

TEDxSMU a Resounding Success

D Magazine's Front Burner

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By Wick Allison

On Saturday, about 400 people gathered at the Owens Art Center for TEDxSMU, an independent TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference. I had heard of TED, seen some videos of talks given at TED conferences, and been told that it is an amazing experience. It is.



The question speakers were given to answer was, "What will change everything?" The answers — given in 18-minute-segments — were so engaging, so practical, and so surprising that I am still trying to absorb them. I'm assuming that videos will be posted on the TED site soon, and when they are I'll alert you.

Pulling this off could not have been an easy task, but it was very smart of SMU to do it. Because many of the speakers and performers were SMU faculty and students, the event was a brilliant introduction to some of the school's most impressive talent. When Gerald Turner arrived as SMU's new president 15 years ago, the school was a little island of mediocrity that few people in Dallas had any connection with. Saturday was a kind of coming-out party for the university SMU has become: an intellectual force radiating energy to the entire city. I have to admit, I was a sceptic. But now I'm a believer. The ideas flowing out of that place are simply astonishing.

How good was it? I sat there transfixed — without even thinking of breaking for my car — for *eight hours*.

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