



Each institutional priority is supported with a number of more definitive objectives. These priorities and objectives comprise the Review Team's recommendations to the Meredith Board of Trustees. The institutional priorities and objectives are presented here, accompanied by some brief explanation of each.

Keep Meredith manageable in size, price and scope of service

Meredith is the largest private women's college in the southeastern United States, yet its size has not reached the unwieldy proportions that characterize many larger public and private colleges and universities. Meredith maintains a strong sense of close personal community, while at the same time offering students a wealth of enriching opportunities. Meredith is recognized for its excellent academic programs, yet the cost of attending is among the most moderate in the state. This critical balance must be well managed and well preserved.

- **Manage the enrollment so that the College will serve approximately 2,800 women of all ages by the year 2005 while improving the academic quality of the student body.**

Continued and sustained growth in enrollment is important. However, Meredith must manage that growth to preserve the balance between personal attention and a wide variety of educational opportunities. Limiting enrollment growth will be a formidable challenge because of the rapid population growth in Meredith's service areas, as well as the College's reputation for serving the educational needs of women of all ages. An annual growth rate of approximately 2 percent will permit expansion without jeopardizing the College's focus on providing personal attention.

- **Work to balance the student population.**
 - ***Geographic mix—Strengthen Meredith's image as a regional college of national distinction, actively recruiting in North Carolina and other southeastern states.*** North Carolina and other southeastern states anticipate phenomenal population growth in the next several decades as people from throughout the world continue to migrate to this region. Historically, Meredith has attracted the majority of its student population from in state and surrounding states; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Meredith will benefit significantly from both the magnitude and diversity of this population growth. By continuing to focus its recruiting efforts and resources in these geographic areas, the College can achieve its enrollment and diversity goals.
 - ***Ethnic Mix—Strive to raise the minority student population to at least 10 percent of total enrollment.*** Currently, minority students represent approximately 8 percent of Meredith's total enrollment. A percentage that more closely matches the population mix in the College's service area is desirable. Realistically, an objective of changing the ethnic mix to include 10 percent minorities seems achievable.
 - ***Resident/commuter mix—Maintain a residential enrollment of 1,150 students.*** Residence halls on campus can accommodate 1,190 students. The current residence count is approximately 1,100. Meredith's policy of allowing juniors and seniors to live off campus has been the major factor that has created the vacancies. Many students now prefer private residence hall rooms. The College rents the vacant spaces as single rooms. This preference for more private living arrangements should be addressed. The 1,150 objective is seen as a viable number of residential students at this time.
 - ***Economic mix—Keep the College affordable by limiting the average annual increase in student charges to between five and six percent and supporting accessibility through adequately funded***

financial aid. Meredith's student charges are among the lowest of the private colleges in the nation. Affordability has and will continue to be a key to the College's ability to attract students. If adequate funding of financial aid is maintained, annual increases in student charges of between 5 and 6 percent will fund the new initiatives proposed in this plan, while at the same time allowing Meredith to remain competitive. It is estimated that the increases proposed in this plan would move Meredith's student charges to the median among North Carolina private colleges. Additional need-based aid should not be funded from tuition revenues.

- **Expand and market summer programs with an emphasis on those which support the College's mission and offer additional revenue.**

More disciplined use of campus facilities during the summer months and the establishment of summer programs as a marketing priority for Meredith could bring an even greater number of people to the campus for educational workshops and camps. Both recruiting and revenues would benefit from these efforts. Emphasis should be put on offering programs and activities that would, in the short-term, and the long-term, increase the number of students who would enroll at Meredith.

- **Increase the endowment through gifts and investments to \$75 million by the year 2005.**

No effort has been made to place a price tag on the recommendations presented in this plan. However, it is clear that new revenues will be needed for the implementation of the plan. Endowment income accounts for about 5 percent of the total College revenues. The current market value of the endowment funds is \$45 million. Most of the recent growth in the endowments has been derived from investments. An accelerated level of giving will have to accompany the investment growth if the College is to reach the \$75 million goal.

- **Commit to a capital campaign beginning in the year 2000 with a goal of a minimum of \$25 million.**

While the actual amount of any future campaign will be based upon the projected needs of the College, it will be important for the College to be aggressive in these efforts. Funding the construction of new facilities; and increasing the endowments for both need-based and merit scholarships, faculty development, and teaching chairs should be the major goals of the next campaign.

- **Clearly articulate the College's core messages to its various publics.**

Though Meredith has experienced steady growth in the past decade, competition for qualified students and donor dollars has increased dramatically. Therefore, it is imperative that Meredith use its marketing resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. Clearly defined and consistent core messages will enhance Meredith's competitive edge. Additional marketing resources will add momentum and strength to Meredith's marketing efforts.

Develop new partnerships with students

A major strength of the Meredith experience is the personal interaction between faculty and students. The College should strengthen the student/faculty partnerships through new and innovative learning experiences.

- **Encourage and enable faculty to engage in new partnerships with students.**

Over the years, faculty responsibilities have evolved to include many activities not directly related to their primary role of teaching. The College should provide adequate resources and time to enable faculty to refocus on collaborative learning partnerships with the students both inside and outside the classroom. Independent studies, honors theses, collaborative research and tutoring are examples of ongoing and new partnerships.

- ***Establish funding to foster learning partnerships outside the classroom.*** A special fund should be established to encourage faculty members to pursue ideas for creative partnerships. The fund could be administered much like the current fund for faculty development where faculty members apply for release time. This fund will need to be substantial so that a significant number of students may benefit from these new partnerships in learning.
- ***Support partnership initiative with adequate and appropriate staff.*** Freeing faculty to focus on the teaching/learning process must be supported by technical, secretarial and administrative staff at the departmental and program levels. Adjustments in hours of support and levels of compensation will be necessary to insure appropriate staffing.
- ***Review the current model of academic advising.*** Meredith's advising system has been built upon the assumption that good teachers are also good advisers. Consequently, all faculty members have been assigned advisees. Now, many faculty members have extraordinary heavy advising loads. Review of the advising system should focus on the goals of effective advising and monitoring of faculty loads to allow faculty to remain as focused as possible on the teaching/learning process.
- ***Establish a policy to improve the ratio of full-time faculty to enrollment.*** Faculty/student ratio is a measure of the availability of faculty to students inside and outside of classes. The use of adjunct faculty is valuable when they provide special expertise that cannot be provided by full-time faculty. Adjunct faculty also help to balance the teaching loads of full-time faculty within and among academic departments. Since adjunct faculty have not been expected to assist with advising, committee work, special projects and the work of the department; heavy use of adjunct faculty throws a proportionately heavier workload on full-time faculty. A policy is needed to insure optimal use of adjunct faculty.

- **Establish at least two new centers of excellence.**

Meredith already has the **Center for Women in the Arts**. Additional centers of excellence will provide curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to recognize and promote the accomplishments of women in such fields as mathematics, the sciences and public life.

- **Create community spaces in classroom buildings.**

The creation of common spaces within each academic department would foster informal relationships and collaborative learning among students and between students and faculty. With a growing number of commuting students, such community space is increasingly important in the effort to maintain a nurturing, high-touch environment.

- **Forge partnerships between students and alumnae.**

Partnerships between students and alumnae are a natural alliance. Mentoring between these two groups who cherish Meredith may be on an individual basis or within groups. Affinity groups that are discipline oriented have proven to be productive in some departments. It is important to facilitate student access to Meredith alumnae for career information and networking. Students will benefit from this interaction, and alumnae will come to better understand and appreciate the needs and aspirations of today's students.

- **Expand the role of the learning center.**

Some years ago, Meredith created a writing center to assist students with their writing skills. More recently, the writing center has been expanded to become a learning center, which includes support in mathematics. The College should expand the learning center to create an academic support center for students with a variety of special needs. This will require ongoing collaborative efforts between the academic division and the division of student development.

- **Offer programs and facilities that encourage total wellness for the entire college community.**

Programs such as health fairs, nutrition classes, exercise and fitness groups should be enhanced along with focus on facilities which will make them possible. These opportunities to enhance personal wellness should be made available to faculty and staff, as well as students.

- **Promote a campus-wide personal service attitude.**

All employees of the College are here because of students. The College should direct resources toward improving personal service during day and evening hours.

- **Centralize and expand experiential learning opportunities.**

Experiential learning through internships, co-ops and community service is increasingly recognized as a vital element in the educational process and is recognized as a significant factor in a student's future success. Many of these activities occur at Meredith. However, a centralized structure that expands and promotes these opportunities would strengthen this dimension of the College's educational program.

- **Make leadership education central to the Meredith experience.**

The development of leadership knowledge and skills prepares students for productive lives. Broadening curricular and co-curricular leadership opportunities will make them integral to the Meredith experience.

Develop creative opportunities for inclusiveness

- **Increase study abroad opportunities and on-campus international experiences.**

For many years, Meredith has sponsored study abroad trips for students and faculty. These trips have seen strong participation, with the greatest number of students and faculty taking advantage of study abroad programs in Europe. In keeping with an emphasis on global awareness, the College should expand these study abroad opportunities, including offering programs to other parts of the world, such as Africa, Asia, and South America. Concurrently, the institution needs to take advantage of information technology, which will bring the world to Meredith. International conferencing, satellite links with foreign dignitaries or students, partnerships with sister institutions abroad, campus-wide focus on regions of the world, concerted efforts to recruit students from abroad—these aims and others can help engage Meredith students with the world—whose economy, ecology, and ethos will directly affect them.

- **Provide more courses, activities, and services that promote and model inclusiveness.**

In order to have inclusiveness it is necessary to go beyond promoting a diversified student population. Attitudes must be changed. To that end, the academic and student development divisions of the College should assure that course work and co-curricular activities promote inclusiveness. Academic course work and co-curricular activities should include more emphasis upon non-western cultures.

- **Increase the number of faculty and professional staff members who represent diverse ethnic populations.**

In the last few years, Meredith has made progress in the hiring of minority faculty and professional staff. The institution should have as its objective a faculty and professional staff that at a minimum mirrors its minority student enrollment. Having visible role models among faculty and professionals staff will assist in attracting and retaining a more diverse student body.

- **Designate merit scholarship funding for students of color and economically disadvantaged students.**

Historically, Meredith has designated most of its financial aid funds to students with demonstrated need. In recent years, Meredith has used merit scholarships to ensure the enrollment of more academically gifted applicants, without regard to economic status. The institution should designate a portion of those merit scholarships for minority students and economically disadvantaged students to assure an institutional diversity.

- **Initiate projects with member institutions of the Cooperating Raleigh Colleges.**

As part of the consortium of Cooperating Raleigh Colleges, Meredith should take the lead to jointly sponsor lectures, concert series, and other events, making the resources and cultures of these campuses accessible to all students. The institution should continue and expand the practice of inviting student participation from other schools in worship services and programs, and work with students from other campuses on service projects.

- **Accommodate growth in the need for disability services.**

Meredith has seen an increase in the number of students with documented physical and learning disabilities. Serving the needs of these students will increasingly challenge both faculty and staff. The College should examine the administrative structure currently in place to determine if this structure is adequate to deal with the expanding needs of students with disabilities.

Encourage awareness of life's spiritual dimension

- **Promote personal spiritual growth.**

Meredith has traditionally affirmed that personal spiritual growth is an essential part of life. To assist in this growth, the College should continue to provide weekly and special worship opportunities and encourage participation in area churches, while seeking new and creative ways to challenge individual students in the development of their spiritual dimension.

- **Recognize the Honor System as the institutional affirmation of personal integrity.**

The Honor System at Meredith College continues to play a key role in the self-governance of the student body, and is important in encouraging students to lead ethical and responsible lives. The Honor System sets a very high expectation for the entire Meredith community and must remain strong and genuine.

- **Seek leadership that affirms and perpetuates the College's Christian heritage.**

The change of relationship between Meredith and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina has provided an opportunity for the College to reaffirm its Christian heritage. It is imperative that new leaders of the College have a deep respect for traditional Christian values and a creative vision for sustaining them in the 21st century.

- **Encourage examination of ethical, moral, political and social issues in all majors, programs and services.**

The next century will bring with it new ethical and moral questions in most facets of society. The academic and student development divisions should incorporate course work and co-curricular activities that will compel students to examine personal and societal values related to their chosen disciplines.

- **Construct new models that encourage a commitment to volunteerism and service by the entire Meredith community.**

In global terms, members of the Meredith community represent a privileged minority. With privilege comes a responsibility for giving. The College should construct models for volunteerism that encourage lifelong commitment to service.

Commit to technology as a tool for fostering creativity and communication

Technology has provided new ways of drawing, writing, designing, calculating, and researching. The problems of distance and time have been reduced. The College must use these tools to improve and enhance its offerings to students. Meredith students must master the use of these tools in their disciplines.

- **Fund a continuation of the DuPont Fellows Program model for development of faculty computer skills.**

For each of the past two years, ten faculty members have received a laptop computer, intensive training, and a course released as a part of the DuPont Fellows Technology Initiative. Each participant engaged in activities to change an existing course by the use of technology. The combination of technology training and support in addition to the portability of a laptop enables faculty members to use the technology to enhance the traditional classroom experience.

- **Expand alternative learning/teaching opportunities through technology.**

Meredith must define its role in distance education. The College can enhance its current programs by adding online components to existing courses, by teaching courses completely online, and by using videoconferencing to bring the expertise of outstanding scholars to the campus.

- **Provide multimedia capabilities in all appropriate classrooms.**

Information stations that include computers, multimedia, connections to cable TV, the Internet, VCRs, and laser disc players as well as other appropriate technology will provide demonstrations and the latest information in the classroom. Stations across the campus will be similar and easy to use by faculty and students.

- **Require personal computers of all full-time freshmen students beginning in the year 2000.**

As students come to rely on computers as a tool in their studies, it is important that students have computers with internet and Email access. Over the next two years, the details of the program and a partnership with a vendor need to be established.

- **Provide open computer labs as needed.**

Part-time students will need access to computers, so they are not at a disadvantage with full-time students who have access to computers in their living quarters. In addition, a need will remain for services and peripherals (such as scanners and recordable CD drives) that students may not have on their own computers.

- **Support specialized computer laboratories for selected academic programs.**

Some programs will require advanced computers or adaptations to the technology to adequately support the curriculum. Examples of such programs include the graphics concentration in the Art Department where students need experience on Macintosh computers with high-end specialized software and in the Music Department where keyboards are connected to computers.

- **Purchase and employ a Campus-Wide Computer Information System that will improve recruiting, marketing, advising, registration and other administrative services.**

In the same way that business strives to empower their employees, Meredith must empower its faculty, staff, and students by providing efficient and effective access to information on the campus. Converting from the current administrative software to a campus-wide integrated system will provide a means of re-engineering procedures and increasing the level of service.

- **Assure that campus technology is maintained and upgraded through a funded systematic plan.**

Meredith must develop a three-year cycle to replace computers. This plan needs to include renewal and replacement for hardware, software, training and support.

Revitalize the general education curriculum

The general education program of the College includes those courses that the faculty have collectively and deliberately determined to be necessary for one to be an educated person. This program has not significantly changed for several decades and should be made more meaningful for today's students.

- **Identify the knowledge, skills, values and global awareness needed by Meredith students graduating in the 21st century and alter the general education requirements accordingly.**

The academic division has developed a list of skills and competencies which Meredith students will need to succeed in the new century. Using this list as a basis, the College should assess and refine its general education offerings.

- **Create integrative learning experiences to assist students in understanding the connection between general education and the leading of responsible lives of work, citizenship, leisure, learning, and service.**

Under the present structure, students have difficulty understanding the connections between liberal arts studies and their more specific career interests. The academic division should more creatively integrate into specific majors the critical thinking and communication skills acquired through general education.

Support an expansion of the Graduate School in size and scope

- **Seek accreditation of business programs.**

In the John E. Weems Graduate School, the programs in music, education, and the nutrition certificate program have all sought and received accreditation by professional organizations. In addition, the Legal Assistants Program, a post baccalaureate certificate program is accredited by the American Bar Association. To enhance the reputation of the graduate-level business programs, the College should seek accreditation from the American Association of Councils of Schools of Business for those programs.

- **Add new programs such as nutrition and legal studies.**

In addition to masters degrees in business, education and music, the College currently offers a graduate certificate in nutrition. This certification program could be expanded to a masters level degree. Likewise, the post baccalaureate legal assistants certificate program could be expanded into a graduate degree in legal studies. Other masters degree programs, for which there is a viable market for women, should be explored.

- **Clarify the College's stance in view of the current legal status of graduate programs conducted exclusively for women.**

While the single gender status of the undergraduate program is clearly protected by law, it is less clear whether the graduate school can legally continue to exclude qualified males. Before the institution commits substantial resources to new and expanded graduate programs, the College should clarify its legal and philosophical position.

Provide appropriate and adequate facilities to support the College's programs and services

- **Construct a new natural sciences facility.**

The 1950's vintage science facilities in Hunter Hall are outdated and over-crowded. The need for a new facility has been identified at every phase of strategic planning. This is the College's top capital construction priority.

- **Construct a continuing education conference center.**

Perhaps less of a pressing need, but no less of an opportunity for service, is the construction of a continuing education conference center. In the Triangle, there is a burgeoning demand for lifelong learning. Women in the next century will need to supplement their academic degrees with specific competencies that enhance their professional skills and enrich their lives. Meredith needs a new facility specifically designed for continuing education, including a teaching auditorium, seminar rooms, multi-media equipped classrooms and food service facilities. Such a facility could provide partnership opportunities with area businesses that need training space and could become a gateway through which non-traditional students find their way to Meredith's undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

- **Conduct a comprehensive review of the classrooms, community spaces, meeting spaces, library spaces, recreational facilities and offices in order to maximize the use of existing facilities and identify the need for additional space.**

In addition to the acknowledged need for new science and continuing education facilities, additional faculty and staff offices are needed, some academic and administrative departments need to expand, there is a crunch on club and organization meeting spaces, and the College needs to make room for more community space in the classroom buildings. Before plans are made for other new construction, it is important to determine that current building spaces are being effectively used. This use may require the expansion of the curriculum further into the afternoon. It will require a serious look at the 10:00 activity hour carved out of the day on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Once this comprehensive review is complete, intelligent decisions about new construction can be made.

- **Complete the ground level space in Ledford Hall for appropriate uses.**

One unfinished space that could relieve some of the pressure on facilities is 3,000 square feet on the ground floor of Ledford Hall. The space utilization study will help determine the highest and best use for the unfinished area in Ledford.

- **Evaluate and respond to the potential need for new types of campus housing.**

It has already been suggested that Meredith currently has adequate residence hall space. However, more and more are desiring private living spaces and styles of living that differ from what Meredith now offers. Students are willing to pay more to have these residential choices available on campus. Research needs to be conducted to determine if new living arrangements are desirable and cost effective for the College. This is circumstance is another in which a partnership venture with business might prove favorable for all parties.

- **Form creative partnerships with business and industry to develop currently unused campus properties consistent the College's mission.**

Meredith is blessed to be located on some of the most valuable real estate in North Carolina. Much of this great asset is going untapped. The College Trustees should investigate ways to make the real estate productive,

while not compromising its long-term value as academic space. Joint ventures with business or creative investment of some of Meredith's endowment in projects that use the available space should be considered.

- **Increase the funding for the systematic maintenance and enhancement of campus facilities and grounds.**

The College has done an adequate job of keeping its existing facilities functional and in good repair. As the buildings and campus infrastructure age, even more resources must be applied to assure that standards are maintained and even raised. The pace with which Meredith addresses these facility needs will be dictated by the dollars available.

Establish a new administrative framework that efficiently addresses the variety of learners' needs

- **Establish a separate graduate school organizational structure.**

The Marketing Audit of Meredith College Academic Programs and Administrative Structure completed by Stamats, Inc. in 1996 recommended that the College's graduate program become a separate, stand-alone academic unit. Meredith should move toward this goal by appointing a dean, responsible to the Academic Vice President, who can establish an external advisory council, forge a vision for the school, design a master plan and eventually establish a separate graduate faculty. There exists great potential for the graduate school to lift the entire College to another level of academic achievement.

- **Design an innovative organizational structure with flexibility to meet the needs of non-traditional undergraduate students.**

The advent of the adult learner and the variety of lifestyles among Meredith women have presented both opportunities and challenges for the College. Meredith has become a leader in serving women of all ages. As the number of non-traditional students increases, there is growing stress upon an organizational structure designed for traditional, predominately residential, students. It is strongly recommended that Meredith consider a separate academic unit that would have the flexibility to respond to the unique needs of non-traditional undergraduate students. This is not to say that there should be any less

academic rigor or less personal attention. It is, however, an acknowledgement that the educational delivery systems and the support services required do differ among students groups. Meredith's continuing success at meeting the educational needs of all women may well depend upon the administrative and academic framework from which it operates.

Continue to develop a culture of institutional strategic planning at Meredith

- **Facilitate a systematic and ongoing review of the viability of existing academic programs and the potential for new ones.**

Studies show that the most important factor in the selection of a college by a student is the availability of the

major the student desires to pursue. The Stamats report of 1996 included a recommendation that the College develop basic criteria for all courses and majors and evaluate these courses and majors against those criteria on a regular basis. Establishing a systematic and ongoing review process will ensure that Meredith offers the programs that will attract potential students and eliminate those academic programs that are no longer viable.

- **Revise the College-wide committee structure to expedite decision-making processes and free professors to teach.**

To be successful in offering programs that support recruiting and retention, the institution must have the flexibility to make academic and instructional decisions in a timely fashion. The Stamats study found that the "academic decision-making process at the College is too cumbersome. It is recommended that a complete evaluation be made of how academic decisions are made." A streamlining of the committee structure and accompanying processes would enable professors to devote more of their time to their primary goal—teaching, scholarship and collaborating with students.

- **Use the strategic plan to establish the operating budget and capital campaign priorities.**

Institutional priorities recommended in the strategic plan should drive the operating budget and define the goals for a capital campaign. Funding for facilities, programs, services, and personnel must clearly support the implementation of the College's strategic plan.

- **Assure that Trustees are actively involved in long-range planning.**

The administration and faculty will continue to engage in sound planning, to assess the results of the plans, and to implement new plans. Trustees should also actively participate in the planning process by establishing priorities and allocating funds to make these priorities a reality.

- **Use the administrative structure to develop and implement strategies that accomplish the plan.**

Upon approval of the long-range plans by the Board of Trustees, the development and implementation of specific strategies will be the responsibility of the administration, faculty and staff. The College's president will take the lead in this effort.

- **Annually review the institutional strategic plan.**

The institutional plan is an "evergreen" plan, which will be reviewed each year and revised to ensure the appropriate growth and evolution of the College. The Chief Planning Officer will assume the responsibility of ensuring that this review takes place annually.

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