

always made sure I was an active participant in my classes.

My journey has lasted six years, and it's surreal that in just a month I will be walking across the stage with a dual degree in Psychology and Communication. The men and women I have met at Meredith will always elicit memories that I will forever keep in my heart. I still don't know how I will adjust to reentering the "real world." Can I survive without daily homework? I know it sounds silly, but I have been in a schedule for six years. The adjustment will be hard, but I know that if I ever need an encouraging word (or two!), I have an amazing support system through professors that have been in my corner since my first class six years ago.

I have to say a special thank you to all the women that have been with me in the Communication Club for the last 2 years; you all have become my family away from home. Thank you for being so supportive and the source of all my fun! My last two years would not have been the same without you. I will miss Meredith College intensely, and, dare I say, my experience was worth every penny!



-Zoe Playe

When I was asked what it meant to me to be a non-traditional student, I wasn't really sure how to answer. I realized that the meaning to me has changed throughout my time at Meredith, the same way that I have changed as a person. I started out very nervous

that I could not do the work or would not fit in, but, through the encouragement of my professors and fellow students, those insecurities have been replaced by a confidence I did not have before.

The most prominent answer I kept coming up with was the idea of choice and the freedom to make choices. I have returned to school because of choices: the choice to change careers, the choice to go back to school, the choice to take advantage of the learning culture that is Meredith, and more. I have learned that the choices you make today enable you to make choices in the future.

Things happen in life—whether it is graduate school, marriage, children, divorce—that force you to reevaluate your life. You have to ask yourself if you have the tools to make the choices necessary to survive. It has been my experience that you can expect that your life will turn out a certain way, but rarely does it work out exactly as you have planned. By having choices you allow yourself to come off of life's unavoidable bumps and land on your feet.

I have had opportunities I never would have had if I were not a student at Meredith at this time in my life. I was in the audience for Dr. Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Nobel Laureate, I have visited a Muslim mosque, I have seen the planets through Dr. Novak's telescope (and learned that there is at least one Martin Luther bobble-head in existence), I learned to play golf and I had the sincere honor of being a student of Dr. John Creagh's this past spring.

Regardless of whether I have participated in activities because of

class credit, extra credit or sheer interest, all of the experiences I have had have impacted who I am as a person. When I get down about a grade or tired from too many deadlines, I remind myself to be thankful for the opportunity God gave me to be at Meredith right now. When I decided to come to Meredith, I did not really understand what all it meant. Now I see that in addition to a world-class education, I have been exposed to so many fascinating people, experiences and ideas that I will carry with me long after graduation.

-Terri Neal

When I was first presented with the opportunity to write about what it means to be a non-traditional student, so many things came to mind that I was sure I could not capture it all in just one paper. After analyzing the situation, I decided that there were three major factors in what it means to me to be a non-traditional student.

First, I have learned to appreciate the value of an excellent education at this point in my life more than I ever did as a traditional student. As a high school drop-out, it took me a few years to gather enough courage to get my G.E.D., enroll in a community college, and set my educational goals. It also took time for me to fully comprehend just how important and valuable higher education is. I was always taught by my parents that as long as I "married well," there was no need for a woman to go beyond high school. I think back to the day that I went for my G.E.D. transcripts and the lady that was helping me stated that I would never become a Meredith student, because "people like me" just did not go

to Meredith. I could not decide if I was hurt, angry, or if her statement made me even more determined than I already was; I decided on the latter. That happened almost two years ago.

The second reason why it means so much to me to be a non-traditional student is the fact that I am the mother of six children, five of whom are girls. I have taught my children that an education is the most important asset to have. No matter where they go, or what they do, no one can ever take that away from them. I have also taught my children to be independent. My eldest daughter is currently a Meredith freshman and I look forward to the day when my younger daughters walk the halls of Meredith. As a non-traditional student, my daughters have witnessed their mom studying, making flash-cards, doing research for papers, and reading more. They have been very patient and understanding in regards to my nights away from them. My reward, however, was the pride I saw reflected in their eyes when I brought home that "A" paper that I worked so hard for. I can only hope that I have shown them that if they set their mind to something, no matter what their age, they can accomplish anything with enough faith, support, and determination.

Lastly, I have witnessed the impact firsthand that I have on traditional students just by being in the classroom, participating in discussions, and making the younger students feel more comfortable by mentoring them. Since my very first class, the non-traditional students would sit in the front of

the class to "absorb" any and all information the professor would give. I always tried to include the traditional students, ask their opinion, and really encourage them to get involved by making them see that what they have to add is just as important, and just as valuable as any one else's opinion. Last Thanksgiving, before our holiday break, I had a student give me a hug and thank me for being a good friend. She said that she missed her family terribly and that having a "mother figure" was helping her through her first year. I realized at that point that non-traditional students not only mean a great deal to the Meredith community, non-traditional students have an enormous impact on the traditional students as well.

-Angela Riggs

## Non-traditional Q&A

**Who is a nontraditional student?** Non-traditional students include adults who have been downsized at work, housewives who are coming back to education after years of taking care of their families and homes, students seeking a degree in order to move up in their jobs, and students who had to take care of families and did not have the opportunity to go to college. There are many reasons for adults to come back to school.

**What are the common hardships for nontraditional students?** The majority of non-traditional students can only attend school part-time. For mothers who attend college while raising a family, it is the guilt of missing those special moments in her child's life. Another hardship for non-traditional students is having to re-learn study skills because they have been out of the classroom for a while.