

---

# RANDOLPH–MACON WOMAN’S COLLEGE

## THE FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE

2006

**“The whole plan for the future can perhaps be summed up in a motto long ago adopted for the College: ‘Vita Abundantior.’ The conservation of the best elements in the heritage from the past and progress toward greater opportunity is the principle that the College has heretofore observed and that will likewise govern it in the future.” –Roberta D. Cornelius, 1951<sup>1</sup>**

This strategic plan is based on the rich heritage of Randolph-Macon Woman’s College’s liberal arts and sciences curriculum with an intensive emphasis on preparing students to contribute and to lead in a global society. It acknowledges the value the College places on high academic standards, its students, its faculty and staff, its alumnae, the strong tradition of its Honor System and personal integrity, and its commitment to a total educational experience.

As a strategic plan, this document addresses the plan’s fundamental concepts in a broad manner. Section IV describes the groups and procedures which will shape the details of the plan and move it toward implementation.

### I. VISION, VALUES, AND PURPOSE

#### A. Vision

The College will be a preferred destination for students, both female and male, who seek intensive individual preparation with the goal of contributing to and leading in a global society. The College will attract and graduate students of exceptional integrity who are passionate about intellectual inquiry, exploration, and collaboration. The campus community will be one that embraces and develops fulfilling relationships between living and learning, empowering its graduates to enjoy and foster, for themselves and others, "A Life More Abundant" in the global community.

This Vision will be achieved in a way that honors the College’s history as a woman’s college of excellence and its long tradition of graduates who have contributed, and continue to contribute, to society in many ways. The Vision will preserve the treasured and long-recognized benefits that flow from our commitments to internal and external community, honorable living, and the liberal arts and sciences. The resulting consciously coeducational living and learning environment will offer rich rewards to both female and male students and, ultimately, the world that they will shape.

#### B. Values and Their Realization

Our Vision is built on the College’s long-cherished values and greatest strengths and ensures that they will be realized to their fullest potential in our future.

- The College values and is committed to continuing to provide a liberal arts and sciences education of excellence in an intimate setting.

---

<sup>1</sup> Roberta D. Cornelius, *The History of Randolph-Macon Woman’s College from the Founding in 1891 through 1949-50* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1951), 347.

- 
- The College values its students and their diversity of background and thought and is committed to recruit students who will contribute to such a community.
  - The College values its faculty and staff and is committed to providing the resources necessary to ensure they can provide the highest quality education as educators and mentors.
  - The College values its alumnae and friends and is committed to including them in the education of its students.
  - The College values personal and institutional integrity and is committed to its Honor System as an embodiment of that integrity.
  - The College values both formal learning and that which occurs outside the classroom and is committed to providing a wide range of curricular and co-curricular opportunities in enhanced and modern facilities to support the scholarly and social lives of the College community.

In sum, the College is committed to providing an educational experience of excellence to enable students to understand and live these values.

C. Purpose

Randolph-Macon Woman's College was founded to undertake what was at that time a dramatic and forward looking purpose, one that it has pursued with distinction. Today, the College adopts a new, dramatic, and forward looking purpose through which it will continue to educate women and will extend its unique culture to the education of men. The College will provide a distinctive educational experience for its students, characterized by vibrant intellectual inquiry, awareness of the continuing importance of gender issues for both women and men, varied opportunities for actual application of knowledge, and discovery in an environment that creates world citizens with a deep sense of global consciousness and responsibility.

## II. **BACKGROUND AND THEMES**

As former President Bowman stated in her President's Report 2005<sup>2</sup>, Randolph-Macon Woman's College has provided women with a liberal arts and sciences education of high quality that its graduates have used to become important contributors to society. She also articulated the external challenges and trends for small liberal arts colleges for women and thus the College. She described the efforts that had been taken by the College over the prior several years to address those challenges. She emphasized the importance of a strategic plan to reposition the College to better face those challenges and, thus, to preserve its special aspects – and to do so at this time, a time in which it could take advantage of its continuing strengths.

In October 2003, the Board of Trustees created a Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) and charged that committee to “Develop strategic initiatives that will ensure the future of R-MWC as an academically excellent woman's college and a financially sustainable enterprise and present those initiatives to the Board of Trustees for discussion and action.” The Board also made clear that the SPSC was to explore seriously any options that would sustain an institution of high quality and financial viability.

The initial research indicated that a greater distinctiveness in our educational program was essential in a competitive marketplace. The distinctiveness that the SPSC concluded most

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.rmwc.edu/strategicplan/pdf/presidents\\_report\\_05.pdf](http://www.rmwc.edu/strategicplan/pdf/presidents_report_05.pdf)

---

effectively reflected the historical strengths of the College is one that will be termed, for the time being, Global Honors. In addition to building on the historic strengths of the College in global education, it also builds on the strength of engaged student learning in an honors environment of active intellectual inquiry.

However, further research confirmed that while academic distinctiveness was a necessary component for a bright future for the College, it would not, alone, suffice to achieve the enrollment needed to support the academic quality that all of the College's constituents deemed non-negotiable. Therefore, this plan also calls for the College to become coeducational and to grow, preserving its commitment to producing thoughtful leaders. The plan results from intense analysis of the challenges, but also the opportunities, facing R-MWC today and the examination of many alternatives. It is based on the best market research available, research that was supplemented and verified by the College's thoughtfully planned and executed internal research. The over two-year planning process included numerous meetings and other communications with faculty, students, alumnae, and major donors and friends.

The College's past points to its future. The plan builds on the College's existing strengths and focuses resources on distinctive programming that also responds to the marketplace of young students. The plan requires change that the College and its alumnae may understandably experience as loss, but it invites future growth and opportunities for R-MWC to reach new and exciting heights that continue the academic excellence and values of its past.

### **III. GOALS**

The strategic plan has six specific goals. For each goal, the plan identifies several important implementations that will further the plan's vision. As the implementation process engages all constituencies in turning the plan into reality, other specific actions will emerge.

- A. To develop the curriculum and educational approaches that will provide a distinctive academic identity for the College based on the proposed Global Honors concept and will ensure that all students:
- Are fully engaged in their education, identify ambitious individual goals, work independently and collaboratively, and reflect often and thoughtfully on their progress.
  - Receive close personal attention from faculty, take individual responsibility for a rigorous academic program, and challenge themselves to excel both inside and outside the classroom in a systematic and progressive way.
  - Regardless of major, are prepared to succeed in, and contribute to, an increasingly global society as knowledgeable citizens of the world.
  - Pursue work, focused research, internships, service, study abroad, or other opportunities that will supplement in important ways the formal learning at the College.
- B. To establish student recruitment, admissions, and retention approaches that will increase the size of the student body by 50 to 60% without sacrificing quality or diversity.
- C. To continue to look to alumnae as models of meaningful achievement and to engage them further in the students' total educational experience.
- D. To implement a coeducational environment:

- 
- that is successful in significantly expanding enrollment;
  - that continues to produce women graduates of distinction and also to produce men graduates of distinction – all of whom will continue the College's traditions of academic achievement and contributions to society; and
  - that improves the social lives of students without diminishing their intellectual lives.

The development of this environment will be informed by the "best practices" of colleges that have become coeducational.

- E. To adopt a business plan that ensures the financial sustainability of the College, that supports the goals of the strategic plan, and that permits investments in the future. The plan will need to consider reallocating selected existing assets, increasing the endowment, and securing new revenue sources.
- F. To prepare integrated communications that will ensure that the College's repositioning is understood.

Any one of these goals is a significant challenge by itself, but they must be addressed simultaneously because they are interlocking. The implementation plan recognizes that reality. All of these goals advance the Vision, Values, and Purpose of the College.

#### **IV. DEVELOPING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

The President of the College and the President of the Board will appoint six working groups, each with a specific charge related to one of the six goals. Working group members will include members of the Board, faculty, staff, students, and alumnae. The faculty will be chosen in consultation with the Faculty Representative Committee. Where needed, external expertise will be utilized. The many studies, reports, and suggestions that College constituents have offered during the planning process will be valuable resources for the implementation working groups.

Each working group's charge will include developing specific approaches for implementing its aspect of the plan, identifying necessary resources, and establishing methods for measuring success. The chair of each working group will be a member of the implementation steering committee, which will be co-chaired by the President of the College and the President of the Board. Their reports will be presented in early 2007, and some groups' work will carry on well beyond.

The first coeducational class will enter in 2007-08, and the new curricular changes will begin to emerge the same year.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

Future generations of our students

- will be educated from a global perspective;
- will travel into the world;
- will have the world brought to them through technology, the arts, and their fellow students;
- will, as they always have done, benefit from their intense engagement with faculty; and
- will experience as well as study.

---

Our students will comprehend how science, technology, and communications have all played a role in globalization, as have politics, geography, and demographics. Our students will experience a strong honor code and the College's tradition of excellence in the liberal arts and sciences. In short, if we meet our goals, our students will be prepared to contribute to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as engaged citizens. This is our imperative.

\*\*\*\*\*