

## **Lynchburg 10-30-06 , Summary of meeting by Laura Arrington '04:**

Heather Garnett welcomed everyone and introduced Ginger. Skip Kughn was also there. Ginger introduced various trustees (past and present) and any of the R-MWC faculty/staff that were there (also past and present). Harriet Whitten was there and Muriel Casey, then a bunch of others who's names I didn't catch.

Ginger began her speech talking about how enrollment has been a problem since Linda Lorimer's days. She said that when KGB was president she was given the mission of increasing visibility for the school which she did. Right now we have 715 students with a 61% discount rate (a 50% comprehensive discount rate which includes room&board). We also have a 61% retention rate. The school spends approx. \$8K per student in marketing just to get them to come. She said this isn't a new problem; it is the reality of marketing. Three years ago the BOT decided they needed a strategic plan and hired A&S. The results they were given in Nov '05 said that being a single sex school is a negative factor. At this time the school was also doing internal research, calling current single sex schools and former single sex schools.

The school had three options to explore 1) staying the same 2)merge with a sister school or 3) embrace the market research and go coed with a global honors emphasis.

At this time the students asked for the vote to be postponed until after the summer so that they were on-campus when the vote took place. Following the vote, protests began on campus among the students. Ginger gave credit to the Coalition and their leaders for being respectful in their protests. She said that over time they came to realize that being "dead" was not better than "coed" and they asked for a 2nd opinion on A&S's research. She said students are beginning to feel respect for the BOT's decision even if they are not happy with it (she did mention that some students are very happy with the decision).

Ginger spoke about the name change how R-MC is planning on protecting their rights and will not allow the school to have Randolph or Macon in their name. She asked us to join her in being what she called "consciencely coed" and then opened the floor for questions.

No one introduced themselves before asking a question so I don't have names down for who asked what questions.

One alum asked why so many changes were being made that we weren't aware of. Ginger responded that it is hard to recruit and attract students if you are also asking for help at the same time. She said her dream is for R-MWC to have a waiting list.

Another alum mentioned that many students are from religious backgrounds that value a single sex education and some would no longer be able to attend R-MWC when it went coed. Ginger responded that Muslim students can attend a coed school as long as they live in a single sex dorm. A different alum spoke up that international students are not our recruiting pool and they don't give money back as alums.

An alum then spoke up about poor communication and lack of information during this process and how distressed many alums are by the way this decision was made. Ginger

admitted that they had not been communicating effectively.

An alum asked how we were to trust this school which misled students in their recruiting process. Ginger responded that these students were not lied to because at the time the school did not realize it would be going coed.

Skip got up for a minute to talk about development and the Capital Campaign and how it would have been necessary to raise \$200 million and that was not realistic. The husband of an alum said that alums are now discontent and less likely to give money. Ginger said that we will succeed and she wishes alums would get behind the idea.

Another alum asked why she thought the reaction to going coed at R-MWC was so severe when other schools had made the transition relatively smoothly. Ginger said the Internet was a big reason.

The meeting kind of lost structure and then got to a point where certain alums were dominating the discussion. Most people had left at this point so Ginger closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.