

# Furman takes some bold steps

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By Tom Kester 1/29/10

For more than a decade, Furman University has been at the forefront of the movement to make higher education truly sustainable. Led by the visionary Dr. David Shi, who is retiring as president of the university this year, today sustainability is fully integrated into every aspect of life on the Furman campus.

Here are just a few examples of Furman's "green" efforts: All new and renovated campus buildings must meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building standards, with seven major projects completed to date. Students live and study in "Eco-cottages," where the environmental impacts of daily life are analyzed and minimized. The campus' centerpiece lake is being restored to a healthy aquatic ecosystem. The school's focus on renewable resources includes copious solar electric panels and a student-run facility producing biodiesel fuel for the campus fleet.

In 2007, Dr. Shi was the first university president in South Carolina and one of the first in the country to sign the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment; today the leaders of more than 650 institutions are signatories.

In 2009, Furman moved even further forward in its sustainability efforts. First, the university opened the David E. Shi Center for Sustainability to coordinate academic, curricular and community outreach activities related to sustainability. The center will be housed in the former Southern Living Home (Cliffs Cottage) on campus, which is anticipated to be designated LEED Platinum, the highest level of recognition possible by the internationally recognized leader in green building certification. Second, Furman announced a \$1.5 million gift from Duke Energy to establish geothermal and solar energy systems on campus.

And perhaps most notably, in November the school's board of trustees approved a comprehensive sustainability master plan for the school. The bold and exciting plan, "Sustainable Furman," includes a pledge to make the campus "carbon neutral" by 2026, the year of the school's bicentennial celebration.

"Sustainable Furman"

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## GUEST COLUMN



Tom Kester, who retired as managing partner of KPMG's Greenville office in 2002, is the current treasurer and former chairman of the Upstate Forever Board of Directors.

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is organized around eight broad goals addressing key aspects of the university's mission and operations. Those include expanding and enhancing opportunities for students related to sustainability, encouraging participation in energy conservation and energy efficiency efforts both on campus and in the larger community, and broadening Furman's role as a national leader in the promotion of sustainability in higher education.

I am particularly excited about the section of "Sustainable Furman" outlining the school's Climate Action Plan. This detailed assessment calls for the university to focus on five specific strategies to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2026. More information about the University's sustainability efforts is available at [www2.furman.edu/academics/sustainability](http://www2.furman.edu/academics/sustainability).

In recognition of his transformative leadership at Furman's helm, Upstate Forever will present Dr. Shi with its Extraordinary Achievement Award at our ForeverGreen Annual Awards Luncheon on Thursday, Feb. 4, at 11:30 a.m. at the Westin Poinsett Hotel. He will be joined by our other distinguished honorees, individuals and organizations that have made remarkable progress toward protecting special places and promoting sensible growth in the Upstate. Dr. Shi will deliver the keynote address.

For more information about Upstate Forever's ForeverGreen Annual Awards Luncheon, visit [www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org) or call (864) 250-0500.