A new landscape in higher education
Slow economy, declining wealth raise college price consciousness

In mid-summer, just as many college admission counselors and financial aid administrators were piecing together their classes of 2016, a rash of national headlines confirmed what they had been experiencing.

“Student Debt: why even the affluent struggle,” was a headline in Time Magazine. At the Wall Street Journal it was “College debt hits well-off.” Middle income households see biggest jumps in student loan burden.”


Fueling some of those stories was a July 26 report issued by Moody’s. Investors that said listless job growth, declining net worth and static income had “created the stiffest tuition price resistance that colleges have faced in decades.”

Too, a study by Sallie Mae, “How America Pays for College 2012,” showed evidence that a sour U-S- economy continues to fuel rising resistance. The report, published annually since 2008, showed that:

- The percentage of families who eliminated college choice after admission rose from 48 percent in 2008 to 61 percent in 2012.
- Families continued to shift toward low-cost community colleges, with 29 percent enrolled compared to 23 percent two years ago.

Forrest Stuart, Associate Vice President for Financial Aid at Furman, says Ivy League and nationally known private liberal arts schools are weathering the Great Recession. And some state universities—particularly those with honors college programs—are getting a leg up.

But private schools without a national name and deep endowments are being squeezed because upper income families, a significant market for private colleges, have borne the brunt of eroding home values and a slowly recovering economy.

According to the Sallie Mae report, the annual amount paid for college remained relatively level for low-and middle-income families, but annual college spending from high income families has dropped 18 percent over the past two years.

“Consumer behavior has changed,” says Stuart. “In the past a family might decide to go ahead and sacrifice for that more expensive private school education. But they are rethinking that now. The recession has scared a lot of families.”

And with unemployment for recent college graduates soaring in recent years, many families and students are less eager to take on student debt.

According to government data, 53 percent of recent college graduates are jobless or underemployed. Many of those fortunate enough to find work are doing so in fields that do not require a bachelor’s degree.

With the market placing a greater demand for graduates with hard technical skills, many parents and students must consider job market realities when choosing a school and major. And they are taking a more critical view of broad-based liberal arts education, says Stuart.

Against that backdrop, the university has appointed a working group to examine Furman’s tuition pricing, financial aid and admissions policies.

“This proposal was grounded in growing concerns about the rapid changes in the national environment surrounding higher education, as well as the concomitant admissions and financial stresses on Furman,” says Furman President Rod Smolla. “Among these concerns are the escalating costs of attendance at private universities such as Furman and the consequences of these escalating costs on the pursuit of a highly qualified and diverse student body.”

Smolla said the 36-member working group, which includes top administrators, faculty and trustees, will meet throughout the fall with a goal of “attacking these issues with energy and getting into them early in what many believe will be a decade-long period of transformation in the landscape of high education.”

Members of the working group

Trustees
Jolley Christian
Richard Cullen ‘71
David Elison ‘72
Robert Hill ‘83
Juan Johnson
Carl Keltz ’65
Kathy McKinney
Steve Reinemund
Michael Riondor
Peace Sullivan
John Yates

Faculty
Maegan Azar
David Bost
Jim Guth
Ross McClain
William Fates
Joe Pollard
Beth Pontari
Doug Rall
Bill Ranson
Marian Strobel
Suzy Summers
Mike Svec

Administrators
Rod Smolla, Chair
John Backford
Amy Blackwell ’87
Connie Carson
Vaughn CroweThpton
Mike Gatcshall ’91
Mark Kelly
Mary Lou Mark
Don Parra
Marianne Pierce
Brad Pochard
Forrest Stuart
Boyd Yarbrough ‘85

Staff forum
set for Oct. 9

University staff are encouraged to attend the annual Staff Advisory Committee (StaffAC) forum Tuesday, October 9 in the Younts Conference Center.

A continental breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m. The forum will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude in an hour.

Agenda items include an update on the Herring Center, website and communications changes, the Poinsett Highway beautification project, open enrollment, the Upstate History Museum and Office 365.

A question-and-answer period will follow these presentations.

Audience members may ask their question at the forum or submit it beforehand through the feedback form link on the StaffAC webpage.
To many historians, the proclamation is among the most important and treasured documents in our nation’s 236-year history.

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and to celebrate Furman’s formal partnership with the Upcountry History Museum, the university is putting on a series of lectures and conferences from September through January. These will be complemented by a Freedom Stories website of community-contributed videos, stories and artifacts focused on the transition to freedom in the Civil War era.

Since early summer, history professor Lloyd Benson, communication studies professor Sean O’Rourke, and students Reagan Thompson and Lena Pringle have coordinated the collection of locally themed stories of freedom. Some, for example, are stories of immigrants who came to America to escape persecution. Others are recollections of those who lived through the Civil Rights era. A selection of these stories will be featured during an October 28 conference. “We wanted to include a variety of freedom stories,” says Benson. “We didn’t want the scholars just coming and the learning to be one way. We thought it wouldn’t be nice if Greenville had something to share with these scholars.”

Vernon Burton, a 1969 graduate of Furman and a history professor at Clemson University, launched the series September 26 with a presentation, “Emancipation and Community Relations.” Burton has authored or edited 16 books. One of them, The Age of Lincoln, won the Chicago Tribune Heartland Literary Award for Nonfiction. His teachings and research include the American South and race relations.

A mini-conference on “Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Freedom” will be held from 2-6 p.m. October 28 at the Upcountry History Museum. Professors Stan Harrold (South Carolina State), Diane Barnes (Youngstown State), A.J. Sasser (Georgetown), Felix Fenton Knight ’02 (University of South Carolina-Allen) and Jamee Martin (University of North Carolina-Pembroke) will participate. A collection of the stories and artifacts from Freedom Stories contributors will be on display at this time.

Professors Michael West (Clemson University), Leslie Schwalm (University of Iowa) and Michael Fitzgerald (UCLA) will discuss “Meaning, Completeness and Legacies of Freedom” during a second mini-conference November 18 from 2-6 p.m., also at the Upcountry History Museum.

The capstone event, on January 22 at the Yeartown Center, will feature historian and University of Richmond President Edward Schwalm (University of Iowa) and Michael Fitzgerald (UCLA). A collection of Freedom Stories events will soon be posted on www.furman.edu/freedomstories.

Big shoes to fill
Miller to put a wrap on a 35-year campus career

Bob Miller knows drama. During his career, he’s made preparations to host every American president on campus since Richard Nixon. He’s also planned for nearly 30,000 screaming teenagers to arrive on campus — for classes, but for a New Kids on the Block concert in 1990.

In the case of the band, it meant preparing the neighbors for speakers that were three stories high, having a doctor on hand to treat tears for heat exhaustion, and arranging for a helicopter to stand by for emergencies. “The only detail I worry about are the ones I haven’t thought of. Those are the scary ones,” said Miller, who will retire in June 2013 after 35 years of service to Furman. Fortunately, every day isn’t that exciting.

As Furman’s director of Public Safety, Miller works with a staff of 25 to oversee law enforcement services, 24-hour communications, physical security, crime prevention and awareness programs, support services for campus activities and events, and traffic and parking.

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Miller earned a bachelor’s degree from Jacksonville State University and began his career at age 21 working for the Dixon City Police Department in Maryland. While he didn’t yet have law enforcement experience, “I was a big guy with common sense,” Miller said with a laugh.

He went on to serve as a special agent with military intelligence in the U.S. Army, where he specialized in interviews and interrogations. Much of his work during that time (late 1960s) involved handling civil rights demonstrations in the South. Miller served as chief of police in Morrow, Ga., and worked at public safety departments at Duke and Emory universities. He was also the chief administrator for public safety agencies at Clayton State University and at Georgia College and State University.

While working in Georgia, Miller was recommended for his current position at Furman. He came for a visit in 1978, accepted the job, and has called Furman home ever since.

“Student interests and concerns have always been a priority with him. Anytime an issue surfaces, he wants to know the possible impact on students,” said Lt. David Enter, who works closely with Miller in Public Safety. “He has always had a customer-service-oriented approach to campus policing. He is a progressive, professional thinker, and many security measures that some colleges have recently adopted were put in place at Furman years ago.”

Miller is currently in a mode he describes as “transitional planning,” working with his staff to prepare for his retirement in June 2013. He’s looking forward to traveling and spending more time with his wife of 46 years, Pam, as well as his five grown children and grandchildren.

When he retires next year, Miller said not only being leaving his mark on campus, he’ll also be leaving behind a pair of shoes. Literally.

One of the fewest incidents on campus that he can recall happened in the mid-’90s, when a man under the influence went on a wild romp across campus, assaulted some pedestrians and ended up in the lake, which had been drained in preparation for the renovation of the student center.

Miller and another officer went after the man and ended up in the lake, which had been drained in preparation for the renovation of the student center. When they were able to capture the man, Miller said they both had a hard time getting out of the water. Literally.

His greatest source of pride is his staff. When he arrived three decades ago, Furman had a security department. Now, it has evolved into a fully certified police department with an expanded range of services. Officers currently working at Furman have diverse backgrounds in law enforcement, formerly serving in roles with the Greenville County Sheriff’s Office and as far away as the New York City Police Department.

“Bob has always been truly committed to the individuals in his department and to making the Furman experience the best that it could be for students, staff and faculty,” said Harry Shucker, who retired in 2007 as Furman’s vice president for Student Services. “He respected the dignity of everyone, no matter how difficult the interactions became or how tragic the outcomes of the events that transpired. I called on him for advice as well as for assistance, and he was always available at any time of the day or night.”

Miller’s community involvement isn’t limited to Furman. He has held offices in numerous local, state, national and international professional organizations and has served as a consultant to colleges and universities throughout the United States. He was chair of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators professional development committee for 11 years, where he was responsible for developing the educational programming for international conferences and workshops. “We congratulate Bob on his campus public safety career and his service to Furman University,” said Christopher Blake, IACLEA’s associate director and campus preparedness project director in West Hartford, Conn.

He served on the Greenville County Commission on Alcohol Abuse and Underage Drinking Enforcement and Education and on the FBI’s Joint Tenants Task Force. From 2000 to 2009, Miller served on the Advisory Board to the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center for the Southeast, and as the representative for college and university law enforcement with the National Institute for Justice.

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— Erikah Haavie
You don’t have to look far to find someone whose life has been touched by cancer. In 2008, John Roberts (Marketing & Public Relations) lost his wife, Lisa, to symptoms after a three-year fight with the blood disease. Her battle with platelet dysfunction—transplant and a lengthy stay at MD Anderson Cancer Hospital in Houston. In addition to John, who has worked at the university since 1996, Lisa left behind three children, now 17, 15, and 13.

In 1987, the Health Sciences lost a remarkable professor, Sandor Molnar, to complications from brain cancer at age 49. Scott Mason, NICC director, was one of Molnar’s students. Says Molnar was “the single most influential person in the human community who was raising awareness about the value of exercise.”

Giselle Williams (Human Resources) lost both of her parents to cancer. Her mother, Marie Austin, lost her battle with lung cancer in 1998 after many years of smoking. Her father, GL Austin, lost his battle with melanoma (skin cancer) in 2008 after years of occupational sun exposure. For much of their early adult hood, the dangers of tobacco and sun exposure were not well known. But not all battles have sad endings.

At the age of 28, Starr Williams (Sports Medicine) was diagnosed with stage four cervical and ovarian cancer in 2005. After surgery and radiation therapy she was declared cancer free, a status she has maintained for five years. Susan Hey (Development) found a lump in her breast in 2007, one month before her annual mammogram. She was diagnosed with infiltrating ductal carcinoma (cancer of the breast). After a mastectomy, six rounds of Herceptin, and 38 radiation treatments, she was cancer free for more than seven years. Susan has completely turned her life around. She says, “I feel better now than I have in 20 years.”

“I, too, have been affected by cancer. In 2005 I was diagnosed with melanoma. I was 27 years old and pregnant with my first child. I had the thoughts and fears of death and of possibly losing my daughter. Understandably, it is easy to feel helpless and hopeless when battling cancer. But you can help to create more happy endings.”

The American Cancer Society is recruiting 300,000 individuals nationwide to participate in the landmark, 20-year Cancer Prevention Study 3 (CPS-3) that will investigate how lifestyle, environmental and genetic factors cause or prevent cancer. Men and women between the ages of 30 and 65 who have no genetic factors cause or prevent cancer—Men and women between the ages of 30 and 65 who have no genetic factors cause or prevent cancer. The goals of CPS-3 are to better understand other factors that cause or prevent cancer and to help significantly reduce cancer risk for future generations.

You can find more information about this study at cancer.org/cps3.
Why have these students decided to eat locally and with the provenance of their food were more impactful and produced media as a way to negotiate their roles within the politics of cultural heritage protection. Lisa Knight gave an invited public lecture at Stanford University titled “Real Women in India and Bangladesh: Women’s Religious Activism and Claims of Authority.” The address was sponsored by Stanford’s Department of Religious Studies, Clayton Institute for Gender Research, and Center for Buddhist Studies. Students, and Center for South Asian Studies.

Mental Health

Biography From Art 13, under the mentoring of Greg Lewis and Min-Ken Lian, received the South Carolina Independent College and Universities (SCICU) Undergraduate Student Faculty Research Grant. Steven, Liao, Andrew and Stephen McCldyer ’22 presented a poster on “The impacts of a poultry processing plant on genetic diversity of E. coli in a headwater stream in the Lowcountry.”

J. Mark_CIPHER

Political Science


Lisa Knight

Theatre Arts

Amae Zhao played the role of Portia in the Warehouse Theatre’s production of Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice last March. She and four faculty from other universities in the Lowcountry discussed “Sensibility and Theatricality in Early Modern Drama.” The panel was sponsored by the Directors of the Non-Traditional Casing of the South Carolina Theatre Conference in March.

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Beyond the microscope
Course gives cancer a human face

In most academic settings, students study the impact of cancer undergo a microscope or in a textbook. But Renee Closhed (biology) is taking a different approach this fall in her “Biology: Cancer and Beyond” course.

She has added a human element. Her students will meet with cancer survivors and the relatives of those who have passed away from the disease. Class members, too, will consult with those on the front line of fighting cancer: physicians and patients undergoing treatment.

More importantly, they’ll get a chance to join the fight.

This summer was an extremely busy time for Richard Schoeny, who led the non-profit organization. To continue doing what they do, they need to continue raising funds. The organization has been able to use the money raised at the event in downtown Greenville.

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For more information, contact the development office for the Don

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THE FURMAN FORUM

In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Furman this academic year?

I think our biggest challenges are the budget and attracting students that can be successful and continue to offer the broad diverse opportunities that Furman now provides.

—Nancy Cooper, Coordinator of Volunteer Services

I would say most important is managing all the construction projects including our new Trone Student Center and other notable buildings on campus like the football field house. It will be exciting to see the student life master plan kick in with the residence hall renovation.

—Anthony Carinci, Asst. Director, Trone Student Center

Money. Our main goal is students. With proper funding we can continue to ensure students have an environment in which to thrive, and, just as important, remain.

—Dianne Alexander, Department Assistant for Trone Student Center, Campus Recreation, and Shucker Center for Leadership

In addition to honing our admissions and financial aid processes, we need to solidify Furman’s strategic positioning. I would love to see us build stronger relationships with external partners to increase internship and job opportunities, sponsored programs, and revenue streams.

—Robert Underwood, Department of Business and Accounting

In your opinion, what is the most important issue facing Furman this academic year?


Wasserman named Furman rabbi

Alana Wasserman of Simpsonville has joined the chaplain’s office as Furman’s first campus rabbi. Wasserman, who began her part-time position in August, will be taking the lead in organizing events and activities for the 20 members of the Jewish Student Association.

“Our student body is so religiously diverse,” said Vaughn Crowe-Tipton, university chaplain and associate vice president for spiritual life. “We have long needed someone to take care of our Jewish students.”

One of Wasserman’s first projects as rabbi will be working to create a Hillel House on campus. Hillel The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, is the largest Jewish campus organization in the world and provides opportunities for Jewish students at more than 500 colleges and universities to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity.

Wasserman is also planning “Pizza on the Hut,” as part of the celebration of the Jewish holiday Sukkot in October where students will eat meals together in temporary, booth-like structures known as sukkahs.

Wasserman taught an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute course last spring on heroines of the Bible and is teaching a second course Thursdays this fall on the history and rituals of Jewish holidays. Her husband, Jeremy Master, rabbi of Temple of Israel in Greenville, previously worked as a volunteer with Jewish students on campus.

A native of New Jersey, Wasserman earned a bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Texas at Austin. She attended Hebrew Union College and was ordained in 2004. Upon her ordination, she worked for four years as the assistant rabbi at Congregation M’kor Shalom in Cherry Hill, N.J., before relocating to Greenville in 2009 with her husband and daughter, Peri.

In addition to Wasserman’s appointment, Kadir Yildirim, assistant professor of political science, has been officially named advisor to the Muslim Student Association this year. Crowe-Tipton said he hopes Wasserman’s and Yildirim’s increased involvement with students will assist in creating “as much interfaith work and dialogue on campus as possible.”

Furman has 21 active religious groups on campus, a high number considering the size of the student body, and many students are active in supporting more than one group, Crowe-Tipton said.

“That’s really healthy,” he said. “They learn a lot from each other.”

One of Crowe-Tipton’s long-term goals is to establish an interfaith center at Furman, which would take the lead in bringing interfaith programming and projects to the Greenville community.