In all that we do, in all we aspire to be, our measure is excellence.

This is the Furman Standard.
A world of possibilities opens when professors and students together explore the frontiers of knowledge. These relationships have distinguished the Furman experience for generations of students and faculty. The transformative power of an exceptional teacher is reflected in these words from Furman alumni who have given generously to support faculty development.

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Don Aiesi epitomizes both excellence in the classroom and a sense of going above and beyond for his students, whom he genuinely loves. His classes were uniquely engaging because Don’s infectious energy, enthusiasm, and constant smile willed us all to learn the subject matter. ‘Political Parties’ may sound like mundane subject matter for those who have never experienced Don Aiesi’s passionate teaching style; however, Don made dissecting individual voting district demographics and voter patterns in the 1976 presidential election into an exciting fascination. Even more amazing to me was Don’s willingness to assist me, nine years after my graduation from Furman, with admission to law school. Without Don’s stellar letter of recommendation, I would not have been accepted into the University of South Carolina School of Law. One cannot place a dollar value on having, in essence, an advocate for life. Therefore, in my opinion, Don Aiesi is the embodiment of the Furman Standard.”

— Steve Perry ’78

“Simply put, I would not have become a lawyer and would not have enjoyed the wonderful and blessed career that I have experienced if it were not for Don Aiesi. As a student in his political science class during my senior year at Furman, Dr. Aiesi took me aside after one of his classes. He asked what I was going to do after graduation, and I told him that I did not know. I was a math major and had been accepted to Duke University’s Mathematics Graduate School. His next words were frank and profound: ‘You need to be a lawyer.’ He recommended the law schools to which I should apply and helped me with my applications. He even told me that we would practice law together some day. There is much more to this story but it all started with Don Aiesi and his efforts on behalf of one student who greatly needed his help. Why? Because he truly cared. Dr. Aiesi, there is still time for us to practice law together.”

— John Campbell ’71

“Don Aiesi epitomizes both excellence in the classroom and a sense of going above and beyond for his students, whom he genuinely loves. His classes were uniquely engaging because Don’s infectious energy, enthusiasm, and constant smile willed us all to learn the subject matter. ‘Political Parties’ may sound like mundane subject matter for those who have never experienced Don Aiesi’s passionate teaching style; however, Don made dissecting individual voting district demographics and voter patterns in the 1976 presidential election into an exciting fascination. Even more amazing to me was Don’s willingness to assist me, nine years after my graduation from Furman, with admission to law school. Without Don’s stellar letter of recommendation, I would not have been accepted into the University of South Carolina School of Law. One cannot place a dollar value on having, in essence, an advocate for life. Therefore, in my opinion, Don Aiesi is the embodiment of the Furman Standard.”

— Steve Perry ’78
“We are delighted to have the opportunity to not only give back to Furman but to honor a mentor and friend. Dr. John Block epitomizes what we think is the cornerstone to a Furman education—the interaction between a student and a caring faculty member that becomes a lifelong friendship. We are especially pleased that by giving to the Furman Standard our gift will support faculty development. As career educators and administrators, we believe in the positive impact that professional development opportunities can have for a faculty member.”

— Gary ’74 and Merrie McCullough Clark ’76
“My husband George’s first introduction to Dan Boda was on a Furman band tour, where Dan conducted (wonderfully!) an operatic overture with little advance notice to him and no prior rehearsal with the band. Before the end of the trip, Dan’s relationship with George was blossoming into both friendship and mentoring. George has always remembered Dan’s ‘welcome home’ greeting when George arrived late (owing to soccer team activities) for an important rehearsal of the Furman Orchestra. Evenings at the Boda home listening to Wagner are also cherished memories. Over the years, we have appreciated Dan’s musical excellence and friendship and have admired his relationship with his truly wonderful Ellie.”

— Fran Smith Ligler ’73
“As the parents of two Furman students, it is reassuring to know that Furman continues to attract the best and brightest young professors. We congratulate Dr. Bouzarth on being an example to her students and peers, and are pleased to bring recognition to her giftedness through the Furman Standard program.”

— Kenneth and Lisa Lee Rust ’87

“One of my favorite things about Dr. Bouzarth’s Calculus class was how she took great effort to not only make the material accessible to students, but also quite interesting. This was an 8:30 a.m. class covering a topic that doesn’t exactly stimulate excitement in most college students’ minds at that time of the day, but Dr. Bouzarth employed practical, ‘real world’ examples and taught in a style that made us want to listen and participate. She even brought cupcakes on some of our exam days to help encourage and de-stress students. In addition to her outstanding teaching, Dr. Bouzarth regularly scheduled meetings with us in her office to discuss problems we had with the subject and would patiently walk us through the material individually if needed. Her personal instruction really helped me learn, enjoy the material, and succeed in a course in which I initially struggled.”

— Jordan Rust ’13
“She listens, sorting through all the debris to find the gem inside. Then, she patiently cuts and polishes that stone until it shines, showing all others the beauty that she knew was there from the beginning.”

— Robin Irvin Locke ’03

“Kathy Cochran, or ‘KC’ as I call her, is one of the most giving, dedicated, and inspiring people I know. She brings positive reinforcement to a new level—instilling confidence and motivating those around her to take risks and reach their fullest potential. I am forever grateful for her mentorship through the years.”

— Claire Majette Jurs ’02

Kathy Cochran
music

“Great teaching speaks to the soul as much as great music. As Kathy Cochran’s student, I have heard both.”

— Maria Tempenis Shelley ’97
John Crabtree has been a scholar, teacher, and administrator, and in all capacities has been productive and inspirational. Even more admirable is the balanced and grounded life he has led and the example he has set.

—John ’63 and Barbara Stone Block ’63
Bob Crapps
RELIGION

“A man of faith, family, and discovery”
— John ’74, Phil ’81, and Stephen Crapps ’72
“Professor Current always challenged students to achieve academic excellence, and he also prepared us for practical application. He was a true academic entrepreneur and professor of engaged learning before engaged learning was the standard.”

— Kevin Byrne ’91

Fred Current
ACCOUNTING

“...a true academic entrepreneur and professor of engaged learning...”
Carlyle Ellett represented the highest standards of teaching and instilling knowledge in young minds. He took extraordinarily complex subject matters and enabled you to break them into understandable and clear ingredients of the whole. When I began my experience with Dr. Ellett, I had no understanding of the broad and unending study that economics provided. Through his brilliant and guiding hand he freighted, persuaded, and taught me to have a great and lasting appreciation of the theories and principles that guide and direct our society. Dr. Ellett was the epitome of providing interesting lectures and discussions, and treating his students with respect and fairness. In many of my activities within my subsequent career, I have sought to emulate and follow the great lessons he provided.”

— Jim Ney ’64
“As a new member of the Furman faculty in 1976, more than anyone else, Dan Ellis was responsible for launching my career at Furman. Through his support and mentoring, he guided my campus orientation and introduced this native Iowan to a large music community throughout the Southeast. Dan taught thousands of students during his years at Furman. These students provide the most lasting legacy for Dan Ellis—students he encouraged, disciplined, coaxed, inspired, comforted, and cared for throughout his career. He was known by many of these students as ‘Daddy Dan.’ He celebrated the successes of his most talented students and found ways to rescue those students who needed a second chance. I’ll always count myself among those who learned from him and benefited from his candid advice. He made me feel special and always had an unselfish interest in my wellbeing. Dan never took himself too seriously and was able to laugh at his own faults. He saw few obstacles to ideas and goals that were worth pursuing. He loved his family dearly and rejoiced in the accomplishments of his talented sons. My father passed away three years before I took the job at Furman, so Dan’s guidance and paternal bearing assumed additional dimensions. It’s difficult to imagine how my life at Furman would have unfolded without Dan’s generous support and personal interest.”

—John Beckford
Students learn just as much from Dr. Friis outside the classroom as within. Whether on a boat in the harbor of Valparaiso, Chile, out to lunch at a Colombian restaurant after class, or in his office discussing future plans, he is always available to students. In fact, his mentoring substantially influenced both my choice to pursue a graduate degree and the particular institution in which I am currently enrolled.

Dr. Friis actively encourages his students’ personal endeavors by intentionally fostering connections with the surrounding community, introducing his students to bilingual afterschool programs and leading on-campus panel discussions. Dr. Friis brings his love of food, language, culture, and literature to the table in study abroad programs, unique course offerings, and a May Experience class that critically explores Hispanic cultures and the Spanish language through a cultural studies lens incorporating economic, political, and historical analyses.

Due to his commitment to teaching, Dr. Friis co-authored a new textbook for intermediate Spanish courses, *Doble Vía*, currently published by Heinle, Cengage Learning. To put it simply, Dr. Friis is the total package: excellent teacher, wise advisor, passionate academic, and most importantly, an outstanding person. He is the true Furman Standard!”

— James Rust ’11
It did not take long while in my freshman year to become acquainted with Dean Harrill. It was not the kind of introduction that one would think very appropriate. It had to do with a very embarrassing situation, but the results became a life-changing experience for me. I will always remember Dean Harrill for how he handled the situation and am grateful for it.”

— Don Anderson ’66
“Through the years Furman University has been blessed with the right president at the right time...”

“Through the years Furman University has been blessed with the right president at the right time in its history. Dr. Johns provided extraordinary leadership and vision during his eighteen years as president, a time when our University faced enormous challenges. President Johns successfully confronted all of those challenges, sustaining Furman’s legacy as one of the finest liberal arts institutions in our nation. Emilie and I are proud to be numbered among the many friends of John and Martha.”

—Nick Theodore ’52
“Though I was a typical business major who often grumbled about having to take courses in the humanities, Dr. Julian awakened in me an appreciation for literature, the arts, and how stretching the right side of my brain could actually contribute to my career success, not to mention enhance my overall quality of life. She taught me to broaden my perspective of success, to recognize the importance of effective written communication, and how listening may be the most valuable skill one can develop. Her courses were not easy, and she demanded excellence from her students. She embodied what has always been so special about Furman professors—a desire to discover and nurture potential in every student. Dr. Julian, your time on this earth was cut way too short. You are truly missed!”

— Mike Gatchell ’91
"My father died while I was at Furman, and Schaefer Kendrick became my surrogate father thereafter. We became very close, and he was an usher in my wedding. As I began my career in banking and financial services, Schaefer’s office was just down the street. When I needed advice, I would visit him in his office, and he was always available and always listened."

—Dave Ellison ’72
“I am delighted to have this opportunity not only to give back to Furman but to honor someone who I am proud to call my friend—Lon Knight. Lon is a gifted educator with a kind and gentle spirit, committed to what he loves and to the institution he serves.”

—Becky Edwards Hash ’67

“My wife Dara and I met on our very first day at Furman, at a welcome meeting Dr. Knight had for prospective chemistry majors. His enthusiasm for the Chemistry Department and welcome to Furman got us off to a great start. Later, I worked in Dr. Knight’s laboratory both in the summer research program and during the school year. That experience was one that firmly set me on the course to graduate school and my career as a research scientist. His gift for explaining complicated subjects in simple terms makes him an excellent teacher and mentor, and his open office and willingness to give good advice makes his wisdom available to all who seek it. Dr. Knight’s steady hand and gentle leadership has been an essential ingredient in making Furman’s Chemistry Department a wonderful experience for hundreds of students. He truly sets the standard for a Furman professor.”

—Keith Keller ’94

Lon Knight
chemistry

“I am delighted to have this opportunity not only to give back to Furman but to honor someone who I am proud to call my friend—Lon Knight. Lon is a gifted educator with a kind and gentle spirit, committed to what he loves and to the institution he serves.”
“When I arrived on Furman’s campus with the intention of majoring in piano performance, it was my privilege to study under Dr. Ruby Morgan. She was a model of teaching excellence and approached each day on campus and each lesson with contagious energy and enthusiasm! As a student of Dr. Morgan’s, one was always challenged and encouraged to excel. However, her influence flowed beyond our interaction at the keyboard. Dr. Morgan cultivated relationships with her students, obviously caring about the quality of our total life and not simply our interest in music. Students frequently found themselves drawn to her studio for a word of encouragement, a bit of advice, or simply to enjoy her nurturing spirit. Regardless of the circumstances, she never offered anything less than her very best. Even when my exploration of the liberal arts led me in a different direction than piano performance, Dr. Morgan helped to craft an Individualized Curriculum Program (ICP) that would best meet my needs. She is the epitome of the Furman Standard—a scholar who invests herself in her discipline and in others. What a joy it is to honor her!”

— Lisa Lee Rust ’87
Initially, our admiration of Ray Nanney was based on his unassuming and caring manner in conjunction with his ability and willingness to shift his academic field from chemistry (where he was very successful) to computer science. Our admiration grew as we better understood Ray’s academic prowess and as he became George’s first professional mentor. Our admiration has grown even further over the years as we became lifelong friends.

— George ’71 and Fran Smith Ligler ’73

Ray Nanney

computer science

“Our admiration grew as we better understood Ray’s academic prowess...”
Dr. Margaret Oakes truly epitomizes the Furman Standard. Her teaching style is engaging and challenging. Her high expectations require her students to explore their intellectual potential. She showed me that I, as an undergraduate, could provide valuable insights into literature that has been the subject of study by leading academics for centuries. Students also enjoy her keen sense of humor, as well as her generous hospitality with class dinners in her home. It was great to have the opportunity to discuss both John Milton and Harry Potter with her at a high level of academic integrity! Professors like Dr. Oakes are the reason I chose to attend Furman.”

—Kate Marley ’12
“In the margin of a paper I wrote in Dr. Reid’s literature class, he advised me: ‘You must go to graduate school and you will be offered a scholarship.’ These words were much appreciated, but unheeded at the time. Two years after graduation from Furman, they changed the course of my life. I enrolled in a doctoral program, received a Ph.D. in French literature, and began an amazing academic journey as a professor, provost, and president of a liberal arts college. I will always be profoundly grateful to Dr. Reid for his inspirational teaching and confidence in me at a time when few women pursued doctoral degrees, to Furman for the academic scholarship that funded my undergraduate education, and to a campus atmosphere that affirmed women students.”

—Mary Seawell Metz ’58
“During my Furman days, I took one or two economics classes under Dr. Ray Roberts as I majored in economics and business. I’m sure he taught me a lot, but economics was certainly not the strong suit of my major! It was a few years later that I renewed acquaintance with Dr. Roberts and became a friend through church work at Buncombe Street United Methodist Church in downtown Greenville. We were on a major committee where he was the chair, and I was a younger, inexperienced member. He mentored me during my three years on that committee. During that time he and his wife, Alice, also became my friends, and I came to truly value his skills and abilities. He helped me develop confidence in myself years after I graduated from Furman. Thank you Dr. Roberts!”

—Jenna Robinson ’74
"As a female student raised in a faithful Christian family, I thought I knew the Bible pretty well when I arrived on campus in 1983. I was wrong. The religion professors, and particularly Dr. John Shelley, led me to take a fresh look at scripture, its historical and social context, and its application to the present day. This careful examination of Biblical text became particularly relevant to me during the struggle between moderates and fundamentalists in the Southern Baptist Convention in the mid-1980s. Having previously given no thought to the theological reasons behind my denominational ties, I was suddenly confronted with a crisis of faith as my denomination made it clear that I and other women were not ‘called’ to ministry in the same way that men were. Dr. Shelley not only patiently helped me sort through my confusion and hurt, but offered to serve as my professor for an Independent Study entitled Women of the Southern Baptist Convention: Ordination or Subordination? That Independent Study affirmed me as a woman useful to God in ANY way He chooses to call. While I did not enter the ministry, I now joyfully serve my church as an ordained deacon and have had the privilege of cultivating a culture of call with both male and female youth. I will always be most grateful to Dr. Shelley for his investment of time and his devotion to his text and teaching. His gentle spirit, humility, commitment, and exceptional knowledge serve as examples to others."

—Lisa Lee Rust '87

"Dr. Shelley makes sure that his students end up sharing his passion for the Biblical text. He challenged me to look at the literary and historical context and value of passages that I had previously read merely as a series of events."

—James Rust '11

"Dr. Shelley always seemed excited about the material he was teaching, even though I knew he had taught it before. I especially liked the fact that I never felt ‘taught at.’ Instead, because Dr. Shelley really enjoyed interaction with his students, each class session was conversational and more discussion than lecture. Students felt free to offer their own ideas and opinions, and Dr. Shelley would lead us in exploring those ideas and how they related to the literature."

—Jordan Rust '13
Lew Stratton, my first professional mentor, arranged for me to be the first Furman student to hold an off-campus summer research internship. At Oak Ridge, I experienced the challenge of research and joy of scientific discovery. In addition to writing innumerable letters of reference over the years, Lew came to work with me on his sabbatical at the Naval Research Lab. To everything he has done during our lifelong friendship, Lew has brought his down-home wisdom and wry humor."

— Fran Smith Ligler ’73
“Dr. Thompson arrived on campus my senior year. She was such an infusion of infectious energy and enthusiasm; it was like a huge breath of fresh air for me! She was the first female biology professor at the time, and looking back, this was the first real tangible example I had of what a successful woman trained in the sciences looked like. She transformed the mundane into mystery (and fun!) and my decision to pursue science was confirmed with a renewed sense of passion. Although finding my true career path would take me several more years after graduating from Furman, the many conversations I had with Dr. Thompson about potential career choices provided the seeds that eventually bore fruit down the line. At the time, she saw areas of potential that I could not see in myself or for myself. These ideas definitely inspired me but also seemed too bold or ambitious for my mindset at the time. That’s what I really admire about Dr. Thompson—her desire to help students know and understand all the possibilities open to them and to help them explore which ones may be right for them. I have ended up in a career path that is eerily similar to one of very early visions Dr. Thompson saw for me. I now appreciate the enormity of her influence after being on a journey to make my own mark as a woman in science.”

— Kimberly Chappell ’88
“We are delighted to have this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent work our friend Courtney has achieved by bringing Furman University into the community at large. Her joint appointment as assistant professor of history at Furman and historian of the Upcountry History Museum has provided Furman students with the opportunity to pursue internships that Courtney carefully organizes and supervises. Her rapport with students provides them with excellent leadership and inspiration as many of these students turn their internship experiences into professional career goals. As the museum historian, she brings history to the community of Greenville and the Upcountry through her research, many public lectures, and newspaper articles. Most of all, Courtney is a dynamic liaison between Furman and the Greenville community, and her tireless work has truly strengthened town-gown relationships.”

— Nick ’52 and Emilie Theodore

Courtney Tollison  
History
Without a doubt, being a Furman Singer was the most meaningful experience of my entire Furman career. I was delighted and in awe of the talent and amazing sound of the singers around me (many of whom were vocal majors or students—I was not!), and on more than one occasion wondered how I ever ‘made the cut.’ Today I remain so grateful that Dr. Bingham Vick saw potential in me and gifted me with the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful group of people. The music we studied fed my spirit and guided me to find my own voice, figuratively, and literally! Dr. Vick was a masterful conductor and professor of conducting. Every cue had to be justified, every text expressed with nuance and sincerity. His unwavering commitment to discipline, excellence, and beauty—in the rehearsal hall, the classroom, and in the life he shares with Judy—has inspired every aspect of my life’s calling. In all that I do as a wife, a mother, a layperson, and a member of the larger community, excellence remains the goal. As a musician in rural southeastern North Carolina, I like to think that I am sharing at least a small bit of the discipline, excellence, and beauty that I encountered through knowing Dr. Vick.”

— Lisa Lee Rust ’87
My wife Fran and I first met in Ray’s non-Euclidean geometry class. Ray’s ‘kid-in-a-candy-store’ enthusiasm for his field positively impacted both of us. We remember vividly one example. Ray had just put a fairly complicated proof on the board. He stepped back, looked at us with a big smile, and said the following (which I paraphrase): ‘Isn’t this beautiful? Every element is absolutely essential, just like a Housman poem!’

— George Ligler ’71

“Ray’s ‘kid-in-a-candy-store’ enthusiasm for his field positively impacted both of us.”
Dr. Yagi was a great friend and mentor to both of our sons, Marcus and Will. They tell us that Yagi Sensei is always full of enthusiasm in class. He is an avid singer who returns to Japan every summer to participate with his middle school classmates in a singing competition. He encouraged Marcus to be a Japanese/economics double major, to study abroad in Japan for a semester, and to join the Japanese Exchange and Teaching program after graduation. Will loved his classes, too, including three semesters of Japanese and a course in Modern Japanese Literature. Yagi Sensei is always eager to help his students, and he even came by our home one summer to visit with Marcus and Will.”

— Marc ’77 and Sherry Cornelius Smith ’78