

WHAT EVERY TRUSTEE SHOULD KNOW

The more alumnae learn about the procedures used by the Board of Trustees to rush the Strategic Plan to a vote, the more dismayed we become. It appears that there may be a number of things that some Trustees may not have been told prior to September 9, 2006. Some or all of these things should cause Trustees to question whether going coed is the right answer. At the very least, the issues raised here should cause Trustees to demand a deeper analysis of the basis for the September 9th vote before moving forward to implement coeducation. In this document, we report things that we have heard from numerous sources, and we have attempted to verify each issue before including it here. Trustees, however, are in the best position to evaluate the accuracy of the issues we have raised. That is the purpose of this document. Not to cast unfounded accusations, but to encourage you to verify the information upon which you based your original vote. If you find, as we suspect, that the September 9 vote is not supported by the available evidence, then you should take appropriate action—rescind that vote.

TUITION DISCOUNTING

- PEC has received testimonials from many parents and students who say that R-MWC gave them more financial aid than they needed or expected. One student reports that she was given a Trustees scholarship, even though her parents were committed to pay full tuition. A number of students reported getting a second round of aid, when the first financial aid figure would have been enough to allow them to choose R-MWC. One student with three generations of alumnae in her family only applied to R-MWC and was offered aid unsolicited. Some parents report getting additional aid after they sent in acceptance letters.
- It appears that the Admissions Office hasn't carefully determined where discounts are needed and instead may have given aid too liberally. It appears that the Admissions Office may have been using tuition discounting as a substitute for an effective marketing effort.
- Therefore, it appears that R-MWC should have first taken a critical review of its tuition discounting processes and policies, before determining that raising the average tuition discounting rate to a percentage larger than that instituted at most women's colleges was critical to the success of R-MWC. Tuition discounting can and has been lowered at other women's colleges successfully—it can be done. To the extent R-MWC may have used tuition discounting as an incentive rather than a response to financial need, R-MWC has effectively cut off its primary source of revenue.

MARKETING

- Sweet Briar College increased its incoming student body by nearly 40% by initiating the enormously successful “Think is for Girls” campaign. A&S marketing consultants provided pivotal assistance in helping Sweet Briar develop this successful solution to their enrollment problem, because Sweet Briar’s trustees didn’t limit A&S’s assistance to merely providing a plan for transitioning the college to coeducation. R-MWC’s financial statements that were released publicly reveal that R-MWC has not engaged any outside consultants for years. Thus, it appears that R-MWC has developed marketing strategies and prepared marketing materials without outside marketing or in-house professional assistance for some time. Like Sweet Briar, R-MWC could use better marketing efforts to generate the additional matriculants necessary for R-MWC to remain a woman’s college.
- It has come to our attention that R-MWC has expressed an intention to enter into a contract with a Baltimore marketing firm to launch a campaign to advertise the new no-name coeducational college. Had a similar effort been undertaken to market the existing woman’s college, the Strategic Plan may not have been necessary.
- Information available to us indicates that A&S sent only two people to R-MWC for only two days to evaluate the existing programs before launching their marketing surveys to identify a new strategic plan. The scope of that review is unclear. Thus, it appears that the Board of Trustees may have limited the scope of what A&S could or would evaluate regarding existing marketing and admissions policies and issues. If so, it is possible that a more detailed analysis of existing practices might reveal that coeducation is not necessary.

ADMISSIONS ISSUES

- College applicants from Virginia are increasing. The Virginia State Legislature recently released information expressing the need for private universities to assist in offering higher education opportunities for the increasing number of Virginia college-bound students projected to enter college during the next ten years. They also approved a new university for south-central Virginia. It is unclear whether R-MWC’s marketing message is reaching these prospective students.
- National trends show that more women than men are attending college today. Small liberal arts colleges across the U.S. are being forced to use higher tuition discounting policies to attract enough men to maintain close to a 50/50 ratio of men and women. Accordingly, R-MWC may be choosing to admit men at a time when fewer men will even want to attend college and greater tuition discounting may be required to attract them in sufficient quantity for R-MWC to be a successful coed institution.
- The likelihood that R-MWC could attract men of sufficient academic caliber to meet R-MWC’s present admissions standards does not appear to have been established in

the materials published to date. Our research has indicated that other women's colleges which have recently gone coed now have lower average SAT scores and GPAs. The Board's projections about the quality of a coed student body do not appear to be supported by published research data or by the A&S studies.

- Our initial investigation seems to indicate that the Admissions Office has spent more money than ever and recruited fewer applicants, not because there are too few women who will consider a woman's college, but because R-MWC moved from the traditional relationship-based model of working with specific schools to a mass advertising model. Large university-style marketing may not be appropriate for a small, intimate campus and is may be the cause of a smaller applicant pool.
- The student survey of September 2006 concluded that the PER building is not the marketing problem that you have been led to believe. No one would object to a bright, new building with better facilities, but if it comes at the expense of losing R-MWC's essential character and its status as a woman's college, students are prepared to wait for a new PER building.

“GLOBAL HONORS”

- The best way to describe the concept of “global honors” as that term is being used in the Strategic Plan is that “The Emperor Has No Clothes.”
- Importantly, a large number of faculty members met in an informal meeting on September 29, 2006. Faculty members have informed us that a number of those present at the informal meeting expressed the view that the concept of “global honors” is meaningless and therefore can't be implemented.
- If the Board of Trustees persists in pushing an undefined “global honors” program on the faculty, there is growing evidence that the faculty may vote to reject that plan and discredit it.

ADMINISTRATION STAFF ISSUES

- According to the published reports we have reviewed, Kathleen Bowman's salary was not too low during her first years in office—from 1996-2000 her salary was comparable or substantially higher than those of the presidents of Sweet Briar and Hollins. During her entire tenure, her salary was comparable to the salaries of presidents of colleges of similar size and endowments. The Board reportedly awarded Bowman large deferred compensation packages in her last years at R-MWC to compensate for a perceived underpayment of salary in the early years of her administration. If that were the basis for Bowman's additional compensation, then given the published data, it does not appear that the awards to Bowman that she received in her last five years at R-MWC were justified, especially considering that R-MWC was enduring budget cutbacks and austerity measures during that same timeframe.

- Data indicate that there was a 50% staff turnover rate in 2001. That seems unusually high.
- Members of the Alumnae Association Board report that Kathleen Bowman rarely attended meetings of the Alumnae Association Board, even though such meetings were held on campus.
- The Development Office at R-MWC has 19 paid employees. Expert development officers from other colleges note that this is more than twice the staff of other schools. They question the need for such a large number of employees, especially in light of the fact that they apparently have not adequately communicated R-MWC's true financial needs.
- R-MWC employs both an Admissions Director and a Vice President for Enrollment. The Vice President for Enrollment's salary appears to be significantly higher than the Admissions Director's. It is unclear to alumnae why two such administrative positions are necessary.

HOW THE STRATEGIC PLAN HAS AFFECTED THE CAMPUS

- The failure to adequately plan and involve the entire R-MWC community – faculty, staff, students, alumnae, parents, and even the Lynchburg community – has completely disrupted R-MWC and was totally unnecessary. If the Board of Trustees had done a better job of planning this announcement and allowing all parties to participate in an open and inclusive strategic planning process akin to Mount Holyoke's, these problems would have been avoided.
- Students feel betrayed. They were told that they would come to R-WMC to find their voice, but when they spoke in opposition to the Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees told them to just accept the decision and “get on board.”

HOW THE COLLEGE HAS BEEN RUN

- The Board of Trustees has acknowledged that maintenance issues have been postponed. The administration has reported that remaining a women's college will cause a \$16 million budget deficit. However, based on R-MWC's own budget forecast given to the Board of Trustees, the majority of this deficit reportedly is due to an outlay of cash required to repair 5 plus years of unaddressed capital maintenance issues.
- What may have seemed a small issue of security cameras and locked doors has caused immeasurable damage to belief in the Honor Code. It has sent a message of

distrust and seriously impacted the sense of community and openness that has been the hallmark of the R-MWC community.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

- What many new trustees may not realize, and which alumnae are just beginning to discover, is that a formal vote to only study coed options may never have taken place. Several trustees and former trustees have indicated that, at the June Board of Trustees meeting, on the last day of business, the President of the Board of Trustees reportedly stated that the Steering Committee had come to the unanimous conclusion that the Board of Trustees should study a coeducational scenario. The President then reportedly asked whether anyone objected to that study. Trustees present do not recall that this vote was meant to exclude all consideration of plans to remain a woman's college, but rather was intended as a vote to additionally consider coeducational plans. Trustees recall, however, that at the July Board meeting, the President of the Board characterized the June vote as one that took all single-sex options off the table. Trustees reportedly were informed that the decision to no longer consider a women's college option had been made. Reportedly, objections to this process were made verbally and in writing to the President of the Board, but were apparently unsuccessful. Reportedly, minutes from the June meeting have not been published, but all other meeting minutes have been published
- Contrary to the repeated assertions of the Board of Trustees and the Administration, the strategic planning process has not been open. It is inconceivable to call a process "open" where the plan itself was not even released until after it was approved.
- Alumnae were not included in the planning process in a meaningful way. The only "alumnae" on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee were trustees who also happened to be alumnae. Compare the strategic planning process of Mount Holyoke. That process was "open."
- We hear very different reports regarding the success of the "forum" meetings in Richmond, Washington, and Atlanta that were held prior to September 9. Trustees appear to believe that those meetings were helpful. Alumnae, by contrast, report to us that the meetings made them feel even more alienated from the process. For example, trustees in attendance at the Atlanta meeting reportedly have characterized that meeting as a success. Alumnae, however, have told us they came away from that meeting more distanced from their Alma Mater than ever. We caution that the Board of Trustees may still not understand how they have wounded the relationship between alumnae and R-MWC. If the upcoming "town meetings" take the form of the previous meetings, the Board of Trustees may well continue to alienate alumnae.
- Moreover, how can you call a document a "strategic plan" when the document merely states the goals of an undefined concept, with nothing indicating actionable plans? It seems strange to everyone that committees are to be formed to determine what the plan entails *only after the plan was approved*.

- The “Town Meetings” planned for numerous cities from now until December are going to be a huge waste of time and money—but they will open trustees’ eyes to the real alumnae rage (or worse, abandonment of R-MWC) growing across the U.S. Alumnae who are planning to attend are actively gearing up to use those meetings to defeat the strategic plan and overturn it.
- It rings false that now the trustees want to meet with various alumnae chapters when the college and trustees have systematically dismantled the chapter system. For example, the Board of Trustees has refused to send a representative to the Dallas-Forth Worth alumnae chapter for five years. They told this chapter, that used to hold parties of 200-300 attendees, that it wasn’t “a viable” chapter and cut off support. Now the chapter only hosts 75 or less at its meetings. What could trustees possibly hope to achieve by going there now? The result of this action explains why the 2006 graduation class only had two graduates from Texas.

FINANCIAL MODELING

- Chris Burnley’s financial projections have not been adequately reviewed by independent third parties. PEC-documented emails with Dr. Lucie Lapovsky have confirmed that she merely reviewed the relationship of equations within Burnley’s model without any information provided as to the data to be used or assumptions to be applied. Numerous alumnae have questioned why the Board of Trustees did not ask for an independent examination of the assumptions upon which Burnley’s dire financial forecasts are based. It is our understanding that skilled economic modelers are available on campus. Additionally, PEC has spoken with a renowned expert in higher education financing, Dr. David Breneman at University of Virginia (who is a Sweet Briar and Goucher College trustee), who may have agreed to review Burnley’s forecasting model and assumptions if asked. We continue to encourage the Board of Trustees to take a second look at the financial projections upon which its decision was based.
- It does not appear possible that R-WMC could have been operating from a “position of strength” in 2004 and 2005 as reported in published reports, or had its most successful capital campaign ever, then a mere months later, be in such dire financial straits that it must change its entire character to survive.
- Alumnae and donors who have contacted PEC feel that it is unconscionable to adopt coeducation and an undefined curricular plan without having first advised alumnae of the financial and recruitment needs of the college. Even the A&S research report of November 2005 reported “a false sense of security” by alumnae that should be addressed. R-MWC alumnae have always risen to every challenge. We just needed to know that there WAS a challenge!
- The administration has claimed that the financial model is proprietary and can’t be shared. However, Ginger Worden admitted before the Alumnae Leadership Council that A&S didn’t create the model—R-MWC did. Trustees are refusing to share an

internally-generated model. This continuing veil of secrecy surrounding the development and contents of the financial forecasts has raised the suspicions of alumnae, students, ex-trustees and even the press. It has made the majority of R-MWC's previous supporters incapable of accepting or believing the trustees' claims regarding the financial forecasts.

- Even as recently as October 3rd and 9th when R-MWC held meetings to share financial and research data, the meetings were held at 4:30 p.m., a time when almost no student can attend due to team practices, rehearsals, labs and such, and when other interested parties, including alumnae, could not attend. Some students reportedly were penalized if they skipped class to attend the meetings. In addition to the poor timing, the meeting locations were communicated inaccurately in some emails from the Administration, which caused some people to miss the meetings because they could not find them. On Saturday afternoon, two days before the second meeting, students were advised that all questions for A&S had to be submitted in advance, and no questions would be taken from the floor. Faculty members were not advised of this requirement, and many were dismayed when they learned that they would be prevented from asking questions.