

Dear Ginger,

I know that you have received hundreds of letters since the Board's proposal was presented in August, in part because I have read many of them on the internet. It was not my intention to write another letter beyond the one which I sent to you and Bill in August, but I believe that I must write to you one last time before the Board makes its decision this weekend. I know that my earlier letter has been widely disseminated and may have caused some problems for you and perhaps the Board, but I make no apologies for that. My assessment of the plan that was presented to the College is, if anything, more negative today than it was when I wrote it. But I am writing to you now as a friend who has known you for years and as a senior professor who came to the college in the year in which you were a senior. I have always respected your intelligence, your sense of fairness and, especially from what I learned about your activities in New York when you taught the seminar with Linda Lorimer and me, your compassion.

I know from reading your comments in several places that both you and the Board believe that this whole process has been transparent but surely you recognize by now that the vast majority of the alumnae and the student body and, at least, some of the faculty do not believe that it has been. Maybe they did not want to hear it, but to me it seems that the suggestions of co-education were so muted or so hypothetical that when the proposal came forth it was a shock. Certainly most of the constituencies of the college expected, at the very least, some extended discussion before implementation. The alumnae, faced with the loss of their college (a loss which is inevitable when the name disappears from history and is replaced by a college with a new identity) are justifiably, in my opinion, outraged. I have been here for thirty-eight years and I am becoming aware, almost to my surprise, how much I love this place though it is not my alma mater. You as an alumna, but also as one who has served this college well in so many capacities, must know how deeply painful all of this is for them. You must also know that as loyal as the alumnae of RMWC have been that they do not want to be taken for granted. They will support the college with their immense energy, their intelligence and skills and their finances. But a formidable number will not do so if it loses its historic identity and mission. To me, it seems reasonable to challenge them to do what they are pledging to do, namely to raise a sum in excess of that which the capital campaign raised to increase the college's endowment, to volunteer in various capacities to help the college meet its challenges, and especially to work assiduously to increase the college's public posture and its enrollment. I am writing to plead with you to assist them in doing this.

Jan Hullum has written eloquently to the Board, pleading the case of our current students who also feel that they have been blind-sided by the Board's proposal. They came to Randolph-Macon Woman's College in large measure because they believed in a women's college education and also because they believed what we told them about its benefits. Maybe blind-sided is too weak a term; we are betraying their trust and turning our backs far too easily on what we have always said and believed to be the distinctive mission of our college. They too are asking to be a part of the process before it is finalized beyond retrieval.. We have told them, again and again, as we have also told our

alumnae how special they are and how much we value them as intelligent and strong women. Should we not demonstrate that our words were not empty ones?

To return to why I am writing so impassioned to you: I was excited when I learned that you were coming to the college as the interim president because I knew you and believed that you would provide us with leadership in this period. I am also convinced that even if the college is in financial straits, it is not in a crisis that is so deep that it cannot delay the decision to become a new co-educational college for a period of three or four years. Rushing into a decision now is too high a price to pay to lose the trust of the dedicated women who are our alumnae and students. What an enormous positive lift of energy it will provide alumnae, students and faculty if we give the process more time. If we fail in the effort then we will have failed together. It will be soon enough then to make a decision of this magnitude. We are not imminently imperiled (our endowment to student ratio puts us in the top 25% of liberal arts colleges in the nation) and there is no discernible need to rush into an irreversible decision. I know that some people think that our alumnae, like alumnae and students of other single-sex colleges, will be angry for a season, but they do not know the women of Randolph-Macon Woman's College. I am sure you have seen the petition which has been signed by almost 1100 alumnae, including some women who have been very generous supporters of the college, in which they pledge to never again give to the college if this decision is made. Please consider these concerns as you face the decision of this weekend. I am not the only one who is looking to you for leadership at this time.

Sincerely,

Ivor