

THE TWIG

MEREDITH COLLEGE



Should students be qualified or 'quantified'?

The Task Force on Curriculum Reform's proposal to the Meredith Curriculum Committee contains one major alteration of the college's graduation requirements. This change is incorporated in the subject area it titles "Communication Skills." The proposal suggests a change of the foreign language requirement from the present mandate 0 to 12 hours to a 6 hour requirement. Neither requirement provides for the optimal language program. The proposal offers some solutions to current problems.

Under the College catalogue, the student is currently required to take up to four semesters of a foreign language. Placement is based upon the scores of a foreign language test.

The Curriculum Reform proposal asks that students who have had two years of language in high school be allowed to choose between specific language or general language courses. Students with less than two years of a high school language would be required to take two semesters of a specific foreign language. Most currently entering students would have this latter option.

Under our current requirements, few students are gaining a competency in a foreign language. Their two years of required language are essentially being wasted—few students with just the two years of language are prepared to pass the reading competency requirements for higher degrees. Most students, not aspiring to higher degrees do not have, after two years, sufficient skills in a language to be able to practice these skills enough with either conversation, reading or writing to retain their knowledge.

There do not seem to be any benefits to be derived from partial study of a particular language. Language study is not a place to bring about appreciation of literature. Students do not gain an appreciation of great literature by stumbling clumsily through diluted editions. It would be better to study excellent translations of these works.

We should either have no language requirement or a qualitative one requiring a proficiency in one or more areas of language use if the courses are to have any long term value. Indeed, two years of a language, under the present curriculum, might be adequate if the high schools prepared the students for upper level language training, but they do not. Most students have had quantitative but not qualitative exposure to foreign languages in high school.

The Curriculum Reform offers a solution to the problems presented by the matriculation of ill prepared students. Under the present structure, students with minimal qualitative language qualifications are placed into Meredith's second year program. With poorly prepared students, teachers of these classes can do little more than teach a modified, moderately accelerated first year course. The Curriculum Reform proposal suggests that the two years be concentrated into one year, students would then have the choice of a review course or an introductory course in the language. Student and faculty energy would be maximized if such one year programs could be devised and if students could be placed with students who are their equals in qualitative background.

If dabbling in a language must be a requisite for graduation, the presentation of an alternate of general language and linguistics courses is a good one. The course idea is a good one even if it is not required.

AKV

Letters to the editor

Dear Meredith Community,

Before the memories of this past Christmas slip any further away, I would like to sincerely thank the people in the Meredith Community who participated in the "Toys for Tots" drive sponsored by the Meredith Christian Association. I appreciate your willingness to give a toy or game to an underprivileged child in Wake County. You will be interested in knowing that the toys donated by Meredith varied considerably, including such things as homemade bean bag games, books, balls, stuffed animals, and dolls. The toys were collected by a local fire department for distribution to the needy children.

The Meredith Christian Association will be sponsoring many types of activities during the spring semester, including Wednesday worship services, growth groups, service projects, and a forum on medical ethics. I encourage each of you to get involved.

Sincerely,
Nancy Pentecost
President
Meredith Christian
Association

Dear Editor,
As an active and participating Meredith sports

enthusiast I am appalled at the lack of athletic recognition in the total Meredith community. Although not claiming that academics should be neglected, I believe that the student who participates in extracurricular activities, including sports, is more well rounded and versatile than the academic bookworm. It's discouraging to learn of females with good academic standing and excellent athletic talent who were diverted from Meredith because of the apathy and lack of scholarships in sports at Meredith. These well-rounded, talented students, while going to other schools, would be a great asset to Meredith's community. A winning season would attract new applicants to Meredith, increase pride of student body, add publicity to the school, and promote physical fitness as well as academic excellence. And furthermore, as much as Meredith College stresses women's individualism and equality, it's hypocritical to hinder female students to excel in inter-collegiate sports.

Signed,

A Concerned and Proud
Meredith Athlete

Dear Editor,

I would like to comment on your January 25 editorial. You stated that "most names (of weak faculty members) can be derived through analysis of the faculty evaluations distributed at the end of last year."

I agree that the evaluations might show some weaknesses of some faculty members. I do not agree with the implication that the evaluations are a definite source for finding the names of "weak faculty members of departments."

While working closely with Dr. Lyn Aubrecht to develop the evaluation form last year, I came to understand two important things: (1) Evaluation responses are only opinions, not facts and (2) the results of any faculty evaluation should be used only as one of several factors in determining the strength or weakness of the faculty.

All members of the Meredith Community need to remember these two important facts if we are to continue to have faculty evaluations.

Rebecca Askew
SGA President

Evaluations are judged

A letter to the editor in this issue suggests an interesting question. What is the purpose of the faculty evaluations if it is not to measure the students' evaluations of the quality of the individual courses, the texts and the teaching?

Consulting the explanation attached to the printout of the evaluation results on reserve in the Meredith library, I found the statement "The purpose of the evaluations was twofold: (1) to help in the evaluation of courses and teachers and (2) to help improve courses and instruction at Meredith College." Both are excellent goals. Conclusions made about courses and faculty members should admittedly be made "cautiously," but they should be made. If such

conclusions cannot be made, we need to consider a new evaluation instrument.

The evaluations seem fair, they do not present an exceedingly negative view of the Meredith curriculum, rather, since few areas were evaluated as poor, they tend to present an overly optimistic picture. These few areas

should surely be analyzed and improved.

Since a very basic purpose of teaching is to communicate knowledge of a discipline to a student, it would seem that student responses to faculty evaluations would be the best means of judging the

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