

Chicago Town Meeting 11-14-06
Summary by Katy O'Malley Bunder '80
mother of Molly Bunder '08 (Reading '07)

I guess I should have known, based on the way the meetings on campus were handled, that it was not worth our time or money to drive from West Lafayette, Indiana to Chicago for the wine and cheese reception at the Racquet Club. It is incomprehensible to me that the college that for 25 years has made me feel important, empowered, and smart now tells me that I have no right to tell them how to run the college. This is an accurate paraphrase of a comment made by Ginger after I had asked a question about the number of highly paid administrators at our small college. It is a national trend at colleges and universities to add well paid administrators who dramatically increase the operating budgets of the colleges and cause tuition to spike. In turn, tuition discounting becomes a necessity because very few families can afford the cost of tuition. This is true at state supported universities and even at Randolph-Macon.

I envy those women who feel they can trust this president and this board. In the past I always trusted Randolph-Macon Woman's College to do the right thing. That felt good. It was a part of my personal foundation. I trusted them so much that I sent them my precious and talented daughter.

My education, my intellect, and my experience working for a university and a non-profit corporation won't allow me to believe that this board and this president are making the right decision for the college I love. I know that it makes many of you very uncomfortable when anyone says anything personal about the board or the interim president. Personal responsibility is part of accepting a position of leadership. Their personal opinions and circumstances have an impact on the way they vote. I know that Ginger and Amanda and the other board members I met are well intentioned, sad about their decision, and going through a difficult time. If they destroy my college I don't care very much about what they've gone through. Ginger's academic background and work history are nothing like that of any college president I've ever heard of. Does anyone know of any other college that would choose her as their president? Has she ever been considered for another college presidency? Would she have been selected if she had not graduated from RMWC? I don't think she is a bad person. I do not dislike her. I think her friends on the board knew that she would be "on board" with this decision and so they brought her in to get it over with. The only plausible explanation I can think of for her unwillingness to slow this decision down and build some sort of consensus with the alumnae is that she wants to get this task behind her and get back to her own life. Finally, why are the president and the board so afraid of taking in new information? You can see that they shut down the minute any new idea or question is raised. They repeat the same "talking points" over and over again. It reminds me of the Stepford Wives. I feel that the reason their decision has to be unanimous and that they are unwilling to consider any of the many alternatives offered is that they want to avoid individual responsibility by having only collective opinions. When you are given a big responsibility it is imperative that you think through each issue independently and that you are willing to dissent even when that is difficult. It seems to me that we will not be able to do anything to persuade this board to slow down and listen to the additional research. I urge everyone to contribute money (until it hurts) to PEC. Our only chance for saving Randolph-Macon WC is the legal system. We must be able to buy excellent legal help.

-- Katy O'Malley Bunder '80