

The following letter from President Worden will go in tomorrow's mail.

August 14, 2006

Dear Alumna,

I arrived as Interim President of Randolph-Macon Woman's College on July 1. Since then I have been running hard to get ahead of all the events that are taking place at our college. I am writing this because if I were not the interim president myself, I would be expecting to hear directly from her.

On August 1, the Board of Trustees submitted a draft strategic plan to the faculty for its comments. That draft plan recommends that our college emphasize its distinctive expertise in preparing students to become global citizens and do so in a manner that will allow our students to receive the equivalent recognition that is given by honors colleges in larger universities. In addition, the draft plan recommends that the College admit men beginning in the fall of 2007. I am an alumna of R-MWC. I loved my experience here in a single-sex environment. I wish that this change were not necessary.

The strategic planning process began in 2003, seeking to position R-MWC in the marketplace with a distinction that would attract more students to her door while remaining a women's college. The research findings were not encouraging. Therefore, the Board asked the research firm to determine if our "going co-ed" with distinctive programs would attract enough students to remain a strong and viable institution into the future. We received the results of that research in June and learned that both women and men would be attracted to the College in significantly increased numbers if we were to position ourselves as a co-ed college with a strong "global honors" component, delivered in a highly experiential manner. The College also conducted its own internal research in which faculty and staff contacted their counterparts at five colleges that had been all women and now admit men and five colleges that have remained women only.

The Board studied all of the information and reflected upon the input that students, faculty, alumnae, and staff had provided the Strategic Planning Steering Committee over the last year. They held 14 gatherings for alumnae around the country. They worked extremely hard and with the highest level of commitment to the long-term benefit of our college. I have been awed by their dedication, but not surprised since 70% of the Board members are alumnae. They will receive the comments of faculty in the near future and will hold their official vote on the College's plan for the future on September 9.

If the proposed plan is adopted, many of us will experience this change as a loss. That has been my own reaction. At the same time, I have come to see the necessity for this action. I have read the internal study of the colleges who have gone co-ed and am heartened to learn that in every case their enrollment has increased and that most of them believe that they have been able to retain the attributes that they most treasured as a single-sex institution. Each of them also found that they were educating more women as a co-ed institution than they had before making the change.

Randolph-Macon Woman's College was founded to educate women with the same intellectual rigor that men were receiving at the finest colleges in the country. It will continue to fulfill that mission while embracing the reality of the world today. If the proposed plan is adopted, the

College will begin a new and ambitious mission to graduate students, both female and male, who are prepared to contribute and to lead in a global society.

I promise you that I will work tirelessly over this year to keep the close community, the respect for all, and our most treasured traditions alive and vibrant as we move into this future. Please work with me on behalf of our alma mater to whom we owe so much of our own Vita Abundantior.

Thank you,

Virginia Hill Worden '69
Interim President