

**MWC COC-SACS Alternative Self-Study
2000-2003**

Academic Affairs Committee Report

Academic Affairs Committee Members:

Smith, Roy H.	Committee Chair Distinguish Professor, Psychology (MWC)
Blakemore, Porter R.	Associate Professor, History and American Studies (MWC)
Coleman, Gilbert	Adult Advising Coordinator (JMC)
Columbus, Robert	Student
Cox, Leah	Assistant Dean, Academic Services (MWC) Director, James Farmer School Program
Hartman, Karen P.	Off-site Library Director (JMC)
Hydorn, Debra	Associate Professor and Chair, Mathematics (MWC)
Norwood, Patricia	Professor and Chair, Music
Stevenson, Susan G.	Registrar & Director of Summer Session

Table of Contents
Section 4: Academic Affairs

Introduction	3
General Findings	4
Committee Methods and Procedures	5
Recommendations for the General Organization of Academic Affairs	6
Recommendations for the Admissions Office	7
Recommendations for Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research	7
Recommendations for Academic Affairs/ Dean of the Faculty	8
Recommendations for Instructional Technology	9
Recommendations for the Libraries	9

Referenced Appendices

Appendix 3: Comparative Organization of Academic Affairs

Appendix 4: Academic Affairs Research Questions

Appendix 5: Questions for MWC and JMC Administrators

Report to the Steering Committee for the MWC Alternative Self-Study
from the
Committee on Academic Affairs

Introduction

The overarching goal of Mary Washington's alternative self study for SACS re-accreditation is to produce a plan for the transition from a single-campus college of the liberal arts and sciences to a multi-campus university serving not only traditional liberal arts students but also the increasing demand for alternative educational opportunities. Other committees are addressing such important conceptual issues as mission and image, governance, and future programs. In contrast, the administration and resources committee has a quite pragmatic charge. How can we best make the transition from the traditional college we have been to the new university we envision with the least disruption of services to traditional students and the best level of expanded services for non-traditional student populations?

This transition is, in fact already in progress. The committee had access to a transition plan prepared in 1999 (TEAM PROJECT) which included descriptions of proposed practices for the second campus, including organization and operations of the programs then housed at the James Monroe Center. The Stafford Campus which houses the James Monroe Center is considerably removed from the home campus of Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, a major factor in any transition plan. The physical separation leads to important limits on integration of academic services at the two campuses, limits less important to administering different programs on a physically united campus. A number of years of programming at the James Monroe Center have also resulted in an existing administrative structure and set of academic programs. These form a starting point from which a transition must take place, and in some ways current structure limits planning. At the very least there is an investment in current positions and practice.

General Findings

Transition to separate academic services for campuses with separate missions will require considerable changes. The campuses are currently different in several ways with JMC requiring the support of MWC staffing and services in most areas (See Appendix 3). Current administrators at both campuses agree that complete duplication of administrative offices and services is neither feasible nor reasonable in the near future. In the long run two major questions arise. First, which academic services should remain centralized on one or the other campuses and which should be separated to reflect programmatic differences? Second, what should be the indicators for moving to separation of various portions of academic affairs? Of course these questions are impacted by what new programs are likely to be instituted at one or both campuses in the near and distant future.

Which parts of academic affairs remain centralized will be primarily determined by which activities the two campuses share versus those which are quite different. For example, international programs are unlikely to be an important part of JMC offerings and would most logically be centralized on the MWC campus. In contrast, the different missions suggest almost complete separation of curricula, with each faculty setting its own offerings. Still some services will be problematic for several years at least. While high-speed computer networking and on-line access should allow registration to remain centralized, some direct contact will always be needed. The differing hours of peak activity across the two campuses and their physical separation seem to make some staffing presence necessary at both sites.

In response to original questions, most administrators who addressed the issue of indicators for supplying duplicate staffing at the two campuses suggested that ultimately enrollment would be the key. But in following up that question none of those questioned felt comfortable in making any specific suggestions about what enrollment triggers might be used. Several felt we should simply react to needs rather than plan a trigger. Others felt that enrollment could not be the single consideration. Certainly funding for positions trails rather than anticipates enrollment numbers. Equally important, with only one building and a planned second building delayed by a fiscal down turn in the state, space concerns at the JMC campus will become increasingly important. Finally, student

numbers at JMC have been both small and variable over its early years. The physical separation of the campuses has required some separate offices which may be justified by the overall enrollment of the college but can not be supported by JMC enrollment alone. Results of surveys indicated a pervasive condition of understaffing for offices on the MWC campus which is exacerbated by the need to provide services at different times and even of different kinds to the JMC campus. This situation will probably continue for some time.

Committee Methods and Procedures

From the beginning the organization of the Academic Affairs Committee recognized that the best information about how to deliver services for one, two, or any number of programs and campuses rests with frontline administrators. While the viewpoints of consumers – the faculty and students – are important, their expertise in this area is comparatively limited. Thus the composition of the committee was weighted toward administrative membership, including multiple representatives from both the Stafford and Fredericksburg campuses.

During its first year the committee spent considerable time examining models of organization and their implications for delivery of academic services, recognizing that administrative structure strongly determines service delivery. Three basic sorts of organization were considered carefully. These three models of university organization were the traditional university model, the hybrid model, and the expanded college model. The committee found advantages and disadvantages to all three. At the beginning of the second year of the self study it became clear that only one structure was actually under consideration overall, one of as complete separation of the two campuses as possible. This decision is driven by the desire to keep the Fredericksburg campus unchanged as much as is possible. Thus the other missions and programs are to be housed in the Stafford campus with considerable differences likely in all levels of organization and programming.

However, the deliberations during the first year made clear how interdependent are the considerations of the Academic Affairs Committee and the Administrative Organization and Resources Committee. As a result the two committees worked together

quite closely during the second year.

During the first year, the Academic Affairs Committee joined other SACS committees in submitting questions for general surveys of faculty and students (See Appendix 4). After learning that the focus of the Alternative Self Study would be completing the separation of the two campuses already underway, the committee, in conjunction with the Administrative Organization and Resources Committee initiated a series of interviews with administrators on both campuses. First a set of written questions produced initial responses. These responses were collated for use by the committee in preparing for the interview.¹ The Academic Services Committee prepared a set of follow-up questions from themes in the written responses. These were used to structure four joint committee interviews with groups of administrators (See Appendix 5).

Recommendations for the General Organization of Academic Affairs

Recommendation: Oversight of academic affairs should be the responsibility of a new provost level administrator.

While academic affairs at the two campuses will become increasingly independent, they must be coordinated at several levels.

Recommendation: Development of academic curricula, academic regulations, and academic policies should be the responsibility of the separate campus faculties under the oversight of a general committee on academic affairs.

The programs, student profiles, and times of peak operation all argue for increasingly separate curricula offered under different policies and regulations. However, some portion of students will always be active on more than a single campus. A coordinating body to minimize contradictions in policies, coordinate common academic services, and coordinate curricular offerings is already clearly needed.

Recommendation: Where possible, common academic services should be located on and coordinated from the MWC campus for the immediate future.

Space is severely limited on the JMC campus with no relief available in the next five years. If the six to eight new teaching positions which JMC has requested are hired, space should be devoted to supporting their delivery of instruction.

Recommendations for the Admissions Office

Recommendation: Admissions should continue to operate from the MWC campus with a staff member assigned to the JMC campus.

This arrangement will continue to serve both campuses for the near future. JMC students do not generally present the same requirements for financial aid or recruiting time as those of traditional MWC students.

Recommendations for Planning, Assessment and Institutional Research

Recommendation: For the near future a single office should coordinate all institutional assessment and research.

External agencies will continue to expect reports based on the entire institution. Planning at the level of academic affairs will be largely based on programs and their curricula, separate from this office.

¹ See: http://intranet.mwc.edu/sacs/research/our_data/admin_focus_groups/index.htm
11/22/02

Recommendations for Academic Affairs/ Dean of the Faculty

Recommendation: A new administrative position should be created within the Office of the Dean.

With the advent of two campuses and the growth of the MWC campus the functions of the dean's office have been stretched dangerously thin. Over the long term the JMC campus should probably be reorganized to parallel a more traditional organization than it does now (see Appendix 3). In the short term, continued handling of registration and most academic services on the MWC campus justify a redistribution of responsibilities across two positions.

Recommendation: The office of the registrar should assign a full-time staff member to the JMC campus.

While traditional registration is now on line, special cases require decisions about prerequisites, interpretation of regulations on status change and withdrawal, and registration for special status classes. The physical separation of the JMC campus require a physical presence, often at hours outside those of the MWC office.

Recommendation: Career services, disabilities services and international programs, should continue their present location on the MWC campus for the near future.

Most of the students on the JMC campus enroll in non-degree programs for specific certification or training. Until a significant number of degree seeking students are based there, career services will not need a constant presence. Disabilities services can continue to operate on an institutional level. While JMC students will require services there, the most difficult accommodations involve living on the MWC campus. At present there are no significant international components to JMC programs.

Recommendation: Academic advising and evaluation of transfer credits should be duplicated at the two campuses.

While general coordination of admissions, advising and transfer will be needed at an institutional level, these services should be tailored to the specific programs of the two campuses.

Recommendations for Instructional Technology

Recommendation: A position should be created to coordinate platforms, formats, and delivery of instructional technology and technological services on an institutional basis.

While both campuses are becoming ever more invested in instructional technology, the emphases are different. For example, JMC is building important new distance learning technology while MWC is enhancing its support of more traditional classroom settings. An on-campus email system and web-based systems for the library and classroom management are also important institutional resources. A single office is needed to minimize incompatibilities and provide institutional level management. While a chief information officer might serve this function along with overseeing administrative computing, we feel that instructional technology alone will require full-time oversight at the institutional level.

Recommendations for the Libraries

Recommendation 1: The JMC library should continue to operate under the administrative umbrella of the Simpson Library for the near term.

Until a larger number of degree seeking students enroll at JMC, duplication of collections is inappropriate. Electronic sharing and loan of materials are appropriate short term solutions to student demands.

Recommendation 2: A position should be added to the JMC library staff.

The JMC center is now open for more hours than a single full time staff member can cover. A part-time library is inappropriate.