CAMPUS LIFE

First TEDx Meredith College Proves to be a Success

Jessica Feltner and Marlena Brown, staff writers

The first TEDx at Meredith College came to campus on Jan. 26, with the theme, "Through a Sustainable Lens." Many guests, as well as students, spoke at this event, enlightening the audience upon relevant topics within our global society. This TEDx event incorporated the basic idea behind a regular TED talk with a focus on sustainable living. Events like this do not come often to Meredith's campus, which makes it unique for students this academic year.

TEDx had a packed agenda with 14 talks and 18 speakers, though only 50 out of the 166 people that had acquired tickets showed up due to the inclement weather that had affected the Triangle area the day before. The topics came from many different areas, ranging from banning single use of plastic bags, to giving insight into a student-run business. The speakers had diverse backgrounds, with students, professors and general members of the community. The speakers included Heather Troutman, Dr. Margarita Suarez, Dr. Rebecca Duncan, Shanna Scott, Victoria Greenleaf, Holly Mills, Paula Meredith, Keval Mehta, Michelle Harrell, Mark Delgado, Dr. Cindy Edwards, Chelsea Wettroth, Ashley Hall, Erin Wilson and Dr. Janice Swab. Though the crowd was less than expected, there was still a sense of accomplishment among the organizers and speakers. "It was a really great success. There were 166 people slated to come, but only 50 showed up because of the wintry mix" said Kristen Gallagher.

Speakers Shanna Scott and Victoria Greenleaf, freshmen at Meredith were appreciative to have had the experience. Attending this event had many benefits to students, as Shanna put it, "[it] can really help broaden your horizon and make yourself aware of things."

Image via tedxmeredithcollege.com

Meredith College freshman and Interior design major, Kristen Rivera volunteered for the program. "I had to keep the speakers from getting too nervous while they were backstage. I overheard some really intelligent conversations," said Rivera.

After the event, audience members felt interested in new topics and inspired to take action. Isabel Benson, Biology major with a focus in Environmental Science at Meredith said, "The speakers were really cool and informative. It should happen every year." Another Meredith student in attendance, Noreen Elnady, International Science and Political Science major, "Feels like going out and doing something."

The idea for TED talks began in 1984 as a nonprofit organization for bringing ideas and innovations from three specific aspects of the academic world: technology, entertainment and design (what the acronym TED stands for) and a slogan that would stick in the minds of audience members: "Ideas Worth Spreading."

Since 1996, TED has become a set of annual conferences that brings various speakers to discuss their ideas and experiences with audiences pertaining to innovations in their respective fields. From their humble beginnings in Monterey, California, two annual conferences are held in Long Beach and Palm Springs, California, as well as a summer conference held in Edinburgh, England.

Not only are the conferences quite well-known throughout the world, but their recognition of scholars and innovators through prestigious awards are also. The TED Prize is awarded annually to an individual who goes above and beyond in excéptional capabilities, with the actual prize being a monetary gift of one million dollars and the support of the TED community in future projects. Other initiatives include TED-Ed, TEDx, Ads Worth Spreading, TED Books, TED Open Translation Project, TED Fellows and TED Conversations.

DIALOGICS

In an effort to help better translate the relevance of the liberal arts, this year the Herald staff is conducting faculty interviews across campus. Focusing on the humanities in the fall and the sciences in the spring, we hope to establish a dialogue between faculty and students that illustrates how knowledge in all fields is useful in the "real world." Our goal is to foster an interdisciplinary dialogics that puts all aspects of a liberal arts education in dialogue, continually informing and influencing each other.

This installment in the series is an interview with Prof. Math, Dr. Jacquelin Dietz by Sarah Haseeb.

-Amy Hruby, Editor in Chief

Q: What is your background in math?
A: I graduated from Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, with a double major in Mathematics and Psychobiology. I earned both an MS and a Ph.D. in statistics from the University of Connecticut. After finishing my Ph.D., I taught in the Department of Statistics at North Carolina State University for 26 years, before coming to Meredith College nine years ago.

Q: What got you interested in this field?
A: I never took any applied statistics courses in college, so I really wasn't familiar with statistics. I started graduate school at UConn in a department called Biobehavioral Sciences. During that first year of grad school, I took my first statistics courses and realized that statistics provided a way to use the mathematics that I still enjoyed to study interesting problems in biology and psychology. I switched to the Department of Statistics after one year.
Q: Who is your favorite mathematician?
There are many statistics educators who have played a major role in transforming the teaching of statistics to include more real data, more use of technology, more emphasis on conceptual understanding instead of just learning procedures, more active learning in the classroom, and the use of a variety of assessments to improve student learning. These statistics educators include David Moore, who is one of the authors of the textbook we use in MAT-245 (Statistics I).

Q: Which math is your favorite to teach and why?
A: I teach almost exclusively statistics courses. I enjoy all of the courses that I teach, but this semester I am really enjoying MAT-248, which is the statistics course taken by math majors. The course is particularly interesting to me right now because I am using a new book called Statistics: Unlocking the Power of Data. This book was written by the five members of the Lock family, who are all statisticians. The book takes an unusual approach to statistical inference that takes advantage of modern technology.

Q: How do you feel about the future of math?
A: The future of statistics is very bright. We are constantly bombarded with data in all aspects of our lives, and people with the skills to make sense of that data will be very much in demand.