



Wealth of

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates spoke at Clemson University's Tillman Hall on Monday.

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World's richest man chats with Clemson students, faculty

BY ERIC SPROTT
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CLEMSON — It's not every day that Lindsey Graham isn't the most prominent figure in a given room.

Monday, however, was one of those days, and it was Graham himself who invited one of the world's most recognizable names to overshadow him in the Tillman Hall auditorium on the Clemson University campus.

Bill Gates joined the United States senator — who spoke at a Clemson Rotary Club meeting earlier in the day as he continues his presidential campaign in a crowded Republican field — and Clemson president Jim Clements in taking the stage at the intimate venue for a town-hall style event entitled "A Conversation with Bill Gates: The Future Generation's Role in Addressing the World's Greatest Challenge."

The hour-long event — which reportedly ran out of tickets in 10 minutes, though there was ample seating available Monday — was announced with just a week's notice. The Microsoft co-founder fielded several ques-

tions from students, while he was also engaged in conversation with Graham and Clements, largely about global health and raising education standards in the United States through his philanthropic efforts with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

His Microsoft career and his outstanding wealth — most of which is earmarked for charitable and research efforts — were mentioned only in passing, though Graham did allude to it while introducing the guest of honor.

"Between the two of us, we're worth \$79 billion," Graham joked, referencing the richest man in the world's net worth.

Graham, who Clements called "a dear friend," said he had been in touch with Clements after he became the school's president nearly two years ago and said he was happy to help him any way he could.

Then the idea of inviting Gates to the campus crossed his mind.

"I said, 'Well, I know this guy named Bill Gates,'" Graham said, recounting

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Bill Gates
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WEALTH: 'You don't have to have

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a conversation with Clements. "Do you think it'd be good if I invited him?" He said, "Oh yeah."

Graham's friendship with Gates started through multiple trips to poor African nations with Melinda Gates through his foreign aid work.

Gates has contributed sizeable sums of money to help poverty-stricken areas and fight numerous diseases, including polio, which now remains in just two countries — Afghanistan and Pakistan. It's his hope

it will be officially eradicated by 2019, and he's already turning his attention to vaccines to rid the world of malaria and measles.

"U.S. leadership really matters," Gates said of the philanthropic work, saying it will help give the citizens of countries being aided a better view of the United States in the long run.

"I've seen firsthand what the Gates Foundation has done to change the world, and I can tell you right now, this partnership between the government and the Gates Foundation ... they're

doing things in Africa and the developing world everyone should be proud of," Graham added.

Gates, being on a college campus, naturally spoke at length about the access to higher education and reform at the primary level, which is another matter close to his heart.

He criticized the American education system — citing U.S. test scores continuing to lag behind countries such as China — and defended Common Core standards, which South Carolina rejected earlier this year.

\$79 billion to make a difference'

A college dropout himself, Gates said both of his parents went to college, as the expectations for him to continue his education after high school were clearly laid out, along with plans to prepare for college and apply for scholarships and financial aid.

For those not as fortunate as Gates was when he was preparing to enter college, he's made it a point to reach out and make college more readily available, especially to minorities and those from troubled backgrounds.

"If America talks about

being the place of equal opportunity, the only way that's going to be true is if any kid who wants to go to college gets the mentorship and financial support to get into college," he said.

The Gates Millennium scholarship program, available to minorities, helps make that a reality, and he spoke with a handful of Clemson's Millennium scholarship recipients prior to his Tillman Hall appearance.

"As a computer scientist, I'm in awe of how this man totally revolutionized the computing indus-

try," Clements said. "As a university president, I'm grateful for his incredible, amazing and unbelievable support of higher education."

In response to the final question of the event, which questioned how to make a difference in the world and show leadership, Gates encouraged volunteering and joining local community groups.

"You don't have to have \$79 billion to make a difference," Graham noted.

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