

Appendix 13

Faculty Concerns, Summer 2002:

Over the course of the Self-Study, we became aware of a number of concerns expressed by faculty about the move to university status. We should keep these in mind as we draft our recommendations. How can we address these concerns in our recommendations? Here is a list of the six major concerns. Below are statements from faculty illustrating each concern. The statements are from conversations between committee members and faculty, as well as from the Faculty Survey.

1. Fear of a reduction in standards and quality of programs, first, by including JMC in the institution, and second if resources are siphoned off from MWC to JMC, as JMC grows. Concern that future hiring to fill faculty positions will follow the model at the JMC—contract, non-tenured labor, hired to teach specific courses term by term.

“If we move to university status, I worry that future hiring to fill faculty positions will follow the model at the JMC—contract, non-tenured labor, hired to teach specific courses term by term. This is exploitative. It also is not attractive to job applicants. While we might retain tenure at the college, the increasing size of a non-tenured faculty in graduate programs at the center will reduce the perception of the overall quality of the institution. Staff hired under these conditions have inevitably (and rightfully) less commitment to the institution. Furthermore, by making the graduate center a major component of our institution, the institution as a whole will become perceived as more vocational and less academically rigorous than at present. In such an environment, respect for the humanities, which form the core of what a college is, will decline.”

“Some faculty are concerned that linkage between the campuses will prevail over distinctiveness, with the result that quality of the two programs will sink to the lowest common denominator.”

2. Fear of cheapening of the Image of MWC, by association with JMC, and by substituting the established image of MWC for a unknown “university.”

“In moving to university status, we need to protect against losing what we have worked so hard to develop, namely the value of a Mary Washington College degree. For example, for legislative purposes, the institution will become one University with one budget. We need to develop safeguards to prevent simplistic numeric comparisons, such as cost per FTE in the BPS program versus the B.A. in classics, where such comparisons don't adequately account for the value of the liberal arts.”

“The biggest reason I think it's a mistake for us to go to university status is that I have no sense that we are going to make the kinds of changes that would encourage anyone to take us seriously as a university.

3. Creation of a genuine university would require additional funding and resources.

“I don't have an objection in principle to a small-midsize state college growing into a university, but to do it in a way that I'd support requires a hefty increase in its funding and resources, and a change in its mission (to include respectable graduate programs in at least some parts of the curriculum). We aren't hearing anything along those lines, so it seems like an empty change, and one that raises eyebrows and suspicions.”

“I fear that if we do move to university status, the college (or the state) will try to do it cheaply. University faculty, faculty with graduate programs, need to engage in more research in order to enhance the status and competence of their programs. This usually means that faculty would teach less than 4-4 and that research would form a greater component in their responsibilities. The college has considered how to reduce the teaching load over the years without it costing too much; their success at doing this has depended on their good will, vision, and the financial well-being of the state.” In short, they have not been very successful.

4. Fear of loss in liberal arts & sciences environment as we convert to a university.

“I think what makes MWC special and effective (and attractive) to students is the fact that it is a four-year liberal arts and sciences college, public and affordable for Virginians (and others). Moving to becoming a part (regardless of how big a part) of a freshly created “university” will diminish that environment significantly. I chose the college I attended because I wanted a 4-year liberal arts institution without vocational programs and the impersonal nature of instruction typical in universities. Even if small class size were maintained, I think MWC, if it changed its status, would no longer have the feeling of being a community of learning.”

“It would be a shame to see the educational community quality of life that smaller schools like MWC have get lost with the shift to bigger classes, reliance upon graduate student assistants in teaching, etc. Those are certainly good reasons to hope that our mission doesn't get changed.”

5. Concerns by MWC faculty in BUAD/ED/CPSCI about how they fit into the new schema; Faculty in BUAD and Education have expressed discomfort with the existence of similar programs at JMC. They are not clear on how the pairs of programs differ, and they fear that the MWC programs will be weakened or phased out.

6. Concerns by JMC faculty about being perceived as second class citizens, despite having comparable credentials and experience as MWC faculty.

Observation by one JMC faculty member in conversation: “I realize you consider us to be only one step above pond scum.”