

2023 National Mentoring Month
Furman Faculty and Staff Mentors
(listed alphabetically)



Alex Akulli

Associate Director and Principal Designated School Official (PDSO)
 International Student Support and Engagement

My mentor was/is Dr. Frank Novakowski, a professor of management, international business executive, and Air Force veteran. In my early years of college teaching and student advising, he modeled for me the importance of sharpening and diversifying my skillset, “the tools in the toolbox” he called it, so that I would maximize on my potential for what I can offer to my students, colleagues, employers, and community. He inspired me to become a lifelong learner and an asset to everyone that I am in community with.



Angelica Lozano-Alonso

Faculty Director of the Office for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Professor of Spanish, Spanish Language Coordinator

My father Dr. Anthony G. Lozano was my biggest professional mentor. He was a Professor Emeritus of Spanish Linguistics at the University of Colorado. In addition to being an incredible father, I shared a profession with my dad. My dad was a first generation college student and one of the first Chicanos in higher education. He loved sharing a profession with me and discussing all aspects of university life from publications to university politics.



Benjamin Dobbs

Assistant Professor of Music Theory

My most important mentor was my graduate school professor/advisor, Dr. Graham Phipps, at the University of North Texas.

Graham taught me to think deeply and critically about music and its historical and cultural contexts, and he encouraged me to study abroad (which I did multiple times!). Most importantly, he treated me not like a student, but like a junior colleague and future music professor.



Carmela Epright

Professor of Philosophy

My mentor, Dr. William Zanardi, was my first philosophy professor in college at St. Edward’s University. Bill Zanardi asked me to consider a life changing question: “what is worth the investment of your life?” He believed in me, my intelligence, and my capacity to use philosophy to positively impact the world. Most importantly, he taught me the importance of teaching; I learned through him that caring about and encouraging students can impact their lives in profoundly meaningful ways.

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Courtney Firman-Watkins

Assistant Director of Student Office for Accessibility Resources at Furman University

My mentor was a former high school teacher - first as a part-time Enrichment/Special Education teacher and then as my AP US History teacher, Mr. Michael Conn. He was also the first teacher to organize a trip where I saw a Broadway show, and my first trip abroad to England, Wales and Scotland. Mr. Conn encouraged me to question the status quo. He was the first person outside of my family to encourage me to explore the wider world and inquire about how it worked and how others experienced it. He was my first example of what it means to be a good ally, before I understood that was even needed. He prodded me to explore beyond what was comfortable and familiar, and always offered an ear to reflect on what I had experienced.



Franklin Ellis

Associate Dean and Director of the Center for Inclusive Communities

My mentor was a Student Affairs professional from my undergrad experience Mrs. Pat Singleton-Young.

I learned from my mentor that the foundation of being inclusive is suspend judgement and love unconditionally.



Glen Halva-Neubauer

Dana Professor, Politics and International Affairs

Connie Danielson, who was my piano teacher from 1968-1976, influenced my life in profound ways. Connie opened my world to the beauty of music, particularly the Romantics, but far more importantly she expanded my imagination about what was possible in life. She fueled my curiosity about politics, religion, art, history, and science, while paving the way for my lifetime fascination with food.



John McArthur (with mentor, Van King)

Professor & Chair, Communication Studies

Van King, the former editor and publisher of the Greensboro News & Record, has been a longtime mentor to me. More than anyone else I've met, Van knows how to develop people, how to uncover and encourage their strengths, and how to harness their potential. He shaped my thinking and practice about how I can challenge and support students to forge their own paths forward.

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Kevin Hutson
 Professor of Mathematics

My mentor was Dr. Dwayne Collins. He was my professor for Calculus I-II and several other mathematics courses in college. Dr. Collins taught me that mathematics was more about problem solving and logical thinking and not about formula memorization as I was led to believe in high school. He showed me that mathematics is a creative endeavor that can produce great feelings of revelation and joy.



Kristy Maher
 Professor of Sociology

My mentor was Dr. Doug MacDonald, retired Philosophy Professor at Furman. Reaching out to me early in my career at Furman, he helped shape who I have become as a professor and a person. Together we created the "Medicine Program" which combines Medical Sociology, Medical Ethics and extensive observation in the health care system. Doug inspired me to create a career filled with interdisciplinary teaching and engaged learning.



Lillian Essaf Associate
 Director for Residence Life

My mentor was my Residence Hall Association advisor during my undergrad, Skip Begley.

Skip helped me grow personally and professionally by listening, challenging me, and providing thoughtful advice. He introduced me to my current career—working in Student Life!



Linda Bartlett
 Cary Shepard Crantford Professor of Modern Languages and Literatures;
 Chair, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

My mentor was Dr. Candelas Gala, one of my undergraduate Spanish professors and my honors thesis advisor. She was an excellent role model who taught me the value of high expectations. Her example and her guidance inspired me to become a professor!

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Margaret Oakes

Professor of English; Chair of the Humanities Interdisciplinary Minor

My guide to a successful career and work-life balance was my father Robert Oakes, who was the school superintendent in my hometown when I was growing up. My father was responsible for the final desegregation of our school system, which took place with little fuss and no backlash because of his leadership. He was reasonable, a great listener with his employees, and superbly calm under pressure – things I still aspire to!



Natalie The

Associate Professor and Chair of Health Sciences

My mentor was my college tennis coach at Furman, Debbie Southern. Debbie was a coach, educator, and role model to her players. Two of her many favorite sayings were “the journey is the reward, not the destination” and “success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming.” I learned to try to bring my best self to every day and to make the most of each day.



Sandy Roberson

Professor, Business and Accounting

My mentor was my college Intermediate Accounting Professor, Mr. Glenn Harman. He expected a lot from his students and supported us so that we could meet his expectations. I vividly remember having to seek his help on a concept I did not understand, embarrassed because I had never asked a professor for help before. He was patient, answering all my questions, and helping me to realize that there was no shame in needing help. As a professor I strive to be as approachable and patient as Mr. Harman was.



Savita Nair

Gordon Poteat Professor of Asian Studies and History; Director of the Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

My first mentor was my 4th grade teacher, Ms. Haydn. I was a new immigrant kid and Ms. Haydn always made me feel welcome and part of a classroom that was mixed white and black but no brown. She knew that being Indian meant that I came from India and not from indigenous/native communities within the U.S. I appreciated her for that. She taught me that learning was cool and that all of us can do it: black, white, and brown me. She also wore cool feathers and beaded jewelry and her hair was tied up in a high knot. It was the '70s after all!

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Scott Murr

Associate Professor of Health Sciences

My mentor was Dr. Sandy Molnar who was a professor of health and physical education here at Furman when I was a student here. Dr. Molnar believed in, embraced and challenged his students to their full potential towards a healthy mind, body and spirit for “optimal” living.



Victoria Turgeon

Professor of Biology and Academic Director of Prisma Partnerships

My mentor was (and still is) my college advisor, Dr. Doug Shedd. Dr. Shedd helped me develop the skills needed to navigate graduate school, look for a faculty position, and advocate for myself as a woman in STEM. To this day, he is one of my main sounding boards when I am considering whether to take on a new responsibility.



Willard Page

Professor of English

Floyd Watkins, Professor of English at Emory University, was my mentor both in college and graduate school.

Floyd taught me to write succinctly, to love Faulkner’s novels, and to value the professor-student relationship.