



bridges

TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE
FURMAN UNIVERSITY

**Strategic Plan
Executive Summary**

2014

“Bridges is a bright light under a basket. The basket mutes the light. If the basket is removed, it becomes a beacon for others to follow.”

- Bridges Stakeholder

Bridges to a Brighter Future engaged 50 individuals in the development of the first ever strategic plan. Partners, donors, principals, guidance counselors, Furman faculty and staff, and parents and students participated in focus groups and planning meetings throughout 2013 to determine the strategic future of Bridges to a Brighter Future.

LEGACY AND CURRENT STATE

Since 1997, Bridges to a Brighter Future has been and continues to be one of the most meaningful programs and key community outreach initiatives of Furman University. Bridges is well-respected, admired, and reflects the deepest institutional values of Furman University. Bridges to a Brighter Future is unique among college access initiatives in the depth and concentration of the program. It is richly praised as being substantial in its intensity, uniqueness, outcomes, holistic approach, and programmatic components. Bridges currently boasts outcome rates of 100% high school graduation, 95% college enrollment, and 60% college graduation. On average, 90% of students are retained from year one to year three.

DESIRED FUTURE AND RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Bridges to a Brighter Future has succeeded through 17 years of refinement, natural organic growth, commitment to the program’s mission, and steady outside financial support. The outcome is a national model that produces incomparable results. Organic growth is necessary through the expansion of staff, and exponential growth should be pursued to affect more lives. While good people have worked passionately to create the current program, the paradigm has been surviving rather than thriving. This is not a formula for future success. Continued success of Bridges to a Brighter Future cannot be solely centered on dedicated staff, it must transition to a healthier staffing model.

Given the “ripeness” of Bridges and the current national trends, it is time to share and add to the national knowledge base regarding college access programs, access to higher education, diversity, and economic advancement, and serve as a model for other private liberal arts college to utilize as an avenue to find their place, increase enrollment, and bring new stakeholders to the institution.

With this first-ever Bridges to a Brighter Future Strategic Plan, we present a five-year process to strengthen, sustain, and enhance the program mission, intent and success while leveraging Furman University’s Alpha program to serve as a model and leader in college access; addressing South Carolina’s most challenging issues of economic mobility through educational attainment.

Strategic Objectives

I. SUSTAINABLE STAFFING & SERVICE EXPANSION

Expand Bridges staff to create a healthy staffing structure that will prepare for succession and ease leadership transition, diversify program knowledge, better serve the student population, and implement new programs and services.

II. SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Utilize current funding sources to fund new positions and pursue new contributions to enhance the endowment to permanently fund program components.

III. ALPHA PROGRAM

Elucidate relationship between Bridges to a Brighter Future and Furman University to ensure systems are in place to sustain the current program and support continued organic growth and program expansion.

IV. RESEARCH / REPLICATION / MARKETING

Develop protocols and research paradigms to better track and report data, measure outcomes and success indicators, as well as aid with Bridges replication and marketing.

V. IMPACTFUL FOUNDATION

Create the Bridges to a Brighter Future Foundation to expand the impact to improve the economy of South Carolina by addressing one of the State’s greatest challenges, economic mobility through educational attainment.

“It is almost our moral obligation to share the Bridges model with others. If we know it works, then we must share the information.”

-Bridges Stakeholder