

Alumnae Association Group
MUW 20/20
Saturday, February 16, 2008

What are our institution's greatest strengths?

- Excellent faculty
- Women's emphasis – this has kept the university alive
- Unique and historic purpose
- Traditions, such as Freshman Serenade – gives the feeling that the university is someplace special
- Size – good faculty/student ratio
- Academic reputation because of the faculty and graduates
- Leadership opportunities for women
- Passionate alums – also supportive
- Unique programs – culinary arts, physical theatre, and others
- Affordable compared to other schools
- Attractive campus – looks like a "real" college
- Good relationship with the community
- Good location – center of Columbus rather than on the outskirts of town like some universities
- Good fit in the community – not the driving force of the community, but a positive, productive part of the community
- Heart of the community – physically and in feeling
- Networking among alumni – the connections they feel toward one another
- Value of MUW diploma – hirability
- Personal contact students have with faculty
- No graduate students teaching class – all full-time faculty
- Strong relationships with legislators – political clout, politicians recognize the strength of a W alum, baking cakes for legislators was good
- Unique traditions keep alums connected with the current students
- Alums represent a powerful resource for the university – not used enough, but the potential is there
- History of good financial support by the alumni – highest in the state with even more potential

What are the most difficult challenges facing the university?

- Funding for higher education – for the state as well as MUW specifically
- Maintaining of historic campus – physical needs
- Money for salaries – recruiting and retaining faculty and staff
- Money for recruiting and retaining students
- To stay current – develop new programs
- Getting buy-in for increasing enrollment

- Competition for money and students
- Perception that community college education is as good as a four-year degree – students and their parents see a community college degree as an end instead of a means to an end
- Other four-year universities have good relationships with community colleges that MUW does not have – failure to build relationships with community colleges, other universities have programs that flow from community colleges to make the transition from a community college to a specific 4-year seem logical
- Recruitment of students – resources for recruiting at local and national level, attract greater diversity (location, cultural, religious, race, etc.), develop a stronger presence in the state, re-establish strong relationships with high school counselors
- People think we are going away because of past closure issues – have to convince people MUW has a strong, stable future
- Strong women’s mission becoming blurred – need to maintain uniqueness to survive
- Re-establish strong relationship with alums – resolve, normalize, make whole again, stop using money and time on this, alums shouldn’t have to beg to help
- Don’t have support from IHL – seem to be an afterthought
- Quality of students recruited is lower than in the past – need more enthusiastic students with high GPA/ACT
- Presidential leadership is reclusive, not visionary for students, faculty, and staff, and a lack of long range plans with specific steps
- Balance the quantity of students with the quality of students – do not lower standards because it sends a message that MUW’s accept lower quality students and this will turn away the higher quality students
- Columbus is a challenge because it is not welcoming to students – nothing to do, housing is bad (many MUW students live in Starkville) – need to include Columbus in the marketing plan
- Campus housing is a challenge – need to update rooms, modernize them
- Balance traditions with what traditional and non-traditional students expect
- Deal with cultural apathy
- Maintaining the value of MUW’s diploma – recruit students who will go on to be good graduates/alums
- The name is established and known nationwide so the challenge is to maintain it because of its dollar value – it is recognized, takes years to establish name recognition, changing it is seen as instability
- Perception that MUW is turning into a commuter college or 4-year community college – that is what MSU admission counselors are saying to potential students
- No clear, consistent marketing around the state – no consistency of the message for recruiting, not a clear brand, the university is MUW and has a women’s mission but that is not what is promoted.
- Proximity to Starkville

To secure a bright future, what big questions should we be asking?

- What student demographic population is wanted?
- Does the administration plan to change the name? Why on earth would the administration

want to change the name?

- How does the university overcome the challenge of low salaries when higher salaries are needed to attract and retain quality faculty and staff?
- Are all possible avenues for funding being explored?
- Is the university communicating specifically what it needs to its constituents?
- Has the university approached the Columbus community to help with marketing to recruit both students and employees? Need to decide what message is wanted, tell them, and then ask them to help.
- How to get the Foundation to be more transparent on how they spend the money that alumni give? The perception is that too much is going to PR and legal issues instead of scholarships. Some people are not giving because of that.
- What plans does the administration have to restore its relationship with alums?
- How to develop a recruitment plan that attracts quality and diverse students by using our resources (both money and alums)?
- How to resolve the disconnect of male students?
- How does MUW get a larger seat at IHL/gain a greater voice?
- What are the plans to strengthen the women's mission and traditions?
- How to pay for what is needed, such as maintaining buildings? Need to explore other ways (besides state funding) to do it.

Which big questions seem most important?

- What plans does the administration have to restore its relationship with alums? 13 votes
- How to develop a recruitment plan that attracts quality and diverse students by using our resources (both money and alums)? 7 votes
- What are the plans to strengthen the women's mission and traditions? 9 votes

For each of the three biggest questions: What goals should be put in place and what specific actions should be taken?

Restore relationship with alums:

- Trust needs to be established on both sides with honesty (both actions and words)
- Reopen restricted flow of communication – not through attorneys
- Resolve the legal issues positively
- Effort to create tangible goals that everyone can do for healing
- Create some excitement instead of negative that all can be unified about
- IHL needs to be part of the positive resolution/needs to take steps to resolve the issues
- First need to come to a resolution, then need to tell the world that resolution has happened
- Recognize the uniqueness of the university that molded the alumni and then maximize the strength of that
- Contribute to positive growth in assisting in the fulfillment of the institution

Develop a recruitment plan:

- Use the mission and uniqueness of the institution to market – doesn't think the average person knows about MUW's mission
- Current highest administrator does not believe in the mission and thinks it will not net

more students – MUW fulfills a niche that no one else can. Every signal that the President supports the mission seems to be to the contrary.

- Women's mission could be exclusive to men, but university really doesn't promote the mission
- When men come here for specific programs, need to make them feel valued, that they can come here and feel comfortable, get what they need
- When MUW was established, men could go anywhere, women were limited in their choices
- Create a men's college to meet the needs of men without changing the name or losing the women's mission
- Clearly emphasize women's mission in a positive way that doesn't exclude other populations
- Fulfill women's mission and direct resources to that end
- Capitalize on strengths instead of trying to be what university is not
- Utilize technology
- Not compare to MSU – not compare apples to oranges – going to have to go out of state to recruit more students
- Be careful not to scholarship too many out of state students because it gets legislators mad
- Really recruit
- Target out of state markets
- Utilize alums for recruitment – use them in the marketing campaign
- Need outstanding recruiters who are good examples of a W student

Strengthen the women's mission:

- Enhance mentorships for graduates and students
- Develop connections/networking
- Abolishing the National Boards of Distinguished Women and Alumni, which was the first thing Dr. Limbert did, was not good – students could volunteer to usher these ladies around which was such a good experience
- Hearing the accomplishments of successful female alums
- Promote career paths that are traditionally for men
- Sort graduates by career fields so they can be used to share their experiences – have a speaker's bureau
- Orientation needs to go back to being about MUW specifically and its traditions, not on standards everywhere
- Emphasize who university is like it is proud of it
- Continue to have Traditions 101, W Day Weekend, etc.
- Encourage SWIPS conference participation
- Don't mess with social clubs – keep traditions
- Develop new traditions
- Tell not only how great it was then, but how great it is now
- Students were made to feel important and part of the group
- The intersection of greatness is when our strengths and passions connect
- Need to align our strengths and goals

- Not always about the classroom
- Empower students with confidence

What would you like this institution to be known for 10 years from now?

- Still open
- Name the same
- In a position to cap enrollment where students with the highest ACTs come here – three applications rejected for every one accepted
- Solidify our national reputation and women's emphasis
- Increase retention
- Increase number of students going to graduate and professional schools
- Continue renovation of historic buildings
- Improve housing
- Fill housing
- Facility maintenance improved
- Environmentally green
- Reinstate athletics – add some men's sports like soccer, cross country, and volleyball
- Growth of the Southern Women's Institute as a national women's research center – got to have funding beyond the state of Mississippi
- Be up-to-date on technology
- Increase Foundation giving/scholarships
- Harmonious relationship between administration and alumni
- Acquire more high profile programs
- Support programs we have
- Tie in to industry that's here because money they can bring in is incredible
- Increase faculty chair endowments because it increases funding available for other things, increases faculty positions and increases prestige