

Campus debate over graduation speaker continues

Businesswoman and entrepreneur Marion Luna Brem will address the Class of 2002.

□ Student challenges class of '03 to pursue graduation speaker.

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the article "Commencement Speaker" in the April 3, 2002 edition. I heartily agree that the academic merits found at Meredith are worthy of publication.

The article mentions that Cornhuskin' is featured in area publications more so than the quality of our education.

If this is true, then it is up to the student body to ensure that events, awards and accomplishments of the students are force-fed to those publications. Eventually the emphasis will switch to education instead of extracurriculars.

Additionally, regarding commencement speakers, remember that the class of 2001 invited Elizabeth Dole, a dynamic speaker who provided a memorable commencement experience.

I would like to know what individuals were sought for commencement this May?

What early efforts were made by the commencement committee to secure an educated, articulate and memorable speaker?

If the commencement committee contacted numerous meritorious individuals and they declined due to the size of Meredith College or due to our traditions or the lack of notoriety, then changes need to be made in marketing Meredith College.

However, if the commencement committee did not begin the search for a speaker with aggression and determination and had to "settle" for Marion Luna Brem, then the fault lies with the committee and not the quality of Meredith.

Graduation marks a pinnacle accomplishment in the lives of our graduating seniors. It is a testament to reaching the mountaintop after years of dedication, commitment, sacrifice, hard work and determination. The commencement speaker should equal this effort.

If Brem does, then the commencement committee should shout her worthiness from the mountaintop.

If not, then I challenge the commencement committee of the Class of 2003 to stand surefooted in the confidence of your Meredith education and seek only those individuals who exemplify what we can all become—a combination of education, accomplishment and role model.

Class of 2003, pick a speaker and don't stop pursuing until you get her.

Thank you,

Deni A. Fholer
Class of 2002

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at Meredith's Class of 2002 commencement this May.

Brem is recognized as one of the "100 Most Influential



Students, faculty and staff have mixed views on the commencement speaker for 2002, Marion Luna Brem. Commencement speakers at area institutions include Senator John Edwards at UNC-Chapel Hill and the *Washington Post's* William Rasberry at NCSU.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

□ Luna is the 'perfect' speaker.

Dear Editor,

I am writing to concur with Christine Kelley's enthusiasm about the significant opportunity we all have to hear Marion Luna Brem's address

Hispanics in the United States" by *Hispanic Business* magazine.

Her story has been profiled in *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *Reader's Digest*. Brem is a highly sought after speaker. Kudos to those who were able to secure a date for Meredith on her demanding schedule.

In response to those who expressed that Meredith is unable to attract "big name" commencement speakers: Is Elizabeth Dole not "prominent" or "well-known"?

Some argue that Dole personally benefited from the occasion with the receipt of an honorary degree and the positive publicity preceding a bid for the presidency.

Are we so naive to believe that Senator Clinton's motives for speaking at Sweet Briar College and Senator Edwards' at UNC are somehow less politically disposed?

In 2000, North Carolina Senator Betsy Cochrane was our speaker.

Linda Finch addressed the class of 1998. Finch is a successful businesswoman, pilot and renowned Amelia Earhart expert. She built a replica of Earhart's original twin-engine "Lockheed Electra" plane, which she successfully piloted around the world, recreating Earhart's fateful 1937 flight.

What is the purpose of a commencement address? I dare say not to impress the local community, which Brem's presence will accomplish among our citizens interested in business and/or diversity issues.

She is the perfect speaker to inspire and motivate women to be confident regarding our abilities and to strive for excellence in this era. She will encourage all of us, as women, to boldly confront mighty endeavors. Although an engaging speaker, Senator Edwards would probably not be able to challenge our graduates so effectively.

It has been proposed that the reason we don't seem to attract notable commencement speakers such as Edwards, Clinton and William Rasberry is that Meredith College is distinguished primarily for our extracurricular endeavors rather than our educational merit. I heartily disagree with

this suggestion.

Dr. Hartford, Dr. Reichard, Dr. Jackson, our nationally esteemed faculty and many others have worked tirelessly to build not only Meredith's academic reputation but also the reality of quality education found here. We can boast that we are among the academic elite.

Secondly, why must we ceaselessly continue this maddening debate over tradition versus academics? The two are not mutually exclusive.

Certainly, we can find a way to enjoy and celebrate Meredith's unique traditions while being respected as the scholarly institution we are.

Women at Meredith are privileged to have outstanding instruction from challenging professors (not graduate students or "TA's") while benefiting from the countless leadership opportunities available.

A graduate of Meredith College enters the professional world with much more than intellectual knowledge; she is also well-organized, efficient, creative, motivated, assertive, articulate and philanthropic—skills and attitudes she developed not only in the classroom but as Cornhuskin' co-chair, as editor of *Oak Leaves* or as the secretary of the College Democrats.

The unique opportunities found at Meredith College educate the whole woman, making her more professionally marketable in the twenty-first century.

By the way, I have degrees from both UNC-Chapel Hill and NCSU, and I cannot tell you who spoke at either commencement exercise.

I do remember, however, that Michael Jordan graduated from UNC with my class in 1986, and I sat beside Cheryl Jenkins, director of Student Activities and Leadership Development, during my NCSU commencement in 1991, but this information is not very relevant to our discussion.

Or is it? I am grateful I found my way to Meredith College.

Respectfully,
Carolyn C. Koning
Co-Director for FYE