

# The Davidsonian

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<p>"The World's Foremost College Weekly"</p> <p>ESTABLISHED 1914</p>	<b>INSIDE THIS WEEK</b>			
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## Celebration marks 25 years of coeducation

BY CARRIE ARTHUR  
Staff Writer

From Monday, Oct. 19 until Sunday, Oct. 25, Davidson will celebrate the 25th anniversary of coeducation. The celebration will officially begin Friday, Oct. 23 with programs featuring Davidson women and a dinner addressed by Rhodes Scholar Letitia Campbell '96, but other programs including Gloria Steinem's speech and the Delilahs and Generals' singing duel will build up to the celebration.

Although Davidson has reached an "important milestone," Associate Director of Alumni Relations Allison Wright '94 said, "It (the celebration) is not only to celebrate the accomplishments of Davidson women, it is to celebrate the myriad of ways women have enhanced the Davidson experience for everyone involved."

The focus of the celebration is Friday, when Davidson women from the areas of education, business, literary arts, home education, and the church, as well as current students, will lead and participate in programs. A luncheon

with students' discussion of women's roles at Davidson today will begin Friday's programming. After the luncheon, alumnae will present sessions about a variety of women's concerns. At 4:30 p.m., Associate Professor of English Elizabeth Mills will moderate a discussion between best-selling authors Patricia Cornwell '79 and Sheri Reynolds '89. AFLAG reception; dinner and address by Letitia Campbell '96, Davidson's 22nd Rhodes Scholar, and the Letty & Georgia Concert featuring Letty Stoneman '92, will complete the day.

Of Friday's programming, Wright said, "the point is to feature Davidson women — students, faculty, staff, and alumnae — and what they're doing out in the world today. The overriding theme is where we've been and where we're going."

On Saturday, a breakfast, an alumnae field hockey game, and a Chickspeare performance will augment the normal Homecoming activities. Chickspeare is an all-female Shakespearean theater company, whose founders are Davidson alumnae Anne Lambert '86 and Katie Oates '86.

Then, on Sunday, the celebration will close with an

openhouse at President Bobby Vagt's house, a worship service by Dr. Frances Taylor Gench '79 at DCPC, and the women's volleyball game.

Thursday's speaker, Gloria Steinem, is a writer, editor, journalist, lecturer, and activist. A leader of the feminist movement, Steinem belongs to the Women's Hall of Fame. She has helped to found "Ms." magazine, the Women's Action Alliance, the National Women's Political Caucus, and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. Steinem serves as president for both Voters for Choice and Ms. Foundation for Women.

In addition to writing many books and articles, Steinem serves as one of ten International Working Group members of "Beyond Racism" for the Southern Education Foundation. Among her many achievements, Steinem received "Parenting" magazine's Lifetime Achievement Award and made World Almanac's "25 Most Influential Women in America" list.

Initiated by the Alumni Association, a committee of 25 students, faculty, staff, and alumnae/alumni volunteers (men as well as women) have organized the events. Wright calls the celebration "very much a group effort,

and sections of the campus have really jumped to get involved (and) to program things."

Elisabeth Malphurs, committee member and chair of the Women's Issues Committee, feels, "The intention is to celebrate 25 years of coeducation at Davidson and to bring women who might not come back otherwise."

Wright summarized the aim of the celebration: "to appropriately celebrate the true coeducation of men and women at Davidson."

"A lot of it is looking at where we stand now versus where we were back in 1973 when women were first admitted. A lot of it is celebrating the accomplishments and the contributions of females at Davidson and what women have brought to the plate, and that can combine with the coexistence of the sexes here. Part of it is to pay tribute to these women who did go through and continue to go through some obstacles to make sure the balance continues."

According to Wright, the Coeducation Celebration aims to recognize the struggles and achievements of past Davidson women and to anticipate the accomplishments of future women.

## The integration of women at Davidson

BY CARRIE ARTHUR  
News Editor

Despite the 25th anniversary of coeducation, women have been at Davidson long before 1973. Local young women, professors' wives and daughters, and students' wives have attended Davidson for years, but they were unable to receive degrees just as male students could not receive degrees at women's schools.

President John Kirkpatrick's five daughters enrolled during the 1860s to fill vacancies created by the Civil War. Since 1871, women were listed as "special students," along with pre-med, scientific, graduate, and other students.

Although Annie Brown completed all of the requirements for an A.B. degree in May 1901, she did not receive a degree but a certificate instead. Gladys Summers followed Brown's example and completed the requirements for a B.S. in 1906. Summers not only received a certificate but also heard her accomplishments recognized at commencement. Letitia Currie '28, the daughter of an economics professor, also studied at Davidson before she transferred to Salem College.

Women were sometimes granted permission to study during times of low enrollment, such as the Great Depression and World War II. Ten or 12 female students from Davidson High School took classes during the 1934-1935 school year, and the College allowed seven local women to enroll during World War II so that seats left vacant by soldiers could be filled. Yet, none of these women could earn a Davidson degree, live on campus, participate in sports, or have a faculty advisor.

The beginnings of change in Davidson's policy came with President Samuel R. Spencer Jr. '40. Professor of English Tony Abbott considers Spencer to be "the person who was really most responsible" for coeducation. The former president of Mary Baldwin College, Spencer "knew that if Davidson was going to maintain its excellence, it had to go coed" according to Abbott.

Although the majority of students and faculty supported the move, objections to coeducation did exist. German Professor Hansford Epes said that some people felt coeducation "would be too costly to adapt the campus" because of "clichés about

what women would be interested in." The fear that coeducation would hurt alumni relations and Davidson's endowments because "alumnae didn't give as much to their own colleges as men" was resolved when the decision was made to "keep the basic number of men and add women to it."

Fears of declines in Davidson's selectivity also found voices. Despite these objections, Epes feels that generally "few arguments against coeducation and no hostility" existed, except for a few professors who refused to teach women.

Spencer refused an advisory commission on coeducation and then followed what Abbott called "a very carefully thought-out plan" of three stages.

Spencer's plan began with the introduction of one year exchange students to the campus. The students came from seven Virginia colleges, and Davidson men went to those colleges for their junior year. Still, the women could not receive degrees. Abbott said, "They weren't allowed to stay. A lot of times what happened was that they came, liked it a lot, and wanted to stay." During the first year of exchange coeds in '70 and '71, the women did not live on campus but instead in private homes in Davidson. For the second year of the exchange, '71-'72, the women lived in the Grey House.

After the exchange program, the trustees decided to admit junior and senior female transfer students, but four-year students were still to come. Abbott explained that freshmen women were not yet admitted because "we needed to have hall counselors and role models for the freshman women entering in 1973." From the classes of '74, '75, and '76, a few women graduated each year as full members of their classes. The first woman to graduate from Davidson was Missy Woodward, the wife of a Davidson student, who earned her degree in 1973. Finally, the first freshman class including women was admitted in 1973-1974.

As Epes said, the process of coeducation occurred over a period of years, and it was not a sudden change: "It unfolded over a period of time, and I think any attempt to portray the move to coeducation as a victory over significant odds would be a lie. It was a natural progression."

Of Davidson's first full-fledged female students, Abbott said, "They had tremendous responsibility, and I think the most interesting thing about

these women was how strong they were." Abbott continued, "They were choosing to be pioneers, choosing to change a lifestyle that had been at Davidson for a century and a half. They had to be strong and directed."

Still, the numbers of men greatly outnumbered the women for many years. From a three-to-one ratio of men to women, the numbers gradually fell to two-to-one and then one-and-a-half-to-one until the ratios were equal. The Class of '96 was the first class in which the women outnumbered the men.

Over this time, Abbott feels relations between men and women on campus have changed. Abbott was excited about the initial change because coeducation "made Davidson a more cultured, more civilized place." He added, "I think that women bring to the study of literature a perspective that is absolutely essential."

In the beginning, Abbott saw an "alliance between the women and the upper-class men." The late '70s and early '80s were what Abbott called "the heyday of coeducation in terms of men and women enjoying being together" whereas before coeducation, "the campus only saw women in social situations and therefore women were basically dates. They weren't people that you ate with, studied with, and did extracurriculars with."

Abbott explained that five coed eating houses helped to create unity until the creation of Rusk, the first female eating house, led to the founding of Warner Hall, Spencer, Connor, and now Turner. According to Abbott, "When the women's eating houses grew, the coed eating houses folded one at a time" and there was "more separation as you find that no one wants to join a coed eating house anymore."

Abbott explained, "Since it was an experimental time, everyone was trying to learn gender relations; it was a more relaxed atmosphere." Now, Abbott feels that "society is just a lot more structured and self-conscious."

Also along with the increase of

female students came the increase of female faculty and attention on women's achievements. Abbott said, "The whole thing begins to expand one's perspective."

Since the first female graduates, Davidson has produced prominent women in different fields: Rhodes scholars, doctors, lawyers, writers, scientists, military officers, teachers, ministers, and others.

Abbott captured the spirit of the coeducation celebration: "Going coed was an absolutely essential step in Davidson being the kind of school it is today. Certainly you can tell by looking at the women who are coming back. They have been clearly among the most exciting students Davidson has ever had. They've brought a lot of pride to this institution."

"I think what we want is a place where men and women are absolutely, genuinely equal. Equal doesn't mean in any way that we're not aware that there are differences, but they should receive equal treatment."

Today, the student body is almost equally represented between men and women.

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