



Meredith serves as backdrop for long-awaited Senate debate

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Managing Editor

North Carolina's hottest political race came to Meredith on Monday, October 10, when U.S. Senate hopefuls Erskine Bowles and Elizabeth Dole held their first debate on campus.

The debate was held in Jones Auditorium and was co-produced by local stations WRAL (CBS) and WTVD (ABC). The moderators for the debate were David Crabtree of WRAL and Larry Stogner of WTVD.

The debate was not open to the public or the media. Only guests and staff of the two candidates were present, along with the television crews and three representatives of the College: Dr. James Piazza, assistant professor of politics; Lora Tillman, SGA president; and Rory Mueller and Sherry Tompkins assistants to the President. According to Kristi Eaves-McLennan of the Office of Marketing

and Communications, two members of the debate committee were also allowed inside just before the debate.

According to Piazza, who chaired the debate committee, Meredith's Office of Marketing and Communications and Hartford made contact with the two campaigns to offer Meredith as a host site for any potential debates. Other members of the committee included Mueller, Eaves-McLennan and Melyssa Allen of the Office of Marketing and Communications, Martha Harrell of the Office of Campus Events, Meredith Police Chief Frank Strickland, Bill Brown from the theatre department, and Tom Sherry and Harry Cadman of maintenance and grounds.

"The Dole campaign was the first to contact Meredith," said Piazza. "They actually talked with Meredith and issued a press release announcing that the debate was going to occur without talking to the

Bowles side."

Despite this misunderstanding, the Bowles campaign was also receptive to holding the debate at Meredith, and the plan was able to move forward.

and the College were not as simple.

"The campaign managers of both campaigns met with Dr. Hartford and myself, along with representatives of WRAL and WTVD, on

These conditions included a ban on media and on a public audience at the debate, which would be taped to air across the state at 7 p.m. that night.

"Dr. Hartford and I were quite surprised and disappointed," Piazza said. He described both camps as "firm" in their conditions and said, "while we wanted and argued for student involvement in the debates (our original plan was to have students in the audience, students working as ushers, students asking questions), that was something that both campaigns were absolutely not willing to have."

"The original conception was for Meredith students to be the ones actually asking the questions of the candidates," said Tillman. "That would have given the state and the nation a chance



Professor Jim Piazza and SGA President Lora Tillman welcomed Bowles and Dole to Meredith.

PHOTOS BY MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

However, according to the Wednesday before the Piazza, negotiations debate and laid out their conditions," Piazza said.

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