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Meredith College Alumna Jo Allen, Ph.D. Named New President

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Meredith College alumna Jo Allen, Ph.D., a member of Meredith's Class of 1980, has been named the eighth president of Meredith College, effective July 1, 2011.

Allen is the first Meredith College alumna to assume the leadership in the 120-year history of the College.

Allen replaces retiring president Maureen A. Hartford, who became the first female president of Meredith when she was selected by the College Board of Trustees 12 years ago.

Sam E. Ewell, Jr., chair of the College's Board of Trustees, made the announcement in Jones Auditorium on Monday, April 18 to a full house that included faculty and staff members, students, alumnae and guests from the community.

A North Carolina native, Allen earned her master's degree from East Carolina University and her doctorate from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla. She has served as tenured associate professor of English at East Carolina University and tenured associate professor at North Carolina State University.

In addition to her duties as a faculty member, Allen has served in a

number of leadership positions at the universities where she taught, including

special assistant to the dean and vice chancellor, as assistant dean and interim vice provost.

She is currently senior vice president, provost and professor of English at Widener University, Chester, Pa., where she oversees academic and student affairs at Widener's main campus in Chester and for satellite campuses in Harrisburg and Exton, Pa., and Wilmington, Del.

"It's both an honor and a privilege to be selected as the next



Dr. Jo Allen, photo credit: Meredith College / Gary Knight

president of Meredith College," Allen said. "This is the position I've aspired to and prepared for my entire career. As an alumna, I know first hand that Meredith is a special place, one that for more than a century has produced women leaders who have made their mark in education, business, government and, perhaps most importantly, with their families and communities.

The announcement event began with an invocation from Captain

C. C. Wiggins, '76, who asked for a moment of silence to remember those who were injured or killed by severe weather, including a number of tornadoes that swept through North Carolina two days earlier. Current Meredith President Maureen Hartford then spoke about her tenure as president and welcomed the newly appointed president-elect.

Former Board of Trustee Chair Elizabeth Triplett Beam, '72, chair of the presidential search committee outlined the search process

the Board had undertaken to select the new president. She thanked all of those members of the Meredith community who had been involved in the process that led to Allen's selection.

Following an introduction by Board of Trustees Chair Sam Ewell, Allen recounted her time as a student at Meredith, praising the College for putting her on the path to become both an educator and leader.

"If the last two decades of the 20th century were about 'women's ways of knowing,' the first two decades of the 21st century are clearly

about 'women's ways of leading.' We have the skills, knowledge and passion to help solve many of the challenges currently facing our country while providing an unparalleled academic experience for our students," Allen said.

"My predecessors, including Dr. Hartford, have helped expand Meredith's focus and strengthen her reputation as one of the premier centers of higher education in the nation," Allen said. "I pledge to continue that legacy with all the energy and enthusiasm I can muster.

"Obviously a number of things have changed at Meredith since I was a student here," Allen said, "but the core of what makes this College so special has not. I must say that it's good to be coming home."

Allen was then welcomed by Associate Professor of Mathematics Tim Hendrix, chair of the Faculty Council, Donna Knott, chair of the Staff Affairs Committee and SGA President Anna Beavon Gravelly, '11, who presented Allen with copies of the Meredith College history.

The event concluded with the singing of the Meredith College alma mater.

Following the announcement, Allen and Hartford met with members of the College community at a reception in the rotunda of Johnson Hall.

"Dr. Allen is a believer in what Meredith is all about," Ewell said, "and the fact that she's also an alumna was icing on the cake. In short, she is the ideal choice to shepherd Meredith College into the future."

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