

Preserve Educational Choice, Inc. (PEC)

Committed to the Preservation of Randolph-Macon Woman's College

www.PreserveEducationalChoice.org
P.O. Box 29612 • Richmond, Virginia 23242

January 16, 2007

Dear Randolph-Macon Woman's College Alumna:

Our College needs your help, and it needs it now—more so than any time in its 115-year history!

On September 9, 2006, in electing to change Randolph-Macon Woman's College (R-MWC) to a coed institution, the Board of Trustees abandoned its original mission and decided to end R-MWC as we know it. Immediately after the decision and with only one month's notice to alumnae, students, and most faculty and staff, the trustees adopted a four-page "strategic plan," – little more than an outline - to admit men in the fall of 2007 and change the curriculum from liberal arts to an undefined, vague concept called "global honors." On December 9, the Board of Trustees announced that it would change the name of the college to "Randolph College," effective July 2007, and the college has already begun to use that name in marketing materials. In conjunction with the coed decision, the trustees have plans to spend tens of millions in college assets to finance athletic facilities, staff, new fields and other expenses of adding men as residential undergraduates.

These decisions—abruptly administered and rejected by an overwhelming majority of alumnae and students, by parents, donors, former presidents, and many of the faculty—are *not* final. In fact, a non-profit group, Preserve Educational Choice, Inc. (PEC), was formed in opposition to the coed decision to help preserve R-MWC as a woman's college and is now supporting the efforts of donors and current students to challenge the trustees' decision in court. Those cases will be heard on January 23, 2007, ***and we have every reason to expect that through these legal challenges, we will reclaim our college!***

When the trustees announced their decision on September 9, 2006, students chanted "see you in court." PEC, like many of you, wanted to avoid legal action by engaging the trustees in dialog on how to solve R-MWC's very real problems through rational means while at the same time preserving its mission as a woman's college. PEC produced a professionally researched 47-page report entitled "20 Reasons Why Trustees Should Change Their Vote," finding the strategic plan flawed, incomplete, and financially harmful, and the vote to adopt it unwarranted. The trustees refused to take PEC seriously in the same way they rejected meaningful discussion with former college Presidents Bill Quillian and Robert Spivey, former Admissions Director Robert Merritt, numerous former trustees, large donors, and education and business professionals among our alumnae and parents. In fact, to this day, the Board of Trustees has not allowed anyone to present a contrary view of its plan before the entire Board of Trustees.

Having no other recourse, PEC raised more than \$175,000 from close to 500 donors, enlisted alumnae lawyers, hired a superb law firm—DuretteBradshaw PLC of Richmond—and is supporting two lawsuits against the College. One, a breach of contract claim on behalf of current students, seeks to stop implementation of the coed plan in order to provide students what they were promised – a four-year, liberal arts education at a singular woman's college called Randolph-Macon Woman's College. The second is a charitable trust claim that demands that the Board of Trustees of R-MWC honor the intentions of those who donated their money and other assets to the school specifically for the purpose of supporting a *woman's* college, and not allow the assets to be used to support a coeducational institution.

The students and the rest of us will now have our first day in court.

Hearings on the two lawsuits will be held on January 23, 2007, at 3:00 p.m., in the Circuit Court for the City of Lynchburg, 900 Court Street, Lynchburg, Virginia. We encourage those of you who are close by to join us, although seating in the courtroom is limited. A large contingent of current students, alumnae, and others will gather in front of the courthouse as it is important for the Judge to see the outpouring of support in favor of preserving our College. **PEC has also reserved the fellowship hall of the First Unitarian Church, Monument Terrace, next door to the Lynchburg Circuit Court.** We will gather there both before and after the hearing. **If you intend to join us, please RSVP to gail@PreserveEducationalChoice.org.**

To see information and updates on January 23, to learn more about the lawsuits, to view materials presented to the trustees, or to sign up as a supporter please go to our website www.PreserveEducationalChoice.org

The hearings on January 23rd are just the beginning of the process of saving our alma mater. Regardless of how that day goes, as the lawsuits and other efforts go forward we will need additional volunteer support and financial assistance in the months ahead. **Please check our website for important information about how you can contribute and join the ranks of the more than 800 people who have already signed up as PEC supporters.**

We also encourage you to express your opinion to the administration, the Board of Trustees and to your local or district representative of the Alumnae Association:

Board of Trustees members: <http://www.rmwc.edu/directories/board.asp>

Alumnae Association representatives: <http://www.rmwc.edu/alumnae/association.asp>

Phone numbers for the President and other members of the administration:

<http://www.rmwc.edu/directories/>

With your help, we will preserve Randolph-Macon Woman's College as a Woman's College!

Vita Abundantior,

The PEC Board

Gail Ballou, '64 President

Diane U. Montgomery, Esq., '85, J.D. Washington & Lee Law, '90, Secretary

Martha McClerkin Durnett, '85, MBA Vanderbilt, '87, Treasurer

Anne Yastremski, Prime Time '05

Carol Curcio Lang, '68, MBA Fordham '77

Preserve Educational Choice, Inc. (PEC) is a non-profit corporation established on September 1, 2006, by alumnae and supported by alumnae, past trustees, past college presidents, faculty, students and parents who are committed to preserving R-MWC as a woman's college. PEC is in the process of seeking approval from the Internal Revenue Service for tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Accordingly, while PEC will make every attempt to obtain tax-exempt status, it cannot guarantee that such status will be granted, nor can it guarantee the date upon which such status may be conferred. Nevertheless, PEC is making every effort to ensure that contributions may qualify for tax exemptions, and will notify all donors when and if such status is obtained. Individual donors should consult with their tax advisors. **Please feel free to contact PEC at info@preserveeducationalchoice.org and/or Preserve Educational Choice, Inc., P.O. Box 29612, Richmond, VA 23242.**

20 Reasons Why You Should Oppose the Strategic Plan and Join PEC

You may have received a mailing from R-MWC's interim President Ginger Worden responding to PEC's documents "What Every Trustee Should Know" and "20 Reasons Why You Should Change Your Vote: An Analysis of the Arguments Used for Coeducation." While we would love to include the entire "20 Reasons" document in this letter to you, at 47 footnoted pages it simply is too large. However, it can be found in its entirety on our website www.PreserveEducationalChoice.org.

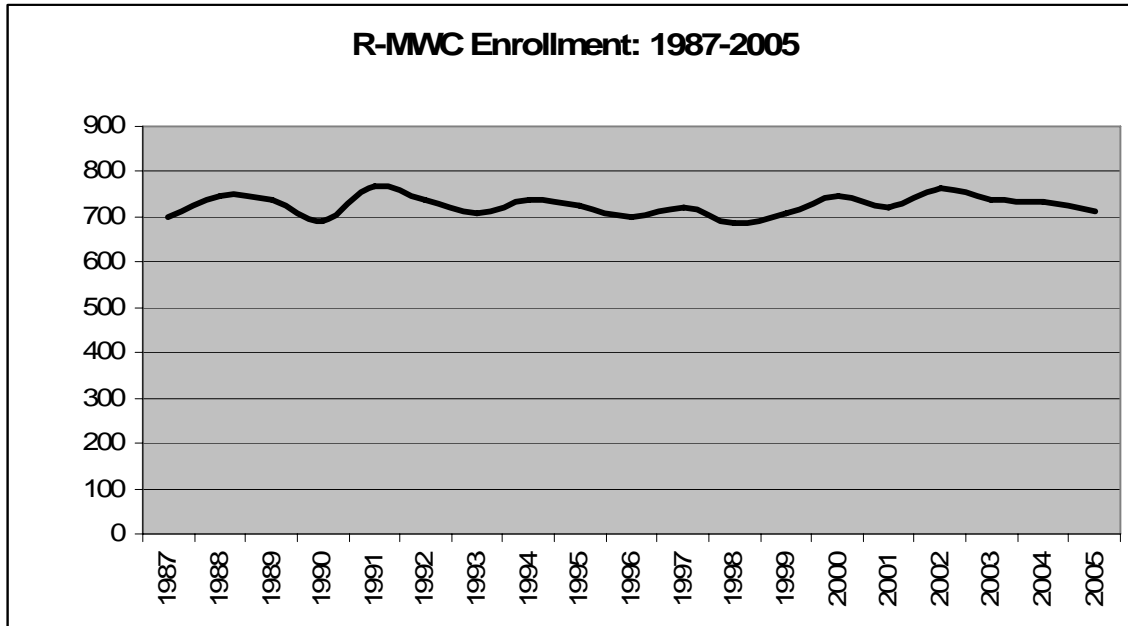
Here is a preview of the "20 Reasons" that we explore in depth:

1. There are enough women who want to attend women's colleges.
2. R-MWC's enrollment has not been in decline for years.
3. R-MWC does not have to "buy" students with tuition discounting to stay a woman's college.
4. Other women's colleges are financially viable.
5. The College can use marketing to solve its problems.
6. The financial model was run with the wrong assumptions.
7. It is possible to grow the endowment sufficiently to stay a woman's college.
8. Alumnae giving to the college will suffer to a great degree under coeducation.
9. Becoming coeducational and adopting the "best case" positioning is not the only viable option. This is because the strategic planning process was less than thorough.
10. The research conducted by Art and Science did not thoroughly investigate how to make R-MWC a stronger woman's college.
11. A global emphasis is not the answer to R-MWC's problems.
12. Admitting men will NOT allow R-MWC to educate more women.
13. The education that R-MWC will provide women in a coeducational environment will not be as good as the education women at R-MWC receive today.
14. Not all students want urban campuses and public universities.
15. Admitting men will not keep academic standards high and may even lower them.
16. The Honor Code will collapse, the sense of community will suffer, and cherished traditions will be lost.
17. Residential men are not the answer to R-MWC's social life issues.
18. The College has not done everything possible to stay single-sex.
19. The College is not in crisis—the decision was made hastily.
20. Trustees can still change their vote now.

We urge you as a concerned alumna of Randolph-Macon Woman's College to take the time to thoroughly explore the issues of coeducation and the four-page "strategic plan." The 800 supporters of PEC, like many alumnae, believe that coeducation will irreparably damage our alma mater and that we must do whatever is necessary to preserve Randolph-Macon Woman's College for future generations of women. Please join PEC today and lend your support to save our beloved College.

R-MWC's enrollment:

- President Kathleen Bowman's 2005 President's Report (published Feb. 2006)—enrollment is "steady."
- The headcount in 1980 was 732 (full-time equivalent of 713). The headcount in 2004 was 732 (full-time equivalent of 712).
- Enrollment can hardly be described as being "in a steady decline"—it has been relatively stable since 1987 at least.



R-MWC's tuition discounting:

- For 2005-2006, R-MWC had a tuition discount rate (62%) much higher than Sweet Briar College (46%) and Hollins University (46%) but students of the same quality.
- Sweet Briar and Hollins have tuition discount rates of 40% or less for their incoming first year classes (2006-2007) while R-MWC has been raising its tuition discount rate for incoming classes.
- Sweet Briar has been lowering its tuition discount rate by 2% a year while increasing enrollment and student quality (as measured by SAT scores and average GPA).
- R-MWC "advertises" its discounting on its website and admissions materials rather than using the discounts as a "behind-the-scenes" negotiating tool.
- Other women's colleges do NOT have to engage in "deep discounting" to attract and enroll a growing body of well-qualified women.

R-MWC's endowment:

- R-MWC's endowment is larger than that of any other women's college in Virginia.
- R-MWC's endowment per student is very favorable and comparable to that of many of the top 25 liberal arts colleges in the U.S.
- R-MWC's endowment has recovered from the stock market downturn of 2002 and has grown consistently ever since.

Alumnae involvement in R-MWC's strategic planning process:

- All of the "alumnae" serving on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee were trustees or former trustees. There was no "alumnae" contingent on the committee apart from these trustees.
- The 500 alumnae surveyed by Art and Science Group in November- December 2004 were part of a "blind survey" (so they did not know that R-MWC was the subject of the study). Survey participants, particularly in a blind survey, can hardly be considered contributors to a strategic planning process.
- The "open forums" held between February and April 2006 for alumnae were information sessions for the Board of Trustees and R-MWC administrators to begin to position the move to coeducation. They were not designed to solicit input into the strategic plan.
- After the August 2006 announcement that ONLY coeducation and global honors would be considered at the September 9th vote, many alumnae wrote the Board of Trustees with alternate suggestions and a multitude of concerns. All were told that the "input" period had passed, even though the four-page strategic plan was not released until after the September 9th vote.

Coeducation at R-MWC:

- Male college students are in short supply—even established coed liberal arts colleges are struggling to compete for qualified men.
- R-MWC's own research of former women's colleges shows that admissions standards are lowered at times for male students, particularly male athletes. The college will initially focus on recruiting athletes for the new men's teams.
- R-MWC's own research of former women's colleges shows that after coeducation problems with vandalism, property crimes and under-age drinking will rise.
- R-MWC's own research of former women's colleges shows that after coeducation R-MWC can expect more honor code violations, increased cheating and plagiarism, and that male students show less respect for the principle of dual-responsibility.
- R-MWC's own research of former women's colleges shows that after coeducation we can expect many of the traditions of R-MWC to die off or be terminated by the college as they do not appeal to men.

- R-MWC’s own research of former women’s colleges shows that after coeducation male students occupy a disproportionately large number of campus leadership positions.
- Studies by social scientists of women’s colleges and coeducational colleges indicate that women receive a better education at women’s colleges. After coeducation, the education of R-MWC’s female students will suffer.

“Global honors” at R-MWC:

- “Global honors,” the other prong of the strategic plan, has yet to be defined and has, in fact, been dismissed by many R-MWC faculty members already.
- “Honors” is a problem for many faculty members as it is disingenuous and academically dishonest to assert that every R-MWC student is an “honors” student or that R-MWC is an “honors college.”
- “Global” is a problem for many faculty members because they see it either taking away from their departmental emphases (e.g. the science faculty) or being prohibitively costly to implement well. For example, developing comprehensive area studies programs (e.g. Middle Eastern Studies, East Asian Studies, Sub-Saharan African Studies, etc.) and increasing foreign language offerings of novice through advanced levels (e.g. Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, etc.) are expensive and, in some subjects, difficult to find faculty (not to mention a large enough number of interested students to make it cost effective).
- In a recent faculty meeting, Dean William Coulter reportedly told faculty that if the curriculum implementation committee ended up with a product that didn’t fit the name “global honors” so be it. This leaves open the question of what impact on enrollment the new curricular emphasis will have as it will not match what was “tested” by the Board of Trustees’ market research firm.

Other women’s colleges:

- Other women’s colleges perceive (and thus promote) being a women’s college as a strength, not a weakness. Take Mount Holyoke College, whose president has said:

in being single-sex, we have a distinctive marketing niche. We are differentiated from the pack of liberal arts colleges. We are a known brand; we appeal to a small but big enough sector of the market. We market a mission that is clear, coherent, and historically resonant. Instead of dispersing our collective energies in various directions, we focus them on being what we quintessentially are: small, liberal arts, residential, for women, diverse, international: we mine each aspect of our identity for its strength and its incipient strength.

In contrast, R-MWC sees being a women’s college as a weakness and thus is giving up its marketing niche, discarding its brand, and abandoning its historic mission to educate women.

- Other women’s colleges are doing well. Take two other “non-Seven Sisters”:
 - At Sweet Briar College applications are up by 54 percent (404 in 2003, 623 in 2005), student academic quality as measured by average GPAs and SAT scores is up, and first year enrollment has increased 37 percent (133 in 2003, 182 in 2005); and
 - At Mills College, applications in 2005 were up 82 percent after the college established a marketing department, they experienced a 50 percent increase in enrolled first year undergraduate students (136 in 2004, 206 in 2005, with a 2005 yield of 34 percent) and the college considers itself to be “thriving.”

Agnes Scott College has reached the “more than 1,000 students” mark and other women’s colleges, from Mount Holyoke to Hollins, are touting increased applications and thriving campuses.

Preserve Educational Choice:

Preserve Educational Choice (PEC) is a group of concerned R-MWC alumnae, students, parents, faculty, staff, and former trustees who are united by our love of R-MWC and our concern for the college’s future. PEC was formed on September 1, 2006 to provide a voice to those who wished to encourage the Board of Trustees to delay their vote or reject the strategic plan. When that effort was unsuccessful, PEC focused its efforts on persuading the Board of Trustees to reverse its vote on the strategic plan. Since its formation PEC has:

- Set up a website, www.PreserveEducationalChoice.org, to centralize information about the strategic plan vote and opposition to the vote;
- Conducted research on the reasons given for the vote to adopt coeducation and global honors and distributed the information to the R-MWC Board of Trustees to help them see how R-MWC can remain a successful women’s college (see our document “20 Reasons Why You Should Change Your Vote: An Analysis of the Arguments Used to Vote for Coeducation” and other materials on our website);
- Organized a strategic summit in Richmond, Virginia in January 2007 of former R-MWC presidents, trustees, faculty members and administrators as well as alumnae leaders and key donors to centralize opposition to the strategic plan; and
- Supported a breach of contract lawsuit by nine current R-MWC students who believe they are entitled to receive the full four years of a women’s college education that they were promised when they were recruited and admitted by R-MWC. Supported a charitable trust lawsuit by students and donors asserting that R-MWC’s charitable assets should be used for women’s education – not a coeducational college.

PEC believes that coeducation and “global honors” bear great risk for R-MWC and imperil the college’s future. We are committed to pursue all legal avenues to encourage the Board of Trustees to reconsider their vote and evaluate alternatives to coeducation and “global honors” that will keep R-MWC a woman’s college and lead to future success. To learn more about PEC and how you can help ensure a bright future for R-MWC as a woman’s college, please see our website www.PreserveEducationalChoice.org.