

Dear Mary Baldwin Alumni,

I write today to update you on our ongoing efforts to redefine the undergraduate residential experience at Mary Baldwin.

To recap, Board of Trustees Chair and fellow alumna Gabby McCree '83 reached out to all alumni in June about our work to build a university that is responsive to evolving needs of undergraduate residential students and allows us to continue to serve our mission well into the future. And last month, I shared an email update regarding the work faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees have undertaken as part of our ongoing efforts to enhance the MBU undergraduate residential experience as well as the options before us, including the closure of some academic programs and creation of new programs.

Mary Baldwin senior and studio art major Charlotte Bradley replied to my email, saying she thought we needed to do a better job integrating the liberal arts with skills that prepare students for post-graduation success in the workforce: "Integrating technology into our learning and understanding how to use it is important, and it would be very beneficial for students about to enter the workforce."

Since January many on campus have been working toward Charlotte's goal by thinking about ways to evolve academic programs, meet student needs, and adapt to the changing world of work. Two creative teams charged by the Board are advancing this effort, and one week ago the team leaders presented an update to the Board of Trustees.

### **Academic Portfolio**

Dr. Paul Menzer, dean of the university faculty and vice president and dean of the Gold College of Arts and Sciences, is leading the work of the Academic Portfolio creative team. This summer, the team guided the reconceptualization of the MBU general education curriculum and has now introduced a new approach to aligning majors within academic pathways or degree categories that correspond to industry needs. This approach clarifies the student path from major to career outcomes or

graduate study and aligns with our intention to evolve the best components of a first-class liberal arts education aligned with industry.

In addition to the new approach, the report included recommendations of which majors to discontinue, which to continue, which to consolidate/reconceptualize, and what new majors to create. It also included some of the data points the creative team considered in its endorsement, including market demand and an analysis of how many students MBU graduated in each major for the previous seven years.

### **Engaged Student Experience**

Will Webb, chief academic officer and executive vice president and dean of the Palmer College of Professional Studies, also presented to the Board the work of the Engaged Student Experience creative team, which he has led and is now divided into three subcommittees, focused on 1) expanding the MBU learning experience beyond campus, 2) creating engaged learning pathways and faculty development, and 3) developing cohort-based living and learning communities. Composed of faculty, staff, and administrators, the subcommittees will work through September to prepare materials for the Board of Trustees to consider next month.

### **Next Steps**

The challenging and exciting work ahead will enable the university to better serve students. But changing our academic offerings will impact students, faculty, and staff in different ways. Each student who is affected will have the information and support they need and, regardless of program decisions, will be able to complete a degree at MBU in their chosen major.

Teach-out planning for potentially discontinued majors will begin immediately, following guidance from our accreditors, and involving faculty members in the related departments. The Academic Portfolio creative team will also begin the work to sequence the new gen ed curriculum, and further market research on the reimagined majors will begin immediately.

I want to reiterate my commitment to transparency and to listen carefully while we work through these changes. As alumni, you are important members of our Mary

Baldwin community, and I value your input and feedback throughout this process. If you have questions or concerns, or simply want to weigh in, please don't hesitate to reach out at **[reimagine@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:reimagine@marybaldwin.edu)** or to me directly at **[president@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:president@marybaldwin.edu)**.

All in for Mary Baldwin,

Dr. Jeff Stein

President