

Mary Baldwin College

State of the College Address

August 26, 2009

“Come Together”

President Pamela Fox

As we open the 2009-2010 academic year, we face a turning point — a significant moment derived not only from the successes of the last five years and this past year’s challenges, but from 50-plus years of innovations.

Let’s look back briefly to 1964. Mary Baldwin College was on the move under President Samuel R. Spencer’s gifted leadership with booming construction everywhere.

The Student Government Association pledged to help raise money for the new library. They secured permission to wear Bermuda shorts to class for payment of 25 cents, they auctioned faculty, and collected over one million S & H green stamps to raise a total of \$6,000.

As changes in the curriculum and expanding international programs took root, MBC was not immune to the turbulent events and far-reaching cultural changes in the United States in the 1960s. I draw my musical metaphor today from one lens of this change in popular culture, The Beatles.

The 1964 SGA officers, many of us everywhere, certainly including me, remember where we were in 1964 when The Beatles debuted on The Ed Sullivan Show. We were transfixed on this: [clip of She Loves You].

As a teenager, and subsequently as a professor and musicologist, I memorized and analyzed every song produced by The Beatles.

So, “lend me your ears, I’ll sing you a song, and I’ll try not to sing out of tune.” I have titled my remarks “Come Together,” from the lead track of The Beatles September 1969 album, *Abbey Road*: “Come Together” [play brief clip, projecting words].

I ask us to *Come Together, Right Now*, to face this turning point.

Come together around our vision and the next phase of the strategic plan.

Come together to create Mary Baldwin as the comprehensive college of the future.

Come together to coalesce our strengths into a bold new synthesis.

This coming together is a culmination of our college's cycle of innovation that began under Dr. Spencer. It was astutely advanced by President Tyson, and it has been fueled by the highpoint of momentum we have achieved in the first five years of our strategic plan, *Composing Our Future: Mary Baldwin College 2014*.

Our coming together is also necessarily informed by the dramatic economic events of the past twelve months. We've spent the last year experiencing this: "I read the news today, oh boy." [play opening of "A Day In The Life"].

Over the course of last year, we have come together with our community as a priority, offering collective solutions to budget reductions, working long four-day workweeks and turning off lights to save \$85,000, making difficult choices to construct the 2010 budget. To put it simply and as any of you here today might well say: "It's been a hard day's night, and I've been working like a dog" [play short clip] .

We will engage in more work over the next few months to make permanent, long-term adjustments. As I have impressed upon you, while reductions and redistributions of resources are necessary, we also firmly believe that we cannot cut our way forward. We must make the most of what we have and create our future, as we have done for 168 years.

Thank you so very much for what you have done and for what we will yet do.

Though the global economic crisis has "reset" some of our expectations, we are perfectly poised to realize a bold new synthesis from our success. Our vision is unconstrained. Remember last year on opening day, inspired by the audacious simplicity of the "Ode to Joy" theme in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, we celebrated exceeding our expectations:

- ✚ record enrollment;
- ✚ your collective imagination that brought forth 16 new and enhanced academic programs;
- ✚ the already far-reaching achievements of the Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement;

- ✚ the restoration of our beautiful historic campus; and
- ✚ the \$20 million success of The Smith Challenge.
- ✚ We affirmed our Boldly Baldwin spirit, pledged excellence for every student every day, and commanded the courage to be extraordinary.

Our 10-year strategic plan has proven to be a flexible framework. It is broadly inclusive in scope, allowing innovative strategies to emerge across all parts of the college. The next five years of the plan must be executed within an economic situation quite different from 2004. Our growth goals have been punctuated. To resume our path, we will retain our vision and our five strategic initiatives, but the 31 goals have been replaced by a smaller number of highly focused goals.

What we have accomplished in the past five years puts into place the distinctive elements of how we transform our women and men of promise who graduate with the confidence to lead, the compassion to serve, and the courage to change the world. This is not rhetoric: it is the lived mission of our college, embodied in the lives of our graduates.

What place in higher education will Mary Baldwin College occupy in 2020? The crystal ball is not cloudy. We see the trends, and we see our place at the forefront forging the future.

Our College of the Future

This summer, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* issued a provocative, data-rich study titled “The College of 2020, Students.” It concludes that there will be three types of colleges and universities by 2020: (1) the flagship publics and highly endowed privates; (2) the community colleges and for-profit institutions; and (3) and all the rest of us will be in the middle. The key to thriving in our middle group is claiming our distinctive position. This is not a branding or marketing function; it commands the courage to commit to our strengths as a unified college community.

In many ways we are ahead of the emerging curve as the traditional model and demographics of colleges are evolving. We have a history of success in serving a broad spectrum of ages at a time when the average age of students is trending higher. We are committed to women’s education. We have fostered a diverse community that embraces inclusivity. We have strong connections in emerging international markets. We have a strong basis in leadership development, experiential liberal arts curricula, and a cutting-edge commitment to civic engagement in a global context. We have a flexible, year-round course delivery system already available in our regional centers.

In some areas we are behind the curve. Connectivity and creativity are essential. The freshman of 2020 is a first-grader today, a member of what the study *Speak Up 2008* calls the “Digital Advance Team,” who are challenging us to leverage emerging technologies for teaching and learning. *Speak Up 2008* cautions us that “colleges that attempt to cram

their styles down students' throats on the basis that it is good for them may quickly find themselves uncompetitive.”

We must push uphill to stay ahead on every front. We seek the sweet spot between mission and market where our programmatic strengths intersect with the needs, talents, and goals of our future students.

- **Our mission:** As an institution, we believe that the power of the liberal arts and the intellectual capacity for critical thinking are fundamental to global citizenship. We value the lively exchange of ideas within the face-to-face crucible of the classroom and the mentorship that a professor provides to her students.
- **Our market:** As an institution, we recognize that a growing number of high school graduates are not adequately prepared for college. Many experience severe financial pressures and desire to pursue a career directly after graduation. Our students come from diverse backgrounds, may be first-generation college entrants, and may learn best through hands-on experience. They expect that technology will make learning accessible and individualized for them. They are accustomed to flexibility.

The **sweet spot** is located at the intersection of these realities. We embrace them to become an entrepreneurial, comprehensive college of the 21st century, providing:

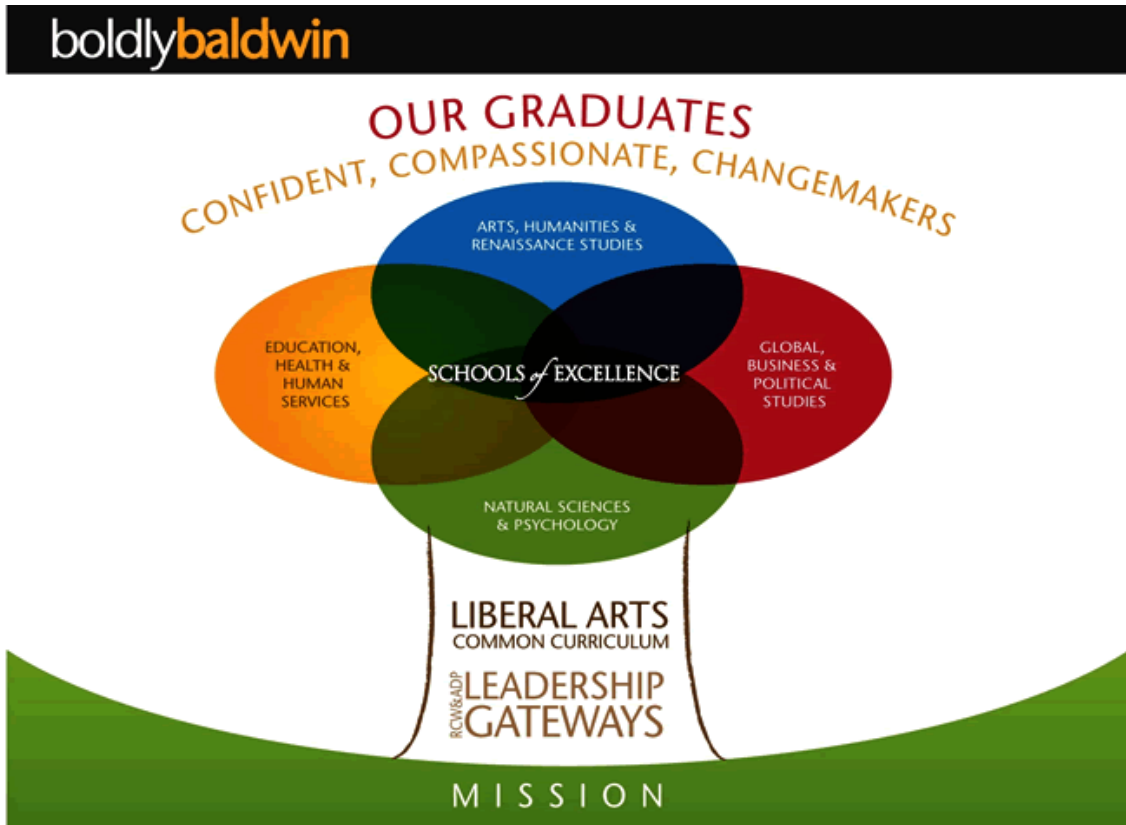
- An innovative liberal education core connecting theory to practice through experiential learning, technology-enhanced pedagogies offered in a year-round calendar, and career development supporting distinctive majors and minors;
- A lean and agile all-college structure that makes our strengths visible, drives a sustainable business model, and concentrates on the strengths of the sweet spot.

To achieve this, we must redesign the college. Currently, the sum of the parts of the college is greater than the whole. We must create a comprehensive all-college structure to reverse that.

We have experienced an additive cycle of innovation. Let's view this compilation and then re-envision these parts as a compelling whole. I draw upon the conclusion of one of The Beatle's most innovative songs, "A Day In The Life." The conclusion of this final track on the St. Pepper's LP contains a 24-bar bridge, recorded by a full orchestra as a semi-improvised, atonal crescendo. As the passage intensifies, our innovations accrue.

Capstone Fair **Biochemistry** **Regional and National Partnerships**
Statement of inclusivity **First-Year Experience and First-Year Curriculum/Learning Labs**
3 sets of learning goals **Premedical Sciences**
Annual Theme **Science Education** **QEP: Civic Engagement in A Global Context**
Public Health Minor **Women for Healthy Lifestyles** **Artists-in-Residence**
Richmond **MLitt/MFA in Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature in Performance** **BSW in Social Work**
New and enhanced academic programs **Materials Chemistry**
International Economics and Business **VWIL** **MEd** **BRCC** **Special Education**
5 year BA/MAT **Charlottesville/PVCC** **Williamsburg**
Spencer Citizens **The nation's only fully endowed program in Health Care Administration** **International Partnerships**
Semester of Service **Class Leadership Program** **Study Abroad and Civic Engagement**
Gifted Education **The first Adult Degree Program in Virginia** **Leadership**
Regional Centers **Career Academy** **New Leadership Gateways**
Environment-Based Learning **Rappahannock CC** **Civic Engagement Minor**
Electronic Art and Design Minor **MAT** **Global Poverty and Development Minor**
Roanoke **USA South Division III Athletic Conference**
Ida B. Wells and The Office of African-American and Multicultural Affairs **South Boston**
BA in Sustainable Business **Special Education Minor** **5 year BA/MLitt**
The Mary Baldwin College Advantage
One faculty contract system **The Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement** **Transforming Our Environment: the campus master plan**
Health and Wellness **US Poverty Minor** **Undergraduate Research**

The music climaxes with a full measure of rest preparing for a resonant E-Major chord. At this point, our bold new synthesis will emerge:



This is the composition of our future.

It is a synthesis of our strengths.

I call upon us to launch four Schools, Schools of Excellence, on July 1, 2010. These schools will flow in an integrated progression from our revised mission statement and consolidated college-wide learning goals, with points of entry through our Leadership Gateways (PEG, VWIL, Ida B. Wells, Spencer Citizens, Healthy Lifestyles, Career Academy, Global Honors, and ADP), through a clarified and consolidated liberal arts common curriculum with an intentional first-year core. We need to be much clearer about our first-year curriculum, building upon the steps put into place this year, if we are to make the path to a degree rational, clear, and outcome-based. We must make the value of a Mary Baldwin education evident.

Why schools? Schools will make our strengths visible and highlight our unique and distinctive programs. Each will contain undergraduate majors and minors, at least one graduate or post-baccalaureate program by 2014, and certificate programs where appropriate.

Every school will feature strong experiential components blending theory and practice, including:

- Civic engagement in a global context, with one Spencer Fellow representing each School.
- One or more regional partners, building upon our success with the American Shakespeare Center, the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library, the public schools, our health care administration and social work partners, and more. These partnerships will be formal, featured prominently in our recruiting materials, and connected through Changemaker jobs and internships. Thus we will live our mission as a college within a community, in vibrant Staunton and Augusta County.
- One or more national and international partnerships with organizations of service to young women, such as our growing work with Women for Women International. Thus we will live our mission as a college with a cause.
- Career counseling with dedicated staff through the Sena Center.
- Strong partnerships with our alumnae/i and our leadership boards.

These are draft working titles to highlight our strengths. For example, *Arts, Humanities, and Renaissance Studies* raises up a signature feature of our college that few others can express in this way. The title *Education, Health, and Human Services* underscores the fact that, since our founding, preparing outstanding teachers has been central to our mission. One hundred thirty teacher certifications are awarded each year, larger than any major. We have the only fully endowed health care administration program in the United States and a new Bachelor of Social Work program.

Global, Business, and Political Studies: We have distinctive programs in international business and economics, sustainable business, world languages and cultures, Asian studies, political science, and international relations. *Natural Sciences and Psychology*: Psychology is MBC's second largest major, and this School's final title must express the four interdisciplinary nodes of excellence the faculty articulated this summer.

Rich interdisciplinary minors and independent majors thrive at intersections between Schools. The Schools are permeable hubs of academic and co-curricular distinction.

Schools will solidify our one-college identity by joining the resources of our undergraduate and graduate programs and our regional centers and Staunton campus. They will create synergy between RCW and ADP as one undergraduate program. They will demonstrate administrative efficiency. They will promote fiscal responsibility and resourcefulness, with each School delivering approximately 25 percent of the college's total credit hour production, ensuring that revenues and expenses balance.

Each will offer a year-round instructional calendar with flexible learning opportunities and delivery systems to a broad spectrum of students. It will be necessary to “live” the structure and make it physically visible within our students’ daily lives.

The Schools are the conjoining of mission and market, highlighting our strengths in a lean and agile all-college structure we can afford.

I say clearly: we will accomplish the implementation of our bold synthesis over the next nine months as we also identify the necessary reduction in our expenses. It will be a year beyond business as usual, a year during which clarity and focus must prevail.

There will be opportunity for input from every member of this community. Every one of us will be part of making this happen.

This year, Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Catharine O’Connell will lead the faculty in creating a five-year master academic plan, based on a dashboard of key outcomes and goals. The work will clarify academic strengths and inform decisions regarding resource allocation. It will involve consolidating our various sets of learning goals and clarifying our liberal arts core. It will also establish the constitution of our Schools of Excellence: Final distribution of disciplines, governance structure, and nodes of excellence within each School will ensure that our mission reaches its market.

The Community Council will continue this year as the principal advising group for the strategic plan.

Staff throughout the college will engage in discussions about how they will best contribute to the new structure.

I have charged a working group to study options for a new Electronic Learning System, recommend the best platform for us, and outline what assistance is needed to develop and support enriched pedagogies.

The Student Government Association Executive Committee will broadly engage students in key questions as our work proceeds.

Our leadership Boards, including the Alumnae/i Association Board and the Advisory Board of Visitors, will be engaged in supporting our new structure. In particular, I ask all of our alumnae/i to come out to hear Dr. O’Connell as she embarks upon a series of visits to key cities. I encourage our alumnae/i to sign up for our new Baldwin Connect Web portal for connectivity and mentoring. I ask that we engage together in activities such as our Apple Day initiative to “tweet the day” and hold festivities and service projects around the country. Alumnae/i also have a crucial role in the success of our educational mission. In particular, students benefit from the experiences and expertise of our graduates who pursue careers fostered in each School of Excellence.

As Chair McDermid has expressed today, the Board of Trustees has established initial goals for us which must be completed by October.

At this point you may be wondering, what does this mean for me, in my courses, in my current role? There will be changes for each of us, and we must approach them with a commitment to institution-wide benefits.

We eagerly begin this year, a year where our college-wide theme “Heart” invokes us to command courage, a year where 280 new Residential College for Women students join our community through signature Leadership Gateways under the guidance of first-year experience faculty and staff directors Dr. Carey Usher and Lynn Gilliland in the new FYE Center in Spencer Hall, a year where we celebrate moving up near the top 20 in *U.S. News & World Report* rankings of master’s level universities in the South, and where our new synthesis will drive the renewed Campaign for Mary Baldwin College.

I close with a synthesis of quotes from my previous addresses. In my first year, I quoted Benjamin Britten on the nature of composition:

“Composing is like driving down a foggy road toward a house. Slowly you see more details of the house.”

It supports Igor Stravinsky’s plea to “Save me from the abyss of freedom. Let me have something finite.”

We see our composition clearly now.

In 2005 I reminded us not to be harpists, as Stravinsky quipped:

“Harpists spend 90 percent of their lives tuning their harps and 10 percent playing out of tune.”

Perhaps the most apt reprise is from Chopin:

“Simplicity is the final achievement. After one has played a vast quantity of notes and more notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art.”

Come together, right now, for Mary Baldwin College.

Thank you very much.