

2022 National Mentoring Month
Furman Faculty and Staff Mentors
(listed alphabetically)



Robyn Andrews

Access Services Assistant - Daytime Circulation, James B. Duke Library

My mentor was my first ‘real’ boss at my first ‘real’ job, Mr. Douglas Boyan at IIE (Institute of International Education). He impacted me by seeing me not just for who I looked like but what he thought I was capable of. He taught me that we all have gifts if we just look a little deeper.



Stephanie Boyd

Associate Dean of Student Success and Wellbeing

My mentor was Terry O’Bryan Daugherty, she was my trainer and friend at Prevention Research Institute. Terry taught me that change is hard, even when it is for the best and when people become resistant to it, it means we are doing something right. She also taught me that being sympathetic is easy, being empathetic is a gift. We should never pretend to know what others are feeling but acknowledge the challenge they may be experiencing because of it. I am reminded of Terry’s truths every day. I often work with students who are struggling. I listen to their perspective, don’t judge, and attempt to understand how they are feeling. I strive to meet them where they are and walk with them toward change instead of pulling them to it.



Omar Carmenates

Associate Professor, Percussion

I’ve been fortunate to have many fantastic mentors over my career, but one that sticks out at the moment is Christopher Deane, percussionist/composer/teacher extraordinaire who I studied with in graduate school and who passed away this past October. Professor Deane always seems to have the exact right advice (his “45 Lessons in 15 Minutes” was legendary amongst his students!) and was key in helping me understand how important creativity and integrity are to being a professional musician.



Jackie Carson

Head Coach, Women's Basketball

My first coaching mentor was my college basketball assistant coach, Tim Taylor. I did not want to coach after college (I wanted to go into the medical field) but Coach Taylor showed me that you can positively impact countless lives by empowering young women to achieve goals they didn’t even know were attainable.

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Connie Carson
Vice President for Student Life

My mentor was Ruel Charles, Assistant Director in University Housing/NC State University, first professional supervisor
Rue taught me to value others and value yourself...live your values joyfully.



Jeremy Cass
Dean of Faculty; Professor of Spanish

My mentor was Dr. David Bost, a retired Spanish professor at Furman. When I was overwhelmed by the weight of career decisions, David helped me reflect, decide, and move forward. He taught me about the importance of investing in others—as his student and as his colleague, he was always available.



Jason Cassidy
AVP for Student Life/Dean of Students

My mentor was my high school science teacher, Mr. Scott Huckaby. I attended a small, private high school in Atlanta and he was my teacher for seven years. He was also my Scoutmaster in Boy Scouts for many years. Mr. Huckaby poured into his students inside and outside the classroom, and it was evident that teaching was his life's calling. My love of outdoor adventure continues to this day because of him.



Erik Ching
Walter Kenneth Mattison Professor, History; Director, Undergraduate Research

My mentor was Dr. Jack Bermingham, a history professor and my academic advisor in college. He taught me that the goal of education, regardless of discipline, should be personal empowerment through the development of critical thinking. It made me want to become a college professor.

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Andy Coe
Assistant Director Internship Program

Coach Mitchell was my high school cross-country coach and mentor. Coach taught me to value and appreciate hard work for its own sake. He taught me persistence, and he taught me the intrinsic rewards of learning that your best is better than what you thought possible.



Nancy Cooper
Coordinator for Volunteer Services at Furman University

My mentor was my former high school teacher and counselor, Virginia Atkinson. She instilled in me a drive and confidence that I could accomplish anything I desired. She helped me believe in myself and showed me that I could attain things that I previously thought were unattainable.



Matt Davidson
Head Coach, Men's Golf

One of my mentors was my college golf coach, Todd Satterfield. Coach Satterfield always believed in me as a student and an athlete. He stressed the importance of hard work and time management, both in college and beyond.



Charles Davis
Adjunct Professor, Business and Accounting

One of my first mentors was Dr. Frank T. Lendrim, professor of music and director of choral activities at The College of William and Mary. While I wasn't considering an academic career at the time, Dr. Lendrim modeled how to demonstrate passion for your field and how to share that passion with students in the classroom. He also modeled the importance of developing a personal relationship with students that extends far beyond the classroom.

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Elizabeth Davis
Furman University President

My mentor was Dr. Del Chesser, my college accounting professor. Dr. Chesser gave me confidence about my abilities and challenged me to imagine myself as a college professor. Our conversation about academia was not while I was his student; it was two years after graduation. He changed the trajectory of my work life.



Chandra Dillard
Director of Community Relations and State Representative, District 23

My Mentor was my high school guidance counselor, County Councilwoman Xanthene Norris. She helped me explore my early love of public service by signing me up for SC Girls State in my Junior year of high school.



Allison Foy
Executive Director of Alumni and Parent Engagement

I am so grateful for my mentor Lillian “Mickey” Harder, who retired as Director of the Brooks Center for the Performing Arts. Mickey challenged and encouraged me, modeled professionalism, and was overflowing with enthusiasm and passion for her work and community. She always made time to teach and advise me during my internship and for many years beyond.



Steve Hairston
Assistant Director, Employer Engagement

Throughout my life, my only true mentor has been my dad, Malik Hodari. He always provided the perfect balance of freedom to make my own choices and guidance to keep me on the right path. My dad is a very successful lawyer and adventurous world traveler. He has always taught me to approach the world with an open heart, mind, and eyes – you never know what you will discover about other people, places, or about yourself.

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Brad Harmon

Assistant Dean for the First-Year and Second-Year Experience

As an alumnus, I had two people at Furman who I would consider to be mentors while I was a student.. The first was Dr. Jeff Rogers, a former professor of Religion. I had Dr. Rogers in a class called “Old Testament Prophets” at Furman. Though I was not a Religion major and he was not my actual advisor, Dr. Rogers always encouraged me to challenge myself to grow and learn as well as to think critically. He took time to patiently listen to me and ask me good questions about what I wanted to do. When I did ultimately decide that I wanted to pursue a master’s degree in education, he wrote me a letter of recommendation that spoke to my strengths as a learner and scholar. He showed me he cared.

The second person was named Becky and she was my supervisor when I worked as a student worker in the old Pala-Den snack bar. Becky was like a second mother to me in that she always asked how my day was going and how I was doing as a person. She took time to ask me how my classes were going but also how I was doing, how my family was doing, was I getting enough to eat, and whether I doing alright. She made me feel like a member of her own family, not just a student worker and for many years when I returned to Furman as a visitor, she would always make sure that I stopped by to see her so we could catch up. Both of these mentors are great examples of the value Furman places on relationships.



Diane Iseminger

Internship Program Director

My mentor is a former supervisor, Steve Wantz. Steve taught me to take a more global view – of people, projects, opportunities, situations – so I could take in the whole view and consider options in a more comprehensive and inclusive way from multiple perspectives. He also taught me to believe in myself and that failure is an integral part of success.



Kim Keefer

Director, Shucker Center for Leadership Development

My mentors were: Kathy – my boss at my high school job, Ronnie – the person who inspired me to apply to grad school in higher education, & Harry, the higher ed professional who invited me to apply to work at Furman.

Each invested in me at times in my life when I needed teaching, encouragement, opportunity and support to keep moving forward in my life. From each, I learned to notice potential in people. It brings me so much joy now to invest in others in ways I know will positively impact their life trajectories.

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Rod Kelley
 Assistant Dean of Student Conduct

My mentor is Dr. Miguel Hernandez, Associate Dean of Students at UC Irvine. I first met Dr. Hernandez as a graduate student. We have since become colleagues while maintaining a mentoring relationship. Dr. Hernandez has helped me critically examine concerns I've had about imposter syndrome and evaluate how I practice care for myself, my colleagues, and the students I serve as a professional of color in higher education.



Cynthia King
 Professor of Communication Studies

Charlene Gilbert, a colleague at another university is one of my many mentors. Charlene coached me in advocating for myself from a mental position of strength. Instead of looking at what you don't have, be laser focused on what you have to offer, and that's your reality. This advice was especially useful in salary negotiations. Because of her mentorship, I've been able to negotiate larger starting salaries.



Kyle Longest
 Associate Academic Dean; Associate Professor of Sociology

My mentor was the Summer Orientation Director at Indiana University, Sarah Thompson Booher. Sarah helped me understand the difference between being a "good student" and being a true professional. She also fostered the skills and emotional maturity to help me make this transition.



Heidi McCrory
 Vice President for Development

One of my early mentors was our department's Vice President, John Zehring. John took the time (always!) to not just assign me a task and tell me what to do, but to share with me the bigger story – of why the work was valuable, of the strategic significance of the job, of how my one part was important in the broader context of fundraising and higher education. His generous approach inspired my passion for educational fundraising. He also encouraged me to get my master's degree in an area of study that excited me which was English, rather than pursue an MBA because I thought that was the degree I needed. Getting that English degree was a gift, an experience I treasure as a result, rather than a burden. Invaluable advice!

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Owen McFadden
 Director, Campus Recreation

John Smyth, a physical education professor and intramural sports director at The Citadel, was my undergraduate and graduate school professor, work supervisor and life-long friend. He provided me with information about his career path, introduced me to experts in my chosen career path at professional meetings, taught me the importance of self-control/discipline and calm in difficult situations, and how to steady life's challenges with family, faith and a great sense of humor. I have been at Furman for 38 years, and I am certain his professional relationship with members of the search committee were paramount in my hiring.



Tony McGuirt
 Director of Auxiliary Services

My mentor is Jeff Martin, the Executive Director of The Conference Center & Inn at Clemson University (ret). Jeff gave me my first full time professional position and for the following fourteen year he continually challenged me with responsibilities and tasks I wasn't always sure I was ready to tackle. His motivation and support helped me grow professionally to meet the challenges given. Always grateful to him for pushing and believing in me as a young professional.



Matt Olson
 Professor of Saxophone and Director of Jazz Studies

My mentor was Don Owens, who was Professor of Music and Director of Jazz Studies at Northwestern University. D.O. (as we called him) showed by example how to be an excellent teacher. His rapport with students of all ages was amazing to observe. He also gave me so much helpful advice about music and, perhaps more importantly, life, and his influence on me comes out in me every day. Without realizing it, I'm sure I use a lot of his words in my own teaching, and I also try to "pay forward" his dedication to mentoring.



Lauren Payne
 Assistant Vice President of Career and Professional Development

Dr. Laurie Williamson, Faculty Advisor, Appalachian State University was my mentor. Dr. Williamson was instrumental in helping me discover the field of Student Affairs. She provided me with the opportunity to teach a career planning class at Appalachian State University which led my passion for supporting students with their career development. She supported me when I decided to travel across the country to complete an internship at the Career Center at UC Santa Barbara which led to my first job at UC San Diego.

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Ken Petterson

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost; Professor of Economics

My high school speech and drama teacher, Ms. Gilbertson, and my band teacher, Mr. Roussel were particularly influential. They were no-nonsense teachers who communicated high performance expectations while simultaneously helping you see the path that would allow you to meet their high standards. They also had an effective way of convincing you that you could do better—it made you want to improve.



Rolyn Rollins

Program Coordinator for Student Initiatives, Cothran Center for Vocational Reflection

In high school, one of my mentors was the music minister at our church, Dr. Glen Adkins (he's a Furman grad, too!). Glen gave me the support and encouragement that I needed to help me believe in myself as a singer. He also regularly introduced me to new music and provided numerous opportunities for me to sing in front of an audience, whether in a choral setting or as a soloist.



Sue Samuels

Director of Bands, Music Education Coordinator

My mentors have been each of the band directors I have had or worked with since 5th grade! I learned something valuable from each role model: the value of community, the power of music, and the significance of relationships we build along the way. Our pursuit of excellence is in the journey rather than the destination.