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President Weems gives Meredith a reality check

by Teresa Latham

An emergency faculty and staff meeting was called Feb. 9 in Kresge Auditorium by President John Weems to discuss the direction and future of Meredith College.

In the recent letters to department heads and other administrators, Weems explained the current financial status of the college and outlined proposed solutions and structures to implement immediately.

In a letter sent Jan. 31, Weems gave the reader a "reality check" by summarizing Meredith's budget, enrollment, freshman retention and reputation. He expressed that all of these areas are not at the level they should be. In another such letter, he described 20 items he listed as necessities for success. He stressed the need for cooperation, new programming and appealing to a larger clientele.

Faculty had strong reactions to the letters, which many felt were written unjustly harsh and suggested plans without consultation of administrators, faculty and students. Dr. Bernard

Cochran, professor of religion and philosophy, described the letters as "in-your-face," and another faculty member described them as "threatening."

Students, who had been alerted to the existence of the letters, informed SGA, who then began discussing the matter and attended the meeting Thursday night. The meeting was broadcast over the Meredith cable channel, and many students tuned in to hear what the president, trustees and other members of the Meredith community had

to say about the issue.

The meeting - Claude Williams,

chairman of the Board of Trustees, moderated the meeting and opened by



photo by Cindy Bradley

President Weems addressed faculty, administration, and students at an emergency meeting about Meredith's future last Thursday.

saying that this is "a very challenging time in the history of our college, a time of change and excitement."

Weems began by saying that Meredith is facing financial disaster in five to 10 years if changes are not made. The 1994-5 school year marks the third year in which the proposed budget hasn't been met, stated Weems, and

the number of traditional age students graduating from high school is dropping.

He described ways in which the budget must be cut, including phasing out unfunded financial aid such as the Teaching Fellows programs and other grants, cutting personnel, decreasing faculty release time, cutting out non-productive programs and restructuring departments. Weems' aim was to prevent implementing a prohibitive tuition hike.

In addition, he felt that Meredith must extend more class and office hours into the evening. "The solution is simple," said Weems. "There must be a commitment to evening programs."

After the president's statements, many of the trustees in attendance said a few words in support of Weems.

Trustee Theo Pitt said the college needs to be "consumer and customer-

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Speech department falls short of Meredith standards

by Clarky Lucas

With the administration's growing concern about Meredith College's financial situation, members of the speech communication department are already concerned about the academic development of the program that has been struggling for some time, said Dr. John Creagh, head of the speech communication department.

The department was created six years ago with only five students majoring in speech communication. There are now over 40 students in this major, but there has been no increase in the budget since the program began, said Creagh.

Creagh is the only full time teacher in the department and is the advisor to 42 students. Some of his advisees are majoring in speech pathology which is an area in which Creagh admits he is not specialized.

"I think the major should be stron-

ger, and how can it be when the ratio of full time faculty members to students is 1:42," he said.

Because Meredith doesn't offer the pathology major, those students must

take a minimum of 12 hours at NCSU to fulfill the speech pathology requirements, he said.

Each semester there are two- to three part-time faculty members who

"A strong well-funded major would reap far more benefits than it would cost."

- Dr. John Creagh
Speech Communication Dept.

teach communication courses. Terri Kauffman and Paul Potorti are offering classes at Meredith as well as NCSU this semester.

Not only is the lack of full time faculty a problem, but there is also the difficulty of not having adequate equipment for students. All of the video equipment is borrowed from the library. The speech and theatre departments do not have their own television sets and video cameras that are

necessary for communication majors to have access to, he said.

"A lot of technology that is not expensive is out there, and we don't have access to it," he said.

Increasing instructional space would also aid the department which is allocated to only one classroom that has a chalk board instead of a dry-erase board. There are constant temperature problems in the classroom, and it is unattractive. Many times costumes from

the theater department are piled high next to the wall, said Creagh.

"Being stuck in only one room that is surrounded by theater stuff makes some feel like the speech communication department is not taken as seriously as other departments like psychology, English, and biology," said Wendy Roberts, speech major.

Because there is only one classroom available, there are a limited number of classes offered per semester. Three solid classrooms with one outfitted for TV production is needed. One of the classrooms should be a facility for business speech performances with a conference table and a flip chart, he suggested.

"More women are becoming speech communication majors; I think

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