

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

University Relations & Development Committee Report

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**Recommendation Report
of the University Relations and Development Committee
for the SACS Re-accreditation Self-Study, Alternative Model**

Executive Summary

The charge of the University Alumni Relations and Development committee is to make prioritized recommendations regarding the image and successful marketing of Mary Washington College, the James Monroe Center, and the larger university including institutional relations with alumni and the broader community, and the continuation and advancement of private funding for operations, initiatives, and scholarships. In other words, the committee focused on three areas: marketing, alumni relations, and development. While inter-related, these three areas operate to a large extent independently from one another. Therefore, the recommendations below reflect the functional aspects of the office's tri-part organizational structure; in each area the recommendations are listed in order of priority.

The recommendations are derived from research from several sources: 1) COPLAC analog schools that best matched our institution and its developmental trajectory, 2) three focus groups consisting of MWC alumni and JMC graduate students, 3) data from the 1997 MWC Image Study Report, and 4) the offices of Alumni Relations, College Advancement, and College Relations & Legislative Affairs. Three staff members, one from each of these offices served on the subcommittee, and contributed extensively to the recommendations in this report.

Most of the recommendations address how the offices of alumni relations and development should be structured and staffed; the committee avoided making recommendations on specific programs or initiatives. Although the population of JMC alumni is still quite small and its needs are yet to be determined, it is important to build flexibility into the office of university relations that will allow the university to respond to this growing constituency in the years to come. It is also important to establish a suitably narrow definition "alumni" in order to identify appropriately a population of individuals who feel a significant connection to the institution, and who will likely

participate in supporting the institution. Alumni, then, do not have to have earned a degree from the university in order to be defined as alumni; rather, they must have completed an adequate number of courses that would construct such a connection. To that end, the committee is offering a slight rewording of the current definition used by the MWC Alumni Association – one that will accommodate graduates of JMC.

In the area of marketing, this committee touches on questions of image and admissions, both of which overlap with charges of other committees. Here again, recommendations are made concerning the structure and staffing of the relevant offices: the offices of News and Information, Publications, and Admissions. Without being too specific, and by creating a structure for future growth, the theme of the recommendations is to create a unified marketing strategy that projects an image that, while targeting individual constituency groups, is internally consistent and does not inadvertently cast in a bad light the image of one part of the institution while promoting another.

Alumni Relations

Recommendation: The committee recommends that there should be an MWC Today article and an electronic newsletter to current students informing them of the care the institution has taken to prepare for the transition to university status.

It is important that current students and alumni be kept abreast of developments that may lead to changes as we complete the transition to university status.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the Alumni Association adopt a modification of what constitutes an alumnus of the institution to accommodate the different mission at JMC. The current definition appears in Article III, Sec. 1 of the MWC Alumni Association Bylaws: “Any graduate of the College’s undergraduate or graduate degree programs or any student who has successfully completed a minimum of 24 credit hours as an undergraduate student or 18 hours as a graduate student at Mary Washington College is a member of the Association.” The

committee recommends that the definition be changed to the following: “Any graduate of the University’s undergraduate or graduate degree programs or any student who has successfully completed a minimum of 24 credit hours as an *undergraduate* student in a degree program or 18 hours as a *graduate* student at the University is a member of the Association.”

The modifications listed above update current Alumni Association bylaws by taking into account the addition of JMC. The wording has been carefully chosen to include the new constituencies at JMC while excluding those students not enrolled in either a degree program or a substantial (18 cr. hr.) graduate certificate program. The committee wishes to avoid inflating the alumni roster in order to avoid a reduced percentage of overall alumni contributions to the college.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that there continue to be one central Alumni Relations Office for the university and that this office continue to coordinate the university's relations with and delivery of services to alumni from all constituency groups within the university's Alumni Association. The Committee also recommends that this centralized Alumni Relations Office be organized in such a way that it can easily recognize and administer to the sometimes quite separate constituencies generated by the two different campuses.

At the present time the Alumni Association provides services for such diverse constituency groups as BA, BS, BLS, BPS and MALS graduates. These responsibilities will grow as the James Monroe Center adds degree programs and as the number of graduates in these programs increases. Data gather from alumni focus groups suggests that, in terms of organization, a centralized office fosters a connection between the campuses, but creates a structure within the office that can recognize and respond to the different interests of undergraduate and graduate alumni.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that, in the long term, one or more positions be added to the staff of the university's Alumni Relations Office, at such

time as needed, for the purpose of coordinating and providing services for the university's alumni of the James Monroe Center.

The Committee agreed that the number of educational programs, anticipated number of graduates, and the Center's relationships with the region's educational, business, and information technology professional communities will provide both individual and organizational growth opportunities. Also, increasingly, the Center, as it develops its unique identity, needs to make a full-range of services readily available on site.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the university's Alumni Relations Office create services and programs designed to meet the needs of the different alumni constituencies within the university's Alumni Association, particularly with the move to university status and as the James Monroe Center continues to grow in size and scope.

As the numbers of graduates of the new programs grow over time, particularly at JMC, the Alumni Relations Office will need to assess constantly the needs and desires of the new constituencies whom it serves. Some suggestions were offered by the alumni focus groups, and these and other options will be considered for implementation, depending on the perceived need and available resources.

Development

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that there continue to be one central Development Office for the university and that this office continue to coordinate all fund-raising at the university, including those involving the programs, personnel and activities of the James Monroe Center as it continues to grow.

Research gathered from COPLAC analogs suggests that a single office to coordinate development within the university avoids creating a redundancy of effort. Moreover, there is significant concern that simultaneous and competing development initiatives can alienate our constituencies if not carefully coordinated.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that one or more positions be added to the staff of the university's Development Office, when appropriate, for the purpose of raising funds, particularly from businesses and individuals in the Fredericksburg region, in support of the university and especially the James Monroe Center as it continues to grow. The committee further recommends that this staff be located on-site at the James Monroe Center.

In the long term, development initiatives targeting JMC will require personnel who are especially familiar with the Center, its facilities and offerings, and who are also in close contact with businesses and individuals in the immediate area who have or could benefit by contributing to its growth.

Marketing

Recommendation: The Committee recommends undertaking unified marketing to the effect that neither campus advertises to the detriment of the other's programs.

The committee agreed that casting an image of one part of an institution may inadvertently put another part of the institution in a bad light. For example, a campus or program should be careful not to talk about what it does not "make" its students learn (a language, for example), but what it does have its students learn. Perhaps central oversight, representing more than one part of the institution could help to avoid this type of thing.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that there continue to be one central News and Information Services Office and that this office continue to

coordinate media relations for the university, including support for the programs, personnel and activities of the James Monroe Center as it continues to grow in size and scope.

The institution should speak with a unified voice to the media. The committee notes that a single office saves money.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the College Relations Office (which includes the News and Information Services Office, Publications Office, etc.) work closely with the Admissions Office to coordinate the image development and marketing needs of the university.

The Committee agreed that the institution should project a unified image to the public and to its potential students.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the College Relations Office (including the Publications Office, in particular) coordinate with the Admissions Office the development of a new graphic design for all aspects of the institution (including production of a complete graphic standards manual) with the move to university status.

The Committee agreed that the institution will require a new set of graphic images as it completes its transition to university status. This set of graphic images should present the picture of a unified but multi-faceted institution.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that there continue to be one central Admissions Office for the university and that this office continue to coordinate admissions for both campuses with the move to university status, and that a branch of the university's Admissions Office continue to be located on-site at the James Monroe Center.

COPLAC analogs indicate that a central office serves to coordinate effort and avoid redundancy, yet it is important to have a branch office on-site at each campus. Given that the adult undergraduate and graduate student admissions process serves a different population and must be more flexible than the traditional BA/BS model, there is a need for maintaining an on-site office and skilled admissions professionals to field inquiries and facilitate not only admission but also registration. A future move to totally separate offices might be contemplated later if central office oversight is judged to be unnecessary.