

News

Meredith Releases New Status of Women in NC Politics Report

By Freya Dahlgren, Staff Writer



Photo courtesy of Meredith College

On Nov. 4, 2021, Meredith College, in conjunction with Dr. David McLennan, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Meredith Poll, published the 2021 *Status of Women in North Carolina Politics* report. This is the third report in this series published by Meredith College.

When asked for some background on his activism, Dr. McLennan said, "I had always had a passion for gender equity and helping specific women get elected to political office was one way in which I could try to address one of the major areas of inequality in our country." After the 2002 election, Dr. McLennan and a colleague decided to create the North Carolina Center for Women in Public Service. He said, "Although that organization ceased operations

in 2014, I continue this type of work with another organization co-founded by Meredith College called the Voices of Change Institute." This organization recruits and equips women of color to seek political office. He said, "We completed our first program this year and are looking forward to our next institute next year."

Dr. McLennan arrived at Meredith College in 2014, but he has been tracking numbers of women in office since the early 2000s. He said, "Meredith College gave me the opportunity to formally publish my findings through the *Status of Women in North Carolina Politics* reports. These reports help raise awareness of the issue of gender inequity in North Carolina politics and they build on Meredith College's commitment to promoting women leaders." These reports have been published in 2015, 2018 and 2021. The three-year timespan between each report accounts for election cycles and enough time to publish and analyze these findings.

In an effort to empower more women to run for office, Dr. McLennan said that "[he] hopes

that the reports spur [women's organizations] to work harder to help get more women into the political pipeline." Dr. McLennan also empowers female leaders by hiring Meredith students to be his research assistants for the project. He said that "producing the report is very time-consuming and...collecting the data on these officeholders and the processes, like elections, that produce these officeholders is a tedious, but rewarding activity." The research assistants and Marketing Department at Meredith College help these reports come together.

One major part of this year's report is the underrepresentation of women in politics. Dr. McLennan says the data shows that three main factors contribute to this underrepresentation. The first is that fewer women run for office than do men, the second is that some areas of the state—primarily rural areas—do not have a history of women in political office and the third is increasing hostile sexism among some voters across all political parties.

The main conclusion drawn from the report is that women's

status in politics in North Carolina is a "mixed bag." According to Dr. McLennan, this means that "there were some gains across North Carolina in terms of women's representation since 2018, [and] conversely, there was really no increase in the overall number of women running for office." He also said that the number of women of color in appointed and elected offices still "lags behind." The report also found that "many women candidates...out-raised their male counterparts." Dr. McLennan said that's a good sign and "goes a long way to dispelling the myth that women cannot raise money."

Dr. McLennan said that he wants the reports to make a difference in North Carolina. "There is evidence that journalists and advocates pay attention to the results and make some effort to remedy the problem," he said. "As we head into another important election year, I am hopeful that more women will be running for office than last year."

The full report can be found on Meredith's website.

Meredith Cross Country Athlete Makes Nationals

By Mia Russell, Staff Writer

For the first time in Meredith history, an athlete from the Meredith College cross country (MCXC) team advanced to the national level. Corrine Weaver, '23, sat down with *The Herald* after her nationals debut to share how she felt about her performance and how she got there.

When asked what being the first runner from Meredith College to make it to nationals means to her, she said, "It is a very special moment and something I will never forget. I was so happy to put MCXC on the national spectrum, and I hope to do it again and encourage others that just because something has not been done before does not mean it is impossible. I really hope this sparks a light for the team and the future of MCXC."

Going into nationals, Weaver's goal was "to enjoy every moment and leave knowing [she] took in as much of the experience as [she] could, to race to the best of [her] ability and not let negative

or nervous thoughts enter [her] head." After finishing the race, Weaver said, "[I was] very tired but very proud and accomplished knowing I went as far as I could with my season...it was a monsoon of people after the finish line. This race was unlike any race atmosphere I have ever been in before."

The Herald also sat down with MCXC Coach Field Miller and asked him how he felt about being the head coach of the first Meredith student to go to nationals. Coach Miller stated, "It was always a goal and will continue to be a goal year in and year out to have representation on the national stage. I have confidence in all of our athletes through the hard work and dedication each individual puts into our program that we can continue to push our program forward and make this an expectation for new recruits as they join our program."

Weaver said she would have never made it to nationals without the support of Coach

Miller or the MCXC team. "Coach always jokes around about me going to nationals, but I didn't quite ever believe that could happen," she explained. "He has definitely made this sport so much fun and always encourages me to work harder."

Weaver also expressed gratitude for the support she received from her mom and grandparents, "who always lift [her] up and push [her] to get better." She said, "I just would like to thank everyone for all the support and sweet messages I received throughout this whole week. It really made a world of difference in helping my nerves beforehand. I can't really thank everyone enough. I am so appreciative of all the support."

When asked about his goals for MCXC's next season, Coach Miller said, "The goal never changes, as we want to have our athletes best prepared for each season to accomplish their goals." Coach Miller wanted to "thank [Meredith's] administration for the



Photo courtesy of Corrine Weaver continued opportunity to coach such a strong and dedicated group of athletes." He said that "Weaver is an extremely gifted athlete who has trusted the program and is fully committed to success, and [he is] honored to have the opportunity to experience such an event like the NCAA DIII XC National Championships with her." Coach Miller said watching Weaver make Meredith history is something he "will cherish and never forget."

Update on the Communication and Exercise and Sports Science Building

By Jayce Perry, Staff Writer

Construction on Meredith College's new academic building for the communication and exercise and sports science (ESS) majors has been in progress since January 2019. Although there was a period of time when the project

had to be halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, construction has been consistent throughout the Fall 2021 semester.

Due to the pandemic-related delay in construction, the building is now expected to be fully finished

sometime in 2022 which is a year later than originally planned. This new building will have new and innovative classroom designs as well as provide new technology, equipment and opportunities for students to get hands-on experi-

ence in their majors. The updated Human Performance Lab for ESS majors will allow for applied learning.

Read the full story on our website.