

Dear fellow W alumni:

Some of you may have heard recent discussions regarding the possibility of changing the name of our alma mater. These discussions have transpired for many years; nonetheless, we have begun more formal preparations to determine if now is the time to make this change.

In May, I received a letter from our Dean's Council, acknowledging the challenges that our name presents and advocating that we pursue a name that is inclusive for all students. Countless others have likewise shared concerns and challenges that exist under our current name.

However, I would like to clarify that although there are calls for a more inclusive name, we are not considering a change in our mission. I assure you, no matter what happens, we maintain our historic commitment to academic and leadership development for women, forever embracing our status as the first state-supported college for women in the United States.

As our first alumni president, I too feel the urgency to do all we can to honor our history while clearing barriers to our future. I acknowledge that should a new name be recommended, it will be an emotional issue for some; however, it is imperative that we sincerely consider all opportunities that will strengthen our position and allow us to better fulfill our mission. Looking back at our history, we have had a name change every 35 to 55 years:

1. Columbus Female Institute 1847
2. Industrial Institute and College 1884
3. Mississippi State College for Women 1920
4. Mississippi University for Women 1974

We are on year 48 with our current name, although we have been coeducational for 40 years. Consequently, the time may be right to take this next step.

In that spirit of progress, I have appointed a task force to take a deeper dive into this issue and see if now is the time to recommend a more inclusive name. This task force is chaired by the Dean of Library Services, Amanda Clay Powers, and includes our Deans Council, Provost, former Provost Tom Richardson, Executive Director of University Relations, Executive Director of Alumni and Development, General Counsel, and representatives of our Faculty Senate, Staff Council, Student Government Association, Alumni Association, and the Foundation Board.

We will begin holding listening sessions soon to gather information about your thoughts and concerns on this issue. These sessions will be for faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders. There is also an email account set up for you to share your thoughts:

namechange@muw.edu I value your input and appreciate the passion you have for The W.

We ask for mutual respect as we exchange differing viewpoints and work toward growing our enrollment and creating the best possible opportunities and outcomes for our students and alumni. Thank you for all you do, and we will continue to communicate with you throughout the process.

Let's go forth and bless by light!

Nora R. Miller

President

Class of 1983

