

Progress Report To President Eileen Schwalbach Related to the Work of the College or University Task Force October 18, 2011

The task force had its initial meeting on July 25, 2011, at which the members volunteered to form small groups related to each of the constituencies. The members of these groups would determine the approach they wished to take to gather information from their members and then implement their approach. A sub-group was appointed to develop a one-page context to provide background to the question.

Introduction to Engaging Entire College Community

The All College Assembly on August 24, led by David Nixon, Vice-President for Academic and Student Affairs, focused on the College to University Issue. After an introduction to the idea, representatives from Marian University in Fond du Lac, Notre Dame of Maryland University, and Wisconsin Lutheran presented the process used at their respective colleges to answer the question related to becoming a university and then responded to questions from the workshop participants.

Engaging Faculty

The faculty representatives decided to work through the Faculty Executive Committee and the Graduate Council.

At the first Faculty Assembly on September 12, Karen Friedlen, the chair of the Executive Committee and member of the task force, invited faculty to raise questions they had regarding this issue. Division chairs were asked to discuss this in their divisions and turn in the results to the Executive Committee by October 14.

Engaging Administrative-Staff

The Administrative-Staff group held two listening sessions on September 14 and 15 for comments and questions. These comments were summarized.

Engaging Graduate Council

Bruce Moon discussed the issue with the Graduate Council on September 16 and submitted the report indicating that it appeared that a majority of the directors of graduate programs view the potential change in name as a positive.

Engaging Alumnae

Karen Muth addressed the Alumnae Board at their September 24th meeting and summarized responses. The firm contracted by the college to develop the survey related to the capital campaign will develop a survey at no extra cost to be sent to all alumnae.

Engaging Students

Two forums for students to get information and respond are scheduled for October 26, from 12-1 pm, and October 25, from 5-6 pm.

Engaging School Sisters of Notre Dame

Sister Joan Penzenstadler will speak with the members of the Corporate Board.

A meeting was held at Elm Grove for the School Sister of Notre Dame on October 17 and these responses were recorded.

Internal Mount Mary Community

Using the reports from each of the individual sessions as well as from the All College Workshop, the Task Force members came up with a list of five questions which seem to express concerns we heard expressed by various groups. To address these, the Task Force held a “Continuing Conversation” on October 14 open to all on campus. The purpose was primarily to share information.

During the “Continuing Conversation” meeting, the task force gave short presentations to address questions that they felt were important to the Mount Mary community. The first question spoke about the current state of change the college has entered into. The college has made many renovations to the campus and relatively recently made structural changes in departments by moving to a division structure. While there are some differences, most embraced the changes.

The second question answered spoke to how a name change is relevant with our mission. While at first we found that the majority of people were more interested in the academic structural changes and less in the actual name itself, as we went through the process we came to the realization that Mount Mary needs a name that supports, reflects and furthers our mission. While Mount Mary College might fulfill the mission, the possibility that another name might do so better should be considered. To do that, it is important to consider the ways that the graduate programs do fulfill the mission so specific ways this takes place were presented.

The third question the committee addressed was in relation to how a name change would alter the criteria for promotion and tenure or change the commitment of Mount Mary to excellence in teaching. Karen Friedlen and Patty Ahrens stated that Mount Mary currently has rules and criteria listed in the faculty handbook that are consistent with other Universities in the country. These were approved by the faculty assembly and any change of these would need to go through that assembly. The rules and criteria the faculty assembly follows are also clearly listed in the faculty handbook.

Dave Wegner and David Nixon spoke to the enrollment and retention concerns the community brought up. They explained how there are in depth plans currently in place to raise both the enrollment and retention numbers and that whether or not there is a name change, Mount Mary would continue to place an emphasis on raising these numbers.

Lastly, Reyes Gonzalez talked about the financial implications that the college might incur if there was a change from college to university. While at first, he did believe the expenses would be large, after further review, he realized that a majority of the expenses would be incorporated into other projects Mount Mary would be doing whether or not there was a name change. For example, the college will be investing money into Marketing and creating a new website for the college. If a name change were decided, it would be easy to incorporate new information into the existing plans.

Later in the semester all members of the college community will be given a survey related to the College to University question.

Following is a summary of comments which provided the basis for the questions addressed at the “Continuing Conversation.” They obviously do not include all the comments made by all the groups.

Summary of Comments From Various Group Discussions

Positive Comments Related to Change

The shift to the university could:

- better fit the classification we are currently in
- give a clearer picture of who we are to the public
- enhance the Mission of the college
- attract more quality applicants for faculty positions
- positively support opportunities for grants and partnerships: eg. experiential/internship placements (graduate program)
- raise academic achievement of students
- increase enrollment, especially graduate enrollment
- increase international student enrollment (College is the word for high school in other countries.)

Additional Comments and Questions:

- Our Masters' programs already are more rigorous than at many universities.
- We could maintain the undergraduate programs as a college within the university, similar to the way Lesley College is a college within Lesley University.
- The term "University" sounds more impressive.
- Because of the upcoming centennial, this would be a good time to do it.
- The term "College" does not do justice to the graduate programs.
- Moving to a university may open up an opportunity for sub-brands. Ex: school of art and design under Mount Mary University. This could help with marketing different programs.
- Changing our name to university follows a trend, particularly of "colleges" in our area.
- We would be joining the other two SSND institutions of higher learning, Notre Dame of Maryland University and Kyoto Notre Dame University in this name change.
- Our current Alums have been bringing up this topic at different events and have had positive reactions.
- The term "College" can have the stigma of being somehow "less" than a university.

Concerns Expressed

The shift to university could:

- involve spending money that might be better spent on other more pressing needs of the College

- drive away students who are attracted to the image of a small college.
- result in a change in structure that faculty do not wish to happen.
- Result in changes in tenure and promotion that would emphasize research to the extent that we no longer would be as committed to excellence in teaching.

Additional Comments and Questions:

- “College” seems more descriptive of our culture/atmosphere.
- “College” has a strong community feel and “university” seems to have a colder connotation.
- University automatically makes one think of co-ed....image-wise would there be a push to become co-ed?
- It is essential that Mount Mary keep the identity of women’s education and continue to focus on education of first generation undergraduates.
- If this really is a trend, will “college” mean something different and better 20 yrs from now---could this reverse on us in some way? Could college mean more family oriented and learn in a more intimate setting?
- Do people look at the name as much or the numbers/statistics about the school?
- We don’t want to make the change to jump on the band wagon or be part of a trend.
- We need to be certain internally why we would do this and be able to share that externally. We must answer all questions and must be clear we don’t want to do this just because we can; we must be careful and articulate this clearly to the external audiences.
- Mount Mary might need to work on itself a bit more before we make the change. Some students don’t have the knowledge they should have after graduating; we need to raise our standards as a college first before we make a change
- No matter what our name is---let’s work on excellence---solve our current problems before we take the next step.
- If there is a change, how much does the entrance of admission change: ACT score? Class sizes? Bring in more students? Reject more students? Raise the bar
- We have had excellent relationships and marketing toward international areas in the past and the name didn’t matter; the efforts have died but we could build them back up and attract the students