



## **Bridgeway Capital—A Company with a Special Mission Creates Poverty Program By Clint Hill '03, Major Gift Officer**

The desires of Furman faculty collide with the mission of a Houston-based investment company to create a program that will affect a University and a community in perpetuity. We have one young alumna to thank, Michele Camp '06.

Michele Camp graduated from Furman University with a degree in Business Administration in 2006. Like every other freshly minted college graduate, she faced the daunting task of finding her first post-graduate job. Long interested in the stock market, Michele was seeking a job in her home state of Texas in the field of finance and investments. Following an interesting lead from a fellow Furman alum, Michele called Bridgeway Capital Management in Houston, Texas. Michele quickly realized this company was very distinctive. Bridgeway seemed to be about more than bottom line profit. In fact, while researching the company online prior to her interviews, she discovered Bridgeway had a Corporate Foundation. Their company mission statement reads, "*Bridgeway Corporate Foundation is a catalyst for hope and reconciliation throughout the world, working towards the prevention of oppression, genocide, and human rights violations.*" ([www.bridgewayfund.com](http://www.bridgewayfund.com)). Michele was immediately intrigued by a company that seemed almost too good to be true. During the interview process, Michele was thoroughly impressed by the quality of people and their common interest of giving back to their community.

After a plethora of arduous, but successful interviews, Michele was hired to be 1 of 5 Equity Traders for the company. Another jaw-dropping fact about Bridgeway – they donate half of their annual profits to charity. Every employee (Bridgeway calls them partners), sits on an internal committee to help distribute the funds to worthwhile causes locally and nationally. Michele's committee was focused on higher education. While considering their giving options, Michele became interested in a poverty program that Bridgeway helped institute at Washington and Lee University. Dick Cancelmo, who leads the trading efforts at Bridgeway, helped implement a very special program at Washington and Lee called The Shepherd Program (<http://shepherdapps.wlu.edu/default.asp>). The W&L website reads "(The Shepherd Program) endeavors to inform students about poverty and what can be done to foster human capabilities for communities and individuals who have been left behind in domestic and international development."

The success of the W&L poverty program inspired Michele to attempt a similar concept on the campus of her alma mater. Michele sent an email to Furman Provost, Dr. Tom

Kazee, in January 2007 telling him of Bridgeway's policy of giving away 50% of its profits and of their specific interest in higher education poverty studies programs. Michele's vision was then introduced to Dr. John Shelley and Dr. Elaine Nocks. Quickly thereafter, the vision gained incredible momentum. Dr. Shelley describes, "While several of us at Furman have dreamed of a "Concentration in Poverty Studies" at Furman, it was the initiative of Michele Camp and her Bridgeway colleague Dick Cancelmo that encouraged and inspired us to realize that dream." Michele and Dick, along with Harlan Beckley, Director of The Shepherd Program at Washington and Lee, visited Furman last October. Dr. Shelley continues, "Their interest, advice, and excitement were crucial in nudging us toward this new program, and Furman is now the beneficiary of their generosity and public-spiritedness."

Fast-forward one year, the Poverty Studies Program is now becoming a reality on Furman's campus and in the Greenville Community. The \$150,000 grant given by Bridgeway Corporate Foundation will act as seed money to establish the program. Bridgeway will award \$50,000 for three consecutive years. After the third year, Furman will assume fund-raising responsibility for the program.

Within the new curriculum, Furman proudly offers a unique academic niche, "Concentration in Poverty Studies". The generous grant from the Bridgeway Foundation will enable Furman to launch the program, cover new teaching responsibilities connected with the concentration; and for three years, fund ten summer internships for Furman students seeking to complete the concentration. A committee is already at work identifying suitable organizations and sites for the first interns in Summer 2009. In Spring 2009, John Shelley and David Gandolfo will team-teach the first section of PVS 101: Introduction to Poverty Studies.

With the backing of a unique and inspiring employer, Michele Camp '06 is making a difference. When asked why she chose to get her alma mater involved, Michele replied, *"While serving the Greenville community as an undergraduate, I truly enjoyed being with Furman people, helping others... and I hope the Poverty Studies program will truly raise the awareness of community poverty. Every Furman student should have the opportunity to realize the power that a little bit can go a long way"* Michele stated, *"Furman students graduate and become successful and even powerful citizens in their respective communities. I want them to know that they can use their individual passions to give back...take it from an Equity Trader, you don't have to be a social worker to make a difference. As it states on the Shepherd Poverty Program website, I want people to be 'conscious of how their conduct as professionals and citizens will affect the opportunities of disadvantaged persons to contribute to a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities'."*