

The Female Brain: President Hartford's Founder's Day Speech

Joy Close, Staff Writer

In light of the differences in how men and women think and learn, is Meredith College effectively addressing the educational needs of its students? This is a central question in Meredith College president, Maureen Hartford's lecture for this year's Founder's Day Observance on February 28th.

What goes into educating the brilliant feminine minds of today? In a talk with President Hartford about her upcoming lecture, she said that she will look at some of today's most successful business women and study how these women, and women in general, learn. Hartford also plans to analyze the education system today, especially higher educational institutions, and how women today are taught.

In her lecture, Hartford intends to argue for the importance of education being built around the intellectual needs of women. Hartford hopes to make more people aware of the significant differences between men and women that stem beyond the physical and into thought processes and learning styles. In order to be effective, she argues, a college must address these differences. Hartford hopes to challenge Meredith College to investigate how the college, as a college for women, can change the way its students are taught and to be aware of and dedicated to ensuring an ideal educational experience for Meredith College

women.

President Hartford also hopes to make people see the value of a college for women in comparison to a co-ed school. Hartford wants to point out and remind people that co-ed schools were originally geared towards educating men, and that women were added much later to higher education institutions, long after the pedagogical methods had been established to suit masculine learning styles and brains. There are many sources that discuss the differences between the male and female brain, and there is one in particular that President Hartford has resourced heavily for her lecture. The book is called *The Female Brain* and is written by Luann Brizendine, M.D. Hartford believes every parent who has daughters should read the book.

Hartford further argues that the assembly line method of education utilized in the United States is not working. She plans to point out how children today are forced to complete a list of academic check marks regardless of whether or not the ways in which they complete them is effectively learned. The education system does not address a variety of minds but a chosen minority, and when education does not cater to the needs of a variety of learning styles then the majority is not reaching its true potential.

In today's educational system, glimmers of the sexual discrimination and misunderstanding of women's mental abilities that



image via meredith.edu

existed so strongly in the U.S. a little over a hundred years ago are still seen. It used to be so prevalent that a Harvard academic named Edward Clark wrote a scientific research book in the late 19th century named *Sex in Education*. Clark's book, according to Hartford, claimed that women would not be able to have children if they thought too much. Clark believed that thinking and learning diverted the blood that was used in the female reproductive system to the brain, thus injuring a woman's ability to bear children. Fortunately people today are quick to recognize Clark's claim as inane.

However, the reality of the existence of such a statement shows how ill-prepared and unreceptive to women the educational system was at its origin. Considering

how far society has had to come, it is no wonder that the trek to realizing, understanding, and accommodating the female brain has taken so long.

Inspired by Maureen Hartford's lecture, the Office of Student Leadership and Service and the Major Events Committee are coordinating a community service project that will donate money and business attire to Dress for Success. Dress for Success helps unemployed women by helping them prepare for interviewing and then providing them with professional work clothes.

Be inspired, too, and come to Meredith College President Hartford's lecture on February 28th in Jones Auditorium. Doors open at 7:00pm.

IN THIS ISSUE...

State & Local: Egyptian Protests, Raleigh Police Sexual Misconduct, Cupcake Review, 2012 Election Preview

Arts & Entertainment: Oscar Preview, Two Art Gallery Openings, Local Beat, Spelling Bee Review

Campus Life: Senior Year Reflections, Waste Audit, Election Results, Fundraiser Ethical Questions

Opinion: Different Senior Year Reflections, Comical Essay on Joyner, International Student's Views