



October 25, 2023

Dear Parents and Families of MBU Students,

As you know and as I have been writing to you about since my arrival in July, we have been working over the past year to redefine our undergraduate residential experience. I write today to update you on the creative teams, last week's Board of Trustees meeting, and next steps, including the following key takeaways:

1. Students who have already declared a major or will declare one from the existing course catalog prior to August 2024 will be able to complete their major on schedule through courses offered at Mary Baldwin.
2. We will introduce a new liberal arts general education program, along with existing, reconceptualized, and new majors in four academic pathways: Health Sciences, Education and Society, Business and Technology, and Creativity and Design.
3. No immediate changes will occur in employment, and we are working with every affected faculty member to navigate future changes in responsibilities and explore alternative teaching opportunities at Mary Baldwin.
4. We encourage students to attend our next student town hall on Thursday, Nov. 2, at 7 p.m. in Francis Auditorium to discuss these changes in greater depth.

#### Creative Team Updates

The Academic Portfolio creative team presented final recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding the proposed list of discontinued majors; continuing majors; and consolidated, reconceptualized, and new majors. The Engaged Student Experience creative team presented recommendations to expand students' on- and off-campus learning experiences through an engaged student experience framework, internships and study/work away, and a new residential college initiative to link living and learning on campus.

#### Board Actions

After months of research, assessment of student demand for majors, community input, market analysis, and dedicated effort from our creative teams, the Board of Trustees voted to endorse a new academic portfolio that weaves together the liberal arts, updated majors, integration of technology and data, and enhanced preparation for lives of personal and professional success. After careful consideration and lengthy deliberation, the Board of Trustees voted to:

- Endorse a new 10-course liberal arts-focused general education curriculum
- Create a new undergraduate residential academic portfolio, consisting of 12 continuing, three reconceptualized, and three new programs categorized within four industry-aligned academic pathways:
  - Health Sciences
    - Biology
    - Health Sciences
    - Exercise Science
    - Nursing (BSN) - *new*
    - Clinical Laboratory Sciences
  - Education and Society
    - Education
    - Social Work
    - Psychology
    - Criminal Justice
    - Public Policy
    - History
  - Creativity and Design
    - Digital Media and Design - *new*
    - English and Professional Writing
    - Theater and Performance
  - Business and Technology
    - Business
    - Marketing and Communication
    - Applied Mathematics
    - Information Technology - *new*
- Discontinue 23 under-enrolled academic majors, including:
  - Arts Management
  - Anthropology/Sociology\*
  - Asian Studies
  - Biochemistry
  - Business Economics
  - Chemistry
  - Communication\*
  - Economics
  - Environmental Biology
  - Film
  - International Affairs
  - International Economics and Business\*
  - International Relations
  - Liberal Arts and Educational Studies (LAES)\*
  - Music
  - Physics
  - Political Science
  - Sociology
  - Sociology/Psychology\*
  - Spanish\*
  - Studio Arts
  - Philosophy and Religious Studies
  - Religion

\*Majors already discontinued between 2017 and 2022 without official Board action

- Remove a 2017-18 provision of the Faculty Handbook related to separation of tenured faculty when an academic program or department is eliminated (5.3.3.2).

#### What Does This Mean for Your Student?

I know many of you will have questions and concerns about how this will affect your student's path to graduation, so I want to make something absolutely clear: Regardless of program decisions, every student who has already declared a major or who declares a major this academic year, will be able to complete their degree in that major on time and with Mary Baldwin faculty.

We are committed to ensuring that your student has the information and support they need on their uninterrupted path to graduation. In the coming weeks and months, academic leaders will be reaching out to each student whose declared major is being discontinued with information about their options and next steps, including their individualized degree-completion plan. For now, those students should contact their academic advisor with any questions regarding degree completion.

#### Impact on Faculty

I want to directly address how these changes will affect employees and reiterate that no immediate employment actions will be taken. To be clear, faculty in affected departments have been asked to continue their current responsibilities throughout the ongoing degree completion for all students who have already declared majors or who will do so by the end of this academic year (a process that could run through spring 2027). Additionally, although department closures mean that teaching responsibilities may eventually change, we anticipate that affected faculty who remain employed at MBU will retain their tenure status and rank.

We are working with each of the 8-10 affected faculty members to navigate changes in responsibilities (including teaching the remaining students in their major and/or possibly teaching in the new general education program), provide transition assistance, and explore options for remaining at Mary Baldwin (such as the Director of Teaching and Learning and Director of Institutional Research and Student Learning Data positions just posted at the university). Since Monday, Dr. Paul Menzer, dean of the university faculty and vice president and dean of the Gold College of Arts and Sciences, and I have met with affected faculty in the discontinued majors listed above and also with the Faculty Council to explain the Board's actions, review employment options going forward, and answer questions. Finally, no decisions have been made yet regarding academic minors.

Throughout this process, we remain committed to transparency and open communication. We held a student town hall on campus on Oct. 4 and will host another on Nov. 2 to ensure students are informed and their questions are answered. To review all university communications and reports up to this point, please visit our [dedicated landing page](#).

As always, students are the heart of everything we do at Mary Baldwin, and it remains our priority to ensure their continued academic success. Please reach out any time to [reimagine@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:reimagine@marybaldwin.edu) or [president@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:president@marybaldwin.edu) to share your thoughts, questions, and concerns.

All in for Mary Baldwin,

Dr. Jeff Stein  
President