

Appendix 11

Context for the Change in Mission & Image and Vision for the Future

For several decades Mary Washington College has addressed, as part of its mission, the continuing educational needs of the region's adult citizens. Until recently, this objective has remained a relatively small portion of the College's activity, with the dominant portion being the residential undergraduate programs in the arts and sciences for traditional students. However, with the dramatic increase in population, business, and industry in the Fredericksburg area beginning in the 1990s, the region's needs and demands for additional higher education opportunities have grown sharply. It became apparent that providing for these needs on the Fredericksburg campus had two adverse consequences. First, as we attempted to expand these programs with no substantial increase in faculty or other resources, it diminished our traditional liberal arts programming. (It was for this reason that our earlier MBA program was ended.) Second, it marginalized the continuing and graduate education programming. While there was a modest administrative structure (headed by a Director of Graduate and Continuing Education), there was no faculty per se; rather courses were staffed by the liberal arts and sciences faculty as they were available. Providing this programming on a shoestring budget was, not surprisingly, viewed as lacking integrity.

With this realization came a need to rethink the organizational structure of the institution, which resulted in the decision to seek university status. How could the institution satisfy the growth in regional demand for higher education, given the strong desire to preserve and retain the distinctive character of the Fredericksburg campus as a small liberal arts and sciences college? How could the institution best organize itself to serve its two distinct missions: liberal arts, and (co-equal) professional & graduate education? The traditional academic growth model of simply allowing all programs to grow bigger did not seem appropriate, since it did not provide a means for meeting both missions simultaneously without either campus overshadowing, or draining resources from, the other. A different model, exemplified by the Johns Hopkins University, was chosen: separate campuses with academic independence and autonomy. In response to this decision, the college began establishing new programs, specifically targeted to the needs of professional and graduate education, and opened a second campus in nearby Stafford County to facilitate the growth of those new programs.

The Vision:

First and foremost, we are the public university located in the center of the busy Richmond--Washington, DC corridor. The university consists currently of two colleges serving two distinct missions. Mary Washington College, our original institution, is the public liberal arts and sciences college in Virginia. MWC endeavors to offer an education comparable to the traditional private Ivy League colleges, but at the cost of a public institution. James Monroe College is a growing school of applied sciences and professional studies. JMC aspires to define the high quality professional education

college, offering higher quality programs than its private and for-profit counterparts, but at the cost of a public institution. Additionally, as a public institution JMC will offer programming, not merely in currently profitable areas (e.g. computer technology), but also where there is a genuine regional need (e.g. education).

We are not, however, a large graduate research institution. We are a university but with a small college-feel. We retain our traditional values of academic excellence, small classes, and a high degree of interaction between faculty and students. We have a number of graduate programs where appropriate to our mission, and research is an essential part of what our faculty (and students) do. However, research is not an end in itself. Rather, it enhances the teaching effectiveness of our programs, which is the central focus of our existence.

Thus, the University provides the administrative structure, much like a corporate holding company, for supporting two campuses serving two distinct populations: traditional age students seeking a residential, liberal education, and adult students pursuing professional or graduate education. Each campus has its own academic culture, appropriate to its mission¹. The two campuses possess separate faculty, while sharing senior administrative staff, facilities services and other support infrastructure. The University is designed to remain flexible in response to the changing needs of the two communities.

¹ Think of an analogy with parenting: in a family, values and quality of parenting are the same but children may be very different.