

# The Pala

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Furman University, Greenville

## Furman Partnership with Christ Church Episcopal School Prompts Questions

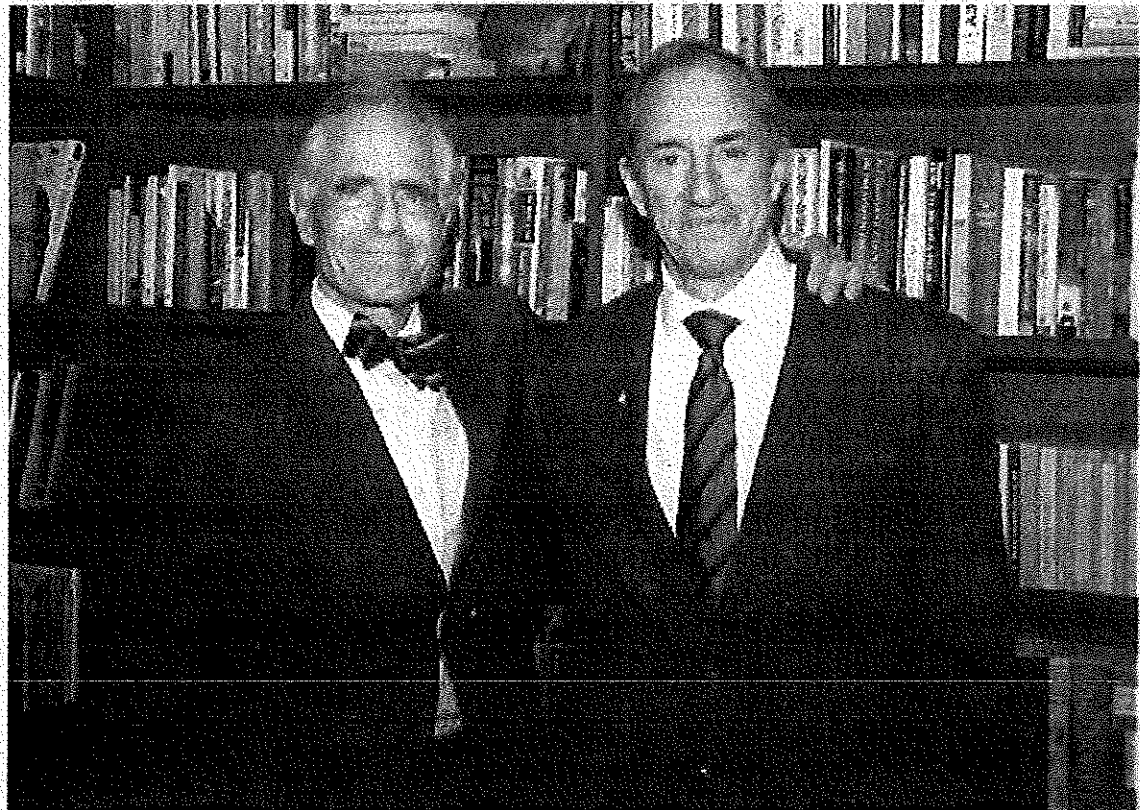
By SARAH HAMILTON AND  
BRYAN BETTS  
Staff Writer and News Editor

Furman University and Christ Church Episcopal School (CCES) have formed a partnership that will provide scholarships for Christ Church graduating seniors to attend Furman and a tuition discount for Furman faculty and staff to send their children to Christ Church. Several Furman professors and students fear the partnership will decrease diversity and further the university's reputation as being elitist.

Furman President Rodney Smolla said, on the contrary, the partnership is consistent with the university's goal of increasing diversity by forming relationships with public and private high schools.

He said Furman has the final say on admissions decisions and that asking CCES's headmaster to select who receives the scholarship is a key component of the partnership because Furman's new admissions process emphasizes recommendations over test scores as a tool for evaluating applicants.

"That's one of the single most important pieces of information we have and we're going to go around to schools around the country and say we believe in that



Courtesy of Christ Church Episcopal School

CCES Headmaster Leonard Kupersmith and Furman President Rodney Smolla after announcing a partnership between their respective schools. The partnership has received criticism from some members of the Furman community.

so much that we'll give a certain number of scholarship opportunities at your school," he said. "We'll put the center of gravity for those decisions in the people who know you the best."

Philosophy professor Carmela Epright criticized the partnership with Christ

Church for discouraging economic diversity among Furman students.

"Announcing a special agreement with such an exclusive secondary school promotes an idea that is already widespread in the Greenville community: that Furman is for rich kids, that we are an exclusive country

club," she said via email.

Christ Church Episcopal School is a private school in Greenville which provides instruction for primer (kindergarten) through 12th grade. Fifteen Christ Church alumni currently attend Furman.

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According to the new agreement, seniors at CCES must apply to Furman during the normal admission process to qualify for the scholarship. Additionally, Christ Church's Headmaster Leonard Kupersmith must interview seniors and endorse their application before Furman makes final admissions decisions.

CCES seniors who are accepted with their headmaster's endorsement will receive a \$10,000 a year renewable scholarship toward Furman's cost of attendance—\$50,184 for the 2011-2012 school year.

They will also receive notification of their acceptance as early as Jan. 10, before early action applicants receive notification Feb. 1.

Students from Christ Church's 2012 graduating class will be the first eligible

for the scholarship. Furman has committed to award three to five scholarships for the 2012-2013 school year and has left open the possibility of awarding up to ten scholarships in future years if the program is successful.

Kupersmith said Christ Church will offer Furman faculty and staff a tuition discount of \$3000 per year to enroll their children. Tuition at CCES for the 2012-2013 school year ranges from \$12,700 for primer (kindergarten) to \$16,920 for grades nine through twelve.

The agreement is currently a verbal understanding between Furman and CCES. Smolla said Furman's admissions office is in the process of finalizing a written protocol for the partnership.

Several faculty and students indicated they were

worried Furman's partnership with Christ Church would hinder the university's work with public education.

History professor Savita Nair expressed concern that Furman's partnership with CCES might send the message to Greenville's public schools that the university favors private education. She said she would like to see Furman meet with Greenville County's 14 public high schools to discuss similar agreements.

"It has to do with the picture Furman wants to give," she said.

Discussion of the Christ Church partnership among Furman students has been more muted than among faculty, but several students aware of the agreement made similar criticisms saying the partnership reflects negatively on Furman.

"It seems frankly unfair to other students from public schools and from other institutions in the South," said junior Mattson Smith, a political science and religion double major.

Brad Pochard, Vice-President of Admissions, said

the partnership with Christ Church is one of many partnerships Furman has with area schools.

He cited as precedent Furman's work with Bridges to a Brighter Future, a program that provides tutoring and mentoring for approximately 75 Greenville county high school students and brings them to Furman during the summer for a four-week residential camp. Several students from the Bridges program have gone on to enroll at Furman.

Furman also has partnerships with the Greenville Technical Honors Program and Highsight, a Chicago based program that provides tutoring and college preparation programs to high school students.

"These are partnerships and my office supports their applicants and looks to assist them in any way possible to further their education at Furman," Pochard said.

Smolla said the partnership with Christ Church builds on the Furman Scholars program already in place at CCES and at other high schools which have

## COURSES *from page 1*

centration. The concentration will be housed in the Business and Accounting department suite and will focus on aspects of running a non-profit arts organization.

Classes for the concentration will cover accounting, marketing, and fundraising. Additionally, the Music department is planning to hire two new professors to teach musicology and lyric theater (opera and musical theater).

These three new faculty positions are made possible by an \$800,000 grant Furman recently received from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to enrich the school's fine arts programs. Furman also received a \$2 million grant from the Duke Endowment in November 2011.

Both Hausmann and Britt noted student interest in

their respective concentrations.

"There have been students who've come and said they're interested," Hausmann said. "Students who have studied film in high school, who want to make film."

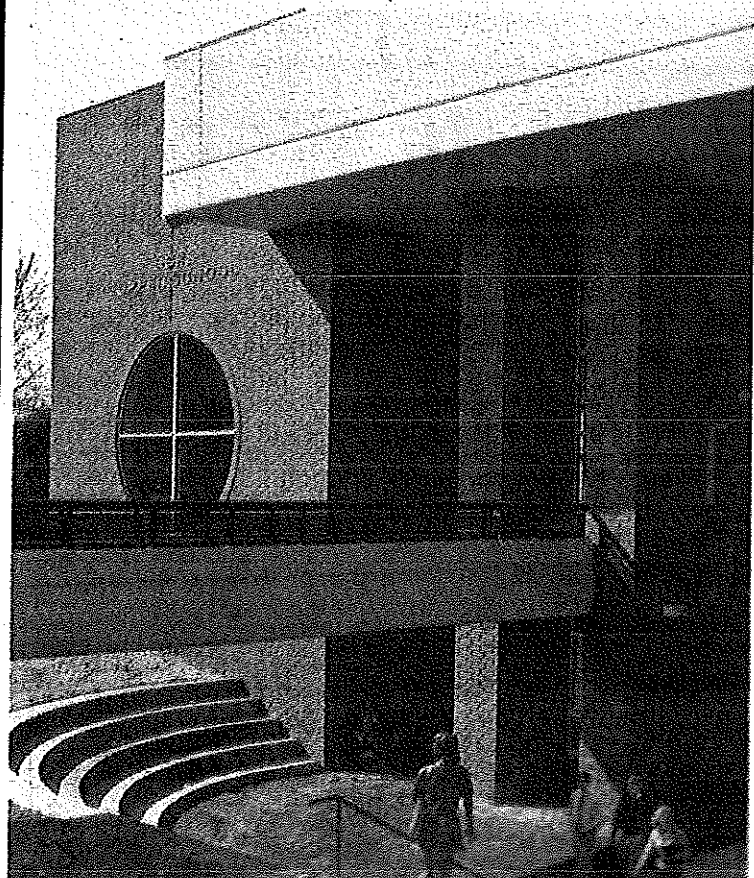
Britt said, "[Art Administration] is a growing field and very flexible," noting that several Furman alumni are pursuing graduate studies and careers in that field.

While recognizing that the programs are in their introductory phases now, organizers hope they will grow. Hausmann expressed optimism about the future of the Film Studies concentration.

"Who knows," he said, "maybe it will develop into a major."

is defined by the strength of the faculty," he said.

Beckford said that a prospective faculty members need to understand what



## HIRING *from page 1*

the 2013-14 school year. What these positions are will depend on the size of the student population and

e scholarship. Furman committed to award to five scholarships the 2012-2013 school and has left open the ability of awarding up to five scholarships in future years if the program is successful.

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Smolla said the partnership with Christ Church builds on the Furman Scholars program already in place at CCES and at other high schools which have

sent graduates to Furman.

For the program, the admissions office sends letters to about 5000 high schools asking guidance counselors to nominate students for a \$5000 merit scholarship. Students are nominated during their junior year and receive the scholarship if they apply and are accepted to Furman.

Pochard said the Furman Scholars program would continue at Christ Church but that students who receive the \$10,000 scholarship would not be able to keep the \$5000 scholarship.

Smolla said Furman is seeking to use the partnership with Christ Church as a model the university can replicate at other high schools.

"It's going to take a lot more of these," he said. "The Christ Church initiative will probably bring us three, four, five students a year and we need seven or eight hundred a year."

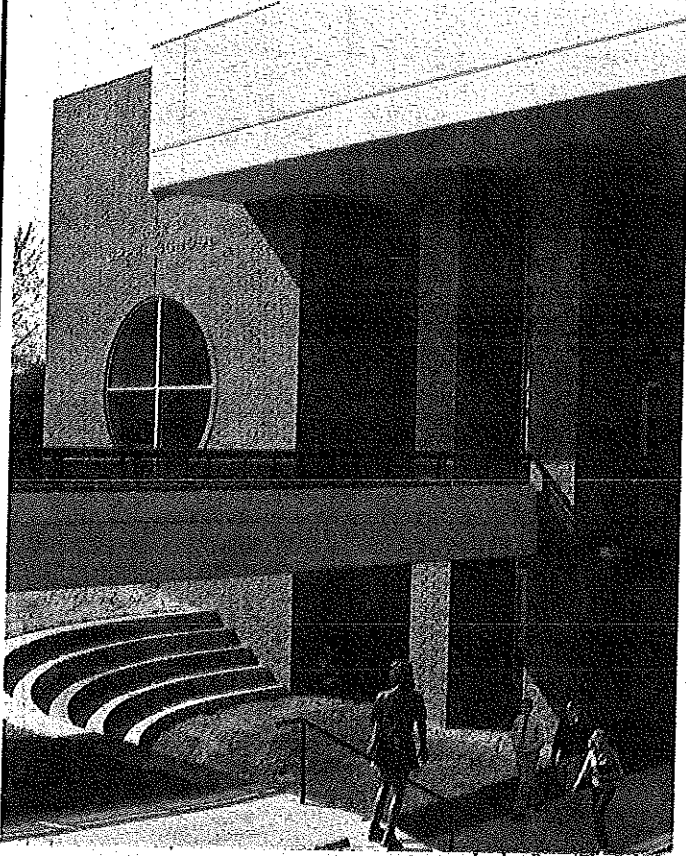
An article about Furman's partnership with CCES published in the Greenville News has fueled criticism of the agreement by Furman faculty and students after incorrectly reporting that Furman would "waive the formal admission process" for Christ Church seniors.

At a department chairs and program directors meeting on Jan. 18, English Department Chair Lynne Shackelford asked about the partnership with Christ Church. Pochard corrected the Greenville News article by explaining that CCES students must still apply as part of Furman's normal admission process.

Department chairs shared the information with the rest of their departments, but some faculty have lingering concerns about the lack of faculty involvement in talks with CCES and how the partnership reflects on the university's commitment to diversity.

For many faculty and students, there remains a need for dialogue on this issue.

"It's still very much on my mind," said Nair. "We say we need to make sure this conversation does not go away."



The front of CCES's Upper School. The Upper School enrolls 342 students in grades nine through twelve. Jordan Kust/The Paladin