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Better in Thought, Word and Deed'

Furman University

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'BETTER IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED'

Students share experiences and inspiration at Furman Engaged!

STAFF REPORTS



Top: Students gather around research posters at Furman Engaged! in April.

Inset: Zach Hughes '20 (second from right) with his home stay parents, Antoinette and Mishak Sithole, and Griffin Mills '21 (left end) in Johannesburg, South Africa.

What if an app could help baseball coaches decide where to put players?

That day may be coming. Andrew Hartley '20 and his research partner Ella Morton '20 and mathematics professors Liz Bouzarth, John Harris and Kevin Hutson, and Business and Accounting Professor Ben Grannan, have been developing a model for their project, "Swing Shift," which helps baseball teams position fielders more strategically to minimize the impact of a batter.

"We hope to create an app where you can insert a batter, run it through the program, and determine where fielders should be placed," says Hartley.

An explanation of "Swing Shift" was just one of the presentations that took place at Furman Engaged!, a spring celebration of immersive learning through The Furman Advantage, which provides every student with a personal, integrated four-year pathway that emphasizes mentoring

and advising and high-impact engaged learning experiences.

The daylong event drew students, faculty, alumni, staff, employers and community members, who happily wandered from a multicultural lunch buffet to a student gallery walk to a gym full of research and internship posters and a panel where employers gave tips about what makes a strong hire.

In short: Where else can you learn about the human heart, learn how (and why!) to blend a smoothie on a bicycle, pop over to New York City, South Africa and Shakespeare's birthplace, and still have time for Thai noodles?

At Furman Engaged!, of course.

These are other experiences that students shared:

'I AM BECAUSE WE ARE'

On one of his first weekends abroad in Denmark, Ben Davids '20 went to a local café at Fredricksburg Castle, five minutes away from his homestay. That's when it hit him.

"I almost dropped my croissant when I opened Kierkegaard's journal and read his first sentence: 'I write this as I sit in the Fredricksburg Gardens café.' It turns out, I was living in the same neighborhood where Søren Kierkegaard grew up," Davids recalls. The philosopher's life and work suddenly didn't seem so far away.

Like Davids, Zach Hughes '20, too, realized a deep sense of connection. But in Hughes' case, it was to the people all around him in Africa. He came to understand the meaning of the Zulu word "Ubuntu," which translates to "I am because we are."

"We are not self-contained, isolated beings making actions independently of each other in an Ubuntu world," says Hughes.

"By contrast, we are all always affecting each other, whether for good or bad. Thinking in this phrase was wonderful for connecting to host parents who welcomed us into their home, treated us like family and educated us on their history and culture.

It was also very difficult in light of massive socioeconomic inequity, environmental issues and human rights violations that we learned about and saw firsthand."

In Hughes' nine weeks in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, he learned about global health inequities, environment and society, human rights, economics, education and history.

The experience transformed him: "The knowledge I gained studying in Africa is the best kind, the kind that makes you better in thought, word and deed."

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