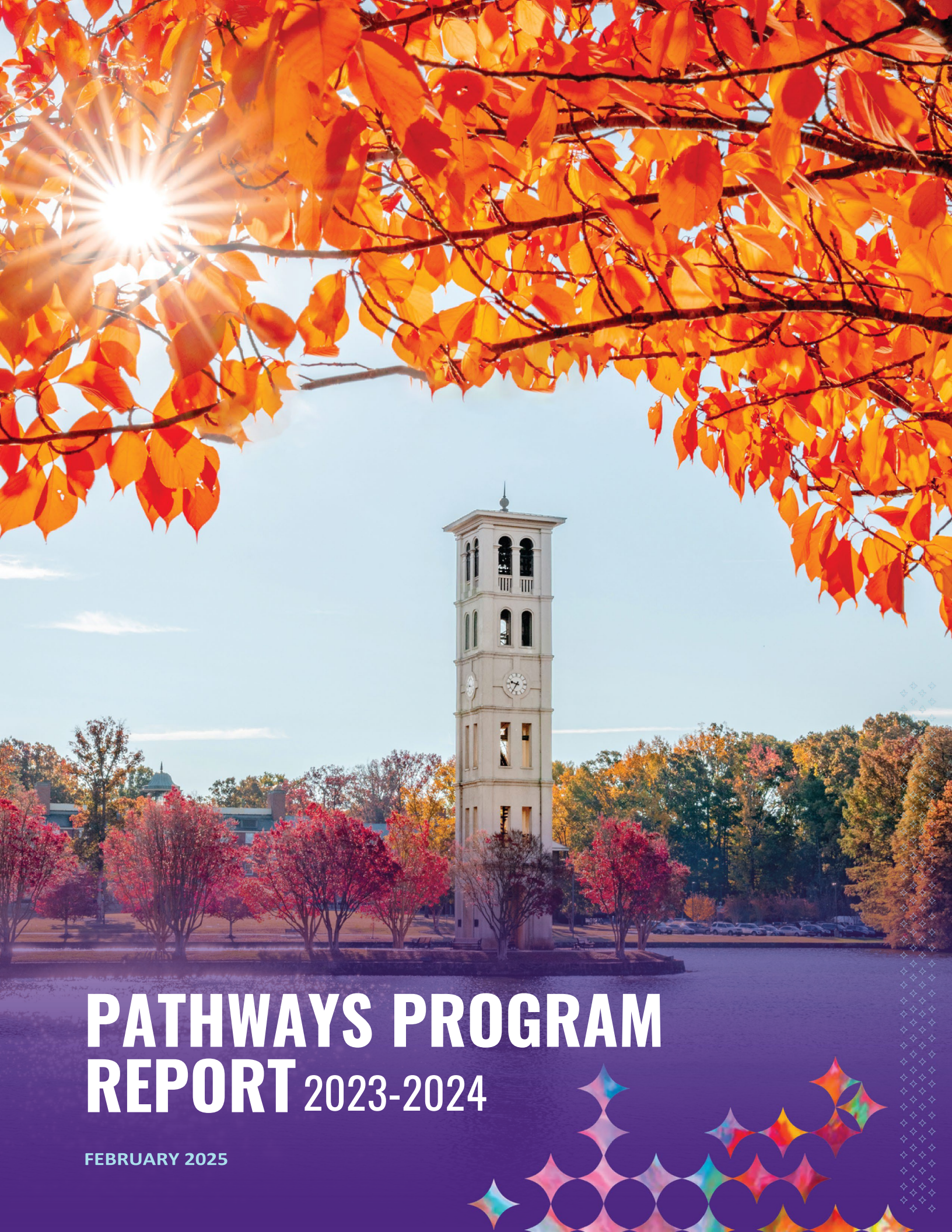




# PATHWAYS PROGRAM REPORT 2023-2024

FEBRUARY 2025

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pathways Program® is Furman’s credit bearing advising program that supports students through their first year and sophomore year. The program was adopted as a graduation requirement and scaled to all incoming first-year students beginning in Fall 2022. This report reflects data collected during the 2023-2024 academic year on new incoming students (Class of 2027) and sophomores (Class of 2026) who represent the first two cohorts for which Pathways is a graduation requirement. In September 2024, reflecting the 2023-2024 year, Furman was ranked #22 in “Best First-Year Experiences” in the U.S. News and World Report, up significantly from prior years (#32 in 2022 and #56 in 2021).

In the second year of the fully scaled Pathways Program®, we experienced many successes, including:

## Retention

- Retention for first two Pathways cohorts at scale (91%, 91%) marks a return to pre-pandemic levels.
- Retention rates for first-gen students returned to pre-pandemic levels in the first Pathways cohort at scale (89%) and exceeds historical norm in the second cohort at scale (91%).
- Sophomore to junior retention in first cohort at scale (96%) exceeds the historical norm (92%).

## Evaluation of Advisors

- A majority of first-year and sophomore students who completed the advising survey report being satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their advising relationship.
- More students strongly agree their Pathways advisors encourage them to reflect on their experiences, articulate their skills and connect with resources for post-graduate planning compared to before Pathways.

## Student Outcomes

- 30% of first-year students share that Pathways contributed positively to their sense of belonging in final reflections.
- The proportion of students who reported knowing their purpose increased from first year to sophomore year and exceeded the levels of sophomores in previous years (pre-Pathways).
- Increased use of the Internship Office and Malone Center for Career Engagement by sophomores.

This report also identifies challenges for the Pathways Program related to staffing the program, training expectations, and perceptions of the program among faculty and students.



Furman University is a private liberal arts university located in Greenville, S.C. The student body consists of approximately 2,300 undergraduates with a four-year on-campus residency requirement and 200 graduate students. The demographics of the student body are 57% female, 27% students of color, and 11% first generation in their family to go to college. Furman offers over 75 academic programs within three undergraduate degrees (B.A., B.S., B.M.) and seven graduate programs (five M.A., one Ed.S., one M.S.). The student-faculty ratio is 9:1.

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education is facing many challenges. Gallup data show that Americans' confidence in higher education has fallen from 57% in 2015 to 36% in 2023 (Gallup, 2023). With rising costs and changing demographics resulting in fewer college-aged students, universities must make an argument for the **value of higher education** and demonstrate how higher education **prepares students for post-collegiate opportunities**. In addition, higher education faces challenges in the nature of the students that we serve. Over the past decade, students' **mental health concerns** have increased and these conditions were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2022 survey by the American College Health Association found approximately 77% of students reported experiencing moderate or serious psychological distress. In addition, the pandemic has widened pre-existing educational achievement gaps.

At Furman University, we began thinking about how to address these challenges nearly a decade ago. The work began with our participation in **the Student Resilience and Well-Being Project**, a four-year longitudinal study funded by the Duke Endowment that engaged four schools (Furman, Davidson, Duke and Johnson C. Smith) in conducting research to examine areas of challenge and resilience for students in the Class of 2018 throughout their four years of college. This research confirmed that we needed to take a **holistic approach** to supporting students and we needed to think about their experience through a developmental lens to ensure that the right supports are available at the appropriate time. The results also reinforced that every student is unique with their own multifaceted needs and therefore campus support needed to have **an element of personalization** to ensure that all students achieve their potential.



# THE FURMAN ADVANTAGE

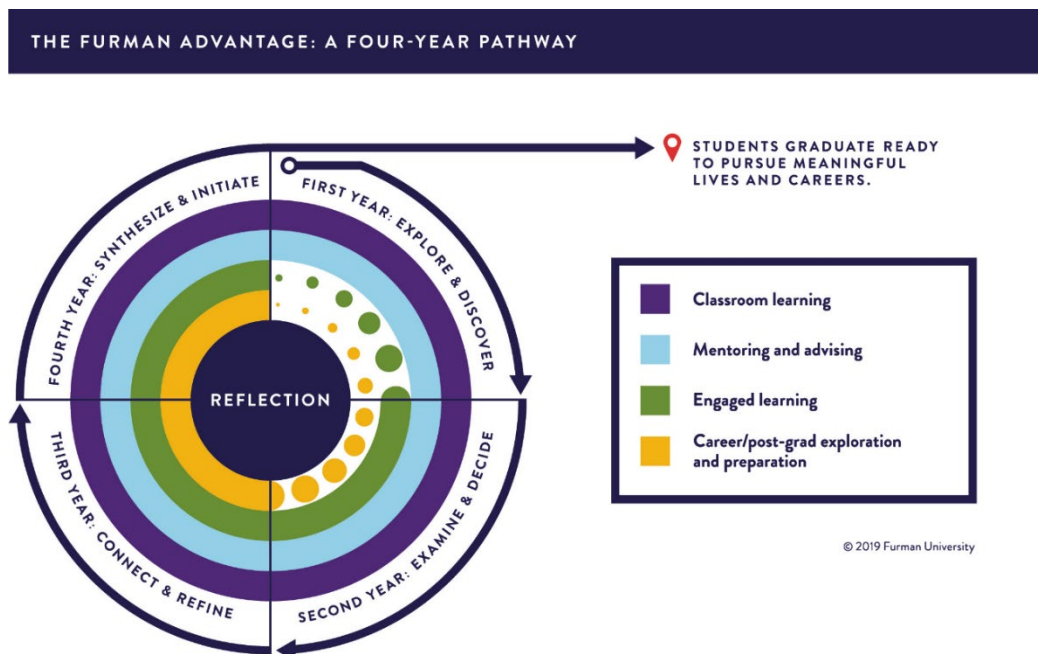
To address the challenges outlined above, in 2016, Furman University launched **The Furman Advantage (TFA)**, a vision for an integrated approach to supporting each student's experience. **Central to TFA is an "integrated four-year pathway," which uses mentoring and advising to encourage students to think intentionally about their classroom learning, engaged learning experiences, and career exploration to prepare them for life after college.** This scaffolded approach ensures that all students are aware of the resources and opportunities that are available to them and that they are exposed to opportunities with enough time to ensure that they may participate. (For more details, see The Furman Advantage website: [furman.edu/furman-advantage](http://furman.edu/furman-advantage)) Working groups, consisting of faculty and staff from across several divisions of the university, were created to develop ideas for the implementation of the components of The Furman Advantage.

These groups concluded that to achieve the promise of the integrated four-year pathway in which all students had access to an immersive and impactful experience, students needed to be aware of available resources and needed dedicated time and guidance to reflect on their experiences to help them

articulate what they have learned, and to discern what opportunities they should pursue next.

This would require a new approach to advising and mentoring, one that would embed advising into the curriculum more directly and that would be developmentally scaffolded to address the needs of first-year students, sophomore students, and juniors and seniors within a major department.

Prior to the launch of The Furman Advantage, Furman offered components of a first-year experience program; however, the institution did not have a unified approach. Students participated in a summer orientation focused on introducing academic expectations, a fall orientation focused on acclimating to the campus socially, a first-year writing course focused on developing college-level writing skills, and were assigned an academic advisor. This approach is common across higher education in which efforts to support student success are relatively uncoordinated and insufficiently integrated (Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot, 2004). There was no formalized consistent curriculum or any assurance that students were uniformly receiving similar support in their first year.



In addition, there was no formalized consistent curriculum for sophomore students. Once students declared a major, many departments had developed programming to support students who were pursuing a path to graduate school, but this programming was inconsistent across departments and also did not consistently support students who intended to go into the workforce after graduation. Thus, the launch of The Furman Advantage provided us with the opportunity to reimagine and redesign our first year and sophomore programming to set the foundation for the four-year pathway in a coordinated and intentional way, while also addressing issues of awareness and access of support resources for students new to the university.

What emerged was the **Pathways Program®**, a common advising program to support first-year and sophomore students, followed by our Purposeful Pathways program that occurs within each academic department and supports junior and senior students with programming that is discipline specific. After several years of pilot testing, the two-year Pathways Program® was approved by the faculty as a graduation requirement for all incoming students in March 2023. Fall 2023 marked the first iteration of the program at scale. This report provides an overview of the two-year Pathways Program® and shares data that were collected on the first full-scale cohort of students participating in the Pathways Program® during their first two years of college.



# OVERVIEW OF THE PATHWAYS PROGRAM

## WHAT IS THE PATHWAYS PROGRAM?

The Pathways Program is an advising program supporting first- and second-year students. The program was designed with the goal of providing all students with a foundation that **would promote their success**, ensure **awareness of available resources**, and **allow all students to achieve** the promise of **The Furman Advantage**. The program consists of a set of four 1-credit, letter-graded courses. Students complete one course each term for their first four semesters. The class meets weekly for 50 minutes with advisors and peer mentors co-facilitating in the first year. Students are randomly assigned to cohorts such that each class section reflects a range of student interests across the liberal arts. A small subset of students opt-in to non-random cohorts that have been proposed by faculty and staff around different themes that vary annually.

The program is designed to be developmentally appropriate, providing **topical content** to students at the time when the topics are directly relevant to their college experience. In the first semester, students participate in a course designed to help ease the transition to college and to help students identify resources across campus. The second semester focuses on holistic wellness, learning about one's strengths, interests, and setting short- and long-term goals. The third semester focuses on career exploration. The final semester focuses on purpose, leadership and telling one's story. The program has also become a place for responding to challenging events in a localized way (e.g., sharing of support resources and encouraging reflection after losing a member of the campus community).

## PATHWAYS PROGRAM GOALS

The Pathways Program goals align with the components of student success outlined by Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot in the 2004 handbook, *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First-Year of College* and literature on supporting sophomore students (Schreiner, 2018). The Pathways Program aims to provide students with tools and information necessary to meet the following objectives:

1. Develop **intellectual curiosity** and **academic competence**
2. Establish and maintain **meaningful interpersonal relationships**
3. Develop one's **identity, purpose, and integrity**
4. Establish and maintain **personal health** and **wellness**
5. Develop **multicultural awareness** and **competence**
6. Explore potential **majors** and academic directions, including **study away, research, and internships**
7. Explore **career paths** and identify ways to build career competencies
8. Develop **career competencies**, including professionalism
9. Learn about the components of **leadership**
10. Engage in **reflection** on one's own development

## Year 1 Curriculum

Similar to a traditional first-year seminar, the curriculum in fall of year 1 is designed to support students as they transition to college. The curriculum addresses goals 1-5 and reflection (goal 10) listed above and covers topics that are typical of first-year seminars such as **time management**, **study strategies**, **stress management**, using **library resources**, and learning of offices across campus to support students' success. The first semester of the Pathways Program® also incorporates discussions of **values** and **thriving** into the curriculum. As part of goal 5, we include modules related to developing the skills of **empathetic listening** and **communicating across difference**. In addition to classroom meetings, peer mentors meet with their students outside of class at least once in the first six weeks of the term to check in and ensure that first year students are acclimating to Furman. Weekly reflection assignments also provide insight into how students are doing and whether additional connection or intervention is required on the part of the advisor.

The spring semester curriculum continues to address goals 1-5 and also introduces goal 6 (exploration of major directions) and goal 7 (introduction of career competencies). We introduce the university's **holistic wellness framework** in the second semester by engaging students in reflection on their first-semester experiences and encouraging them to think about how different facets of wellbeing intersect (e.g., academics and social, financial and social, etc.). We also use this opportunity to remind students of campus resources and encourage their use through peer modeling.

As part of goal 5, students participate in conversations around **what it means to belong** and how they can contribute to the campus community.

We intentionally introduce goal 7 in the first year to encourage students to begin thinking about careers; however, we recognize that many of our students are still in the phase where they are deciding what they want to do. Therefore, we introduce students to the **NACE career competencies** and ask them to think about how they are developing these competencies through their curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular experiences.

We also encourage students to begin thinking about how they may use **engaged learning experiences** to help develop these skills in the future through conversations with upper-class students who have experience participating in these activities. These conversations take place during our signature campus-wide event, **Furman Engaged**, in which students present what they learned through their research, internship and study away experiences. Throughout, students are asked to reflect on their experiences in and out of the classroom. By the end of the first year, students should be aware of resources, have explored the curriculum and potential majors, and have developed a supportive relationship with their advisor and peer mentor.



## Year 2 Curriculum

As the Pathways Program® extends into the sophomore year, it allows additional time to address goals 6-8 related to major and career exploration more deeply. We have found that sophomore students typically return to campus with a clearer sense of what major they want to pursue, making the sophomore fall an ideal time to engage in conversations about career exploration and engaged learning experiences that will be most informative to their path. Therefore, in the fall, sophomore students explore their **strengths** and **values**, and reflect on how these strengths and values can be applied in different career settings. Students are required to learn more about the engaged learning experiences that are available to them and what the processes and timeline are for applying to these experiences. This semester also develops practical skills by requiring students to complete a career conversation with an alum who works in the student's career field of interest, create a resume, learn how to engage in networking, and map out a plan for their remaining time at Furman.

In the spring semester of the sophomore year, the curriculum shifts the focus to how the student may have an impact on others and focuses on goal 9, leadership. The first half of the semester asks

students to reflect on **what they value**, how they want to **have an impact**, and forms of **leadership**. The second half of the semester focuses on helping students learn how to **articulate their story**. Thus, as they move into their majors by the end of the sophomore year, students should have a clear plan for what their next steps are along their four-year pathway, and they have been exposed to campus resources that they will need to engage with during their remaining time at Furman.



**Overall, the two-year Pathways Program® is a comprehensive, integrated curriculum that provides students with support that is scaffolded in a developmentally appropriate way.** It not only addresses issues of transition to college in the first year but extends to the sophomore year to support the changing needs of students by addressing purpose, career paths, engaged learning opportunities and leadership at the times when students are prepared to engage in these ideas. The modular nature of the curriculum allows for adjustments to be made each year to adapt and respond to the changing needs of students based on feedback from advisors and peer mentors. This two-year program sets up students to be prepared to engage with the continued programming that is designed for juniors and seniors that occurs within the major departments and provides a common set of expectations for academic departments to build from.

# PATHWAYS PROGRAM STAFFING

## ADVISOR RECRUITMENT AND COMPENSATION

Historically, advising was considered part of the service requirements for faculty members and was entirely voluntary for staff. When developing the Pathways Program®, we recognized that we needed to create a **compensation structure that reflected the importance of the Pathways Program®** while also acknowledging the additional time and effort that the program would require of advisors. In this new model, staff who volunteer to be advisors in the Pathways Program® are compensated with a stipend, with approval from their supervisors, equivalent to the rate for teaching a 4-credit overload. Faculty advisors are compensated with a stipend or may request their participation to count as part of their teaching load with approval of the Dean of Faculty and their department chair. Faculty who opt for compensation in the form of course credit are strongly encouraged to apply the course credit in the first semester of the program, when students have the greatest need for support.

In 2023, with an incoming class of 620 students, we recruited advisors to staff 40 sections. 52.5% were faculty and 47.5% were staff. 15% of the advisors had previous experience with facilitating the program during the pilot phase. 38% of faculty advisors opted to be compensated with course credit; the remaining advisors were compensated with a stipend.

## PEER MENTORS

A call for peer mentors was sent out to students in February 2023. Advisors who previously participated in the Pathways Program and colleagues in Student Life were asked to nominate students, who were then emailed directly and encouraged to apply. All students completed an application and interview process before being hired into the role. Each peer mentor co-facilitates two classes. Peer Mentors receive \$2400 per year as compensation.



## TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

All academic advisors at Furman are required to complete advisor training that provides them with **knowledge of graduation requirements, academic regulations**, and instruction on the use of advising **tools and systems**. This general training also includes a session on **inclusive advising** and **support resources**. Each year, advisors are encouraged to attend a brief refresher training to learn about changes to the curriculum and academic policies and support resources available on campus.

### Key Components of Pathways Training

- Provide an overview of the goals and objectives and connections across the curriculum
- Build a community of practice by encouraging new advisors to learn strategies from returning advisors
- Give advisors and peer mentors opportunity to plan facilitation of initial class periods

In the fall, Year 1 advisors and peer mentors participated in three days of training that provided an overview of the incoming class, **the arc of the curriculum** with experts sharing best practices, **classroom facilitation strategies**, advising first year students, and reminders of academic regulations and support resources. Optional sessions were also made available for advisors who were new to using the learning management software or teaching stations in classrooms. Peer mentors also received additional training related to supporting first year students, ethical considerations that emerge in the peer mentoring role, facilitating discussion, and self-care. In the spring, advisors and peer mentors completed a day and a half of training that reviewed the Health and Wellbeing Committee's work and the **framework of holistic wellbeing** that was used to organize the spring semester's content. Additional mandatory sessions included training about **financial aid** and **facilitating dialogues**. In all trainings, dedicated time was built into the schedule for

advisors and peer mentors to plan their facilitation strategy for initial class periods.

In the fall, Year 2 advisors participated in a day and a half training session in August to become familiar with the **career exploration resources** referenced in the fall curriculum and learn about the opportunities that Furman's Centers and Institutes offer for students. In the Spring, Year 2 advisors participated in one day of training to learn about the **leadership** arc of the curriculum and approaches for facilitating the **storytelling** modules.

Throughout the year, optional lunch and learns were offered on supporting students in distress, effective team-teaching strategies, supporting international students, strengths-based advising, and advising neurodivergent students. Peer mentors participated in weekly meetings to receive additional professional development and debrief their experiences.



# ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

The Pathways Program is assessed in a variety of ways to evaluate the **(1) fidelity of the program content** (i.e., consistency of content across sections, teaching effectiveness, feedback on content of modules), and **(2) student outcomes** related to the program goals. Data on the **program content** are collected through immediate short evaluation surveys completed at the end of each class and student opinions of teaching surveys. **This feedback shows that there is a high level of consistency across sections and ratings of instructor performance were in line or in some cases higher than overall university averages.** Feedback on course content is also provided by advisors and peer mentors throughout the year during meetings and online surveys. These data are shared with the Academic Advising Committee, which is responsible for curriculum oversight, and are used to inform changes to the curriculum over time.

**Student outcome data** are collected via available institutional data, quantitative surveys that are administered throughout the year by the **Office of Institutional Research**, and qualitative coding of end-of- year student reflections. In addition, student outcome data are collected annually through a partnership with **Gallup** and biennially through the **National Survey of Student Engagement** (NSSE; Note: These data were not collected in 2023-2024 and are therefore not included in this year's report). These latter entities, for some items, allow for the comparison to benchmark data from other institutions. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have compared results to baseline data collected in 2018 or 2019 where it exists; although, it should be noted that current students have experienced a range of challenges associated with the pandemic and therefore the historic student samples likely differ in many ways from the current student sample. In addition, during the pilot phase of the Pathways Program® we collected data from students in the program as well as control group of students who did not participate in the program. The results we found after the first year are largely consistent with the trends that emerged in the pilot phase.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES

### RETENTION

**Retention** was not a metric that was considered during the pilot phase of the Pathways Program due to small sample sizes. However, trends in the data during the pilot suggested that retention was likely to improve due to the program and that retention rates for first-generation college students (defined as students whose parents or guardians did not complete a four-year degree) were likely to benefit. Data provided by Institutional Research show retention has increased since scaling Pathways.

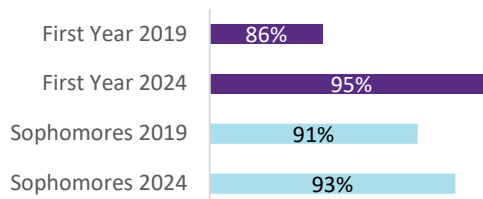
#### Key Takeaways

- In the two years of Pathways Program at scale, there have been **improvements in first-year to sophomore retention** compared to pandemic-era rates and a return to pre- pandemic norms (91%).
- First-Gen retention rates in 2023-2024 matched continuing gen and exceeded historical norms (**91%**)
- **Sophomore to Junior retention rates** in the first class to complete the Pathways requirement was 96%, up from 93% the year prior (without Pathways)

## SATISFACTION WITH ADVISING EXPERIENCE

Advising satisfaction is assessed at the end of each academic year via a survey administered to all current students. A larger proportion of first-year students reported being satisfied with advising compared to data from 2019 (pre-pandemic). Sophomore satisfaction also increased slightly compared to historical norms.

### Academic Advising Survey % Satisfied



## STUDENTS' PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE PATHWAYS PROGRAM

### First Year

All **first year students'** final reflections at the end of the spring semester were coded for themes that emerged in response to the prompt, *"Think back to when you arrived at Furman in August. How have you grown in the last year? What have you learned about yourself through the Pathways Program and your Furman experience to date?"*. The qualitative analysis found that **72% of students in the Class of 2027 wrote about Pathways as having been valuable to their first-year experience** (up from 67% the previous year). Only 1% of students wrote Pathways was a negative part of their experience, down from 7% of students the year before.

### Sophomore Year

In the **sophomore year**, students' final reflections showed that 50% wrote about Pathways had being valuable to their experience, 1% wrote Pathways was negative, and 7% stated that Pathways was not something they enjoyed but they noted that the content was useful.

"Prior to the pathways program, I had a very rigid view of my career prospects and I had strong belief that there was a fixed path/way to go about achieving it, however now I've seen that there are lots more ways to go about it through trying various new courses, experiences and opportunities." - Sophomore

"If I could sum up what I have learned from Pathways in one phrase, it would be to constantly be reflecting on the opportunities around you and the strengths, passions, and values that you possess." - Sophomore

"The Pathways Program has been helpful in reminding me that the small parts of my life which I often don't think too much about are very important because together, they will define my experience in college. Many of the concepts we covered were not new to me, but it was good to know that Furman wants to make sure we are prioritizing our personal wellbeing. It has definitely helped me to establish a sense of trust in that this institution truly wants me to succeed both outwardly and inwardly." - First Year

"Pathways is not a class that I typically look forward going to, but in reality, at the end of the day in my mind, I need that class more than anything." - First Year

"Pathways helped me transition into college in a practical sense, but also in the sense that it gave me space to reflect on my experiences and how they impacted me all throughout that crazy time. Pathways gave us all the chance to step back and critically evaluate where we were and where we wanted to be. It was a good, constant reminder every week that put things into perspective when we all needed it most." - Sophomore

# ASSESSMENT OF PATHWAYS PROGRAM GOALS

The Pathways Program intentionally addresses the foundational components of student success outlined above on page 7.

30% of students share that Pathways contributed positively to their **sense of belonging** in final reflections.

55% of first-year students mention **wellness** discussions in Pathways being helpful

**The Counseling Center** reported stable usage among first-year students (24% of the Class of 2027) compared to the year prior to Pathways launch (24% Class of 2025). Within the sophomore class (Class of 2026), 25% used these services in 2023-2024 compared to 30% of the class in their first year.

↑ 40% of first-year students (Class of 2027) agreed to the Gallup item, **"I know what my purpose in life is"**. This is similar to the Class of 2026 in their first year (42%) and both were higher than the first year class measured pre-pandemic in 2019 (36%). 50% of sophomores in the Class of 2026 reported agreement with the item, an increase relative to their own first-year (42%).

77% of sophomores agreed that they have **confidence in their abilities to discuss social and cultural differences** from an informed perspective - a decrease from their first-year baseline (86%) reflecting an increased awareness of the challenges, but also reflecting greater confidence compared to the class the year prior who did not have Pathways (67%)

The **Malone Center for Career Engagement** reported a small increase in number of first-year student appointments, increasing from 51 appointments in 2021-2022 (Class of 2025, pre-Pathways) to 75 appointments in 2022-2023 (Class of 2026) and 76 in 2023-2024 (Class of 2027).

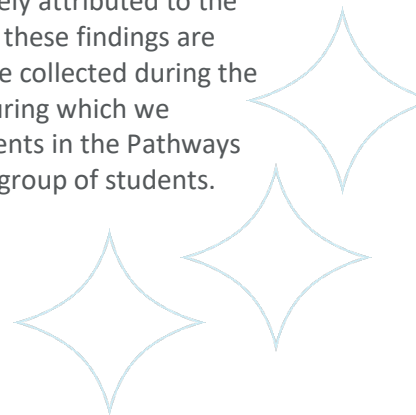
↑ The number of **sophomore appointments** at the Malone Center also increased from 124 appointments in 2022-2023 (Class of 2025, pre-Pathways) to 189 appointments in 2023-2024 (Class of 2026). 15% increase in the number of sophomores meeting with **internship office staff** compared to pre-Pathways

94% of sophomores agreed the **curriculum helped them develop useful career skills**

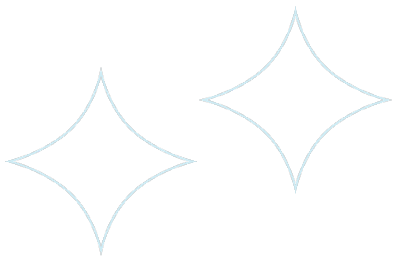
48% of sophomores strongly agreed they will **graduate with the knowledge and skills to be successful in the job market**, an increase from 27% of sophomores the year prior who didn't have Pathways.

A larger proportion of sophomores (24%) indicated that Furman helped them **present their skills to potential employers** compared to their first year (19%)

\*It is important to note that there have been many simultaneous activities across campus that may also contribute to these findings. Although the successes reported here may not be solely attributed to the Pathways Program®, many of these findings are consistent with data that were collected during the pilot phase of the program during which we compared outcomes for students in the Pathways Program® pilot and a control group of students.



# CHALLENGES FOR THE PROGRAM



Three ongoing challenges for the Pathways Program that continued in 2023-2024 were: 1) staffing the program over time; 2) navigating differing training needs for advisors with varying levels of experience; and 3) student perceptions of the program.

## STAFFING THE PROGRAM

Recruitment of faculty advisors presents a larger challenge than recruitment of staff or peer mentors. The primary barriers for faculty participation include concerns about timing in light of upcoming sabbatical or study away programs, other service commitments, and a desire to participate for course credit but not having this option due to departmental staffing needs.

With respect to staff, recruitment has been less of a challenge. Staff report that they value participating as a form of professional development and as an opportunity to connect and support our students in ways that their primary roles do not allow them. They also appreciate that their participation is compensated; prior to the Pathways Program their participation as advisors was voluntary and uncompensated.

The recruitment of peer mentors has also not been a challenge. Student interest in the peer mentor role is high, as evidenced by the fact we have significantly higher numbers of applications than we have available positions. These students see the role as valuable to develop their teaching and student support skills.

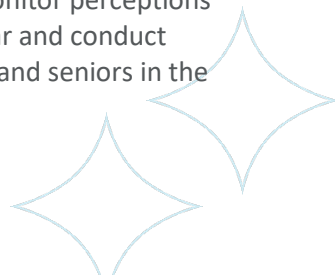
## TRAINING AND FEEDBACK ON THE CURRICULUM

The goal of training is both to ensure that advisors are prepared to facilitate the content, but also to develop a sense of community among advisors and peer mentors. As we have scaled the program, we are faced with the challenge of developing training that meets the needs of both our experienced and novice advisors. We want to ensure that there are opportunities for our new advisors to learn from our experienced advisors, while also not asking experienced advisors to have to spend extensive amounts of time in training they have previously completed. To provide additional professional development opportunities and help develop a sense of community, we have added optional sessions at times throughout the year for those who wish to continue elevating their advising practices.

## STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Although the qualitative analysis of final reflections found that a majority of students mention that Pathways is useful, we are aware the Pathways requirement is a source of complaint for a subset of students. The primary concerns shared related to prior familiarity with the content of the program and feeling that using the class time for other activities would be more valuable. It is unclear how to interpret this information since we do not have any data to compare this to perceptions of other required programs (e.g., general education

requirements or first-year writing seminars). It may be the case that these rates of disapproval are similar to that of other required programs. It will also be important to follow these perceptions over time to see if students' perception of the value of the program changes over time as more cohorts of students have participated in the program. Therefore, we will continue to monitor perceptions of students in the sophomore year and conduct follow-up assessments of juniors and seniors in the coming years.

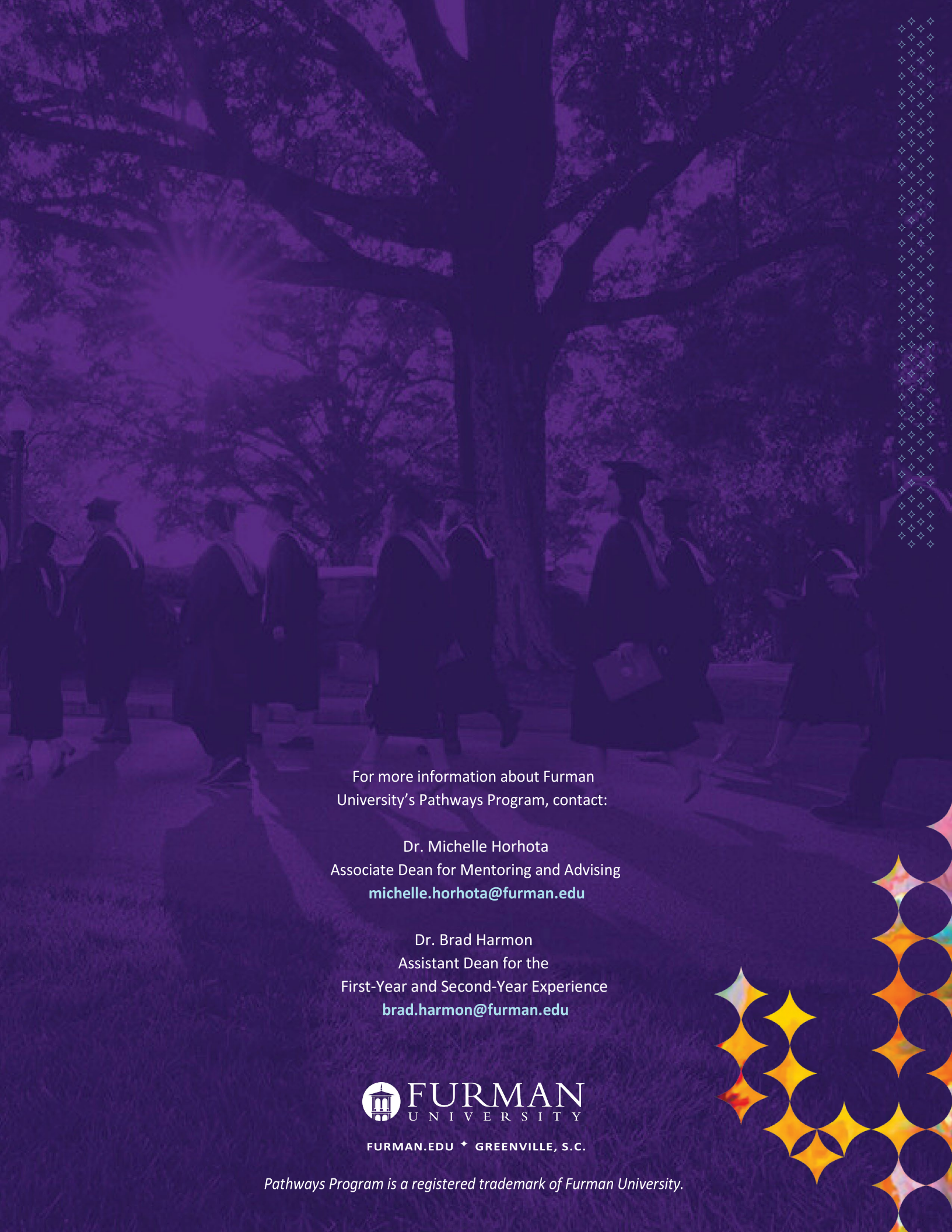


# CONCLUSION

In 2016, the launch of **The Furman Advantage** provided us with the opportunity to reimagine and redesign our first year and sophomore programming to set the foundation for the four-year pathway in a coordinated and intentional way, while also addressing issues of awareness and access of support resources for students new to the university. What emerged was the **Pathways Program®**, a common advising program to support first-year and sophomore students, followed by our **Purposeful Pathways program** that occurs within each academic department and supports junior and senior students with programming that is discipline specific.

**The Pathways Program® is innovative, comprehensive, data-driven, and unique in higher education.** It has quickly become recognized as a leading program in the country, with a ranking of #22 among all colleges and universities in the “Best First Year Experiences” category in U.S. News and World Report in 2024. In 2024 the **Pathways Program®** also was the recipient of two national awards, the **Advising Innovation Award through NACADA**, the global community for academic advising organization, and the **John N. Gardner Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition Award** through the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.





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