

Students respond to former Meredith student facing allegations of federal offenses

The recent indictment of former Meredith student Lisa Phillips for posing as an Air Force Captain, has solicited several student responses. These responses do not necessarily reflect those of the college administration, faculty, or student body.

I am outraged by the alleged actions of Lisa Phillips and the administration of our college. Luckily, I never had the chance to be fooled by Phillips. I had seen her around campus but never met her. I imagine I would feel as duped as our administration, professors and some students feel now.

If Phillips is found guilty of the numerous federal charges against her, including impersonating a military officer and fraud, I want to know why she thinks she deserved a free education from Meredith. I am one of the many Meredith students now who work extremely hard to make it through college, supporting themselves, and I don't get a free education. And why did she choose Meredith? Did she think we would be easier to fool?

Apparently that was the case. She managed to find a way to get approximately \$42,000 from our school, as where the rest of us deal with increasing tuition each year and no extra money in our academic departments. Who in the Admissions Office or Financial Aid Office did not check on her application? Somewhere on there I remember is a place to submit if you deserve military preferences. With all the employees on campus, isn't someone responsible for making sure all the information on the application is accurate? Could I have said that I have no parents so that my financial aid would not be subject to what my mother earns each

year as well as my income? When this is all said a done, I want to know what action was taken by our administration to fix this loop hole in our system. The administration is not the only ones who need to have answers for us. I understand from other students that Phillips missed class frequently because of injuries and her military duty, along with turning in late assignments. I have to give some sort of proof for my absences and have to have an extremely good reason to miss a test or turn in a paper late. Why didn't she?

I know the people of Meredith had good intentions for this woman, but we must stop being naive on this campus. Not everyone is honest, and thank goodness Chief Strickland realized her deception before she got another free year of education from us and her degree.

Ava Leigh Jackson
Senior

I hadn't heard much about this case until yesterday, which is when I heard it mentioned in class and then read the article in the N & O. While reading it, I realized that I knew exactly who she was, as she sat beside me in one of my psychology classes last year. As I put two and two together, it gave me chills. I would never have guessed that she was an impersonator. I remember my professor, Dr. O'deKirk making special arrangements for her when she missed class or a test due to her "sickness/injuries". I am appalled that this happened and that I knew her. I can't believe that someone would do something like this. I am also concerned that Meredith did not truly check this situation out and ask for proof that she truly was an officer. It seems as if Meredith had gone through the process

they needed to initially to make sure she was legit, this may not have happened.

Amanda Bordeaux
Senior

I think this whole situation has far reaching effects. I think that as a larger community, we in the United States might have to take a look at the preferential treatment we give to soldiers and how our desires to be and appear supportive of the soldiers can lead to face-value judgments and situations like this, that could pop up more frequently if they haven't already in a variety of settings. Support for the soldiers is a great thing, but not when you gloss-over regulations and checks about the facts, such as in this case and the cases of domestic abuse of military spouses. We never want to believe that someone wearing a uniform would be dishonest, but unfortunately it has become easier to obtain the uniform and dishonest people will use that and our overwhelming desires to be supportive against us.

I think as a community though, we deserve answers. I know many of us who were in classes with her feel betrayed and angry. Getting answers for the Meredith community would at least help us understand why we were so taken in, how she got money from Meredith so easily, and what Meredith is doing to prevent similar situations in the future.

Kathryn Bailey,
Senior

I'm shocked and highly offended that Lisa Phillips duped every single person on campus! I'm from a military family and for her to impersonate someone in the military and "reap the benefits" makes me ill. I have

always had a high respect for those in the military and when I hear about someone pretending to be an officer baffles me beyond belief. It makes me wonder still... what did her fake record look like and did no one research it to find out its authenticity? I was her classmate my freshman year and I remember her telling us stories of her flights and how she became injured. Everyone became worried about her and she still kept up the guise. Personally, I'm very glad she had been caught. I hope she is locked up for a long time so people will know that you cannot lie and get away with it. It's unfortunate that this happened here at Meredith but at least someone caught on.

Jirah Kirk
Senior

Lisa Phillips affected the Meredith campus as a whole. Not only the psychology department, but the departments of foreign language and religion too. It is amazing to think that someone would take such advantage of the trusting environment that Meredith College has to offer. I know that several people, students and faculty alike, dedicated time and effort to making her presence and sacrifice for her country known at Meredith. My experience with Lisa is sensitive and rather personal because I had a former boyfriend deployed to Afghanistan in February of 2004 and was instructed by some professors that Lisa Phillips would be a great source of support and answers for me as I wonder what kind of danger my boyfriend at the time would have been encountering and how I could be helpful to him as he re-adjusted to civilization. She would take time to write out details about what she had

experienced, how those experiences affected her, and what she found helpful as she dealt with re-adjustment. These notes included such experiences as post traumatic stress disorder, shell shock type problems, and the list continued. She even gave me a pin to wear when I met him as he returned from deployment in Afghanistan that she said only those people who knew the soldier directly could wear as a symbol of support. I was very vulnerable and did not know what to expect other than what I saw on the news so I completely bought into the testimony that Lisa Phillips offered. Being a psychology major I had classes and contact with Lisa and even helped her carry her books to and from classes on occasion. I listened to stories about her missions and about the surgeries that she had on a wound that did not exist. It is disheartening to think that someone would play off the emotions of so many people and also to think that she would make such a mockery of the state of our country in this time of war where men and women are dying in the very situations that she claimed to have experienced.

Katie Harrall
Senior

I don't understand how Meredith College waived her tuition. You would think there was so kind of procedure in that they would have checked out her "military service". You would also think that the military would have had some kind of paper because I don't think you can be active and going to school. There is just something not right about the whole thing.

April Ford
Senior