Note on the Revised Plan

In May 2004, the Board of Trustees and University faculty approved *Engaging the Future: A Strategic Plan for Furman 2004-2006*. At the center of this plan was a charge to the University to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the curriculum and academic calendar. Since such an assessment had the potential to reshape Furman’s academic landscape – and thus had wide-ranging consequences for the life of the University as a whole – the Strategic Planning Steering Committee recommended that the plan be revisited once the evaluation of calendar and curriculum was complete. That point has now arrived; the faculty voted to substantially reshape the curriculum and implement a new academic calendar in the fall of 2008. Accordingly, the Steering Committee was reconvened to refresh, extend, and elaborate a strategic plan to serve the University for the next four years.

The revised plan presented below is built on the firm foundation of the plan approved in 2004. The four guiding principles of the plan remain unchanged, as do the broad outlines of how to achieve those objectives. At a programmatic level, the new plan is a blend of initiatives first identified three years ago – some of which have already been implemented – and many new concepts, opportunities, and challenges identified since then. Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving. To reach the port of heaven, we must sometimes sail with the wind and sometimes against it; but we must sail and not drift, nor lie at anchor." *Engaging the Future: A Strategic Plan for Furman University 2007-2011* follows the course laid out in 2004, but defines it with considerably more detail and texture than its predecessor.

Preface

Colleges are paradoxical places. They embody tradition and revere continuity, yet are constantly changing. For over 180 years, Furman has maintained a steadfast commitment to liberal learning and spiritual reflection. Yet it is a much different – and much better – institution today than when it was founded in 1826. Furman’s success in adapting to profound changes in knowledge and society is rooted in its commitment to excellence and its
ability to envision the future and respond strategically. Excellence demands that Furman nurture its strengths while embracing innovation, improvement and planning. Introduced in 1997, the Furman 2001 strategic plan featured an array of initiatives promoting Furman’s distinctive commitment to engaged learning, a problem-solving, project-based, participatory approach to education. Students, faculty and the wider community have benefited greatly from this commitment to active learning.

Guided by the Furman 2001 plan, the University established the Christian A. Johnson Center for Engaged Learning, expanded opportunities for student internships and undergraduate research, increased applications for admission by 25 percent, raised alumni support of the annual fund to the 50 percent level, increased the diversity of the student body, and raised faculty compensation to more competitive levels.

The momentum generated by Furman 2001 has emboldened the University to raise its sights and address new needs while sustaining many current initiatives of proven success. Engaged learning has helped set Furman apart from other colleges, but we must continue to find new ways to apply its premises and benefits across the campus. Likewise, this new strategic plan envisions information technology as an organic feature of the Furman experience affecting virtually every area of University life.

To ensure the vitality of the academic program, Furman has undertaken a comprehensive reassessment of the curriculum, graduation requirements, and the academic calendar. We will enhance the academic program so as to cultivate greater intellectual excitement. A Furman education must begin with a first year experience that excites students’ intellectual curiosity and alerts them to the benefits of engaged learning. We also must do more to encourage intellectual communities and develop in our students the habits of mind and heart that will foster lifelong learning.
Strategic Goal I: To Enrich the Intellectual Climate

“To invigorate intellectual life at Furman inside and outside the classroom.”

Furman’s central mission is to provide a comprehensive liberal arts education to a diverse, eager, and accomplished student body. By teaching critical and imaginative thinking and by stressing engaged learning - helping students assume greater responsibility for their own education - Furman extends the liberal arts beyond the insular classroom and promotes collaboration among students, faculty, and the community. Through its curricular and co-curricular programs, and through the habits of mind and heart those programs cultivate, Furman intends to create and to nurture a varied and congenial community of students, faculty, and staff - a community characterized by intellectual and ethical curiosity, by a truly global awareness, by respect for others and for the natural world, and by a lifelong commitment to the life of the mind.

Having incorporated engaged learning into the University’s way of life, Furman can now, in accord with this dynamic approach to education, continue to transform its curriculum and its programs, the teaching and learning strategies it employs, and the technology and facilities it uses to deliver them. By engaging students from their very first year here, by using emerging technologies in teaching and learning, and by encouraging students to reflect upon—and thereby enhance—their own education throughout their time here, Furman will continue to foster excellence in liberal arts education.

Academic programs

- Implement, assess and improve the revised curriculum and calendar
  - First-year seminars
  - May Experience
  - General education requirements
  - Semester Plus calendar
- Hire additional faculty required by curricular changes and program development
- Develop programming for a Center for Teaching and Engaged Learning
  - Provide support for instructional design and innovative teaching
  - Increase support for engaged learning (e.g., internships and undergraduate research)
  - Consider use of e-portfolios
- Ensure vitality of Study Away program
  - Create Office of Study Away and International Education
- Expand Asian Studies Program
- Expand the Engaged Living residential learning program
- Assess the strategic possibilities of additional graduate or professional programs

Student recruitment and retention

- Enroll an increasingly select, diverse and intellectually-engaged student body
  - Increase admissions applications
  - Reduce acceptance rate
Approved by the Faculty
October 10, 2007

- Raise average SAT
- Increase proportion of entering class from under-represented groups
- Work with Admissions Committee to improve efforts to attract and enroll an intellectually rich and diverse student body
  - Target financial aid expenditures to shape an academically excellent and diverse student body
- Increase endowed support for merit- and need-based scholarships as a means to reduce the proportion of aid coming from tuition revenue
- Raise sufficient funds to meet the full demonstrated need of all students receiving financial aid
- Increase athletic revenues and Paladin Club donations so as to reduce the percentage of University financial aid spent on intercollegiate athletics from tuition revenue
- Create an endowed fund to assist students whose families experience financial hardships

**Strategic Goal II: To Support the Development of Students, Faculty and Staff**

*“To promote the holistic development of all members of the Furman community.”*

Furman’s campus comprises many groups: freshmen adjusting to college life, students seeking both intellectual challenge and direction, student-athletes stretching their minds and bodies, international students exploring a foreign culture, seniors preparing for life after Furman, staff contributing in a variety of capacities, and faculty embracing roles as teachers and scholars, mentors and advisors.

The University is dedicated to meeting the distinct, but often interconnected, needs of these disparate groups. In doing so, Furman recognizes the importance of enhancing personal and professional growth; providing academic and ethical guidance; and developing the whole person through diversity in thought and culture.

**Students**

- Develop strategies for enhancing the senior year as a cumulative learning experience
- Improve sophomore academic advising and orientation
- Develop Chaplain’s Office programming in life transitions and faith exploration
- Develop programs encouraging students to respect individuals, appreciate diversity and embrace tolerance
- Expand mental health services in the Counseling Center
- Continue to improve the academic profile and standing of student-athletes
- Create a distinctive student-athlete experience by providing access to the full benefits of a Furman education
- Encourage students to experiment with and excel in ambitious, creative uses of technology
- Create new opportunities for alumni worldwide to become involved with Furman through expanded options for internships, mentoring and admissions involvement
Faculty and staff

- Provide faculty compensation that is competitive with regional peers, as specified in *Furman 2001*
- Ensure that administrative and staff compensation is competitive with appropriate peers
- Ensure that Furman’s staffing is adequate to achieve the University’s mission and goals
- Nurture faculty intellectual life by enhancing learning, scholarship and diversity
  - Increase the number of endowed faculty chairs
  - Increase the number of endowed faculty development opportunities (e.g., faculty professional travel, research support)
  - Enhance sabbatical support (e.g., availability of pre-tenure and fully-funded post-tenure sabbaticals)
  - Recruit faculty from traditionally under-represented groups and develop programs for their retention
- Provide formal, on-campus staff development opportunities through the offices of Continuing Education and Human Resources
- Develop programs to improve the health of faculty, staff and their dependents through employee wellness and education plans
- Continue to develop employee safety and health programs to reduce illness and occupational injuries
- Expand programs for recognition of outstanding staff achievement
- Partner with the Greenville YMCA or other community organizations for the continuance of quality child care for the Furman community

Facilities

- Complete Charles H. Townes Center for Science, including renovation of Plyler Hall
- Develop plans for design of a new teaching and performance theater
- Renovate Herman W. Lay Physical Activities Center
- Aggressively increase annual funding for a systematic capital renewal plan for all campus buildings, grounds and infrastructure

Information technology

- Provide infrastructure and services to enhance academic and administrative programs in support of teaching and learning
  - Establish a competitive technological standard for the provision of all academic spaces
  - Establish applications in support of instructional programs, through collaboration between Computing and Information Services and the Center for Teaching and Engaged Learning
  - Promote the use of handheld technologies
- Provide the user support and infrastructure necessary to balance data accessibility and security
  - Improve and expand campus wired and wireless infrastructure
  - Establish an efficient central system that serves as the information window to Furman University
Seek competitive strategic advantages through computing technology by conducting proactive and continuous evaluation of alternatives for equipment, systems, and software

**Strategic Goal III: To Advance Environmental Sustainability**

“To strengthen our commitment to the environment by promoting sustainability through educational programs, campus operations/construction practices and public awareness initiatives.”

The Furman community is passionate about preserving the environment, a sentiment that was made tangible when the Board of Trustees unanimously approved the above statement in February 2001. Students, faculty and staff have demonstrated this commitment on campus and in the community, frequently in collaboration with neighboring organizations, to reduce our footprint on Earth and live environmentally sustainable lives. With environmental responsiveness instilled deep in its philosophy, the University serves as a model for its communities.

Furman students find that personal responsibility for the environment is very much in harmony with the University’s cooperative spirit and fundamental approach to engaged learning. Just as we value intellectual curiosity and creativity, we must ensure that students come away from the Furman experience embracing environmental citizenship.

- Create and staff a Center for Sustainability
- Create a Sustainability Planning Group
- Support curricular development that reflects Furman’s commitment to sustainability
- Initiate a co-curricular plan for promoting sustainability
- Conduct a comprehensive campus inventory of environmental programs
- Reassert commitment to building all new construction and renovation projects to the Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards
- Consistent with Furman’s signing of the Presidents’ Climate Commitment, initiate the development of a comprehensive plan to achieve climate neutrality as soon as possible
- Integrate climate neutrality planning into all future building and renovation projects
- Expand the lake restoration plan to include designation and restoration of other campus natural areas
- Expand green purchasing guidelines
- Increase energy conservation efforts through additional educational programs and completion of existing energy reduction projects
  - Work with local agencies to protect and enhance the environment surrounding Furman (e.g., develop an environmental teaching and research program for the Blue Wall Preserve in northern Greenville County in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy)
- Integrate sustainability planning into the design and function of the Townes Center for Science
- Extend existing sustainability initiatives across departments and functional areas
Strategic Goal IV: To Serve the Greater Community

“We serve Greenville, the Upstate, South Carolina and alumni worldwide as a catalyst for improving quality of life.”

Furman operates within the context of many communities and audiences who connect regularly with the University on many levels. Furman’s community programs and initiatives are designed to improve the lives of the people they reach. These interactions offer students, faculty and staff collaborative opportunities outside the usual campus activities and recognize Furman’s acknowledged responsibilities as a citizen of the community.

Through public presentations of lectures, symposia, performances, athletic events, other learning opportunities and interaction worldwide through the Internet, Furman emphasizes its role as an engaged member of the greater community.

Beyond Greenville, the creation of the Hollingsworth Scholars program and the statewide expansion of the Diversity Leadership Academy have raised the University’s profile within South Carolina. Furman is a private college with a very public mission. We aspire to be the first liberal arts college in the nation with statewide programming and stature.

Statewide leadership

✧ Expand the summer study away program in Charleston
✧ Explore the possibility of partnerships with South Carolina’s three research universities and Greenville Hospital Systems and develop a relationship with the University of Georgia
✧ Fully endow the Richard W. Riley Institute of Government, Politics and Public Leadership in order to perpetuate its on-campus and statewide leadership programs
✧ Fund and implement the Wilkins Fellows internships in state government, the annual Excellence in Legislative Leadership awards dinner and the Wilkins Professorship in State Government
✧ Expand the stature of the Hollingsworth Scholarship as the premiere campus-based scholarship for South Carolina students

Educational content and services

✧ Carry the arts and other intellectual content to the community through lectures, performances and gallery opportunities in downtown Greenville
✧ Increase Continuing Education’s and the Graduate Program’s presence at The University Center of Greenville in both credit and non-credit offerings
✧ Assess the appropriateness and explore the feasibility of the creation of a community-based radio station at Furman
✧ Ensure the continuity, vitality and quality of the Bridges To A Brighter Future program
  o Develop a Bridges program for Greenville County middle school students
  o Increase the participation of Furman students in the program
Enhance Furman’s national and international reputation for excellence in running research and training

Community enrichment

- Collaborate with community groups on lectures, performances and other projects
- Support Furman University Learning in Retirement volunteers, who will raise the money to provide a classroom building for the FULIR program
- Collaborate with community leaders and organizations to support the implementation of Greenville’s Vision 2025 plan
- Establish a physical presence for Furman in downtown Greenville
- Consider sponsorship of a professional cultural arts series
- Improve Furman’s trail system and support the community’s rails-to-trails initiative
- Increase student and community excitement and participation in supporting the University’s athletic teams

Strategic Goal V: To Finance Furman’s Future

“To secure the financial foundation on which Furman’s future rests.”

As higher education continues to experience accelerating costs and heightened calls for accountability, Furman’s strategic vision for the future presents greater financial challenges than ever before. A combination of sound asset management, efficient budgetary planning, and enhanced revenue streams will ensure Furman’s place among top-tier liberal arts institutions. Particular emphasis must be placed on strengthening the University’s endowment, which, when computed on a per student basis, is lower than that of most of its peer institutions. Like the foundation of a well-built house, the University’s endowment is critical to ensuring the Furman experience for years to come. The endowment allows the institution to provide greater financial assistance to deserving students and to make permanent those special programs that make Furman unique. A stronger endowment also allows for greater flexibility to minimize tuition increases while continuing to invest in future advancements. In support of Furman’s strategic plan, the objectives outlined below indicate areas of focus for the University’s business and development operations.

- Increase the endowment through planned gifts, focused fundraising and strong annual investment returns
- Provide funding for strategic capital projects through:
  o Targeted fundraising
  o Continued management and utilization of debt as a permanent financing technique
- Allocate funding for key strategic initiatives and enhance operating budget support
  o Substantially increase annual giving
  o Maintain Furman’s position as one of the top universities in the country in alumni participation in the annual fund
  o Extend the use of Hollingsworth funds for scholarships and other initiatives
  o Identify new revenue sources and new cost-saving opportunities in an effort to relieve budgetary pressure and responsibly address public concern over the rising cost of higher education
Reduce the annual percentage of the operating budget of the University devoted to intercollegiate athletics by increasing athletic revenues and donations

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None of the preceding strategic goals stands alone. Each must be seen, and will ultimately be achieved, in concert with other initiatives and goals. Similarly, the specific initiatives in this plan are also interconnected. They should not -- indeed, they cannot -- succeed in isolation from the larger plan. Furman must, in short, conceive and implement a plan whose vision is as coherent as it is ambitious, a plan that builds on the traditional and distinctive strengths of the University even as it moves us in new and exhilarating directions. As we strive to achieve these goals, Furman will cement its reputation as a progressive institution poised to make the most of change in a continuously transforming world.