

# Minority recruiting at W&L: A

By PHIL MURRAY  
Phi Staff Writer

[Editors Note: This is the first of a series on black students at Washington and Lee.]

"If we are ever going to understand each other, we are going to have to study together and be educated together. There isn't this opportunity really now at W&L for either the black or white man; so diversity, racially, is extremely important."

From an interview by the Ring-tum Phi with James D. Farrar, director of admissions at W&L, Dec. 5, 1969.

"We need to come to some fuller understanding of the black experience in the United States."

John D. Wilson, President  
W&L, April 27, 1983

In 16 years since the first black applicant to Washington and Lee University was admitted, school officials have pledged a commitment to meaningful integration.

But the black community at W&L remains only a nominal group. Since 1966, only 93 black students have matriculated and 39 have graduated from the undergraduate school. Today there are 24 blacks on a campus of about 1300, taught by an all-white faculty.

And the numbers show no sign of increasing. Although the number of blacks applying has increased in the past three years, the number enrolling has remained at a consistently low level.

"Looking at the statistics, we're not doing that well," said John White, director of minority affairs. "But we're doing all that a small college can do."

Now minority recruitment at W&L and other private institutions in the state faces an uncertain future.

Virginia public colleges and universities have received a mandate from a federal judge to increase enrollment of black

freshmen and transfers in 1985 by about 20 percent, or face a cut in federal funds. (See related story.)

Competition for qualified black students will become unusually keen.

Among private schools, W&L's dilemma is not unique. Only a very few four-year private institutions in Virginia can claim a minority enrollment above five percent.

The problem is not a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the administration or admissions staff at W&L.

"We are making a good-faith effort toward affirmative action," said Van Pate, associate director of admissions.

Between 2,000 and 2,500 black high school seniors receive information from W&L each year; and a combination of financial aid, grants and scholarships give W&L "one of the most attractive recruitment policies of any small college," White said.

Yet the percentage of minority students enrolling from the numbers applying is only 34 percent. Black students are simply not attracted to W&L.

"They're just not biting," White said.

## Problems

Admissions officials at W&L and VMI have identified several problems that they believe hinder efforts to recruit black students:

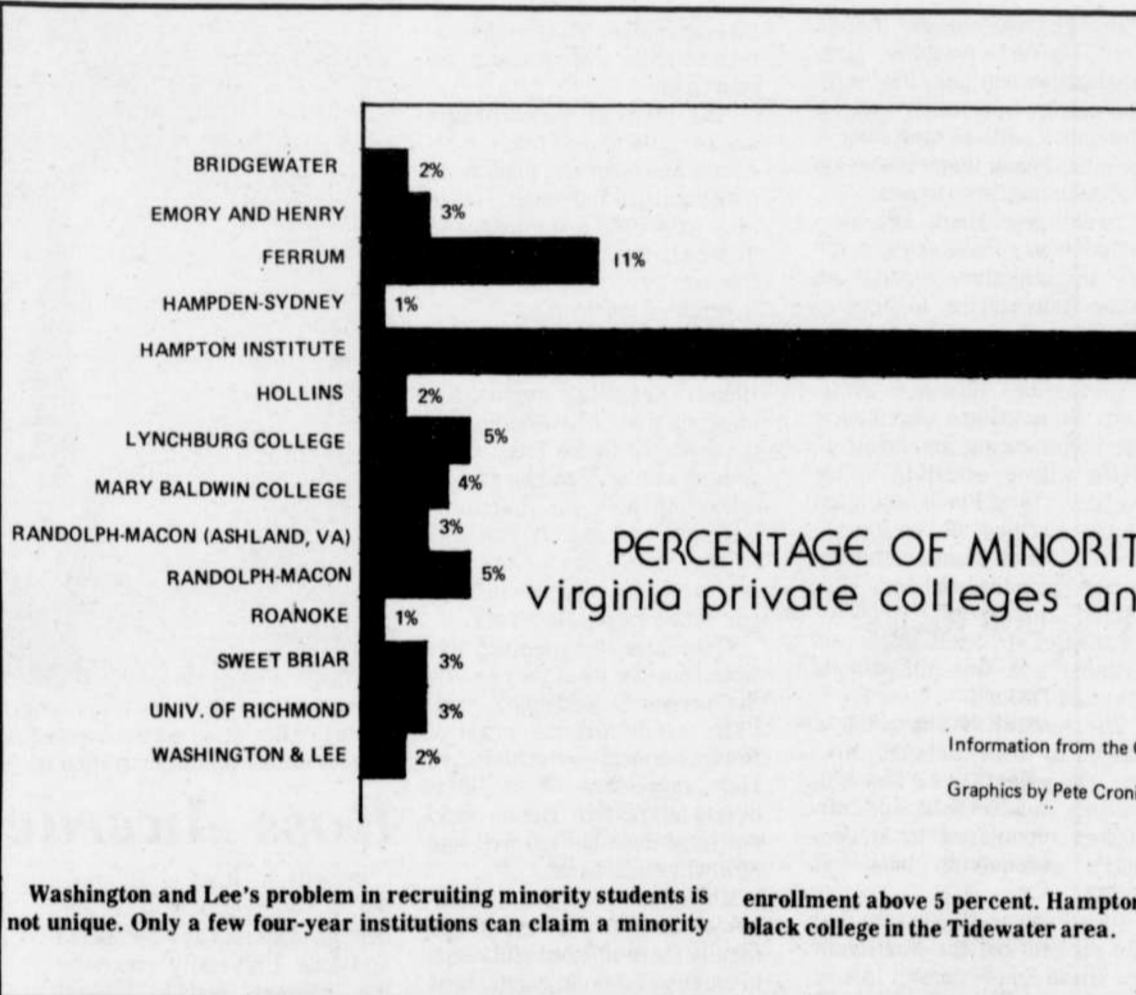
### •Perception

W&L was one of the last schools in the country to integrate; and its links to the traditions of the Old South have created a considerable image problem among blacks.

While W&L enjoys considerable respect by middle- and upper class white circles, it does not have a good reputation among blacks.

"Historically we've got to fight a misapprehension on the part of the black community. We have to convince them that we are sincere," White said.

The school's location adds to that apprehension. Most black students are recruited from ur-



Washington and Lee's problem in recruiting minority students is not unique. Only a few four-year institutions can claim a minority

enrollment above 5 percent. Hampton Institute is the only black college in the Tidewater area.

ban areas and are not generally attracted to a rural campus.

Moreover, many are concerned about coming to a college where blacks are few in number on campus and in the community.

"I think they are put off when they come into a community where they don't join black professionals," Wilson said. "This side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, there is not a black community to join."

White also believes location is a problem. "A lot of parents are skeptical about sending their sons to a predominately white, all-male college in Southwest Virginia," he said.

### •Competition

W&L is in head-to-head competition for top black high school seniors with some of the best schools in the country, many of which can offer full tuition or scholarships for minority students.

As a private university, the cost of coming to W&L prevents serious consideration by poor families, black and white, despite liberal financial aid programs.

Many promising black candidates have been lured away by the service academies as well. White remembers more than one student committed to W&L who has backed out after being accepted at the U.S. Naval Academy.

### •A small pool

Col. William J. Buchanan, director of admissions at Virginia Military Institute, sees another problem existing at the secondary school level.

He said not enough blacks are

taking college preparatory courses in high school to qualify them for admission at schools such as VMI and W&L. Only 33 percent of all males, white and black, take any college prep courses, he said.

To counteract that, VMI has undertaken "project transition," in which minority high school students are brought to summer school at VMI without charge "to pump up their backgrounds." In addition, VMI can offer full athletic scholarships to qualified blacks.

Approximately 4.6 percent of VMI's student body is black.

### •No Women

W&L is crippled by its all-male status, primarily because the school cannot recruit black women.

"Fifty-one percent of the population goes right there," White said.

It also limits the social opportunities W&L can offer to black students. The black communities at the surrounding women's colleges are as small as W&L's.

"The social life at W&L for minority students sucks," said

Terry McWhorter, a black sophomore from Cleveland, Ohio.

No blacks are members of fraternities and they have to make a special effort on the weekends, he said.

White said most blacks are used to coeducation and may be frightened away by the prospects of an all-male college.

"Several students, otherwise convinced to attend W&L for academic and financial aid considerations, are deterred by

personal anxiety about social survival in an all-male environment," White said.

## The Recruiting Program

To combat those and other obstacles, W&L has developed a program to attract qualified black students.

The process begins with a mail campaign to high school seniors identified through the SAT student search.

White, who was hired in 1979 specifically to recruit and counsel minority students, travels about two weeks a year to black high schools all over the country, trying to convince



President John D. Wilson: "I think the... join black professionals." (Photo by Pe...

## Minority Recruiting at W&L

1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	
22	29	31	13	13	APPLIED
13	23	26	7	7	ACCEPTED
7	7	14	7	2	ENROLLED

# A future of problems and uncertainty

its New York field office.

Black alumni assist in the recruiting effort through fundraising and by supplying names of candidates. Hill heads a black alumni group in Atlanta; and Matthew Towns, '74, vice president of Wachovia Bank in Winston-Salem, N.C., has personally contacted every black applicant for the past three years.

Despite that kind of effort, W&L continues to have trouble enticing minority students.

"I go into places like Harlem, D.C. and Dallas," White said. "And I've had students tell me, 'I like what I see, but I don't think I can make it.' ... We're doing the best we can."

## OCR Review

W&L's performance in recruiting minority students is under routine review by the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education.

According to Ron Gilliam, deputy director of the OCR regional office in Philadelphia, the office is required to do periodic reviews of schools receiving federal money.

Nevertheless, it will be the first time W&L's minority policy has come under the scrutiny of an outside agency.

W&L receives substantial federal funds especially for financial aid; under Title VI, federal money must be used without discrimination to race, religion or sex. W&L is exempt from the sex clause.

"Frankly, I'm surprised the OCR review has not come up sooner," Pate said.

Pate said the OCR review is equivalent to audits of the financial aid books conducted each year by the federal government to ensure that federal funds are being dispensed properly.

The OCR wants to be sure that W&L is doing everything it

can to recruit minority students, he said.

An unfavorable review could result in an ultimatum to improve the recruiting process or lose federal money.

One possible area for improvement is in the faculty. There are no black faculty members on the undergraduate campus.

"We're going to keep our eyes open for black faculty, administration and staff," Wilson said. "That will help attract black students."

Black faculty also would help with the students already here.

"It would be helpful if minority students had a few more role models here," White said.

University officials, however, are confident that they are do-

ing as much as they can.

Gilliam said representatives from OCR will be on campus this month for interviews with administration, faculty and students.



John White, director of minority affairs at W&L: "They're just not biting." (Photo by Peter Cronin)

## State colleges face new quotas

By PHIL MURRAY  
Phi Staff Writer

Efforts at Washington and Lee University to recruit minority students may be complicated in the next few years as state-supported colleges and universities scramble to meet quotas established under a new Virginia desegregation plan.

Virginia is under fire from U.S. District Judge John H. Pratt, who has threatened to cut \$100 million in federal funds unless state schools can demonstrate some improvement in enrolling black and other minority students.

In January, Gov. Charles S. Robb signed the new plan which includes:

- Adjusted numerical goals for enrollment of minority students.

- A faculty exchange program between black and white colleges.

- \$1,000 scholarships for qualified community college students who transfer to predominantly "other race" institutions.

The 3-year plan will cost about \$16 million, according to The Washington Post.

The historically white institutions must increase their enrollment of black freshmen and transfers by an average of 20 percent by next fall.

Many schools are taking extraordinary steps to prove their sincerity in recruiting blacks. The University of Virginia, The College of William and Mary and George Mason University have announced they will take applications from blacks until school opens in the fall.

And several institutions are taking part in a state-funded airplane tour of Virginia community college campuses scheduled for today.

At Virginia Military Institute, however, the problem is not as severe, according to Col. William J. Buchanan, director of admissions. VMI's goal has been set at 16 black Virginians for next year's freshmen class of about 400. Last year 14 entered the all-male public institute in Lexington.

"At least we have a fighting chance," Buchanan said.

Nevertheless, VMI is instituting new measures to draw more black students.

This summer, VMI will hold its first "project transition." High school students will be able to attend VMI summer school at no cost and take college preparatory courses needed to gain admission to VMI and other institutions.

In addition, Buchanan will be traveling for eight days later this month with admissions personnel from other Virginia public colleges in a state-coordinated car and van tour of community college campuses to talk to potential transfer students. VMI is not participating in the plane tour.

Buchanan is critical of the new desegregation plan, which, he said, does not address the problem at its roots in the secondary school system.

"We need time to get seventh- and eighth-graders into college prep courses," he said. Judge Pratt is giving the schools 18 months to comply.

Buchanan said it is unrealistic to expect a college to

increase its black enrollment unless the pool is enlarged. Currently, only 33 percent of all males, black and white are taking college prep courses in high school, he said.

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund also has blasted the new plan.

The fund is angry because the goals set for freshmen enrollment in 1985 are lower than the goals set for 1981.

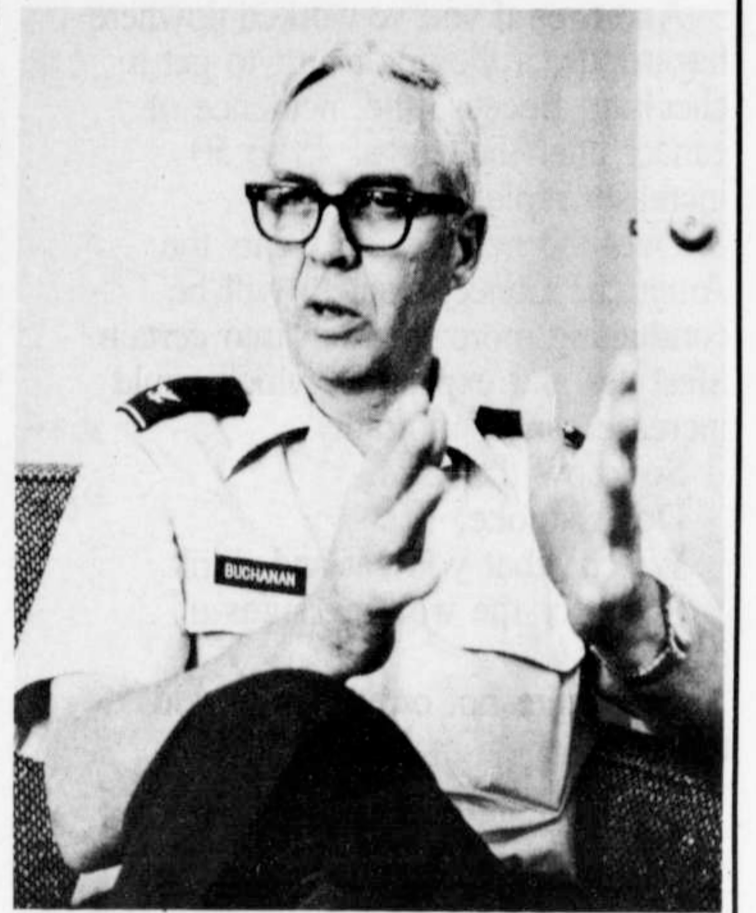
The Washington Post reports that the state should have

enrolled 5,754 black freshmen under the old plan while the Robb plan calls for 5,477 by 1985.

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund originally brought suit in 1972 to integrate colleges and universities in Virginia and other states.

Virginia's first desegregation plan was instituted in 1978.

That plan fell far short of its numerical goals and was declared a failure by the federal government last summer.



Col. William J. Buchanan, director of admissions at VMI: "At least we have a fighting chance." (Photo by Peter Cronin)

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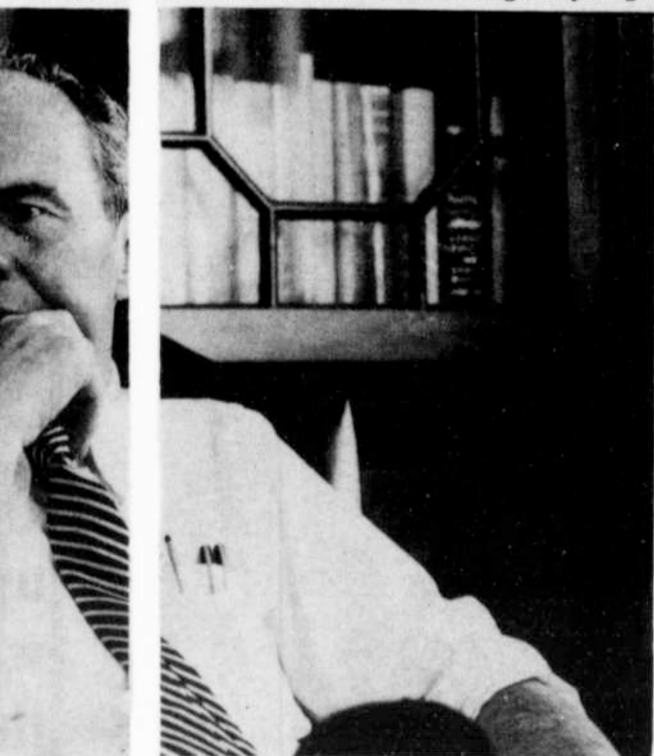
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by Peter Cro