

MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN
IDENTITY COMMITTEE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In response to the recommendations of the MUW 20/20 Envisioning Our Future/ Fulfilling Our Promise report, a 33-person Identity Committee comprised of faculty, staff, community leaders, and alumni was established to discuss the following questions:

- What is our unique niche?
- What can we offer to our students -- particularly well-prepared, highly motivated students -- that is different from other institutions?
- What is our brand and does it reflect who we are today and what we want to be in the future?
- How does our current name play into this brand and into our unique niche? Does this name support the image that we want to and need to project? If we should change our name, how should we involve everyone in the process?
- How do we promote and enhance our emphasis on leadership development and is this the something special we want to be known for?
- How do we clarify our women's emphasis in today's climate where women form the overwhelming majority of students across the nation and in Mississippi? What makes our emphasis different?

THOSE INVITED TO ATTEND THE MEETING WERE:

MUW Representatives

(Education and Human Sciences)

Dr. Suzanne Bean, *Professor and Director of the Wicker Center for Creative Learning*

Dr. Sue Jolly, *Chair of the Department of Education*

Dr. Lillie Smith, *Assistant Professor and Interim Coordinator, Teacher Education*

Dr. Joyce Yates, *Professor of Health and Kinesiology*

Dr. Monica Riley, *Associate Professor*

Ms. Kate Brown, *Director of the Governor's School and Assoc. Director, Wicker Center*

(Arts and Science)

Dr. Marty Hatton, *Chair of the Department of Communications*

Dr. Michael Burger, *Chair of the Dept. of History, Political Science and Geography*

Dr. Dionne Fortenberry, *Associate Professor of Chemistry*

Dr. Brian Anderson, *Assoc. Professor, Dept. of History Political Science and Geography*

Mr. Robert Gibson, *Chair of the Department of Art*

(Nursing)

Dr. Tammie McCoy, *Chair of the Bachelor Nursing Program*

Ms. Mary Jo Kirkpatrick, *Chair of the Associate Degree Program in Nursing*

(Library)

Ms. Cathy Young, *Chair, Faculty Senate*

(Culinary Arts)

Dr. Jim Fitzgerald, *Director, Culinary Arts Institute*

(Business)

Dr. Glenn Rhyne, *Chair of the Department of Business*

Ms. Carla Lowery, *Director of Institutional Research*

(Staff)

Ms. Melanie Freeman, *Director of Human Resources*

Ms. Amy Swingle, *Executive Director of Campus Recreation*
Ms. Robin Holliman, *President, MUW Staff Council*
Ms. Anika Perkins, *Director of Public Affairs*

(Cabinet)

Dr. Sandra Jordan, *Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs*
Dr. Bucky Wesley, *Vice President for Student Services*

Alumni Outside of Columbus

Ms. Susan Puckett, *Past President, MUW Alumnae Association*
Ms. Renee Flynt, *President, MUW Alumni Association*
Ms. Cindy Dunbar, *Past President, MUW Alumnae Assoc.; Board Member, MUW
Alumni Association*
Ms. Jill Ashley, *Attorney*

Community Members

Col. Mark Brown, *Columbus Air Force Base*
Mr. Gray Flora, *BankFirst*
Mr. Bobby Harper, *Retired, Cadence Bank*
Mr. John Bean, *Local Restaurant Owner*
Ms. Allegra Brigham, *4-County Electric Cooperative*
Mr. Steve Rogers, *WCBI*

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Participants initially were asked what they would like to achieve from the meeting. The general consensus was that there is a need to resolve who the University is, and to achieve a clear understanding of how to move the University forward.

The committee was also asked how it would define success for MUW. Some answers included: larger state appropriations, an increase in the number of students, having others know “who we are,” increased student retention, a unity of purpose and “peace.”

Primary key audiences were determined to be: adult learners, high school and community college students, parents, high school and community college counselors and corporate industries. Based on faculty and staff experience, the Identity Committee identified the needs of these key audiences and discussed how MUW should position itself to those audiences.

Adult learners are interested in completing their degrees, earning additional degrees, changing their career paths, or enhancing their current business skills.

High school students and parents are looking for ways to help the students feel connected and to achieve their goals in a safe and positive environment, while offering parents value for their investments.

High school and community college counselors would like college recruiters to provide pertinent information to students, such as student-teacher ratios and available scholarships. At this time, it is believed counselors do not encourage students to attend MUW and strong working relationships with counselors would support MUW’s recruiting efforts.

Corporate industries are interested in hiring quality student leaders who are “big picture thinkers” interested in maximizing their career potential. These students should exhibit good social skills, independence and preparedness.

The Committee defined MUW as a unique Liberal Arts college and felt MUW could differentiate itself through colleges and departments that are considered unique and

marketable. These include: The Culinary Arts Institute, the College of Education and Human Sciences, Graduate Studies, the College of Nursing and Speech Language Pathology, the University's externally funded centers, International Studies, and the College of Business. Additional offerings considered marketable include undergraduate research, service-learning, experiential learning and leadership development.

As a public institution which must comply with IHL guidelines, MUW cannot compete directly with private institutions. However, one competitive strategy could be to promote those characteristics of MUW that are relatively the same as those of some nationally known private colleges, including MUW's personalization and one-on-one attention to student needs.

Gathering community support was determined as a major factor for the continuing success of MUW. Obtaining this much-needed support can be achieved through outreach to the community, by demonstrating the relevance of the University, the value of the students to the community and by offering leadership development opportunities.

MUW has a public mission with a desire to prepare all students for life and leadership. However, given the University's history, emphasizing women's leadership is an important tradition that should continue. The University should explore options for this task. However, some recommendations that came out of the meeting include pursuing such programs as women and public policy, and research and development, as well as creating affiliate programs with advanced technological institutions, such as the Stennis Space Center.

In addition to programs and offerings that are unique to MUW, the Committee considered characteristics of the University that are also unique. These include the fact that students receive personalized learning and leadership development in a family atmosphere. Also, the University's unique legacy and mission of providing advanced women's education was emphasized, as well as its current reputation of having a diverse faculty and student body.

The strengths of the University were discussed, as well, during which many of the aforementioned programs were listed again, along with the visual and performing arts

programs, the beautiful campus, and the fact that there is a true sense of giving back to the community among students and faculty alike.

The Identity Committee reached a unanimous conclusion regarding the Central Identity of the University: “Leadership.” The concept of “leadership” as the true Central Identity of the University is inclusive of all student demographics while also reinforcing the history of MUW in preparing women for leadership roles in the professional arena. MUW also has a goal of providing opportunities, through innovative teaching, service and experiential learning, for students to become leaders, and considers itself a university for serious, focused students who are prepared to go into the world and make a difference.

Concerning the question regarding the name of the University:

- How does our current name play into this brand and into our unique niche? Does this name support the image that we want to and need to project? If we should change our name, how should we involve everyone in the process?

A clear majority of the Identity Committee members believed the name -- Mississippi University for Women -- impedes the success of communicating the true identity of the University and, therefore, future student recruitment efforts. IHL's recent decision to implement fully the funding formula which is based to a great extent on student credit hour production, beginning July 1, 2008, will result in a reduction of \$4,088,486 by FY 2014, if student credit hours are not increased. This decision serves as a catalyst to take bold and innovative actions to enable our institution to survive IHL's adopted funding formula.

The Identity Committee agreed that a name change is warranted and recommends the name change committee include a fair representation of the following:

- Community leaders
- Diverse group of alumni
- Faculty
- Students

DISCUSSION POINTS

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET OUT OF THE SESSION TODAY?

- Resolution among all disputing parties and to move forward
- Decision of how best to move forward for the overall success of the University
- Clarity on the future goals of MUW
- A marketing strategy that clearly communicates who MUW is

DEFINE SUCCESS FOR MUW

- Larger state appropriations
- Increase of students at MUW
- Highly satisfied and confident graduates
- Increase in quality of students
- For others to know who we are
- To be viable in the community and region
- Greater student retention
- Strong community partnership with the campus
- Increase student and faculty diversity
- To be a vibrant campus
- Atmosphere where challenges are viewed as opportunities
- Greater intellectual student engagement
- Unity of purpose and peace
- To be known beyond the local community
- For MUW to have adequate resources
- Students who are independent, capable thinkers
- Attract qualified faculty and retain them

DEFINE SUCCESS FOR MUW, CONTINUED

- Provide quality service and programs to students
- To have unity
- Better communication about MUW
- For our graduates to be in demand
- Maintain physical appeal such as building maintenance
- Embrace innovation
- For the best students to make MUW their first choice
- Technical upgrade
- Increase in alumni donations
- Increase community “ownership” of the University

KEY AUDIENCES

- Public and private high school students
- Dual enrollment students
- High school parents
- High school counselors
- Community college parents
- Community college counselors
- Local companies with adult learners
- Community college transfer students
- Senior Adults
- State and local political leaders
- Institutions of Higher Learning
- Existing students, faculty and staff
- Alumni
- Teachers who desire graduate degrees
- Teachers needing advanced degrees and continuing certification

KEY AUDIENCES, CONTINUED

- Professionals changing careers/obtaining teaching degrees
- Online learners
- Five to seven surrounding counties
- Local community
- Home schooled students
- Air Force base
- Surrounding states in the southeast
- Feeder schools

POSITIONING

To show MUW in the most favorable light possible in order for potential students to consider the University their number-one choice in continuing education.

ADULT LEARNERS

- MUW offers continuing education/certification.
- MUW offers opportunities for new careers and/or new career paths.
- MUW offers the opportunity to obtain additional degrees.
- MUW offers part-time enrollment.
- MUW takes advantage of new technologies to deliver select programs online.

POSITIONING

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- MUW helps guide students through the enrollment process.
- MUW is the best choice to help them achieve their professional goals.
- MUW helps students meet their potential.
- MUW is for the career-driven student.
- MUW students feel connected with the faculty and are engaged on campus.
- MUW students have access to the development of leadership skills.
- MUW students are engaged through experiential learning.

POSITIONING

CORPORATE INDUSTRIES

- Graduates from MUW are qualified.
- MUW graduates are leaders.
- MUW graduates are prepared.
- MUW graduates want to maximize their potential.
- MUW graduates are independent, big picture thinkers.
- MUW graduates have real-world experience.
- MUW graduates are innovative and developed leaders.
- MUW graduates are well-rounded individuals.
- MUW graduates hold solid social skills.
- MUW graduates have global thinking skills.
- MUW graduates know how to apply their knowledge to real-world experiences.

POSITIONING

PARENTS

- MUW offers a good quality of life for their child.
- Columbus offers a good community environment for students.
- There is a sense of safety both on and off campus.
- MUW is a good investment in their child's future and for his/her life.
- MUW holds a good academic reputation.
- MUW graduates are marketable throughout the United States.
- MUW is a value for their investment.
- MUW helps the student develop comprehensively on all levels.
- MUW offers mentoring relationships.
- MUW offers a faculty and staff support system.

POSITIONING

HIGH SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNSELORS

- MUW provides good service.
- MUW is an effective partner.
- MUW provides timely information and consistent contact.
- MUW provides scholarship information.
- MUW develops strong relationships with students.
- MUW educates counselors on the benefits of a Liberal Arts education.

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGY

A differentiation strategy includes capitalizing on those assets that distinguish MUW from its competition.

- MUW is a small institution with a private-college atmosphere.
- MUW offers a one-on-one learning experience.
- At MUW, each student is given individual attention.
- MUW offers an environment to develop well-rounded, engaged students.
- MUW offers unique graduate studies.
- MUW offers an experiential learning environment, much like private colleges and universities.

COMPETITIVE STRATEGY

- The University should compete nationally with colleges and universities holding similar characteristics as MUW, in addition to Mississippi institutions.
- Offer unique delivery methods for programs on a local, statewide, and national basis

MUW'S UNIQUE NICHE

- Culinary Arts Institute
- College of Education and Human Sciences
- College of Business and Legal Studies
- Graduate Studies
- College of Nursing and Speech Language Pathology
- Externally funded centers
- Innovative, experiential learning communities
- International Studies
- Emphasis on leadership development
- Undergraduate research

HOW TO EMPHASIZE SUPPORT OF WOMEN

- Develop curriculum and co-curriculum opportunities for women's leadership and engagement
- Identify opportunities to create women's professional development programs such as public policy, research and development, and affiliate programs with advanced technological institutes such as the Stennis Space Center
- Review the mission of the externally funded centers to make certain they address women's development among University students, as well as women in the community

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF MUW

- Personalized learning
- Legacy of women's education and mission
- Leadership development
- Value of investment
- Family atmosphere
- Diversity of faculty and students
- Historic buildings
- 125 years of tradition (2009)
- Public institution
- Unique Graduate Studies
- Secure, gated campus

STRENGTHS OF MUW

- Liberal Arts
- Nursing programs
- Culinary Arts Institute
- Education programs
- Honors College
- Learning communities
- Social clubs
- Serving commuters/non-traditional students
- Visual and performing arts programs
- Beautiful campus
- Community service
- The Wicker Center for Creative Learning
- Women's Center for Entrepreneurship

MUW CENTRAL IDENTITY

Leadership