

Ninth Annual Leadership Conference

Held by the Andrews University Department of Leadership

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The Leadership Conference took place in Newbold Auditorium, Buller Hall (Photo by Darren Heslop, University Communication staff photographer)

By: Gillian Panigot, media communications manager & FOCUS editor

On July 22, 2019, the Andrews University Department of Leadership held their ninth annual Leadership Conference in Newbold Auditorium, Buller Hall, on the campus of Andrews University. The conference, titled “Leadership, Organizational Culture & Innovation,” was

planned in partnership with Spectrum Health Lakeland. Following the conference, there was a participant roundtable from July 23–25.

Keynote speakers for the event were Jeff Reuschel, global director of Design & Innovation at Haworth, Inc.; Jeremiah Lee, senior consultant, Leadership, Culture & Innovation with Spencer Stuart; and Haijie Ding, senior associate and director of analytics at Spencer Stuart.

Reuschel opened the morning with a presentation emphasizing the importance of utilizing the strengths of a team, saying, “Innovation is not about hierarchy, it’s about what you’re good at.” He highlighted five categories of strengths: creator, editor, critic, connector, adherent. He also noted that it is important to talk about people’s strengths and weaknesses and summarized ten creative characteristics and the seven deadly sins of innovation leaders.

Lee noted how common it is to have gaps between executives and everyone else in the company—in pay and in power. He said, “I was always skeptical because I grew up believing in the power of teams for problem-solving.” He added that in a team environment, there is value in different perspectives but said, “In order to maximize the value of diverse perspectives, you have to have sufficient trust in the environment.” Leaders, then, need to create work environments conducive to trust.

Ding found value in looking at each person on his team and how their skillsets fit together. He has developed an algorithm, Organizational Network Analysis, related to the relationships between people, and has examined where China and the U.S. fit on the scale. He said the process is challenging but added, “Learn with each other and enjoy.”

Following an interactive question and answer session, participants had the opportunity to attend breakout sessions led by keynote speakers throughout Buller Hall. The breakout sessions were as follows: “What Leaders Should Know about Space, Performance & Innovation” by Jeff Reuschel, “Leadership & Organizational Culture Evaluation & Change” by Jeremiah Lee and “Applied Research to Help Leaders Understand the Reality & Importance of Organizational Culture” by Haijie Ding. The conference ended with closing remarks in Newbold Auditorium.

“We’re very excited to have hosted our participants, sponsors, partners, campus and community for our 9th annual Leadership Conference,” says Jay Brand, professor of leadership and higher education. “I’m confident that our speakers offered practical ways for leaders to enhance strategy and improve their teams and organizations—especially in regard to innovation.”

For more information, please visit the conference website.

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