

Furman Engaged

17 April 2018

### My Furman Advantage

The Furman Advantage is often overlooked as part of the Furman experience by students. The Furman Advantage, however, is essential to post-graduate success. The celebration of the accomplishments of students' unique Furman Advantages through the Furman Engaged programs effectively celebrates and encourages the student body to engage in high-level thinking and advocacy. Integral parts of The Furman Advantage include engaged research, internships, and study away experiences as well as highly qualified advisors and mentors. These two important pillars of The Furman Advantage were demonstrated in all of the Furman Engaged sessions that I attended.

In session one, I attended a session explaining the Madrid study away experience and the different research requirements of the semester. All four of the presenters researched extremely different topics that covered a broad range of Spanish culture. The common thread between these presenters was the influence of their mentors on the success of their research. This demonstrates that even while abroad, students are still able to fully experience The Furman Advantage. Perhaps the most intriguing of the four student presenters was Julia Castanet's discussion of bilingualism as a requirement in Spanish Elementary Education. She found that the new requirements of five hours per week of English language immersion was highly political and not favored by the educators. The new standards of English learning meant that teachers had

to be certified in the English language in order to teach their subjects in English. To fully explore the depth and breadth of this issue, Julia Castanet coordinated with her advisor from the Spanish university to interview an elementary school art teacher. This engaged research and strong guidance from mentors reflects components of The Furman Advantage and directly led to the success of her presentation.

In session two, I attended a session that had not initially piqued my interest subject wise, but I went out of support for my fellow teammates. This session became my favorite experience of the day. Through listening to the four individual research and internship experiences, I learned an enormous amount of knowledge that will be applicable to my four year pathway. Allie Able presented on her findings of a principal-agent problem in the Department of Education of South Carolina that is likely applicable to bureaucracy as a whole. She explored the short comings of her internship while also sharing valuable life lessons that she gained. The other two sections of the session were from Shannon Cherney, Katherine West, and Nicole Hyman. All three of these women conducted research over the summer which is leading to extensive data collection. Shannon Cherney researched the religious affiliations of members of the House of Representatives in order to create a comprehensive religious profile of each member. This data will eventually be used to help with elections and determining the overall effects of religion on the House of Representatives and, perhaps, Congress as a whole. Katherine West and Nicole Hyman discussed the percentage of women that are President of their college student governments and how this may effect the future make up of Congress. What they found suggests that women are more frequently president, especially in schools with a female majority of the population. Interestingly enough, Furman does not follow this pattern and has had male

presidents for multiple of the past years. All three of these women collaborated with Furman professors to conduct their research and to aid them in their individual research projects. After the presentations, the audience asked questions of all of the presenters to which they provided insightful answers. Before these presentations, I had not considered the gender makeup of an SGA executive board to directly correlate to the gender makeup of Congress, however the research conducted seems to suggest that a correlation may be occurring. This information reflects what I have learned in both my World Politics and Spanish classes. In many Spanish speaking countries, the gender makeup of government is very different and, in some cases, is even mandated. In World Politics, gender is less frequently discussed as being a factor in major world events, however it is possible that gender could be correlated to successes or failures of certain legislation.

By attending the session one discussions of study abroad trips to Madrid, I have decided that I will hopefully be attending the Madrid trip during my junior year. The individual experiences that each student had during their trip demonstrated to me how I can make the trip fit my academic interests. Prior to Furman Engaged, I had not fully considered how participating in research might embellish my college experience. After watching my peers discuss their extensive research and skills that they learned from these experiences, I am interested in joining a research program during the summer. I believe that this experience will be incredibly valuable to my role as a professional after graduation. As was evident by the number of staff and faculty members attending each session, a key part of The Furman Advantage is the incredible advising and mentoring staff available to all students. Throughout my next three years I hope to form

strong bonds with professors that will be able to improve my knowledge and extend my world view so that I can graduate Furman being a member of a global society.