

RANDOLPH-MACON WOMAN'S COLLEGE

*A Letter from Jolley Bruce Christman '69
President, The R-MWC Board of Trustees*

November 10, 2005

Dear R-MWC Alumnae, Students, Parents, and Friends,

On November 5, the College's external market research consultants, Art & Science Group (A&S), presented their final report to trustees and other members of the College community. As I explained in my October 24 letter, the Board charged A&S to conduct research about the future of Randolph-Macon Woman's College as an academically excellent woman's college and a financially sustainable enterprise.

The A&S report represents a year-long, intensive market study incorporating data from alumnae, current and withdrawn students, and prospective students. It details the deep emotional attachments that alumnae and current students have to the College and their firm beliefs that they have benefited from a single-sex education. It also underscores what you know from your own friends, daughters, and granddaughters: few of today's young women are interested in attending a single-sex college. It is a powerful reality that the market for women's colleges has shrunk to an alarmingly small size.

We remain firm in our belief that the benefits of a single-sex education are as important today as they were 100 years ago, but remaining a woman's college in the 21st Century carries with it enormous costs. Over the years, we have found, as every woman's college has, that the gap between the cost of providing a top-quality education to women and the revenue that can be gained from providing that education continues to widen as demand shrinks.

A&S was not directed to examine the appeal of enrolling men at Randolph-Macon Woman's College; its focus was on the College's future as a woman's college. Yet the A&S research reveals that the greatest possibility for increased enrollment could potentially result from admitting men.

The Board of Trustees has decided to commission additional market research to determine whether, as a coeducational institution with a distinctive identity, the College would appeal to males as well as the many females who would not have previously considered R-MWC. The Board believes that it has the fiduciary obligation to do so. This study is not just to understand if we should open our doors to men but also to identify what would make us truly distinctive in the marketplace. The research will be conducted during February and March with results and recommendations reported in May 2006. This is a study, not a commitment, and its results will be considered by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee along with many other factors.

The Board of Trustees has also decided to postpone the presidential search, pending the results of the additional research and the development of our strategic priorities. It is important that we are clear on our strategic directions before we seek presidential candidates, who will want to know that the various constituents of the College have looked at our options and have come to

agreement on general direction. The Board will seek an interim president for the academic year 2006–07 to assume office following President Bowman’s retirement.

As the external study goes forward, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee—composed of faculty, staff, and trustees—will work with your respective associations (the Alumnae Board and Alumnae Representatives to the Board of Trustees, the Student Government Association, and the Family Advisory Council and Parent Representative to the Board of Trustees) to plan how to involve all constituencies in the internal research and community dialogue that will occur in the next several months. As more information is available, we will post it to the College’s strategic planning Web page (<http://www.rmwc.edu/strategicplan/>).

This is a time of both opportunity and challenge. I am confident that our combined energy, intelligence, and love for this place will move the College forward powerfully. I invite your comments to board@rmwc.edu, and I invite your best visions for our College.

Sincerely,

Jolley Bruce Christman '69
President, Board of Trustees