

CAMPUS LIFE

DON'T PARDON MY FRENCH

Julia Houtchings
Contributing Writer

The ever-popular saying "pardon my French" warns the listener of the use of bad language in the speaker's upcoming phrase, but is often repeated in a light-hearted manner. Meredith College, on the other hand, seems to be pardoning its French quite literally by eliminating the option of a BA in French. Although the Board of Trustees will not meet to make the final decision until Friday, October 23, certain members of the Meredith community are quite adamant about kicking the major to the curb. Meanwhile, Francophile students are popping up all over campus to voice their outrage in many different avenues. Several students in the French program created a bilingual student petition to "show their admiration and enthusiasm" for the language and to "protest against the elimination" of the major here at Meredith.

Although originally circulated only by a handful of French students, the petition quickly grabbed the attention of faculty and administration across the campus, particularly after some results became public. Between 10am Monday, September 21, and 2pm Tuesday, September 22, the petition had more than 250 signatures and now claims around 300. Students say the petition will continue to circulate across campus until the final decision is made. In addition, the Table Française has recommenced its weekly discussions in Belk Dining Hall and encourages students at all levels to participate. Le Cercle Français, the French

Club, has several activities already on the agenda for this semester. Meredith's chapter of Pi Delta Phi, the National French Honor society, will induct three more members this month. Several French majors are also planning to spend spring 2010 abroad in France – two in Angers and one in Strasbourg – where they will immerse themselves not only in French studies, but also in French culture. These experiences will ultimately balance their education and become applicable to nearly any career industry, including international relations, education, business, and law. However, current students are not the only ones outraged by the desire to eliminate the major. Letters of support from Meredith alumnae have streamed into the Foreign Languages and Literatures department since August when information about the 11 majors under review was leaked to the public. Sharon Rinker Johnson, '84, wrote that her French studies crossed into nearly every aspect of her education at Meredith: "public speaking while lecturing the class on a particular facet of French grammar, research techniques while researching current literary publications for a senior project, cognitive improvements while trying to present creative projects for professors, and discovery of French masters while trying to master hues and shades in art classes."

Her experience with French accurately reflects most students' view of the French program at Mer-

edith – even for current students. "I'm being challenged in the sense that I have to use what I have previously learned in conjunction with the copious amounts of new knowledge I have received here to further my French skills," Kaylee Dyson, '13, states. "For me, my French class [with Dr. Machelidon] has furthered my understanding that this foreign language is incredibly useful around the world and has encouraged my desire to study abroad in France."

Kristen Flora, '08, majored in French and ultimately decided to write her Honors thesis on immigration after learning so much about it from the media. Writing entirely in French, Flora researched both Mexican immigration and Algerian-French immigration and discovered numerous connections between the two. She refers to her thesis as a "truly fulfilling and enlightening project." Another recent alumna, Lindsey Cooke, '09, has received recognition from the director and curator of the British Museum for her contribution to the academic and Francophone world. A graduate of both the French and History departments, Cooke worked with John Kincheloe in the library to translate a Chatelain engraving that dates back to the early 1700s that is the only known English translation in existence. Approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2005, Vision 2010 is the College's five-year plan that "seeks to create academic programs and a campus culture that prepare students for their lives as engaged

global citizens and leaders. To achieve that vision, the College must attract students, faculty and staff who bring diverse talents, ideas, aspirations and cultures to campus." The elimination of the French major, or the other ten majors under review for that matter, contradicts the very goals the College set forth in this plan. Vision 2010 is supposed to CREATE academic programs, not ELIMINATE them. Eliminating majors at Meredith, particularly those in the arts and humanities, robs the Meredith community of such rich and diverse cultures these majors can provide. Furthermore, Vision 2010 is to establish Meredith College as a women's college known for its academically rigorous and transformative education. The French program is renowned for its challenging courses and passionate and caring faculty who maintain very high expectations for students in all levels of the language.

Alumnae of the French major at Meredith are thus emerging as the very engaged global citizens and leaders that the plan envisioned. It is evident that current students and alumnae of the French major are making their marks in the world, both personally and professionally, and because the number of students interested in the major is rising dramatically, this positive impact could ultimately become more and more profound. Since June 2009 alone, the number of French majors at Meredith has increased by more than 30 percent, and even more students are

ask gigi

Dear Gigi,

I am a freshman. My family lives about ten minutes from Meredith. I find myself going home every weekend. I want to stay on campus and hangout out, but what can I do at Meredith and/or in Raleigh?

Sincerely,
Can't Decide

Dear Can't Decide,

I know it is very hard as a freshman to stay on campus after school lets out on Friday, especially when your parents live close by, but I really recommend staying at Meredith College for the weekend. Meredith can be a fun but quiet place on the weekend, and there is always something going on in Raleigh. The Campus Activities Board is getting ready to do a day trip to King's Dominion on October 24, 2009, and the members of this organization are always trying to figure out what type of activities the campus would like to see on the weekends; if you have any ideas, go to Student Leadership and Service in 2nd Cate, talk to Cheryl Jenkins, and she will point you in the right direction. Also, the Office of Student Leadership and Service tries to put out a list of things happening on campus and in Raleigh, so they are a great resource for ideas. When NCSU has a home game, you can try to gather up a group of friends, especially those from State, and go tailgating. Check out MyNC.com, and you can click on the events link and see everything going on across the triangle. There are many options if you want to stay on campus for the weekend, and all you have to do is ask!

Sincerely,
Gigi