

UNIVERSITY STATUS

At the August meeting, the Chancellor's discussion with the Board included a briefing on the Policy Commission's policy regarding university status for institutions and his observation that upon the commencement of the College's Master's in C&I degree program this semester, Shepherd would fully qualify for university status.

As the Chancellor observed, the ultimate decision as to institutional names is the province of the Legislature. The Legislative leadership has expressed the intention that name-change should be associated with a decision of the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) regarding university status. It is anticipated that several of the other State Colleges will seek university status during the fall, with the prospect of Legislative action during the 2004 regular session. The Policy Commission's December meeting could be a venue for seeking university status. That would require final action by the Board of Governors on the question of seeking such status to occur not later than the November meeting.

President Dunlop has begun advancing the topic of possible university status within the campus community. As the dialogue within the College progresses, the enclosed "Talking Points" document reflects the President's observations on the issue and is offered to facilitate a preliminary discussion among the members of the Board.

“College to University” Talking Points

1. A name change is a separate issue from a mission change. We are considering the possibility of a name change — Shepherd College to Shepherd University. Our mission statement already provides for limited master’s degree offerings.
2. Enrollment is not a defining criterion for the name of the institution. In West Virginia, if you exclude MU and WVU, the average headcount enrollment of Wheeling Jesuit University (1,324), Salem International University (660), Mountain State University (2,399) and the University of Charleston (1,096) is 1,370. This average is only about one-third the size of Shepherd College.
3. Reasons supporting a name change:
 - a. **Historical evolution of names.** History shows that the natural evolution of most public institutions of higher education has resulted in a name change from college to university. This has also been the case for many of the private colleges, as well.
 - b. **Potential confusion.** Several colleges that became universities in recent years say they wanted to avoid confusion with two-year colleges that had dropped “community” from their names. A local example of this is the name change from Garrett Community College to Garrett College. In some states the word college is reserved for institutions that offer only two-year programs, and the word university designates institutions that offer baccalaureate or higher degrees. In another part of Maryland, Montgomery College, formerly Montgomery Junior College, we find an example of a community college that no longer uses the word “junior” or “community” in its name. Shenandoah University, Shippensburg University, and George Mason University are three other examples of regional institutions that successfully changed their names from college to university.
 - c. **Attractiveness to international students.** The Chronicle of Higher Education reports (6-13-97) that several colleges that became universities in recent years say they wanted to be more attractive to international students from countries where secondary schools are called colleges.
 - d. **Competition.** Some colleges have changed their names to improve their competitive position vis-à-vis neighboring institutions with similar course offerings that already called themselves universities (Chronicle 6-13-97).
 - e. **Prestige.** Institutions with the name university are viewed by the general public, for better or worse, as being more prestigious than those with a college name. James Mingle, executive director of the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the national umbrella organization for state coordinating boards, believes that prestige can also play a role in name changes. “I think there is a general escalation of titles. You need to do this in a competitive environment” (Chronicle 6-13-97).

- f. **Dwindling number of state colleges.** Most state colleges in the country already have changed their names to university. In 1996-97, 13 public four-year colleges in Georgia became regional or state universities. Their budgets and missions did not change and doctoral programs remain limited to the research universities (Chronicle 6-13-97). The chancellor of the University System of Georgia hopes that the name change will help the institutions attract more students and help graduates find jobs. Most state colleges in our region have changed the names of their colleges to universities. In fact, all public baccalaureate colleges in Maryland and Pennsylvania became universities, at least in name, over a decade ago.

Within 500 miles of Shepherd College there are approximately 275 public institutions that offer at least a bachelor's degree. Excluding West Virginia, of these, only about 29 (less than 11%) do not have the word university in their name. If you also exclude institutions in New England, the percentage of institutions without the word university in its name drops to about 5%.

- g. **Increased web presence.** Campbellsville College web site hits went from 1,500 per day as a college in 1996 to 10,000-20,000 per day when it became a university about one year later (Chronicle 6-13-97).
- h. **Increased donations.** Nancy Gray, VP for development and university relations at Rider University, says their 1994 name change may be partially responsible for a steady increase in giving. Only one alumnus stopped giving as a result of the name change (Chronicle 6-13-97).
- i. **Funding and reputation.** We know from the Chancellor's statements at Shepherd's Board of Governors' meeting on 8-14-03, that there are three other West Virginia public colleges ready to ask for a name change (WV State, Fairmont State, and Concord). If they move forward with a name change and we don't, we will likely be associated with Bluefield, Glenville and the free-standing community colleges rather than being linked with the universities. This could impact our standing in the peer funding model and, thus, diminish our State funding.

4. Frequently asked questions regarding a name change:

- a. **Why break 130 years of tradition?** Shepherd College as an institution has existed under four different names. The institution was chartered as a private college in 1871. The following year the West Virginia Legislature established this institution as Shepherd College State Normal School. In 1931 the name was changed to Shepherd State Teachers College in recognition of its authority to grant four-year degrees. In 1943 the institution's name was changed to Shepherd College. For the reasons stated in section 3, above, it is again time to consider a name change to reflect the current mission of the institution and to be consistent with where most of the rest of the country has already moved.
- b. **Would changing our name to Shepherd University change our mission?** No, there is wide-spread agreement that a mission change is a separate issue from a name change. A name change would be consistent with our current mission statement.

- c. **Would our budgets change if we were to be called a university?** Probably not directly. However, it is possible that a name change could have a positive impact on our peer grouping, thus an indirect impact on budget is possible. There is some evidence suggesting that the name change would also have a positive impact on private giving.
 - d. **Will there be a cost associated with a name change?** Yes. Institutional stationary, business cards, brochures, advertising templates, etc. will have to be updated.
 - e. **Concisely, what are the main advantages of a name change?** The institution will be better positioned to serve the educational needs of its students and the region. This will happen because of the enhanced ability to market the campus, attract quality students, broaden employment opportunities for graduates, and secure additional funding—especially from the private sector.
5. Examples from Chronicle:
- a. A year after it became Arcadia University, enrollment at the Pennsylvania institution is up 20%, with the number of applications jumping from 1,912 to 2,560, with students coming from 48 states — 13 more than the previous year. More applications allows for quantitative and/or qualitative growth. (6-28-02)
 - b. Plymouth State College in New Hampshire wants to change its name to Plymouth State University — opposed by Southern New Hampshire University. Presumably, SNHU sees the name change as making PSC a stronger competitor. PSC states that students, parents, and alumni perceive a degree from a university to be more valuable and employers think it demonstrates a higher level of professionalism. (3-7-03)
 - c. Rosary College changed its name to Dominican University in 1998. The president indicated that the word university communicates a level of academic reputation and opportunities that are consistent with their students' current and future interests. (6-13-97)