Students bring TED(x) formula to Furman

Jim Stewart
Furman University

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TEDxFurmanU was held in Younts Conference Center March 15 before about 100 students, faculty and staff, all chosen to participate through a competitive application process.

AJ Calhoun ’15, head of the FCC, called the event a “catalytic moment” for the university.

Whether or not he was right, the speakers, who included Danny Stillion ’89, an associate partner with IDEO, an international design and consulting firm, did offer a wide range of possibilities for education in the 21st century. A few examples: Christian Long of Cannon Design in Columbus, Ohio, advocated “human-centered design thinking,” which focuses on reinventing classroom space to spur collaborative work. Alan Webb of Washington, D.C., a founding member of the Open Master’s Program, discussed how education is primarily about creating relationships — and how to reimagine those relationships in a technology-driven world.

Cynthia Lawson with The New School at Parsons in New York City suggested pushing educational boundaries beyond the classroom and into the world, where students learn from hands-on fieldwork and teachers serve as facilitators to help them develop their resourcefulness and observational skills. DeAndrea Nichols, founder of CatalystsbyDesign in St. Louis, addressed the needs of underserved youth and promoted empathy-based learning models designed to establish sustainable connections and eliminate the “failure mindset.”

In all, the evening proved to be a fast-paced, five-hour package of ideas, thoughts, dreams and possibilities. How can you top that? Furman will try on March 22, 2014, with “Stories: The Common Thread of Our Humanity.” The FCC and company are already on the prowl for storytellers. Learn more at tedxfordun.com.

— JIM STEWART