my colleagues of research-based practices that could help them make necessary modifications to meet the English Language Arts standards.

As our communities become more diverse, the need for trained educators increases. The TESOL program at Furman prepared me to help students transition from non-English proficient to fluent English proficient. With only 15 graduate hours, I was able to be certified in a field that I truly feel passionate about. I highly recommend this program to other educators who are interested in working with culturally diverse students.

—Delaine Heidt, Skyland Elementary School
In Furman’s TESOL program, we are dedicated to helping our teachers meet the needs of all students in their diverse classrooms. If you are a teacher who is interested in exploring the many struggles your English language learners may face, we invite you to join us in leading the way to building inclusive learning communities. Our unique program can help you transform your passion for creating successful learners into practice with research-based tools and methods.

—Bobbi Siefert, Ph.D.
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Furman’s TESOL program graduates Elisabeth Allen and Kelly Weekes speak about their experiences . . .

How did you learn about Furman’s TESOL program?
Elisabeth: I actually heard about the program after I had inquired about an ESOL program at another institution. Eve Diaz told me that she was helping teachers get certified in ESOL and that we should talk about my being a part of Furman’s program.

How did faculty interaction affect your overall experience in the TESOL program?
Kelly: Our professors were from a variety of ESOL disciplines (teachers, psychologists, counselors) and this diversity gave me a broad spectrum of philosophies and ideas.

What aspects of the TESOL program made the biggest impact on you, personally?
Kelly: I learned so much about different cultures and how hard it is for families to make the choice to move from their homeland to give their children a better life. I am more sympathetic to my students’ families and their struggles. I want to educate their child and help the family find their way in their community.

What makes the TESOL program at Furman unique?
Kelly: Furman’s program goes beyond theory. It prepares you fully for working with ESOL students. The program taught me the theory behind language acquisition and acculturation and facilitated theory with practical applications for best practices in the classroom.

—Kelly Weekes, Mitchell Road Elementary

How do you learn about Furman’s TESOL program?
Elisabeth: I was inquiring about a program at another institution when Eve Diaz told me about the Furman program.

Describe your interactions with the Graduate Studies faculty.
Elisabeth: The professors and instructors were available for help and were flexible with assignments (particularly due dates). I asked my teachers for advice when I started the program at Berea High School, and they were so helpful. Since I was new to this field and our school has a very large ESOL population, I did need guidance in setting up an ESOL program that would work at my school.

How are you using principles you learned in the TESOL program in your career?
Elisabeth: One of the most important principles that we learned in the TESOL program was teaching English in the context of everyday events as well as in students’ course work. When you teach a language, you have to make it relevant to your students. In my classroom, we look at current events and examine what we’re studying, as well as hit on the mechanics of the language. I learned to give students time—time to warm up, time to smile, time to talk, time to adjust.

—Elisabeth Allen, Berea High School

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