

Resolution and agenda for Meredith's future

contributed by Clyde Frazier

On Thursday evening, Mr. Williams repeatedly challenged us to present an alternative vision for Meredith's future. What follows is an attempt to take up that challenge. It is not a complete blueprint but an outline of a few crucial initiatives to begin the process of institutional renewal.

This is also an invitation. If you are interested in these ideas, I invite you to join with me to build consensus for them. If you have a better idea, or just another idea, I implore you to come forward. Meredith needs all the wisdom we can muster.

I will present the following resolution at the faculty meeting on Friday if there is support for doing so. Please let me know if you are interested in taking the time to discuss this and if you have any suggested changes in the form of the resolution or in the agenda.

Resolved: The faculty of Meredith College supports the ideas in the agenda for institutional renewal. The faculty directs the faculty affairs committee to work with the administration and to act on its own initiative to study the expanded schedule; to develop, in consultation with all parts of the Meredith community, specific proposals to implement the elements of the agenda; and to advocate these ideas and proposals with the administration and trustees.

Dr. Weems has created an opportunity for us to address fundamental issues. The trustees who spoke on Thursday seemed to be concerned about the present situation and looking for solutions. They repeatedly challenged us to change. We should not let this opportunity slip away.

An agenda

for institutional renewal:

I. Quick yet careful action on an expanded schedule

Dr. Weems is right. We cannot afford to ignore the increasing competition for traditional students and the potential of other markets. But an expanded schedule poses particular dangers for Meredith. One of our greatest accomplishments is the intense experience we have created for traditional dorm students. Almost 4/5 of our students are traditional age and they spoke eloquently on Thursday about the

value of the traditional Meredith experience and the hazards of the proposed changes. There are also costs for faculty and staff who have family, church, professional and community obligations which are important to them and to the college.

We cannot afford to ignore any potential opportunity, but we must never jeopardize our base. It is especially important that there be wide consultation on the issue of an expanded schedule because of the potential costs. But we cannot afford to succumb to bureaucratic inertia. Those who wish to be consulted must commit themselves to work in an intensely focused way to bring the process to a conclusion with dispatch.

II. Reform social rules

Listen to the students. They know that the major cause of our recruitment and retention problems is our outdated social rules. This is not the sole cause of our problems, but it is the only one that can conceivably be changed in short order at low financial cost. Meredith should not seek to be in the vanguard of liberalization. I believe very strongly that Meredith should remain a safe, protected place. But we cannot survive as an anachronism. The world has changed, for good or ill, and we must continue changing with it as we have done in the past.

Students have worked all alone on this issue for years, but it is clear that it is not just an issue for students anymore. The rest of us need to join hands with them to make change a reality.

III. Student-led quality initiative

Meredith is currently the best bargain in private higher education in North Carolina. Our costs are comparable to those at far weaker institutions. This is a tremendous accomplishment. We all owe the president, the dean and the board a debt of gratitude for it. It puts us in a very strong position to face the future, but we are in danger of being imprisoned by our success.

Our low cost raises questions about the value of a Meredith education — everyone knows that you get what you pay for. It also limits our ability to enhance quality. Students want smaller classes, updated labs, more course offerings and many other things which cost money. The only way to get more

in the short run is to raise prices. This is a hard issue for students, but many students will support increases if they will go directly to improving their education and living conditions. Students know what they need, and we must ask them what they are willing to pay for. This is an issue the faculty has been pushing for years. Student support will make it possible to break the deadlock.

Higher costs pose special problems for students with limited resources. We must face those problems squarely and use part of any increase to fund need-based scholarships. I do not share the president's desire to completely eliminate this type of tuition discounting. No college in the country charges its students the full cost of an education. Currently we subsidize every student's education by keeping tuition low. Instead, we need to focus subsidies on those students with financial need and those, like Teaching Fellows, that we especially want to attract. Discounting is like debt, too much is dangerous, but conservatively used it is an invaluable tool. We should no longer deprive ourselves of its use.

IV. Expand our traditional base

In spite of the smaller pool of traditional students, we can still increase our share if we take the steps outlined above. A couple of years ago the Women's College Coalition found that only 3% of high school age young women would even consider going to a women's college. The bad news is that we are in a fairly small market niche. The good news is that if we can just convince an additional 1% to consider a women's college, we have increased our applicant pool by 1/3. Meredith is not for everyone, but we have something very valuable to offer far more than 3% of young women. The drawbacks of women's colleges are apparent to potential students, but the benefits are not. Research shows that graduates of women's colleges do better in business, professional and political life. Most young women do not know this — we need to make sure they learn.

Career Connections

On-Campus Recruiting:

• Sign up today for these companies:

Hudson Belk

The Limited

Jefferson Pilot

Cacique

Northwestern Mutual Life

Lady Foot Locker

Coastal Group

Health Source

Applied Analytical Industries

• Employer Resume Review:

American Tele/Telegraph

Eckerd Family Youth

Merrill Lynch

Xerox Corporation

Johnson & Johnson

Metropolitan Life

Alfred Williams

BASF

DancoScandinavian/Contemporary

Life of Virginia

Raleigh Athletic Club

• Brand New! Submit your resume for these companies by March 1.

Blackbaud

John Hancock

Cache'

Employment Opportunities:

• Administrative Assistant/Office Manager - Great opportunity, growth potential with Cowdery Corporate Services in Durham.

• Camp Day '95 - Find a Summer Job! Feb. 15, Great Hall - UNC-CH, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. More than 50 camps from GA to NY will have reps on campus & will be hiring students for positions from counselors to lifeguards to specialty instructors.

• The Eight Annual Student Conference on Careers in International Business - Monday, Feb. 20, Cone University Center - UNC Charlotte (704) 547-2407

• USA WORKFORCE 2000 - Winston-Salem's Best Job Fair - Grow with Winston-Salem Tuesday, Feb. 28, 9:00-3:00 p.m., Benton Convention & Civic Center (910) 727-2976 (for directions) \$25 Fee - Register by credit card for reserved seating, call 407-686-68000, ext.3.