



THE MEREDITH HERALD

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Black History Month at Meredith

By Evelyn Summers, Staff Writer

Black History Month is an annual celebration of Black Americans' achievements and an opportunity to reflect on their contributions in American history. According to NPR, Black History Month's theme this year is "Black Health and Wellness." This theme honors medical providers and scholars as society "enter[s] the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected minority communities and placed unique burdens on Black health care professionals." Carter G. Woodson, also known as the "Father of Black History," picked February as Black History Month because it coincides with the birthdates of former U.S. President Abraham Lincoln and social reformer Frederick Douglass, two men who were involved in the abolition of slavery.

To gain insight on what it's like to be a professor of color at Meredith, *The Herald* reached out to Dr. Alisa Johnson, Associate Professor of English and Assistant Dean of Arts and Humanities.

"I have spent most of my life in predominantly white institutions," Dr. Johnson said, "some

of which were quite difficult, and I have been very pleased by the amount of support that I have received [at Meredith]."

However, she stated that while she has felt supported overall, there have been a few concerning interactions. "There were a few occasions during my first year of teaching when I was asked by campus police to show my ID as I was entering or leaving Joyner," she explained. Overall, though, Dr. Johnson said her transition to Meredith was "fairly easy" and she has "felt respected and appreciated, especially for [her] teaching."

Dr. Johnson said that she appreciates Meredith's awareness "that [the College] could be more inclusive and diverse" and finds that its steps towards accomplishing that are "very encouraging."

However, she said she remains "concerned that the college has not been able to hire and retain more faculty of color, because one way to improve the environment for faculty of color is to employ more faculty of color." She explained, "The presence of a diverse pool of faculty sends the message that an institution is inclusive and accept-

ing of difference."

Dr. Johnson said that when she began working at Meredith years ago, there were "far fewer open discussions of racism on campus than there are today, even though racist incidents happened."

"The campus's current antiracism efforts have created spaces for more discussion, and I am impressed by the number of students and faculty willing to become involved," Dr. Johnson said.

"If we follow through with our efforts to become more inclusive, we will see change. But change probably won't happen as quickly as we want it to—it never does."

While people may celebrate Black History Month in February, Dr. Johnson stated that "for African American scholars, every month is Black History Month."

"I enjoy the public attention given to the contributions



Photo by Elinor Shelp-Peck

of African Americans during the month—the number of programs and events seem to grow each year, and that fact is very affirming," Dr. Johnson said. "I especially love the attention paid to artists and their works...The variety of art on display this month makes my heart sing."

"Black History Month is the perfect occasion to read James Baldwin," Dr. Johnson concluded. "I'd like to include one of my favorite Baldwin quotes: 'Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.'"

Resources for Career Decision-Making at Meredith

By Maggie Barnhill, Staff Writer

The Office of Career Planning (OCP) is a resource for Meredith students and alumni available to them starting their freshman year. According to the OCP's website, students can receive help in "selecting a major, assessing skills and talents, securing internships and participating in mock interviews."

Students can visit the OCP on the second floor of the Cate Center during business hours to speak with the front desk team or schedule an appointment through their Handshake account.

According to Dana Sumner, Director of the OCP, students can participate in "personalized career counseling appointments on a variety of topics including job and internship search, interview prep, salary negotiation, resume and cover letter reviews, LinkedIn reviews and more." Sumner said students also attend employer events like the Career Fair, Mock Interview Week and more. Students can register for these events through Handshake.

Sumner explained that Handshake "provides students the ability to curate a personalized job and internship search." She

said, "Students have the ability to customize their preferences and career interests on their Handshake profile, meaning the content they see when they log into Handshake is selected just for them." Sumner recommends using Handshake alongside LinkedIn when job searching and making career related decisions.

The OCP's MyMeredith page also has a variety of virtual resources for students such as "interactive, self-paced learning modules" and an online copy of the Career Planning Workbook.

Meredith Mentors is another program available to students. This program "serves as a professional networking platform specifically for the Meredith community," according to Sumner. This resource is available to current students, alumni, faculty and staff who want to "connect with one another for information-sharing, mentoring and asking career-related questions."

These resources are available to Meredith students while in school and post-graduation. To contact the OCP, call 919-760-8341 or email career@meredith.edu.

President Allen Advocates for Increase of Federal Pell Grant

By Shae-Lynn Henderson, Staff Writer

On Jan. 18, President Jo Allen, '80, wrote a piece for *The Hill* advocating for the increase in the Federal Pell Grant. Dr. Allen discussed the benefits of the increase for students and their future in her article while separately discussing the impact of financial assistance for Meredith students and students at other colleges and universities.

The Federal Pell Grant is funded by Congress through the appropriations process. This process is when the House and Senate Appropriations Committees hold hearings to look into budget requests and needs of federal spending programs. The Pell Grant is a need-based form of financial aid that does not need to be paid back. Students who have demonstrated financial need are eligible for the Pell Grant and are identified when they fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Dr. Allen said she chose to write an article for *The Hill* because it is an outlet legislators read, and they're the ones who have the power to increase the Federal Pell Grant. In her article, she argues that "Pell Grants

have failed to keep pace with cost increases" and now cover less than 30 cents on the dollar when they once covered over half the cost of college, on average.

In order to fix this problem, Dr. Allen advocates for doubling the Pell in her article—this would increase the maximum award from \$6,500 to \$13,000. She cites the Gender Policy Institute's research, which found that doubling the Pell Grant would cut students' college loan debt in half.

Dr. Allen told *The Herald* that in addition to the arguments she makes in her *The Hill* article, she is passionate about ensuring students who choose to attend private colleges get the same government aid as students who attend public universities. Dr. Allen said that as a "past Chair of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), the largest organization engaged in political advocacy for private colleges in the U.S.," she keeps up to date on legislative matters regarding education and is currently focused on the "disproportionate funding for public versus private higher education."

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