Senior parking a problem

From the Editor

I try not to complain about the parking situation here at Meredith because I know how hellacious the problem of parking can be on other campuses. For example, my friends at Carolina have to make a two mile trek off campus to the lot where they park. At Appalachian State, one parking lot is clear across town, accessible only by a long bus ride.

In light of these issues, I should feel lucky that the parking space that is the extreme farthest from my dorm is still within walking distance. And I *do* feel lucky. However, I am experiencing a slight dilemma with the senior parking situation. What's the problem? I'm having a really hard time *finding* any senior parking.

Last semester, it wasn't such a big deal. There were two less senior parking spaces than there were seniors, so occasionally I couldn't find a space near Barefoot and had to park in the Pit. That wasn't a problem. A rare afternoon (or midnight) stroll through the parking lots was a nice diversion and, hey, I needed the exercise.

But, this semester I'm getting way too much exercise. About 20 juniors who had enough hours to be first semester seniors got senior parking stickers in January, according to the security office. Now there are 22 less spaces than there are seniors, which totally throws the system out of whack. Now I'm finding myself darting from the very bottom of the Pit more often than I'd like. Three times during one week, I was banished to the Pit after cruising unsuccessfully for a senior space. My friends and I are starting to get physically violent over which of us has to drive places and lose her parking space.

I realize that other students have to walk a good distance to their cars everyday, but I did, too, when I didn't have the privilege of senior parking. I did my time as an underclasswoman, parking near Faircloth Street and waiting for the day when I could slide into a space marked "senior." And now that I'm fixing to graduate in three months, I'm being denied this upperclasswoman reward? How rude.

According to the registrar's office, "very few" students graduate from Meredith a semester early, so most likely those 20 first semester seniors who just got their parking stickers will be taking advantage of senior parking privileges for three semesters. In my opinion, that's not going to cut it. I don't want to be denied my parking privilege three times a week so another student can have it for a year and a half.

Letter from the administration: response to the e-mail problems

From Ruth Balla, Technology Services
Reprinted from an e-mail message sent to Meredith e-mail users

This is going to be detailed — but as users of e-mail, you need to know this! There are several things that are happening that contribute to the E-mail situation. I will try to explain each of them.

Money to install, support, and upgrade the network — cabling, hubs, routers, servers, software, desktop computers, is not "unlimited" — only a portion of tuition money can be spent on E-mail! We purchased a system that in all honesty should be adequate. The system works great for on-campus mail — it does many things that other e-mail software does not — like address lists, and an easy user-interface. Remember, the reason the system was installed was to improve communications between faculty and students, and between students. The system was to add to your academic experience.

The system gets complicated for off-campus mail. Going off-campus, mail goes through 5 systems for conversions, packaging, and sending. Each time we have a problem with e-mail, a different system was involved and needed to be upgraded — that meant coming up with a solution, finding money, ordering and installing — each takes time.

Currently, we are in the process of installing new software for the SMTP Gateway — the system that gets the mail ready to go off campus. The software that we have now works — it is too slow to keep up with the volume of mail.

Let's talk about volume — because of the chain letters (that means you receive a letter, it asks you to send it to all your friends — and you do! From now on — DON'T), broadcasts, and listserves, our volume keeps increasing — dramatically increasing. And message size is large. Christmas cards, the meaning of life, charitable donations, the latest scam, all these messages get sent to people over and over, in and out of our system. The e-mail with the meaning of life — one day a student sent it to 20 people (I have no idea how many times it was sent in total — I just know this one because someone showed it to me). That message was huge — it took over 30 times as long as a regular e-mail message. For those 20 messages to be sent off campus took the same time it would have taken 600 regular messages. That is one example of what some users call use and I call mis-use! That type of misuse happens over and over and contributes greatly to our e-mail problems.

I feel if our system was not abused, it would work fine. Lots of users send me copies of messages that they can't send out — usually because the address is wrong. But the point I want to make is that none of those messages have ever been about Meredith College or academics. How much money should Meredith spend for students to send e-mail to friends?

Students complain about our long distance telephone charges — they may be higher than some companies but there are no monthly local charges! We use PBX which means no local charges but means we must charge higher rates for the way we must connect to long distance services. Other schools make students deal with the local phone company — that means $75 deposit, waiting each year for phone installation — which sometimes takes weeks, and a monthly local phone bill — it is a trade-off!

Students complain that they use the e-mail in place of the phone — that is not the way e-mail works. Once a message leaves Meredith College, we have no control over it. E-mail over the Internet is not like the Phone system — it is not a direct connections. The Internet is based on a short hop principle. Your message goes from site to site — picking a path that will get it closer to its destination but on a path which is "less busy" — recall all of the news about the Internet being busy, too busy and the threats of the collapse of the Internet due to overuse. Well, even for a message to go from Meredith to NCSU, it may take several hops and a matter of several hours depending on how busy the routers are.

E-mail is not a replacement for telephone, in some cases, it is not even a replacement for US mail. It is an alternate form of communication — one in its infancy, one that is developing, one with changing standards. The rules governing the Internet have no guarantee of mail delivery, and Meredith can not guarantee what they do not.

Meredith offers students e-mail accounts as a way of introducing the technology. I hope it is used for academic purposes, I hope it is used appropriately and not abused. We cannot maintain a system that will send every broadcast, chain letter, and junk mail in minutes. We will improve our system. When we reach another critical point, we will improve our system again. But users must learn to use e-mail appropriately. Wait times of hours or even occasionally a few days are reasonable. If your have critical information, pick up the phone, fax it or send it US mail.

Meredith By Tory Hoke