

FINISH LINE

ISSUE 9
WINTER/
SPRING 2018

Furman Undergraduate Evening Studies



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

FURMAN UES GRADUATES FIND SUCCESS AT BMW

They have different motivations, skills and goals, but these three BMW employees share one common attribute: a dedication to expanding their educational horizons. From management to human resources, each earned a degree from Furman and used newfound expertise to springboard into new roles and expand their career opportunities.



PHIL VOLINO

Phil Volino has worked at BMW for 24 years, starting out as a maintenance technician on assembly conveyors. "I was one of the first maintenance guys hired here in 1994," he said.

project leader, and the last project I led was valued at \$25 million," he said.

His degree not only helped him earn the role, it also affects how he handles his day-to-day responsibilities. "It helped me know more about cash flow, international business and understanding how things work," he said. "I'm better prepared."

Volino has steadily added to his educational credentials since graduating from high school in 1981. He joined the Navy and first trained to be an electrician on airplanes. He later joined Dow Chemical as an electrician, and when their Mauldin plant closed, he found the BMW job.

After earning a bachelor's degree in business administration from Furman in August of 2016, he is now a senior equipment and controls planner. "I'm a

Around the same time that he joined BMW, he completed his associate's degree in electronic engineering at Greenville Technical College and went on to complete another associate's degree in automotive technology from Spartanburg Community College in 1997. "My job kept growing faster and I needed to keep up," he said.

"I want to keep my value high and have options for what I want to do. I might eventually teach or consult."

The speed of growth at BMW offered many opportunities to advance, and he wanted to keep growing along with the company. As he took on more engineering projects and worked with different cultures, he came across Undergraduate Evening Studies at Furman and realized it would be the ideal next step. "I could learn about business, culture and international business. I felt like, if I'm going to put the time in, I wanted it to mean something, and Furman meant the most."

During his seven years at Furman, he was struck by the quality of his fellow students "and how much I learned from them."

In his continuing quest for knowledge, Volino is currently completing his MBA at Clemson. "The bottom line is lifelong learning," he said. "I want to keep my value high and have options for what I want to do. I might eventually teach or consult."

He is grateful that Furman, BMW and his family offered him so much support along the way. "It was difficult, but I'm glad to have taken the opportunity," he said.



PAUL SINANIAN

Paul Sinanian '14, a manager of total vehicle validation at BMW, earned a bachelor's in accounting from Furman for a different reason than most. "I did it to relax," he said.

"I enjoy learning and I went back to school to shut my phone off and pay attention."

Sinianian earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering straight out of high school before joining Bosch as a manufacturing and development engineer. He also earned an MBA from Clemson. After seven years, he joined BMW as a product validation engineer before moving into his manager role.

When he began at Furman, he had been in management for two years and wanted to learn additional managerial techniques. "I looked at every teacher as a manager of the class," he said.

Since his undergraduate degree was in engineering, he appreciated the liberal arts aspects of Furman. "It opened up different avenues to think about," he said. "I enjoyed being in a collaborative environment that isn't like work."

He valued the diversity in his classes and group projects that allowed him to understand different perspectives. His favorite class was Strategic Management taught by John Meindl. "It really connected all the dots, and transformed the way I manage and teach at work," he said. "I use a teaching perspective more than a path-oriented managerial perspective. If you align vision, mission and strategy, you can build something that's not target-based or transaction-based, but transformational."

"I enjoyed being in a collaborative environment that isn't like work."

As he continues to collect degrees, his next step is likely a master's degree in teaching, and his experience at Furman reconfirmed his desire to pursue the field.

"I've always been a defender of people who go to school at night," he said. "It's impressive and quite motivating. There are some smart people in these classes working really hard. It's uplifting to see people working that hard, and seeing the rewards is quite nice as well."

continued on page 5

FACULTY FOCUS

NEVER TOO LATE

After 20 Years, Chidester Took a Second Shot at Her Childhood Dreams

*By Leigh Savage,
Contributing Writer*

Today, Dianne Chidester is a respected instructor in anthropology and sociology at Greenville Technical College and Furman Undergraduate Evening Studies. However, 40 years ago, she was flunking out of college.

"I was a first-generation college student, and I wasn't ready," she said. Overwhelmed and under-prepared, she dropped out, moved from Ohio to North Carolina and took a job as a secretary for surgeon Dr. Erle Peacock. She later became office manager and worked there for two decades.

Over the years, she considered returning to college for her degree. "I gave it a shot a couple of times," she said, "but life gets in the way."

Inspiration arrived when Dr. Peacock, who founded the UNC Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and the UNC Hand Rehabilitation Center, decided to retire from medicine and go to law school.

"That left me without a job," Chidester said. Dr. Peacock encouraged her to go to college, but she told him she had already tried that and it hadn't gone well. He implored her to take a couple of classes at a community college and "see how it goes."

Once she began, she was forced to select a major. "I thought it didn't make any difference what I majored in," Chidester said. "I just wanted a degree so I could get another office job. When I was a kid, I wanted to be an archaeologist, and you could major in anthropology at Alamance Community College, so I said I would do that."

She eventually earned her bachelor's degree in anthropology from UNC Greensboro in 1994 at the age of 42, and by then, she had realized that the office life was not for her after all. All these years later, she still wanted to be an anthropologist. "I wanted to teach at a community college and reach out to non-traditional students because of my own experience," she said.

To pursue that dream, she earned a master's degree in anthropology from the University of South Carolina, and was able to assist on an archeological project in Western Mexico. Being hired at USC helped her fall in love with teaching. "I like explaining things, and I love anthropology," she said. "There are always new discoveries coming out, new ideas."



DIANNE CHIDESTER

After stints teaching at the University of South Dakota and a community college in Kentucky, she joined the faculty at Greenville Tech in 2005, teaching anthropology and sociology. She found that some community colleges offer anthropology infrequently or not at all, so she earned 24 credit hours in sociology - "almost a master's," she said - so she can teach those courses as well.

In 2007, she became an adjunct professor at Furman in UES, and enjoys teaching Furman students, many of whom are earning degrees in business or accounting. "Cultural anthropology is important for people going into business," she said. "The work is international, multinational. They need to learn how to stand back and see why things happen, how things happen to a culture. It's cultural relativism, and they need good analytical skills."

While she values both of her jobs, she finds that students at Greenville Tech tend to vary more widely, where one class might have a 14-year-old and a 65-year-old. Furman students "are really determined, work hard and bring life experiences to the discussion," she said. "Many of them have international experiences as well, which enhances the classroom experience."

Her 20 years in the workplace added value to what she brought to the classroom. Many of her students are in the same boat, bringing skills, determination and understanding that they didn't have at 18.

continued on next page

QUALITY MATTERS

During the past year, Furman University joined Quality Matters (QM), an organization that provides a best practice rubric and training opportunities for ensuring the quality of blended and online courses. Four of our evening studies professors participated in the Quality Matters program. Upon completion of the program, they will each receive the QM Teaching Online certificate. Participating in the program were David Johnson (business), McCrady Gwinn (accounting), Elizabeth Gordon (chemistry) and Marian Osborne-Berky (religion). A generous designated gift to Undergraduate Evening Studies made the Quality Matters program possible for these instructors.

The certificate curriculum included in-depth study of the following topics relevant to instructional delivery of content:

- Evaluating your institutional policies: (2 weeks)
- Evaluating your course design (2 weeks)
- Orienting your online learners (1 week)
- Connecting learning theories to your teaching strategies (2 weeks)
- Gauging your technology Skills (1 week)
- Creating presence in online classroom (2 week)
- Assessing your learners (1 week)

According to participant Elizabeth Gordon, she saw the following results from the certificate program:

- A more comprehensive understanding of Furman's policies
- A better idea of the resources and effort required to design an effective online course
- New teaching strategies, particularly around the topics of scaffolding and accessibility
- More disciplined time management of the course

Never Too Late

continued from page 3

Chidester's life has taken many twists and turns over her 65 years. She said it proves John Lennon's point about life happening when you are busy making other plans. She is glad she was open to making changes and hopes she can inspire her students to do the same.

She's also grateful to Dr. Peacock, now deceased, for showing her that it is never too late to pursue your interests. After decades as a surgeon, he went on to have a law practice for 15 years.

"It took me a long time to get here," she said. "I didn't think I was smart enough or had the resources, but I finally did what I said I wanted to do when I was a kid."

Furman UES Graduates Find Success at BMW

continued from page 2

ELLE COHEN

Elle Cohen began at BMW working on the line as a production associate. After six years, she moved into a supervisor role, but what truly interested her was human resources.

She had earned an associate's degree in business management at Greenville Tech, but when she checked job postings at BMW, every human resources job required a four-year degree. "I was ineligible," she said. "I knew if I wanted to further my career, I had to go back to school."



"I had been passed over with no bachelor's degree, and I was discouraged about the missed opportunities," said Elle Cohen, who worked at BMW for 16 years before earning her degree in 2016. "Now I feel empowered. I only wish I had done it earlier."

As Furman is a private university, she was concerned about price but quickly saw that UES tuition was comparable to other schools in the Upstate. With BMW's tuition assistance, "It was very affordable."

Working toward her bachelor's degree in 2012 was a difficult decision. "That same year, we adopted a child," said Cohen, who already had four children

ages 12 through 19 at the time. "I took a semester off to get things situated with the new baby, but I was trying my best not to stop," she said. "If you take a break, it's hard to get motivated to go back. The staff at Furman were very supportive."

She valued the way Furman offered help along the way, including a tutoring program that allowed students who excelled in certain areas to help other students who were struggling. "I took advantage of that in several classes," Cohen said. "I did that with probability and statistics, and I ended up making an A."

Another perk of the program was the staff, including an advisor who helped her when she became discouraged by all the years she waited before pursuing her dream. "He told me that right out of high school, I wasn't prepared mentally, but now I realized the importance of education and I'm not wasting my money," she said. "It was one of the realest things anyone told me. A lot of people wait and have to mature first."

She enjoyed meeting students from different walks of life and different industries, from an executive at Fluor to a gas station owner.

One year after completing her degree in 2016, Cohen noticed a human resources position listed on BMW's website. This time, when she saw that the job, associate relations professional, required a bachelor's degree, she was proud to send in her application, and she got the job.

"I think it's a great fit," she said. "If I decide to take another position, I would want a higher position in human resources." Cohen says she daily applies the skill learned through her degree, particularly organizational behavior, management and communication. "That really resonates in the human resources role," she said. "People are your number one resource, and to sustain the business, you have to make sure people feel gratified when they come to work."

DATA DRIVEN

Analytics Help Companies Boost Efficiency and Maximize Profits

by Leigh Savage, Contributing Writer

Data analytics, according to Wikipedia, is the process of collecting and inspecting data to find useful information, suggest conclusions and aid in decision-making. While businesses have been collecting and examining data for centuries, technological innovations have opened up a whole new world of data and new avenues for business optimization.

“I don’t think it’s complicated,” said Phil Corbett, manager of marketing analytics and communications at IBM and a strategic consultant with Undergraduate Evening Studies (UES). “Analytics is fundamentally about asking questions, and with the right questions, you can get answers from your data.”

Technological advances have led to the “democratization of data,” he said, so that anyone can find loads of information related to his or her business. “It’s no longer one guy with a spreadsheet and thick glasses. Data is available at anyone’s fingertips.”

Using software and specialized analytics systems, companies can find untapped markets, improve marketing messages, increase efficiency and customer satisfaction. Transaction data is just one piece of the puzzle, with businesses now able to use online sources such as clickstream data, social media posts, phone records, web servers and even data captured by household items like Amazon Alexa and Google Home.

“That’s the internet of things,” Corbett said, referring to devices and machines that can transfer data without human participation. “All sorts of data comes in, so the issue becomes, how do we manage it, organize it and get something out of it?”

One reason data analytics is such an important topic is that it can be applied to all aspects of business, from marketing and human resources to finance and supply chain.

Jeff Diaz ’06, CIO at SJWD Water District in Spartanburg and an adjunct professor in Furman Undergraduate Evening Studies (UES), said his approach is taking “what seems to be loosely

correlating information and turning that into knowledge that we can take action on. It’s taking data and using it to make decisions that drive the business forward.”

As a utility company, one of the largest costs at SJWD is pumping large volumes of water across vast spaces. According to Diaz, keeping the company’s power bill as low as possible leads to lower rates for customers. “The actual pumps collect data such as the temperature of the motor and voltage irregularities,” he said. This information allows staff members to make decisions about how best to distribute water as well as when to maintain or replace equipment.

SJWD uses an algorithm designed by the U.S. Department of Energy to analyze data inputs. In addition to keeping power consumption and related costs down, the system also cuts capital expenditures, as pumps can cost more than \$500,000. “It helps get that ROI,” he said.

MAXIMIZING DATA

With so much data coming in so many forms, including video, social media, and websites, the challenge according to Corbett is hiring people who can process and analyze that data. Understanding a programming language such as Python helps people extract the data, and further training allows people to understand the data once it is extracted.

Data starts in a straight-forward descriptive form. “This is spreadsheets or data visualizing,” he said. “Visualizing data is the key enabler for anyone who wants to analyze data.”

Once the data has described a situation, it can then become diagnostic. If descriptive data shows that sales were down in May, diagnostic looks into why the sales were down in May. The more advanced stage, said Corbett, is predictive analytics, when multiple data sources can be used to predict certain outcomes. A prescriptive analysis then takes the information a step further, showing what businesses can do to optimize profits.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FALL 2017 UES DEAN’S LIST

Furman UES Dean’s List achievement is awarded to students who are enrolled in six or more credit hours and earn a grade point average of at least 3.4 during a semester.

Geoffrey S Allen
Catherine C Avinante
Devin G Berlin
Jennifer C Bobo
Lauren S Canady
Katlyn A Clark

Jennifer B Cote
Diana K Godwin
Christopher G Haley
Jason N Mendez
Robert W Pappas
Christopher A Reynolds

Helen Reynolds
Susan M Simmons
Sydney Townsend
Joshua S White

Diaz has witnessed data analysis evolve from a more theoretical approach, when most businesses didn’t have the processing power or storage capacity to successfully gather and analyze large sets of data, to a more practical tool for businesses today. Even the smallest businesses can benefit to some degree.

For example, a small restaurant may use data to find out the best times to order food and beverages to prevent spoilage and maximize savings. “They could find out how weather affects sales and what people choose to eat. That helps you plan your orders and stock your pantry,” Diaz said.

George Manteghi completed his business degree at Furman in 2008 and is now a senior buyer at biotech conglomerate Lonza. Using data for supply chain management is a key area of focus for Manteghi. “We use the numbers to paint a picture of what we are trying to accomplish with our supply chain, such as on-time delivery. We can play with the numbers,” to optimize efficiencies, he said.

Recent advances have allowed companies to do “a whole lot more with less,” he said. He uses SAP software, employing an algorithm that shows when purchases must be made to prevent stock shortages. “We’re dealing with data that manages millions of dollars’ worth of inventory, so we don’t want to buy too much or too little,” he said.

While the technology is helpful, Manteghi said it is pivotal for companies to have employees who can decipher what the numbers are saying. He sees companies striving to become more nimble, accomplishing in a week what used to take a month. Companies “need robust systems to look at the data, finding shortcuts to make decisions, because time is money.”

Diaz added that data analytics is the future of operations management, as “everyone is being asked to do more with less. It’s about using business and management acumen to define vision and then using these analytic platforms to deliver.”

“The fundamental common denominator is critical thinking and common sense,” Corbett said. “If you ask the right questions, the data will be there.”

Furman’s Data Analytics Certificate sets you apart in a competitive, relevant and growing field. Our program will give you the academic foundation and real-world experiences to develop your expertise in collecting, interpreting and making sound decisions from data. Employers across all industries are seeking those who possess this in-demand skill set. Now’s the time to dive in to data and advance your career!

Contact us today for more information at furman.edu/ues or 864.294.3141.

UES SCHOLARSHIPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Every year many students struggle financially to achieve their Furman education. For many students, financial aid and scholarships are the single greatest factor contributing to their ability to attend and graduate from Furman.

This year, thanks to the generosity of a donation of \$10,000 from **Sharon and Leonard Lee** in 2017, UES can help even more students with financial assistance. As Furman alumna who took many of her courses in Undergraduate Evening Studies, Sharon understands the financial challenges that working adults face when making the decision to enroll in college later in life, and wants to designate a gift that would alleviate some of the burden.

In addition to this newest scholarship, UES also awards students from these endowed funds:

- **The Jack Dickey Scholarship**—open to juniors and seniors with demonstrated financial need and high academic achievement
- **The Dr. Grace Hill Scholarship**—an annual award to one UES student with demonstrated financial need and a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- **The Hazel Long Smith '41 Scholarship**—awarded to students with demonstrated financial need

Contributions, large or small, make a big difference to hardworking students who juggle many competing financial obligations as they strive to improve their lives. UES is actively seeking to grow the **Frances Selby "Gig" Meredith** fund to

an endowment level (\$10,000). Currently the Gig Meredith Award recognizes an outstanding UES graduating senior each year and is publicly awarded to the student at Furman's annual Academic Award Banquet. Once the fund becomes endowed, it will also provide recipients with a scholarship award.

In 2016–17 academic year, UES awarded a total of \$19,200 in scholarships to ten students.

Undergraduate Evening Studies scholarships are available each semester to returning students who demonstrate strong academic ability and financial need. Students wishing to apply for a scholarship can download the application from the Costs and Financial Aid section of the UES website at furman.edu/ues.

The 2017–2018 scholarship application deadlines are:

- May 1, 2018 for the summer term
- August 6, 2018 for the fall semester
- December 17, 2018 for the spring semester

UES welcomes gifts at all levels.

To give, please visit furman.edu/give. Choose "Other" to designate "Undergraduate Evening Studies" By choosing "Other," you may restrict your gift to a particular fund (for example, UES: Gig Meredith fund or UES: Educational Excellence operational fund)



MARK YOUR CALENDAR*

March 19	Summer schedule released	June 1	Fall schedule released
March 23.....	Spring Block C withdrawal deadline	June 4.....	Summer term begins
March 30-	Easter holiday break for	June 11, by 5 p.m....	Add/Drop Deadline
April 1	Block C courses ONLY	July 1	Fall admission application deadline
April 11.....	Spring Block B withdrawal deadline	July 1	Fall term registration opens
April 15	Summer admission application deadline	July 2-4.....	Independence Day: No classes
April 16	Summer registration opens	July 16, by 5 p.m....	Summer term withdrawal deadline
April 25-May 1	Block C final exams	August 1	Fall registration deadline
April 30-May 2	Block B final exams	August 2-8.....	Summer term final exams
May 3, Noon.....	Instructor final grade deadline for graduating seniors	August 10, noon.....	Instructor final grade deadline
May 4	Instructor final grade deadline for non-graduating students	August 11	Commencement
May 4	UES Commencement Celebration	August 14.....	Summer final grades available in MyFurman
May 5.....	Commencement	Aug 20.....	UES Fall semester begins
May 8	Spring final grades accessible to students in MyFurman	Sept. 3	Labor Day: No classes, offices closed
May 16.....	Summer registration deadline	Sept. 5-19	Entry period for UES Art Exhibition

*Dates subject to change. Current information available at calendar.furman.edu



Furman University
Undergraduate Evening Studies
3300 Poinsett Highway
Greenville, South Carolina 29613-1507

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Greenville, SC
Permit No. 1460

Address Service Requested