

Point

Counterpoint

Students debate Open House policy

Meredith College has had a long-standing tradition of no open house in the residence halls. It now looks as if that policy might be in danger. It is my belief that Meredith would only suffer from allowing open house.

We here at Meredith seem to take our safety and security for granted. On Thursday, February 11, I had a Raleigh policewoman tell me, and several others, that Meredith is known for its safety record and that the main reason we are so safe is because we do not have open house, and we do not allow males in the residence halls. I, for one, do not want to jeopardize my safety.

When each of us came to Meredith, we were well aware of the strict policy on open house. We chose to come here anyway. It seems that we have forgotten the decision we each made to further our education. Meredith's primary objective is to educate, not to promote one's social life. Open house starts out as one Sunday a month for four hours, but then it snowballs into open house at all times, and there is no going back.

I do not believe everyone is aware of the problems open house could create. What if you want your boyfriend in your room and your roommate objects? Who gives in and loses her rights? Both of you pay equal tuition and have equal rights, but somebody has to lose. Is it fair? No, it is not. Why do students here want to create extra problems? We have the rest of our lives to share our space with men, so do not try to force it on us now. It is only four years, and you can see your boyfriend somewhere else, but not in my residence hall.

My mother and my sister attended Meredith, and I have heard about and seen many changes occur throughout the years. What we must remember is that all change is not good, and we have to protect our world, Meredith, as we know it.

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Meredith has long been a meeting ground for open minds. Unfortunately, as the Open House recommendation has evolved, this tradition has been clouded by minds being closed.

The argument that Open House opposes Meredith tradition stems from a misunderstanding of our roots. Meredith tradition is based not solely on rings, little sisters, or the WOMEN ONLY signs. In a larger sense, tradition here is about change, growth, and evolution. Indeed Meredith's original students—

the immortal ten—defied tradition by attempting to get educations. Fortunately for us, their determination to stimulate change and their willingness to think and evolve created a precedent for future Meredith generations. Students since then have followed their lead, and we now recognize Meredith as a place where the vision of students guides student government and administration.

The current vision of students—at least the 89.1% who indicated so on last spring's Senate survey—is to follow the tradition of change by opening our campus for weekend Open House activities.

The empty parking lots, deserted dining hall, and vacant courtyards do not lie: most Meredith students do not remain at 3800 Hillsborough Street on weekends. Instead, we seek hubs of social activity whether at home in Fuquay-Varina or at UNC-Chapel Hill. What we are seeking off-campus—activities—can be provided easily on-campus. Open House will increase student involvement on campus during weekends by offering students more things to do, like movies, worship, athletic tournaments, fund raisers, canoeing, or picnics. The visitation element, which is a minor part of the proposal, allows students who live in residence halls to open their rooms as their homes—a right afforded to most other students on college campuses. With more weekend activities, we are more likely to remain on campus throughout weekends, to feel that Meredith is our home, and to share it with friends and family.

While Open House was created to meet the needs of current Meredith students, the policy will inevitably boost recruitment. The shrinking market of applicants forces colleges to be more competitive in attracting students. Meredith is no exception to this trend. While enrollment continues to decline, Meredith must do all it can to recruit and retain students. Open House will allow Admissions to truthfully sell weekend activities as a benefit of coming to Meredith and to dispel claims that this is a suitcase school. Such a positive social atmosphere on weekends will enhance the image that prospective students get of Meredith, thus increasing our chances of recruiting more students.

But perhaps the main reason to support Open House lies in its title—temporary. Open House from 1 to 5PM on the third Sunday of September, October, and November during the fall semester will give the campus an opportunity to experience and evaluate what an open house is like. If we like it, we can suggest dates for future open houses. But the real jewel of this temporary policy is that if we don't like it, we can trash it with the assurance that it is good for neither the students nor the school. It is only by tasting the medicine that we can know if Open House is the right prescription. Without trying it, we will never know.

Open House will not turn Meredith into Animal House for the third Sunday of each month during the fall semester. Nor will it open the door for 24-hour visitation or a co-ed curriculum. Open House is truly about improving the lives of Meredith students during weekends. Certainly, the roots of this policy empower Meredith students with the freedom and ability to change their environment into what they feel it should be. Without change, our tradition of open minds may transform into closed doors.

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**Friday, Feb. 19, 1993
9:00 p.m.**

Kresge Auditorium

