

Dear MBU Staff,

We are writing to you today as valued members of our university community. As you may know, higher education is in a period of redefinition marked by increased competition for students and operational challenges. It is a moment that demands proactive and decisive action to overcome significant financial constraints.

As such, last week we proceeded with select faculty reductions. This action was taken as part of a broader, multi-stage plan being developed to protect the health and future of our institution. Leadership of Mary Baldwin has taken bold action numerous times over our 181-year history as we have innovated to serve the evolving needs of our students.

The context. MBU, alongside many institutions across the country, is facing increasingly large operational deficits, forcing tough strategic choices. Demographic shifts, technological innovation, changes in student needs, emerging educational providers, and the urgency to equip our students with the much-needed skills to enter the workforce are driving the relevance and redefinition of higher education.

As administration and board leadership have shared during recent Town Halls, these significant external market pressures have a profound effect on MBU's operations and finances. The Board has engaged an external firm, EY-Parthenon, to help us chart a course forward that will allow MBU to navigate these pressures effectively and sustainably while staying true to our institution's mission.

The bigger picture. It is likely that the transition timeline to this new paradigm for MBU will take place over several years. Yet we must take action now in planning for our next fiscal year (which begins in July), to not only support this emerging redirection but, more importantly, to help us balance our budget given the pressures bearing upon us: declining enrollment, increased competition for students, changing student preferences, a general market downturn, rising costs and an unpredictable economy. The Board therefore directed the administration to undertake significant cost reductions, including reductions in instructional expenses.

The decision. On December 12, the Board took the first steps to reduce overall university spending through curricular adjustments to be implemented in the next academic year. These initial cuts fell significantly short of the target budget reductions necessary to ensure the continued financial viability of the institution. As such, the MBU Board of Trustees authorized the administration to not renew a number of annual faculty contracts, which was done last week. The Board has also directed staff to continue to review its personnel and operational expenses to help the institution reduce its budget; this work is ongoing.

As members of the Mary Baldwin community ourselves, we understand these decisions are uncomfortable and painful for all affected. However, we are confident we are taking the necessary steps to ensure the viability of the institution we are all invested in seeing thrive. As we move into a presidential transition, there will be more change as we evolve to best respond to student needs. We, the MBU Board of Trustees, remain grateful for your commitment to our students in these changing times, and for your continued understanding as we navigate this critical moment together.

Sincerely,

Gabby McCree, on behalf of the Board of Trustees