

Meredith College to Require COVID-19 Vaccination in Spring 2022 Semester

By Elinor Shelp-Peck, Co-Editor in Chief



Photo by Madison Sholar

On Thursday, Sept. 16, the Meredith College Executive Leadership Team (ELT) announced that they are "adding the COVID-19 vaccination to the list of required vaccinations for students...and employees, except for those with religious or documented medical exemptions." Meredith had previously only highly recommended the vaccine, but given the recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine they decided to make a decision for the "health and safety of [the] entire community."

In order to give individuals time to get the vaccine, the new vaccination requirement will not take effect until the Spring 2022

semester. To remain in compliance with the mandate, students and employees must submit their vaccination status by Jan. 4, 2022. Any student or employee who wishes to apply for a medical or religious exemption will be able to do so starting on Oct. 15, 2021. All medical exemptions must be physician-documented. The email stated that those who receive a waiver by Meredith College "will still need to [wear] masks and be tested weekly until further notice."

The email stressed that the ELT "listened to a wide range of opinions, arguments and applications" and chose to implement the vaccination requirement after consulting with "Meredith's Administrative Management Council and health experts." As of Sept. 21, 2021, 78% of students and 79.4% of employees are vaccinated against COVID-19, according to the Staying Strong webpage. That value has changed since the original email was released on Sept. 16, which

stated that "nearly 80% of employees and over 73% of students have submitted proof of vaccination."

On social media, there has been backlash amongst current students, parents and alumnae who believe that requiring the COVID-19 vaccine does not allow them the personal freedom they desire. Others have been quick to point out that Meredith already required a Certificate of Immunization for many other diseases. President Jo Allen released a video on Sept. 17 further explaining the College's decision-making process, which is viewable on the Staying Strong website.

When *The Herald* asked Meredith students what they thought about the new policy, the majority of responses were supportive. Naiylah Harris, '22, said she is "so happy they finally made it mandatory...One step towards our campus' safety!" However, some students have concerns about compliance. Natalie Baker, '25, said, "I am concerned about how many people are talking about faking religious exemptions...and hope they are report-

ed." Alumna Mary Kathryn Keleher, '99, stated that she is "so happy [her] alma mater is taking a stand for health."

An anonymous student shared a personal story regarding those who are considering submitting a religious exemption for nonreligious reasons. "I had to have an exemption on file to go to school here because my parents are anti-vaxxers and it was physically impossible for me to catch up on all of my primary immunizations from the time I was 18 to my enrollment," they said. "Getting all my vaccines takes months, time, a driver's license...and I still got the COVID-19 vaccine. Hearing people complain about a privilege they have been able to receive their whole lives makes me question where their logic is." The student went on to say that if anyone was scared about getting the vaccine, they encouraged them to fight their fears and do their own research about the risks and benefits. "It can be really scary," they said, "but I promise you'll be okay."

Renovated Lake to be Revealed on Oct. 7

By Haileigh West, Contributing Writer

Interview conducted by Freya Dahlgren, Staff Writer

The Meredith Lake, located behind McIver Amphitheater, is set to have its donor celebration for the reopening on Oct. 7, 2021. According to President Jo Allen, the college has planned "outdoor celebrations with masks, social distancing and more" following the lake being unused for five and a half years. Dr. Allen said, "Our intention [for the celebrations] is to include those who have donated to the costs of renovations as well as...students and employees who love the lake."

Renovations to the dam, lake and island were slowed due to COVID-19, Dr. Allen stated, and "the return of a booming construction economy also waylaid some of our earlier efforts for renovations." She said, "It took a long time to get engineers, designers, compliance officers and donors together to see what needed to be updated from the 1960s when the lake and dam were built...all sorts of codes have changed since then, necessitating additional structural support, compliance regulations for the



dam, site development, landscaping and accessibility options and more." Photo by Molly Perry

With lake renovations close to completion, Dr. Allen is "delighted that our students and others throughout our community have a destination at the college for all kinds of community-building and sharing" or for enjoying solitude. In addition to events like weddings and family reunions, the Meredith

signifies for alumnae like herself, Dr. Allen shared, "The lake has always been a focal point for the campus. When I was a student, we would often take our lunch out to the lake and chat with friends. It was a nice site for an afternoon [or] early evening date, too...I'm also pleased that the lake is a site for research and study. Our students and employees, for instance, have tested water quality, algae blooms and environmental priorities." Dr. Allen said that the college also uses water from the lake for irrigation purposes during hotter months.

Dr. Allen is grateful for everyone's patience with the lake renovations and for gifts from special donors, referred to as "the Ladies of the Lake," for making these renovations possible.

for Cornhuskin for some time," and other events such as theatrical performances and guest speakers have taken place here. "And, as always, the lake offers a peaceful respite from the stress of college life—and a quiet place to read, study, talk with friends, eat lunch, walk and more," Dr. Allen said.

When asked what the lake