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DR. CAWTHON'S 'LAST LECTURE' INSPIRES STUDENTS TO BE THEMSELVES

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Photo credit: Alec Bailey



Perks lounge was filled yet again with attentive students on Thursday night to hear the imparted wisdom of one of Northwest University's staff or faculty members in the 'Last Lecture' series. The 'Last Lecture' series challenges staff and faculty with a thought provoking idea: what wisdom would you try to impart to the world if you knew it was your last chance? This month, Dr. Rowlanda Cawthon centered her lecture on students.

In Cawthon's introduction she said, "You come to higher education institution to get engaged intellectually, but I think, in my own opinion, one of the best ways to engage students is to engage them in themselves first, because you are your own change agent." Cawthon spoke about how we, as people, live in a world where most try to be anything but themselves. From a prepared reading, Cawthon said, "We are systematically persuaded to hate who we are. We are meticulously encouraged to alter our identity, consciousness, beliefs and values, and to abandon our faith and spirituality to fit in this marginalized way of being." To this Cawthon responded, "The best you to fit into, is you."

Cawthon spoke against conforming to society in ways that alter your identity. "Your primary goal is to fit perfectly into you, to know you, to understand you, and accept yourself for who you are to influence the larger world," said Cawthon. Cawthon shared three ways of being: be authentic, be creative and be intentional. According to Cawthon, these three ways of being will enable people to fit into their world and to live courageously in the larger world. The students repeated the three ways of being three times, each time with more volume and emotion.

Cawthon detailed what each way of being meant, starting with being authentic. "To be authentic is to be who you are in an uninhibited fashion," said Cawthon. "Being your authentic self means that you walk and live confidently in who God created you to be. You can't know who you are or who you were created to be without knowing who God is... In building a relationship with God, you know who He is, and we can't be authentic if we don't know who God is." Cawthon said that there are two aspects of authenticity: inner self and outer self. The inner self is rooted in values and beliefs and the outer self is driven by talents, gifts and abilities. Cawthon said, "Both work collaboratively to create the authentic [you]." Cawthon explained that "living authentically in your world means that you accept who you are, including your strengths and weaknesses, but keep in mind that truth doesn't come from who we think we are and should be, but rather who and what God created us to be."

Cawthon's second way of being is being creative. She defines creativity as "the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, and interpretation." Cawthon states that people are creative because God is creative. "Here are the ways to invoke creativity in your life," said Cawthon, "be open to God's leading when it comes to creativity, trust yourself to be creative, associate yourself with people who are uncompromisingly creative, and challenge the status quo."

Cawthon's final element of being is being intentional. Authenticity and creativity requires intentionality. "When you are intentional you

Cawthon's final element of being is being intentional. Authenticity and creativity requires intentionality. "When you are intentional you are deliberate and purposeful... Being intentional means that you show up in every situation that pertains to you," said Cawthon. She encourages students to be intentional in their words, interactions and reactions. Cawthon explains that there are two ways of interaction: "when you take in the words of others and when you take in the wrong words that yourself is saying to you." Cawthon said that most often, we are our largest source of hurt and doubt. "It is important to intentionally include people in your life who seek and bring the best out of you when you don't see it in yourself."

Cawthon concluded with "When the world is going left, you have to be willing to go right, not to cause defiance but to be in compliance with God's word. Your profession along with everything that's inside of you is a vehicle God will use to draw people into His kingdom....Remember that leadership in your profession and in your life requires you to be authentic, creative and intentional."

With Cawthon's final words, the audience erupted in applause.

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