

Executive Summary

Over the past two years, the Alternative Self-Study has worked on developing a plan to implement the transition from college to university status. As will be amplified in the Steering Committee report below, the self-study has been organized with a committee structure that assessed seven key components of the college's operations: Academic Affairs, Administration and Resources, Co-Curricular and Student Activities, Faculty Governance, New Programs, University Mission and Image, and University Relations and Development. During the past two years these committees, working independently, sought data from the widest possible spectrum of resources, including information about these topics collected from analog institutions. In addition, the committees designed and implemented extensive surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires to gain information and input from all elements of our large college community. At the same time, the chairs of each of these committees formed the larger Steering Committee charged with organizing and synthesizing these data. The Steering Committee, augmented by *ex-officio* representatives and an editor, met periodically during the self-study period, both during the academic year and during summer retreats in order to organize and establish priorities for the larger vision of the university.

After defining new missions for each branch of the new university, our key findings center on three areas: the need to reorganize the administrative structure for the institution; an assessment of the funding investments in technology necessary for this transition; and the identification of additional staff in key areas of faculty and administration in order to fulfill the new university's mission.

In the area of institutional organization, we recommend the addition of three new officers to coordinate and centrally administer the various functions of the university: a chief academic officer (CAO); a chief information officer (CIO); and a chief planning officer (CPO). Each of these positions would report directly to the president.

The chief academic officer should have extensive experience in administration at the university level, and should be able to provide a fresh vision for the institution. The CAO will be responsible for the coordination of all academic services, and be sensitive to the needs of the different Colleges, Centers and Programs that will evolve at the university as it continues to grow. Further, the CAO would ensure adequate communication between colleges, safeguarding the academic quality and integrity of all academic programs.

The chief information officer should direct the creation of an Office of Information Technology that can coordinate the technologically specific mission of James Monroe Center. Adequate support for distance learning, technology in the classroom, and flexible administrative systems demands a dedicated office. Moreover, the CIO must also coordinate the university's web pages by working closely with the Webmaster, the Office of Development, and the Office of Admissions to safeguard the uniformity of the university's image.

The chief planning officer will be responsible for the coordination of all planning, assessment and institutional research. Planning is a complex operation at any academic institution. Demand on limited resources requires a coherent system of planning both in terms of academic and student services, and in terms of the judicious development of new programs.

The largest allocation of financial resources necessary for the transition to university status connects to technological functions. Fulfilling the goals for each college and for the larger university will require a significant financial investment. The replacement of the administrative computer system, new software to centralize databases, and additional staff to provide technological support at a greatly increased level than currently possible is recommended. Dedicated servers, 24/7 help desk support, and increased student access to campus resources represent a small part of what is necessary to provide support for the instructional programs during our transition.

Current constraints caused by budget reductions require the majority of our recommendations with respect to additional staffing be restricted to the longer term except where enrollment growth or conflicts with accreditation support their implementation. In this context, our research demonstrates that additional staff will be necessary to support the CAO, the CIO, the CPO, academic services, and distance learning at both colleges. At a minimum, the registrar, the library, student affairs, and alumni relations will all require additional staff to accommodate the needs of students, faculty, and staff as we complete the transition to university status.

The role of university development in terms of fund raising efforts must be significantly expanded in order to partially offset the cuts the institution now faces, and expand resources in the areas of building, scholarships, and faculty development, among others. Further, both colleges should work closely with the development office to help them further their own mission-specific goals.

The Office of Admissions should continue its efforts to promote the mission and image of the individual colleges first by retaining its practice of publishing individual admissions catalogs in close coordination with the office of University Relations. The promotion of the university's image can be addressed in the longer term.

Distance learning on both campuses should be implemented to augment instructional programming as appropriate to the mission of each. A searchable database of all policies and procedures of interest to students at the college should be created. Improvements to parking, access to academic and technological services, including expanded office schedules, should be implemented at both Colleges.

With respect to the individual colleges, the committee first reached consensus that the individual autonomy of each college should be preserved with respect to curriculum and to faculty governance. The committee then focused its attention on issues of particular significance for each in the areas of mission, new programs, student life, and faculty affairs. The Committee recommends that new programs be controlled by

enrollment pressure and adequate or demonstrable potential for growth. Current plans for program expansion in the near term should continue at JMC. New and revised programs for MWC should be designed with an eye to expanding inter-disciplinary study, internship, undergraduate research, and to improving minority recruiting and retention among faculty and staff, and in other ways consistent with its mission.

The Committee recommends that in the area of student life, the institution should continue to be sensitive to the needs of the autonomous and diverse student populations at each campus. Shared goals include a rededication to serving the needs of the students in a reasonable and responsive ‘customer service’ oriented way. At JMC policies addressing student governance, the judicial system, and the honor system should be created. At MWC student concerns with respect to housing, programming facilities, dining services, and athletic facilities should all be addressed.

The Committee recommends studying the establishment of tenure-track lines at JMC in order to improve stability in certain areas of its instructional programs and to improve recruitment and retention among its faculty. A separate governance system should be implemented at JMC as well, with the specific charge to create policies to assist faculty with renewable term appointments. New faculty appointments at JMC are critical to the academic integrity of its programs. MWC should reassert its commitment to the tenure system, and work to find ways to reduce the faculty to teaching load to 15:1 in order to promote stronger personal interaction between faculty and students.