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## Fwd: A Message to Our Alumni: Clarity, Resolve & The Road Ahead

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From: **Office of the President** <[president@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:president@marybaldwin.edu)>

Date: Wed, Oct 22, 2025, 17:52

Subject: A Message to Our Alumni: Clarity, Resolve & The Road Ahead



Dear Mary Baldwin Alumni and friends,

Homecoming weekend reminded me of everything that makes this community extraordinary. Nearly 300 alumni and friends returned to campus to reconnect, celebrate milestones, and share their love for this special place. I was honored to induct our newest Grafton Society members, the Class of 1975, and celebrate the 30th anniversary of VWIL and the 40th anniversary of PEG—two programs that continue to exemplify Mary Baldwin’s enduring impact on the lives of our students and graduates.

That sense of connection and purpose capped off last week’s meeting of the MBU Board of Trustees, where we engaged in honest, productive conversations about our present realities and our shared future. I’d like to take a moment to share some of the key takeaways and the path ahead.

### **A Sharper Focus for the Future**

At the Board meeting, I introduced a new strategic direction to guide our work. Mary Baldwin will be a premier institution for career-focused, workforce-aligned programs that is partnership driven and professional by design. This strategic direction will be supported through a commitment to skills development informed by liberal arts principles, including communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and ethical judgement.

This north star builds on our strengths and areas of opportunity—particularly in health sciences, human services, business, education, and technology—while holding fast to our mission: Mary Baldwin University empowers inclusive leaders to create lives of purpose and professional success in our changing world.

Our calling as a university remains the same: to prepare students for meaningful, purpose-driven lives—but we must continually evolve to meet the needs of today’s learners and tomorrow’s workforce.

### **Building Momentum Through Academic Innovation**

Even as we face challenges, there is tremendous progress to celebrate. Our academic transformation is reshaping the student experience:

- The recently launched common curriculum simplifies general education and connects learning to real-world purpose.
- The new Academic Neighborhoods, The Commons, and skill stacks are fostering collaboration, belonging, and career readiness across disciplines.
- Through the Foundations of Excellence initiative with the Gardner Institute we are strengthening the first-year experience to ensure every student begins their MBU journey supported, seen, and poised for success.

The Board also approved three new online graduate programs that build on MBU’s tradition of professional education:

- Doctorate of business administration
- Doctorate of education
- Master of clinical mental health counseling

### **Confronting Challenges with Transparency**

As you all have heard many times, like many small, private universities across the country, Mary Baldwin faces real external challenges: rising costs, shifting demographics, growing competition for students, and governmental pressure. For years, we have said that “the future is bright,” and I still believe that. But optimism alone will not sustain us.

Today, we carry \$18 million in loans—debt that, while once necessary, now costs us \$1.7 million annually in payments. These obligations limit our ability to reinvest in our academic programs, facilities, and innovation. Much of our Staunton and Fishersville campuses are pledged as security against our debt, which constrains our ability to reshape our physical footprint and leverage these assets if needed.

We are committed to addressing this challenge head-on—and doing so with transparency and partnership. During Homecoming, I shared these realities openly with our alumni, and your response moved me deeply. Many of you asked how you can help, and I want you to know: your engagement and support will be vital as we work to retire this debt—a first and major step in our plan for financial sustainability.

There will be difficult decisions and moments of change ahead, but I promise that we will move forward with integrity, clarity, and purpose. You will soon hear from the advancement team with a call to action and an appeal to help. Now is the moment to act. If everyone does what they can, we can strengthen our foundation and reduce our financial vulnerability so that we can truly be made for all time.

### **Moving Forward, Together**

We have a clear sense of where we are and where we must go. Mary Baldwin is in

an enviable position compared to many small colleges because of our thriving health sciences programs, established online presence, and resilient community.

Our next chapter will ask much of all of us—but I am convinced that we can meet this moment. The warmth, honesty, and generosity you showed during Homecoming demonstrate that the spirit of Mary Baldwin is alive and well.

Together, we will ensure that this institution continues to empower generations of inclusive leaders—just as it empowered each of us.

Sincerely,



Todd Telemeco  
*President, Mary Baldwin University*

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