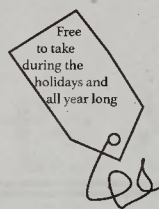


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December 5, 2018

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Beltline Project's Impact on Meredith Revealed

By Olivia Slack,
Staff Writer

A frequent topic of conversation at Meredith has been the beltline expansion project, and many probably remember the October email from Dr. Jo Allen that notified students and staff about the final decision being reached about the I-440 beltline project. The project concerns an expansion of the freeway, something that is clearly much needed, given the traffic that commuters to Raleigh experience on the regular. Originally, the project was estimated to take as much as 17 acres of land from Meredith's campus, a prospect that was alarming to many because of the potential loss of green space and areas for future building, as well as light and noise pollution on campus.

In a recent interview with *The Herald's* Rebecca Dowdy, Dr. Allen explained that maintaining close contact with the NC Department of Transportation was a key factor in negotiating down the amount of land that was to be taken from Meredith. Staying in contact was vital because although estimations of land often start at the maximum and are reduced over time, "we felt that if we didn't keep pushing back, that's where they'd stop with it," said Allen. Now, the DOT has signed a memorandum of understanding to Meredith, stipulating that there will be as minimal an impact on campus as possible and including guidelines about times of construction and the noise and light levels. The current plan that the DOT has finalized

What North Carolina Voted For

By Mimi Mays, Associate Editor

Almost a month ago, North Carolinians headed to the polls to vote on local, state and federal issues. *The Herald* spoke to Meredith Political Science professors Dr. Whitney Manzo and Dr. David McLennan to determine how the election results will impact our state and our country.

A notable change in the NC General Assembly was the upset of the previous republican supermajority. "Having a supermajority meant that the republicans in the NC House and Senate didn't have to worry about how the governor would feel about what they wanted to do," explains Dr. Manzo. A supermajority is quantified as three-fifths of the available seats; with that advantage, a party can control legislation and overturn a governor's veto. "Now, republicans will have to take into consideration democratic concerns on legislation because they cannot win on their own," says Manzo. With a more balanced House and Senate, Dr. McLennan estimates that "we'll probably see movement on teacher salaries, an issue both parties can get behind, but prob-

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Rebecca Dowdy, Opinion Editor, contributed to this story.

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In the election for US House seats, all winners were incumbent congresspeople, with the exception of one undecided race. While other states flipped seats, "North Carolina wasn't subject to the blue wave, or the pink wave as it's been called—because of the success of the republican gerrymander," clarifies Dr. Manzo; "everything stayed the same because it was intended to stay that way." "The districts were gerrymandered in a way that it was virtually impossible for democrats to flip a seat," Dr. McLennan adds. Of note, the one still-undecided US House race is from NC's district nine. The NC State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement is continuing to investigate possible election fraud, amidst evidence of tampering with absentee ballots and theft of those belonging to elderly and African-American voters.

Of the five proposed amendments to the NC Constitution, three were approved and two were defeated. The two defeated amendments both sought to limit Governor Cooper's powers: to appoint justices to judicial vacancies and to appoint members to election boards. According to Dr. Manzo, the amendments' defeat was thanks to the fact that Cooper is a fairly popular governor, and, most importantly, because of a bipartisan coalition of ex-governors who came together to agree that the amendments were a bad move.

Drs. Manzo and McLennan agree that the voter ID amendment will be one of the most influential things NC residents voted for. In the wake of its approval, the General Assembly has been in hearings, working on how to phrase the language of the law. What kinds of IDs are going to be accepted? How will individuals without driver's licenses be able to vote? How can IDs be accessible to member of all socioeconomic statuses. Dr. McLennan observes, "the republicans are taking a more conciliatory approach

to voter ID regulations than could have been expected." In 2013, North Carolina attempted a law that first established voter ID, but it was struck down by the US Supreme Court. "Will people who are against voter ID laws be happy about how it's being implemented now?" McLennan asks. "Probably not. But it's less egregious than it could have been."

As for the three other approved amendments, their language was more vague, their meanings were less clearly stipulated, and their impacts will not likely be substantial. North Carolinians voted to expand victims' rights protections, which if anything could slow down the legal process a bit; the passed hunting and fishing is more symbolic than anything; and the new income tax cap is already significantly higher than the current rate, so it won't make any difference unless we get into a serious budget situation where we urgently need to produce revenue in the short-term, analyzes Dr. McLennan.

Both professors also agree that matters at the federal level will be the most exciting to keep track of. Dr. McLennan predicts that with a newly-organized US House and US Senate, it's a real possibility to see some progress. "We actually often see more come out of a divided Congress," he explains. "The family leave act has been stuck for many many years, but if the house gets behind it and puts pressure on the senate, it could get somewhere."

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New Yorker and newly elected member of the US House, is a exciting player to watch. Already, she's changing the game in how she connects with her constituents. She uses Instagram Live for sharing recipes and meanwhile talking about politics, and she makes people wonder why other representatives aren't as available as her. Can the new, younger congresspeople significantly influence the entire representative dynamic? How is she redefining the expected behavior of a congressman? Most likely, her tactics and people's responses to them will have long-term effects on political norms, says Dr. Manzo.