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The Meredith Herald

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Hispanic Heritage Month at Meredith

By Aminah Jenkins and Rachel Van Horne, Associate Editors

Hispanic Heritage Month originated as a celebration of the Hispanic communities who are largely responsible for several contributions to American society. It is celebrated from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 every year and was first introduced in June of 1968 as a commemorative, week-long celebration by California Congressman George E. Brown. *The Herald* recently interviewed several Hispanic and Latine students on Meredith's campus to get their perspective on this important month.

In regards to what Hispanic Heritage Month means for them, Amanda Duran, '23, stated, "I grew up loving who I am and loving who I come from. That being said, I always loved sharing parts of my culture with people and I still do! Hispanic Heritage Month gives me a chance to share what I love about being me!" Similar sentiments were shared by Daniela Cruz Reyes, '23. She explained, "I'm often reminded

of my parents' sacrifices in order to provide us with the American dream."

On Sept. 15, Meredith College announced in an Instagram post that they are "being intentional in acknowledging cultural commemorations" on their social media. However, not all students felt that the post was beneficial. Charlie Hatch, '23, described the College's post as "a perfect example of performative activism." They explained that they feel the lack of support Hispanic and Latine students receive in academics as well as in situations where their identities are threatened makes the College's words ineffective. "Until the institution itself fully embraces and protects Hispanic and Latine people, I will never take their posts or their words seriously," she said. Duran echoed these concerns, saying that they have not felt supported by Meredith as an institution due to the lack of accountability for students

who make insensitive comments about Hispanics and Latines.

Hatch touched on how difficult it can be for members of the Hispanic and Latine community to simplify these emotions into a few sentiments, saying, "These months signal that the United States has somewhat acknowledged that it has oppressed our people both domestically and internationally. However, the U.S. continues to create these months so it doesn't have to go through the laboring process of creating legislation that protects

our communities."

All three students agreed that Meredith could and should be doing more to celebrate and sup-

port Hispanic and Latine students. Duran suggested that Meredith open their platform up to students to share these important experiences. Cruz Reyes explained, "We're almost at the end of the month and haven't seen any [other] posts from Meredith." She believed

that including additional posts of Hispanic and Latine culture, accomplishments and heritage would allow people to learn more.



The image that was posted on Meredith College social media

What to Know About Meredith College COVID-19 Vaccination Exemptions

By Jayce Perry, Staff Writer

On Sept. 16, 2021, Meredith College announced via email that students, faculty and staff will be required to get the COVID-19 vaccine by the start of the Spring 2022 semester.

The email to students and employees said that the administration's "guiding concern" in deciding to require the vaccine was the safety of the entire community. Students who wish to request an exemption for religious or physician-documented medical reasons can do so through an online portal beginning on Oct. 15.

Meredith's Staying Strong website answers many of the most

frequently asked questions about the vaccine requirement, but *The Herald* interviewed Dr. Jean Jackson, Vice President for College Programs, and Dr. Mary Johnson,

Director of Health Services, to get more details about the vaccine requirement.

When asked about what will happen to students who are not vaccinated and have not been granted an exemption by the Jan. 4, 2022 deadline, Dr. Jackson stated that "students must be vaccinated or be granted an exemption in

order to enroll or remain enrolled at Meredith in Spring 2022." She also said that since conditions

related to COVID-19 continue to change, the College "will continue to monitor those conditions and [make] decisions about formats of classes closer to the start of the spring semester."

Dr. Johnson provided information about how students can obtain a vaccine exemption. She said that there is a statewide medical exemptions form that "outlines the specific contraindications to immunizations." This form has to be completed by a physician. For religious exemptions, Dr. Johnson said, "A religious exemption must accurately reflect a student's sincerely held religious beliefs which are contrary to the practice of immunizations." Dr. Johnson said that Meredith College is working on a "streamlined form to help students navigate this process" and that this form will be available after Oct. 15 when the portal for exemption submissions opens. Dr. Jackson stated that "if exemptions are found to have no basis,

then they will not be granted."

With fake COVID-19 vaccination records circulating on other college campuses according to WRAL, some Meredith students have wondered how the College will prevent the use of false vaccination records. Dr. Jackson said that "Student Health Services closely examines all vaccination documentation submitted to them." If documentation is suspected to be false, it will be reported to the Community Standards Task Force, she explained. "If found to have provided false information," Dr. Jackson said, "a student would face sanctions issued by the Community Standards Task Force up to and including removal from College."

Dr. Johnson said that Health Services is planning to offer another vaccine clinic later in the semester. Students or employees who need help finding vaccine providers can contact Health Services or Human Resources.

Rooting for the Home Team During COVID-19

By Jayce Perry, Staff Writer

For many years, Meredith College students have attended NC State football games and other sporting events, and this semester is no different. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, some Meredith students have expressed concern about their classmates participating in large events like

these. The most recent NC State games were on Sept. 25 and Oct. 2 and many Meredith students were in attendance, which brings up the concerns of NC State's COVID-19 protocols for some. *The Herald* interviewed several Meredith students to get their opinions on COVID-19 protocols at sporting events.

Kasey Wilkins, '23, had attended every home football game so far this season when she was interviewed. She said she feels safe attending since she is vaccinated. "If I were not vaccinated, I would probably not feel comfortable attending...or if I lived with people that weren't vaccinated, I

would not feel comfortable attending," she stated. Wilkins said she didn't notice any safety protocols in place besides masks being required in restrooms.

Read the full story on our website.



Photo by Ally Cefalu