

# Graduation Changes Cause Controversy

Hannah Thornton, staff writer

After 46 years of McIver Amphitheater serving as the location for Commencement, Meredith College has decided to make the change to J.S. Dorton Arena. Mixed emotions met the members of the senior class in January as future May graduates discovered that the intended setting for their big day had been changed. Some students are heartbroken, some students are disappointed but making the best of the situation, and some students do not care as long as they get to receive their diplomas, wherever that may be.

The decision to make the switch did not come lightly. Discussion started in the fall amidst concerns about the size of the class and space in the amphitheater. Dr. Allen, Dean Gleason, and the 2013 Executive Board met to discuss the pros and cons of moving Commencement.

Having been a part of the discussion, Class of 2013 President Michelle Cox believes, "After contemplating all the pros and cons of moving the location and adjusting the time, I thought

the decision to move it to Dorton was in the best interest of my class, our families, and of the Meredith Community."

The frustration and disappointment of many Meredith students lies in the meaning of the amphitheater as Commencement's location: students would be returning to the scene where they officially became Meredith angels at the Honor Code Ceremony. A Facebook group called "Save the Tradition: Stop Graduation at Dorton Arena" was created with a petition containing 263 signatures of Meredith students, parents, and alumnae as of Monday, February 4. The main concerns of the group lie in that "Dorton Arena is not appropriate for a Meredith College graduation, it is not a personal setting, nor does it have any affiliation with Meredith College or its traditions."

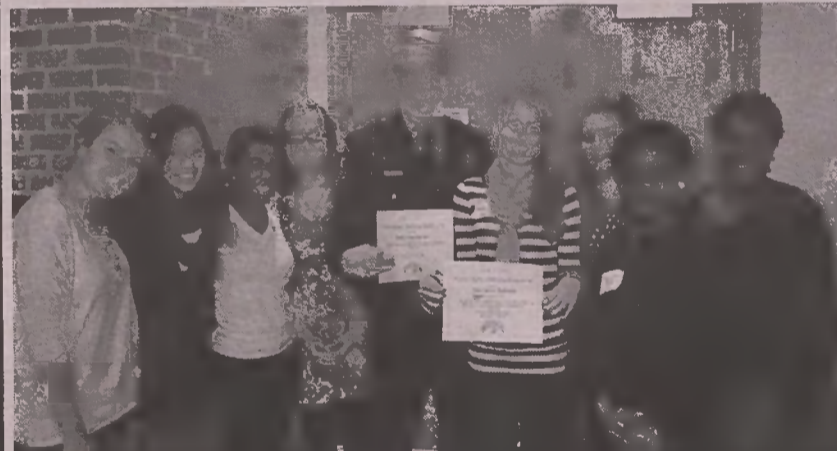
Dr. Jackson, Vice President of Academic Programs, explains that as charming and beautiful as the amphitheater is for Commencement, numerous concerns jump into play that threaten the happiness of those

## CAMPUS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 2013 edition of *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges* will include the names of 31 seniors from Meredith College who have been selected as national outstanding campus leaders. They join an elite group of students from 2,300 institutions of higher learning. Students were selected based on their scholastic achievement, service to the college, participation and leadership in academic and extracurricular activities, and potential for future achievement. Each department submitted the names of twelve students in nomination for the award and a special committee appointed by the Student Life Committee and the Dean of Students consisting of faculty, students and staff met to make the final selection. Students named this year from Meredith College are:

Alexandria Parrish Warren, Amelia Jo Hruby, Anna Catherine Barefoot, Ashlee Nicole Pemberton, Ashley Taylor Matthews, Brittany Jordan Murray, Chloe Felicia Williams, Colleen Elizabeth Gibbons, Cori Jean Spade Elizabeth Helen Ostermann, Emily Elizabeth Smith, Erica Barbara Elizabeth Rogers, Esther Kagure Wamunyu, Ida Wambui Githu, Jade N. Rice, Jessie Dresser, Karen Chung, Kelsey Irene Davis, Kristen Maeve Gallagher Kristin Leigh Kirby, Maggy Alexandra Norwood, Maria Elizabeth Adonay Mary Royall Hight, Michelle Lee Cox, Paula Marie Meredith, Pooja Devi Ghai, Rachel Nicole Atkinson, Sarah Marie Beno, Sarah Louise Pannill, Sayyeda Zeenat Anwer Razvi, Sofia Castillo-Cieza

On February 1, 2013, as part of National Freedom Day, Partners Against Human Trafficking (PATH-NC), held a press conference and recognized community leaders and organizations that have been working hard to bring awareness and combat human trafficking in our area. Meredith College's "Angels Against Trafficking" (AAT), a campus club bringing awareness in regards to human trafficking, was one of those groups that were recognized for their work in the community and on Meredith campus. Rebecca Wyatt, a Junior at Meredith and President of AAT, was asked to speak at the press conference and give some details as to what the club was working on at Meredith. For example, AAT raised money and participated in the "Stop Child Trafficking Now" Walk this past fall, and was also able to present a check for \$300.00 to the organization, to add to what was raised from the race. The club has also done simulations at The Gathering, and are speaking on campus and in the community.



If you want information, you can find the club on facebook, or email Rebecca Wyatt, President at [wyattreb@email.meredith.edu](mailto:wyattreb@email.meredith.edu)

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involved and the success of the event. Whereas the amphitheater is a significant symbol of tradition and sisterhood, it also brings heat, the possibility of stormy weather, pesky critters and little seating for family and friends who sometimes end up struggling to see their graduates. Dorton Arena provides accommodation for more guests, handicap accessibility and abundant parking, all while being closely located to campus.

Michelle Cox asked herself and wants the seniors to ask themselves, "Would I rather be in the amphitheater and have two people cheering as I receive my diploma, or would I rather be in Dorton and have space to have everyone I love be a part of my special day?"

As of this moment, there is nothing to be done and no change will be made to Commencement. Dorton Arena

is the location where it will be held. No final decision has been made for future commencements, but Dorton is still a possibility because of its accommodations.

The impact and growth Meredith has given our graduating seniors "will not change and should not change because of where they spend the last two hours of being a student," Dr. Jackson illustrates. The ultimate message Dr. Allen and the administration, the 2013 Executive Board, and Dr. Jackson all hope to give: make your special day wonderful and exciting, as only you have that power, and enjoy being surrounded by your Meredith friends and community.

Check the Meredith Herald Facebook page for transcripts of Hannah Thornton's interviews with Dr. Jackson and Michelle Cox.