

Mary Baldwin College

State of the College Address

The Power to Seize Our Future

August 25, 2010

President Pamela Fox

Last year on opening day I stood before you and asked that we "come together, right now" to coalesce our strengths into a bold new synthesis. I called upon us to create the composition of our future, a compelling one-college model aligning all of our outstanding innovations. I predicted that it would be a year beyond business as usual during which clarity and focus prevailed.

With clarity and focus, you answered my call. We launched our four Schools of Excellence. Our signature academic excellence is visible, and shortly we will gather under the majestic banners outside Grafton Library to celebrate together.

I thank the faculty for a year-long discussion about implementation and governance of the Schools. I thank CoMPA for the inspirational school brochures. I honor the entire admissions process this year, the faculty, the admissions staff, administrative staff, and the physical plant for making sure the Schools came to life for our potential students. Our Leadership Gateways and First Year Experience program are a great success. Our college-wide learning goals and common curriculum are now clear and distinctive.

I believe that no college president in the United States stands before her colleagues today with greater gratitude or with greater certainty that our direction is the right one.

I come forward to speak not of promises, but the facts of grounded optimism. I bring the confidence of realistic enthusiasm. My message is heartfelt and direct.

Over the past two years, we have exhibited the courage to address the fundamentals of our institution. We have a thorough understanding of who we are — financially, programmatically, and culturally. We drew upon data, common sense, and wisdom. We made difficult but necessary decisions. We rely upon our creativity, hard work, and communal support of one another, in part because we have never had a large endowment. The recession had a heavy impact on our endowment, resulting in the unfortunate one-year decline in our Department of Education ratios for the fiscal year ending June 2009. We are moving beyond. We are certain that this year's final audited financial will demonstrate it. And we know that as our success builds, the resumption of salary improvements and the restoration of retirement benefits are of the highest priority for a community that gives so fully of its talents and time.

Our students become their best selves, achieving more than they dreamed they could. As an institution we have done the same. Confidence, compassion, and the courage to change are in the Baldwin DNA.

This year I charge us to seize our future. We have composed it. Power is our campus-wide annual theme. The power is within us to seize the future we have created together. We can grab hold of it, take control of it, and capture the opportunities.

We are crafting an update to our strategic plan to take us through 2015. We are working together on a blueprint, a construction schematic, that is logical, data-driven, and results oriented. Over the summer nine faculty members dedicated many hours per week to help us create our MBC 2015 blueprint. All staff divisions have met to discuss the blueprint.

We know precisely the combination of financial imperatives that are necessary to bring the college to a thriving future. We know that enrollment growth accompanied by strategic and sustainable private support is required. We will leverage our legacy of women-centered ethos for 169 years.

We will have opportunities to evolve our MBC 2015 blueprint over the next two months.

Our MBC 2015 blueprint has three straightforward goals:

- (1) **Grow enrollment.** We are a tuition-driven institution. Enrollment growth is required to bring us to a thriving position. By 2015 we will grow enrollment in our existing programs by 25 percent overall, from our current student headcount of around 2,300 to 3,000, or from total current credit hours of 42,630 to 58,010. We have drafted a detailed strategic roadmap for growth in each program, proposing not only the incremental enrollment targets but the specific tactics necessary to achieve them. Our resultant growth mix may vary from these projections, but setting specific goals for each program is vital. By 2015
 - a. We seek to increase the Residential College to around 1,000 students, maintaining the goal from our 2004 strategic plan
 - b. We seek to increase ADP enrollment from 13,700 to 23,500 credit hours
 - c. We strive to increase graduate enrolled hours from 4,700 to 7,000 credit hours, maintaining full enrollment in MLitt/MFA and increasing graduate teacher education.

We must also look forward by creating and launching three to five new graduate programs to fuel growth from 2015 to 2020. Twenty-five percent growth in our existing programs by 2015 leverages existing innovations. We must always create our next opportunities, which, all the external data tell us, lie in new graduate programs.

- (2) **Attract resources.** We aspire to fully engage the collective resources of our alumnae, friends, and new supporters. We are implementing new strategies to increase total revenue from gifts to 2015 and beyond. Our search for a Vice President for Institutional Advancement is nearing an exciting appointment. We will complete the capital campaign focused on strategic priorities necessary to achieve MBC 2015 and make a demonstrable difference. The transformation of Hunt Hall into a true student center and the renovation of the Pearce Science Building will be the centerpieces of The Campaign for Mary Baldwin College in the coming year.
- (3) **Ensure academic excellence.** This is indeed the overarching goal. Our academic excellence will attract new students and resources. We will leverage our existing strengths, including the nineteen new or enhanced academic majors and minors created since 2004. We will develop new graduate programs with significant growth and return-on-investment potential. The academic integrity of our liberal arts and science mission is paramount.

Why are we confident we can achieve this? I want to highlight three reasons.

First, The positive achievements of the present.

We ended fiscal year 2010 with a balanced budget. Year-end enrollment across the college exceeded budget expectations. ADP credit hours rose above 14,000 with summer enrollment of RCW students. Graduate teacher education continued its strong growth with the addition of the MEd and its signature tracks.

We have record enrollment again this fall. In the RCW, we welcome a class 10 percent larger than last year. Academic profile is shifting, with an increased percentage of women in the upper two levels of ability. The class is geographically more diverse. Our innovative admissions strategies are working and compare impressively to other private colleges in Virginia.

- ✚ MBC applications are up more than 50 percent; the average for Virginia private colleges is nine percent.
- ✚ Acceptances here are up about 30 percent; the average is two percent.
- ✚ Our deposits are up 10 percent; the average is 0.

We have achieved a competitive edge within the complex landscape of higher education in Virginia.

ADP and graduate enrollment is trending strongly as well. We are 10 percent ahead of last year to this date in ADP enrolled hours. Graduate teacher education has 35 new students. MLitt MFA has enrolled beyond budget goals in all tracks with 55 total, including 21 new MLitt students and 14 MFA candidates.

So reason one: the proof of the present.

Why are we confident we will achieve our goals? Reason 2: We have a strong positional advantage.

As Wayne Gretzky said: A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be.

The strengths of the Mary Baldwin College of today align with significant external opportunities. Dr. Askegaard prepared an external scan. The Faculty Planning Team studied this and other key predictive documents, such as The College of 2020. They sought best practices from other institutions. We are well positioned to leverage all our innovative programs. Here are a few key examples:

- ✚ **Adults.** Adult students aged 25–44 will increase 27 percent by 2016. Our outstanding and proven ADP program positions us as a leader in the Commonwealth and nation to capture this market. In our National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE] 2010 report, ADP seniors report higher overall satisfaction than any other comparable group ranked by NSSE. Ninety-four percent of ADP seniors report in the NSSE data that through the quality of relationships with faculty members, they have the support they need to succeed academically, exceeding the all-NSSE average of 76 percent. This competitive edge will be very important, as for-profit institutions will likely enroll 20 percent of all adult students by 2020.
- ✚ **Diversity.** This is a core value of Mary Baldwin College. In the next 10 years the U.S. population will grow by 10 percent. Half of the growth will be in the Hispanic population. Around 2020 white Americans will be in the minority. We can prove our success in supporting women of color in the RCW. Our graduation rate for African-American students is five percentage points higher than for white students; it is six percentage points higher for Hispanic students. This bucks the national trends. And, in a residential college that is a reflection of American society, we are building inclusive American citizens. In our most recent NSSE data, we again score above all women's colleges and NSSE peers in Enriching Educational Experiences. Within this, 83 percent of RCW students reported frequent serious conversations with students very different from themselves, versus the 54 percent coeducational average and the 55 percent for women's colleges.
- ✚ **Graduate degrees.** The number of master's degrees awarded nationwide is expected to grow by another 23 percent to 2018. We have proven success in our 3 mission-driven graduate programs.
- ✚ **Women.** Women are increasing at all levels of higher education. By 2018, 58 percent of undergraduates will be women. Women will be the majority in almost all graduate programs. Women in higher education is the major opportunity going forward.

And this leads to my third point about why we will achieve our goals.

It is our legacy as a women's centered institution. This is the proof of our past, it is our present, and it must be our future.

Let's boldly claim it. It is inspiring to seize the opportunity of being **the** women's university in the United States in the 21st century. Our record enrollment last year was 91 percent women across all programs. We have cultivated a women-centered ethos of remarkable success for 169 years. We foster women's leadership and women's citizenry in distinctive ways. We embrace and celebrate the

unique attributes of women that are essential in solving the complex problems of global interdependence.

Our women-centered ethos drives academic success, personal transformation, the interactions of faculty and staff, and is embodied in our alumnae. Our women's centeredness should be a guiding lens for everything we do and will do.

So let's seize our future. It is bold, yet logical and compelling.

MBC 2015: Seven words.

Ensure academic excellence.

Grow enrollment.

Attract resources.

MBC 2015: A clear portrait of our future.

- ✚ A women-centered institution of 3,000 students.
- ✚ A composite financial index in the range of 4 to 6.
- ✚ A vibrant campus.
- ✚ A central presence throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

We will work together. It is very important that everyone in the college is engaged in shaping MBC 2015 and playing a rewarding role in its success. The faculty gather this afternoon for a retreat. Three working groups of faculty will be constituted: one for considering new graduate programs; one for technologically-enhanced pedagogies; and one for delineating the ways our current academic programs can be articulated more clearly.

We will discuss our financial model based upon enrollment projections, determining together how resources will follow enrollment. We are re-envisioning Institutional Advancement. A working group of staff has already begun to consider housing to accommodate on-campus growth. The Executive Committee of the Student Government Association will lead student discussions about key issues, including student input into graduate programs, housing, social life, technology and course delivery preferences.

The Community Council will lead the way in developing a manifesto of women-centeredness and a new vision statement for the college, focusing on our aspiration to be recognized as an outstanding women's-centered institution in the liberal arts and sciences emphasizing leadership and global citizenship. Then, together, we will complete the update of our mission statement for Board approval of the entire MBC 2015 blueprint on October 21.

And over the next few weeks, above all else, relish in the joy of doing this work together. We are doing important work for our nation and world. And we are doing it extraordinarily well.

We are pleased that MBC remains strong in the standard national rankings. We are 27th among the 118 regional universities in the South in this week's *U.S. News & World Report* and we are listed there as number 10 among 15 regional universities in the south recognized as "Great Schools at

Great Prices.” But Monday a different kind of ranking was published by the *Washington Monthly*. *Washington Monthly* judges colleges on the lives of their students, lives well led as citizens of our nation and world. The purpose of the new rankings is to show the extent to which colleges in the United States make a positive difference in their communities and their nation.

Mary Baldwin College is ranked #8 in the nation among the top 50 master’s universities. This is based upon data demonstrating social mobility, research, and service.

The power is within us to recognize and celebrate that we really are making a difference, for our students and for all those whose lives they will touch. We empower our students to exceed their expectations and to act as positive agents of compassion and change in their communities, for their nation, and for the world.

The power is within us as a community joining the contributions of each individual faculty and staff member within our collective power as a women-centered institution.

Who we are is who we aspire to be.

The power is within us to rejoice in the present and seize the future.

Thank you very much!