

August 3, 2023

Colleagues,

Thank you for the warm welcome you have provided to Chrissy and me this month. One thing is abundantly clear: Faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the local community are dedicated to Mary Baldwin students and the future of this institution.

I am writing to provide updates on the Board-charged Academic Portfolio and Engaged Student Experience creative teams, the July 20 Board of Trustees meeting, and new student engagement data. In addition to reports on the creative teams, the meeting included discussion of university finances; Board passage of the 2023–24 budget; updates on Admissions and Advancement; and an initial report from Dr. Todd Telemeco, Vice President and Dean of the Murphy Deming College of Health Sciences. As outlined in the Board's May 25 charge memo to the creative teams, the Board will meet again in summer and fall to review progress on the teams and to consider next steps.

### **Creative Team Progress and Documents**

I offer my gratitude to the members of both creative teams, who began work this past month to envision from the ground up:

- ♦ A streamlined core curriculum and set of majors that combine the liberal arts, market needs, and essential skills, and

- ♦ Experiential learning programs (cohorts, internships, leadership opportunities, civic engagement, student employment, domestic study/work away, etc.) and an enhanced campus learning environment.

This challenging work is intended to address the university's structural budget deficit, significantly enhance student success and job placement, and distinguish Mary Baldwin regionally and nationally.

Below are brief progress updates on both creative teams. Attached are longer reports on the initial work and progress of both teams, including their charges, membership, and work summary thus far. My thanks to Executive Vice President, Chief Academic Officer, and Dean, Palmer College of Professional Studies Will Webb and Vice President and Dean, Gold College of Arts and Sciences, and Dean of the Faculty Paul Menzer for coordinating these teams and reports. *I ask that you read these reports and provide suggestions and feedback (to [reimagine@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:reimagine@marybaldwin.edu) or to Paul or Will directly).*

#### Academic Portfolio Creative Team Progress Update

As charged by the Board of Trustees in a memo of May 25 the Academic Portfolio Creative Team presented to the Board on July 20 a draft of a new general education core curriculum. Composed of 10 bespoke courses featuring innovative pedagogy and skill-based outcomes, the collaboratively designed curriculum aims to unlock aspects of students' current selves and prospects for their future ones. *The attached Board Report from the Academic Portfolio Creative Teams further details the objectives and architecture of the proposed common curriculum.*

#### Engaged Student Experience Creative Team Progress Update

As charged by the Board of Trustees, the Engaged and Experiential Creative Team began its work in July to produce a vision for a new student experience for Mary Baldwin University. Presented to the Board of Trustees for the July 20 meeting, the report provides a detailed scaffolding of the new student experience. This includes a blueprint to enhance learning through a new engaged learning model (cohorts, mentoring, leadership opportunities, internships, student employment, civic engagement, and study/work away), and several new residential components intended to improve campus life for our students. *The attached Board Report provides a detailed summary of that vision which*

*includes a preliminary look at the proposed scaffolding for the student experience.*

### **Student Voices and Engagement Data**

Because data will play an important role in decision-making ahead, I hope to provide you with information and evidence related to our work. I have attached a recent report related to student engagement and student interactions with peers, faculty, and staff at MBU. My thanks to Dr. Amy Diduch, Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Professor of Economics, for the countless hours she spent reviewing the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data and compiling this excellent report, which can help us focus on student voices and better understand student perceptions of engagement on campus in and out of the classroom. I am thrilled that Amy has agreed to present this data at gatherings this fall so we can further consider methods to increase student success.

### **Going Forward: Challenges and Opportunities**

At the risk of stating the obvious, I will reiterate that I am new to Mary Baldwin. I do not know – but want to hear – all that each of you has committed to this institution and its students, what you are proud of, and what you would change if you could. What I do know is that for many, many, many decades, Mary Baldwin, like many higher education institutions, has faced dwindling revenues and increasing costs for our residential undergraduate program. I also know that the people who make this community come alive have always found ways to adapt in order to serve as a launchpad for promising young people from all backgrounds. I believe the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of this institution will create an innovative iteration of MBU for the decades ahead that supports students to succeed in their time and thereby addresses our financial challenges.

As we learn more, I will do my best to share updates regarding the two creative teams and impending decisions, and I will share as much information as possible during my opening of school address on **Tuesday, August 22 at 9:00 a.m. in Francis Auditorium**. A webpage on the Mary Baldwin website will also be created to provide updates from the creative teams, opportunities for feedback, and planning ideas for the future.

Thank you for all you do for Mary Baldwin and students. I look forward to getting to know each of you in the near future, and I hope you can enjoy the last few weeks of summer,

All in for Mary Baldwin,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Stein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeff Stein  
President