

Dear Meredith Alumnae,

In recent days, we have witnessed brutality in unfathomable clarity. George Floyd's death was unacceptable and unjust: his pain, his call for mercy, and even more (most) heart-rending, his call to his mother rip my heart. I have never seen such pain in our country or felt on a more personal level the grief and anguish of that pain.

I also know this is not a current problem; it has been simmering and erupting since our nation's founding. George Floyd is our most recent loss, but so many others have suffered violence or died in startlingly similar scenarios. It is time to do something to make change happen, starting here at Meredith as we work for more change throughout our state, nation, and world. I hope that as the intelligent, compassionate alumnae you are that you will join me in this work.

The lives of Black and Brown people matter, tremendously, to Meredith and to me. Our campus community is richer and stronger because of the contributions of our students, faculty, staff, and alumnae of color. Thus, I am initiating a college-wide initiative on race and action, and I am so pleased some students, faculty, staff, alumnae, and friends have already stepped forward to offer their help and eager participation in this important conversation. Thank you.

While we always want to be out front on issues of injustice and actions to take, we especially want to be sure this initiative is thoughtful, inclusive, and impactful in ways that take us toward healing. We do not need quick fixes; we know from centuries of experience now that they do not work. The complexities of race and experience are deep; we must invest the time and resources—and our hearts—to do this work well.

So before on-campus conversations can happen, we need information. We need data. We need the fuller picture of how people actually live, work, and interact on this campus. Research on diversity and inclusion shows that a campus climate survey is the best way to give power to impactful anecdotal stories; results will demonstrate how widespread and in what fashion hurts exist and how we can recognize, own, and work through those hurts to become the human beings we need to be. We will soon be asking for experiences of our alumnae, again collecting data to give us a better picture of our campus climate from a more longitudinal perspective.

Beyond the campus climate survey, the college's vice presidents, their direct reports, and I will continue in the diversity and inclusion workshop series we started in 2019-2020. I am inviting members of Meredith's Black Student Union to talk with me and other members of the administration, faculty, and staff about how we can improve the experiences of Black students at Meredith. And I know other student leadership groups, along with faculty and staff, are also eager to participate in this work. These are a few additional steps; more will come.

While we do not always share the same experiences, I do believe the Meredith College community will coalesce on a pathway for moving toward openness and justice. I also believe that it is imperative that we address inequalities in thoughtful ways that express the pain and, ultimately, that heal. Our balance of urgency and thoughtfulness remind us that in times and contexts of extraordinary complexity, either/or is rarely the right step forward. Both/and is far more likely to move forward. Thank you for your patience as we try to take the right steps.

I am grateful to our campus leaders experienced in the research and scholarship of diversity and inclusion for their early tutorials that already show me how little I know. I am open and eager to learn from those who will teach me. I care and appreciate hearing from students, alumnae, faculty, staff, and parents. Let us continue to teach each other and become the better community—the better *people*—we strive to be. Please stay tuned for calls for your participation...we welcome you all.

Sincerely,  
President Jo Allen, '80