



In recent years, retention rates have become a hot-button topic in higher education. A key indicator of how well a school is doing can be found in how many students progress within the institution and earn degrees.

For **William Polk Glover ('61)**, the subject has been front-and-center for many years.

"We didn't work on that in the past as we do now," he says. "That's something I like to see."

In 1997, Polly Glover told the *Unionite* that during her student years, Union's faculty supplied the encouragement she needed to stay focused. "I only hope that I've been able to pass on some of what they taught me to my students over the years," she said.

According to daughter Brooke Emery, Polk and Polly Glover passed on a love both for higher education in general and for Union

# Helping Students Stay in School

Union's retention rate has increased from 70 percent in 1996 to 88 percent today. Glover – who goes by the first name Polk – has been here to watch that rate climb. His service to the Union University Board of Trustees dates back to the 1981-82 academic year. He has rotated on and off the board many times since then.



Why the keen interest in retention rates? One answer lies in the influence of Glover's late wife Polly.

Also a member of Union's class of 1961, Polly Stone Glover was a professor of English and served for many years as the

coordinator of the Student Learning Center at the University of Tennessee at Martin. She even wrote a book about making successful adjustments to college life entitled *So... You're Going To College*. The book was aimed at freshmen, and at one point was distributed to incoming Union students.

University. Emery earned a Master of Business Administration here and is now a member of the faculty in the McAfee School of Business. She started as an assistant professor of marketing in 2010.

She remembers visits to the Union campus as a small child. Then and now, she sees her father's love for the institution.

"Union is very important to him. He loves Union deeply," Emery said.

Glover says local churches can be important partners in the effort to keep students in school. During his student years, he was an active member of First Baptist Church in Jackson.

"There was a big focus on students," Glover said. "I taught Sunday School there my last two years of college."

Financial burdens can drive some students to drop out. Glover has been a faithful giving partner through the years, helping meet the university's needs and establishing scholarships in honor of family members.

First Lady Lanese Dockery points to Glover as one of Union's outstanding friends.

"Polk Glover has been supportive of this university and this administration in extraordinary ways," she said. "He has encouraged students with his financial support, and encouraged faculty and staff as well in this special calling to this university." ■