

DEAD END?

The Question of Coeducation

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Front Lawn

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Washington and Lee University

Lexington, Virginia

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Drop in student market projected

By RICK SWAGLER
Chief Editor

The Washington and Lee Class of 1996 will only number 265, a drop of 104 students as compared with the class of 1986, according to the Admissions Office Demographics report for the faculty. The prediction is based on the assumption that the economy and federal financial aid situations remain stable and that the two classes are academically comparable.

These figures — from the National Center for Education Statistics — are based on the study's prediction that the 18-year-old population will dwindle making admissions more competitive among colleges.

Associate Director of Admissions, Van H. Pate pointed out that beyond 1992 "there is another bubble." Pate said that the children of "baby-boom" babies will be entering college.

Pate discounted this increase, though, saying it was "flatter and not as wide."

Adults from the baby-boom era, Pate said, are having fewer children and are having them later in life.

According to the study, W&L's 15-state market which has accounted for over 84 percent of the student enrollment

in the past five years, is expected to suffer a 22 percent decline in 18-year-olds between 1982 and 1992. (See accompanying graph.)

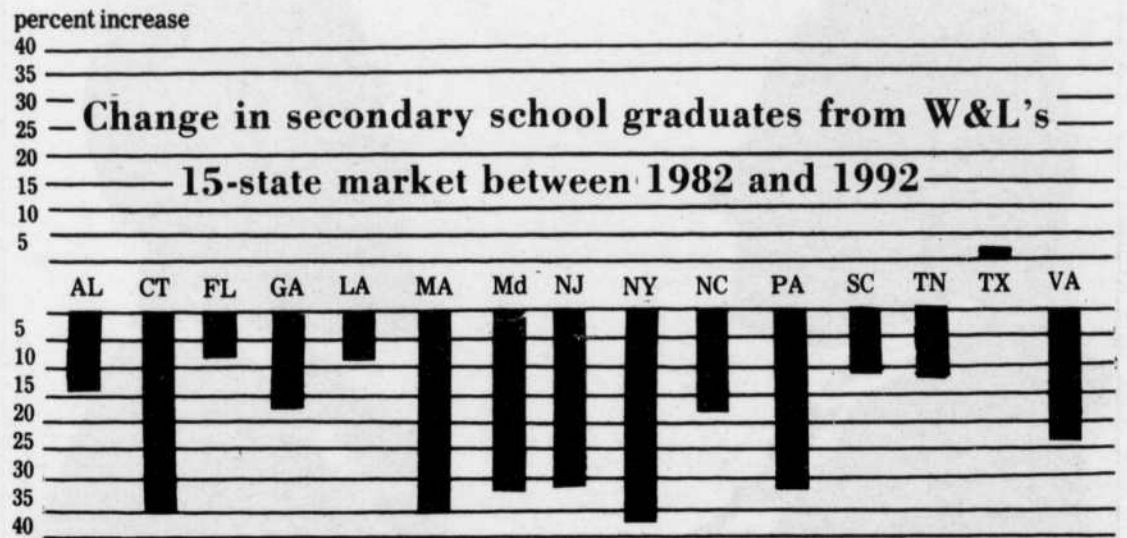
W&L's five-state market (excluding Texas), which has accounted for nearly half the enrollment over the past five years, is expected to drop by 33 percent. Only Texas is predicted to post a gain, .02 percent.

The 15-state market is of key importance to W&L, according to the report, because it accounts for 84 percent of both the accepted pool and the enrolling class.

According to Pate, the bulk of the statistics, particularly the 15-state market projections are from the national report but, "the Center also ran some special searches for us."

The Admissions Office has also prepared a breakdown on the number of students who possess characteristics typically found in W&L students.

- Males who score 500 or more on the verbal section of the SAT
- Males who also score 550 or better on the Math section of the SAT, and
- The number who rank in the top 2/5ths of their class and have a 'B' average or better.
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The report projects that, in the 15-state market, the number of students typical of Washington and Lee will drop from 4,888 to 4,400 by 1987. The report

predicts that the number of applicants from the 15-state market will drop 35 percent from the 1982 total of 1,605 to 1,151 by 1992.

Coed issue addressed before

By B. SCOTT TILLEY
Staff Reporter

This generation of Washington and Lee gentlemen is not the first to confront the issue of coeducation. As early as 1896, the faculty considered the possibility of coeducation, voting the idea down. In 1902, it was again brought up, and again it was defeated in a vote of the faculty.

In recent years, most of the remaining all-male schools, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Virginia, have decided to go coed. Their decisions led W&L twice to consider the question of coeducation — in 1969 and 1975.

"Many of those schools were making changes for pedagogical reasons, to enrich their overall educational experiences," said Frank Parsons, the executive assistant to the president and a 1965 graduate of W&L, from his office in Washington Hall.

"Many others, though, looked ahead and saw difficulties for themselves. Student recruitment possibilities were enhanced by the admissions of women.

"In that climate, in 1969, the question was addressed here by a faculty student committee," said Parsons.

That committee, he explained, was deliberately "loaded" with proponents of coeducation by then-President Robert E.R.

Huntley. They were charged with looking at the issue and determining the consequences of going coed, "not necessarily whether to go coed."

The faculty committee studied coeducation's consequences from two angles: from that of simply adding women, thereby increasing the student body size, or from that of substituting women, thereby maintaining the same student population.

The conclusions of the committee, explained Parsons, were never made public or acted upon. The Board of Trustees, in response, simply thanked the committee and asked Huntley to keep them abreast of the situation.

The 1975 study was requested by the Board of Trustees probably at the request one year earlier of the student body president, remembered Parsons. He was a law student who had not attended W&L as an undergraduate and who had run emphasizing his pro-coeducation stance.

Dean Lewis John's office provided the staff support for that study, which Parson's described as "substantial." John's office consulted several schools that had recently gone coed, asking them to assess their gains and losses, and asking for faculty comment.

(continued on page 11)

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Special for W&L Students

Board to examine issue with great care, Ballengee says

By JOHN CLEGHORN
Chief Editor

Since formally making the announcement that they will reexamine the issue of coeducation at Washington and Lee, the members of the W&L Board of Trustees have adjourned until their February meeting to study the question and probe the options, according to Board Rector James M. Ballengee.

Ballengee said that the Board plans to make a preliminary study of the issue in February in an effort to be ready to make a final judgment at its May meeting.

"We have been looking at projections that Bill Hartog and his people have brought to us," Ballengee said. "and that, coinciding with the arrival of the new president of Washington and Lee, has raised this issue again."

Ballengee said that the Board was given no particular direction on how to study the issue in preparing for the vote.

"We're taking our lead from President Wilson," he said.

"I have not appointed any committee or committees," he continued, "my current thinking is that we would do this a committee as a whole."

"We will examine it in a very careful and deliberate way."

Ballengee said that it would be difficult to predict the present opinion of the current Board on the question and that he thought the board would vote as individuals.

"I don't think there are any factions on the Board," he said.

The announcement of four new Board members to replace retiring members is expected in the next week. Although the names of the new members have not been announced yet, Ballengee said he is in the process of speaking to the candidates and that he foresees no dramatic change in the sentiment of the Board because of the transition.

"I don't think the change will affect the decision in any way," he said.

In the press announcement released after the Board's

meeting two weeks ago, Ballengee wrote that the reexamination of the question stemmed from the board's "desire to understand all of the options before (it)." Ballengee mentioned alternatives of lowering enrollment or lowering standards as the other viable "options."

Ballengee agreed with President Wilson that the major constituents in the decision are the faculty, the alumni and the students. He also said that prospective students, college counselors and citizens of Lexington would be considered in

the decision.

He added that all of these constituents would be informed of any major actions by the Board before its May decision.

"We're not going to handle this like Grenada," he said. "We are going to keep people informed."

In a statement released after the Board's October meeting, Ballengee wrote, "...American colleges and universities are now facing an unprecedented fall-off in the number of high school graduates who will enter upon collegiate study."



Board of Trustees Rector James M. Ballengee.

Coeducation would be tough on fraternities

By PETER WRIGHT
Staff Reporter

The question of coeducation and its possible effect on the fraternity system at Washington and Lee is still lingering around the campus, but according to officials at the University of the South (Sewanee) and Randolph-Macon College, two

In 1968 Seiter said Sewanee had 800 males enrolled, while only 380 were enrolled last year.

According to Seiter, the ability of the fraternities at Sewanee to pay their bills has been hampered by the decline of the numbers in the respective houses, yet he added, "I think the change in the social life has been extremely positive."

Andrews agreed with Seiter that the change to coeducation has been for the better.

There have been no momentous changes in the structure of the fraternities, Andrews said. Identical to Sewanee, the number of fraternities has remained the same since the decision of the school to go coed in 1972, Andrews said.

Of course there are now fewer males at the college, but Andrews said, "there is simply no problem at Randolph-Macon with the student population."

Andrews pointed out that the relationships between the males and females were not healthy before women were admitted to the school.

"I think Randolph-Macon was not normal because women came to campus for only social purposes," he said.

According to Andrews, wom-

said.

Meanwhile, here at W&L, Dean of Students Lewis John anticipates that if the school does go coed, some fraternities could run into trouble.

"Obviously, it's going to make it tougher to keep all 17 fraternities on campus with fewer males," John said. He added that he felt the social life

would still revolve around the fraternities at W&L, but anticipated that there would be less "frenzy activity" on weekends and on Wednesday nights.

John did point out that previously at W&L over 80 per-

cent of the student body was affiliated with fraternities and if the interest increased to that point again, there would be less of a problem with the stability of the fraternities.

"...we do have a significant decline in the number of males in fraternities."

schools that changed their all-male status and admitted women over a decade ago, coeducation has only had a minimal effect on the survival of the fraternities.

At the University of the South, the arrival of women did not pose any serious problem to the fraternity system said the university's dean of men, Doug Seiter. Seiter said that since the decision to go coed in 1969, the number of fraternities on the university's campus has remained the same.

"Presently, we have the same number of fraternities," Seiter said, but he added, "we do have a significant decline in the number of males in fraternities."

Seiter explained that the campus of the University of the South is somewhat isolated with no other colleges nearby, which is not the case at W&L. As a result of the school's accepting coeducation, the students now have many social outlets and have parties every weekend, Seiter said. Having graduated from Sewanee in 1965, Seiter said the school "has gained so much more" by admitting women.

Although many people at Sewanee were afraid the change would wipe out much of the tradition of the school, Seiter said, "we were able to preserve what was of value of the all-boys' school."

The Dean of Students at Randolph-Macon College, Ira L.

en have since been fully integrated into both the social environment and the student affairs of the school.

"It's all gone very well so far, and it's as if women have been here the whole time," Andrews

President of the the Interfraternity Council Emery Ellinger said he does not foresee the interest in fraternities increasing with the advent of coeducation.

"It is absurd to think W&L fraternities will increase from 60 to 80 percent," he said.

Ellinger explained that fraternities will not have as many members if women enter the school and said that many of the fraternities would fold because of their inability to fulfill their financial responsibilities.

Ellinger also said, "...the W&L fraternity system has been so strong because of its being an all-male school surrounded by five girls' schools."

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Surrounding women's colleges fear coed W&L

By NELSON PATTERSON
Staff Reporter

If W&L were to go coed, neighboring women's colleges say they fear the "new W&L" might, in the long run, irreversibly harm the social life and academic life of their schools. While none of the schools believe such a move would force them to go coed also, they acknowledge that there will be immediate effects.

One of these effects will be on the social life W&L shares with neighboring schools. All of the area women's colleges feel the close social network developed over the years would be broken by coeducation.

"Mary Baldwin and Washington and Lee have always had close social ties, but I believe that we would have to reconsider those ties if coeducation comes to light. We are close to Hampden-Sydney also because of our Presbyterian ties," said Kris Milker, admissions counselor at Mary Baldwin College.

The Director of Public Relations for Sweet Briar agrees that the social environment would change.

"One can only speculate as to the effect of coeducation academically, but socially I'm sure it would be there. Sweet Briar students spend a great deal of time with W&L students, and women at the W&L campus would affect that to some extent," said Janet Lowry.

"As you well know, Randolph-Macon and W&L are socially active. But I'm sure that with other girls around, that might change," said Bill Driskill, Associate Director of Admissions at Randolph-Macon Woman's College.

None of the schools believe coeducation at W&L would lead to coeducation at their schools.

"The applicant who looks at Mary Baldwin definitely looks at it because it is all-women. If W&L were to go coed, I don't think it would force us to go coed," Milker said.

Driskill agreed. "I doubt we would have to consider going coed. We are a traditional school, just as W&L is. But we are deeply committed to the principles and ideals behind women's education," he said.

That same commitment to principles and ideals in women's education also holds true for Hollins College.

"Let me make one thing clear! (W&L's going coed) would not force Hollins to go coed. We would hope that what-

ever the outcome, there would still be a close relationship between the schools," said Sandra Loveinguth, Director of Admissions for Hollins.

Loveinguth wondered what type of woman would attend W&L.

"Would the type of woman attracted to W&L be the type of woman W&L men would want to date?" she asked. "What type of woman would be attracted to W&L?"

The question of traditional, all-male education means much more to neighboring women's colleges than most would believe.

"We use W&L, Hampden-Sydney and VMI as selling points in the admission process, and with W&L coed, that would change, drastically," said Driskill.

"There's just a historical tradition to your institution, an all-male tradition. I don't think Hollins is threatened by coeducation, but concerned we are. We would think thoughtful men's colleges should exist to complement women's colleges. The role of the all-male college is as distinctive a role as ours is," said Loveinguth. "It takes judicious planning."

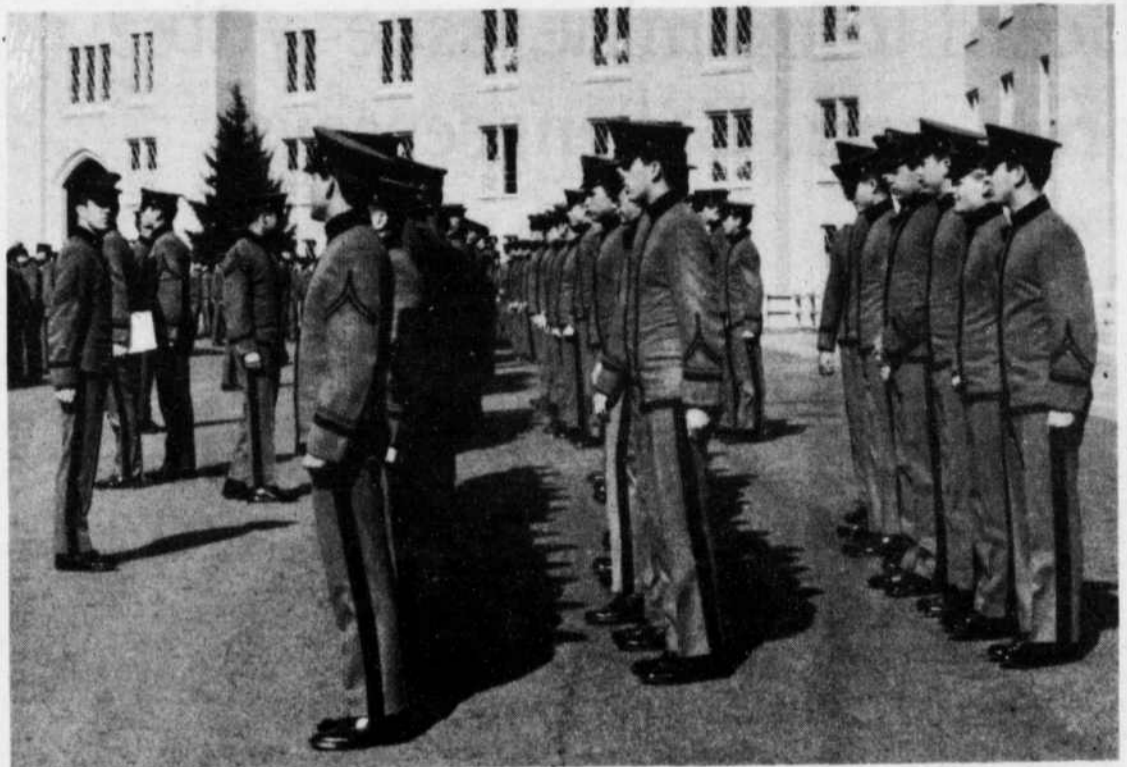
The academic effect on other schools is of great concern to the neighboring schools. While fewer high school graduates are attending college, many more women are opting for higher education. Competition for top students will heat up, admissions counselors at the neighboring women's colleges predict.

"W&L would skim the cream off our applicant pool, and I fear the academic students might be lost," said Loveinguth, citing past gains in average SAT scores as typical of Hollins' growth in the academic realm.

"While it is conceivable that applications might drop off, I doubt that it would. Enrollment is at its second highest in the history of Sweet Briar. In that sense, it might not necessarily affect us," Lowry said.

Each of the women's colleges, however, admits the real effect of W&L's going coed is pure speculation.

"It is hard to anticipate exactly what the effect would be. However, we need to remember that the strength of each of the schools in the area is derived from the strengths of all of the schools, and Washington and Lee's going coed would mean some strength would be lost," Loveinguth said.



According to VMI officials, there will be no women in the ranks in the near future.

Hampden-Sydney, VMI look on

By ANDY HOPPE
Staff Reporter

Although neither Virginia Military Institute nor Hampden-Sydney College currently has any plans to abandon its all-male status, officials at Hampden-Sydney said that they are keeping track of the coeducation issue.

"We're monitoring the situation, but at this moment we don't have any high-level committee studying it," Lewis Drew, the dean of students at Hampden-Sydney, said.

Drew said that about 18 months ago a study group had recommended that Hampden-Sydney remain all-male for the foreseeable future. The prohibitive cost of going coed was the main reason for the decision, Drew said.

Hampden-Sydney officials also realize that demographic trends show that there will be a sharp drop in the number of

persons of college age in the next decade, Drew said. The college is trying to broaden its recruiting base in order to make up for this, he said.

Roughly 52 percent of this year's freshman class at Hampden-Sydney are Virginia residents, Drew said. A large percentage of the non-Virginians come from states that border Virginia, Drew added.

"We've set records for applications in the last two years. But the worst years are yet to come," Drew said.

W. Sydnor Settle, the chairman of the Board of Trustees of Hampden-Sydney, said that the Board has supported attempts to broaden the college's recruiting area.

"For whatever reason, the college has a tradition of drawing most of its students from Virginia and bordering states," Settle said.

Both Drew and Settle said that Hampden-Sydney's admin-

istration is closely watching Washington and Lee's current debate over coeducation.

"I really think that you might make the switch. There's really no right or wrong about it," Settle said regarding W&L's study of the coed question.

"I think we would probably have to look at the issue again," Settle said concerning Hampden-Sydney's reaction to a possible decision by Washington and Lee to go coed.

"As the number of all-male colleges gets smaller, it might seem more unique. It might seem somewhat unusual," Settle said.

Drew said that if W&L went coed, Hampden-Sydney would have to "consider more closely the coed issue." The network of single-sex colleges in Virginia provides a comfortable social atmosphere that might be hurt by a decision by W&L to go coed, Drew said.

(continued on page 9)

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Alumni express divided opinions

By MIKE ALLEN
Staff Reporter

Recent telephone interviews with a handful of prominent Washington and Lee alumni show that opinion is divided on the coeducation question, with few willing to lend wholehearted support to either position in the debate.

Although most had a strong idea of their general sentiments about such a change, a hesitant sense of doubt pervaded the responses. Peter A. Agelasto III ('62), president of the 17-member Alumni Board of Directors, said "it's a little premature" to have an opinion on the question. "I speak for the alumni. I need to be as aloof as I possibly can so that I can make a responsible evaluation," he said.

The Norfolk lawyer continued, "I think what's being done from the University's standpoint is to educate everybody. This is a very important question for the alumni, the students and the University."

"This is definitely not an adversary proceeding," he said. "We're all on the same side of the fence. It's just that we represent different constituencies."

Agelasto said he believes he can accurately speak for the University's alumni when he submits his written recommendation on the coeducation question later this year. "I think the Alumni Board is a big, diverse group, and I think it will be representative. A day doesn't go by that we don't get input from somebody."

He emphasized, however that he "wouldn't recommend for a minute that we send out a postcard asking for everybody's opinion."

"I think it's a question of education," he said. "It's awfully hard to keep the emotionalism out of the argument. You get that on both sides. It's not black and white. It's very gray."

He concluded by admonishing the reporter, "I don't think anybody you contact ought to give you a response with enough meat to digest."

William C. Norman Jr. ('56), vice-president of the Alumni Board, said, "I would anticipate that any decision by the Board of Trustees or the administration would be made in the interest of what is going to be needed to ensure the survival of W&L into the next century."

"That's a pretty heavy responsibility. I would not pre-judge any decision that would be made."

However, he said, "If there's any possible way that the school could survive as an all-male in-

stitution, I'd be the first to say that it was folly to try to change that."

West Virginia, Army and the University of Virginia. "There was all this hue and cry from the students and the alumni. We felt we'd been betrayed. But it was absolutely the right decision," he said.

According to Norman, "Major changes are in the short run disruptive. Unfortunately, there is only one generation that's going to suffer the consequences of this, and that's yours."

"It's easy for me to take a liberal viewpoint — and I'm not

"We are unique.

I have no problem with being one of five schools in our position."

stition, I'd be the first to say that it was folly to try to change that."

The Crossett, Ark., bank president said that an Alumni Leadership Conference held in Lexington last month was "the first indication we had that the current administration might be moving very rapidly toward a resolution of this problem."

Norman said he was meeting with a group of Arkansas alumni over the weekend, and said that "it'll come as a big shock to many of the alumni, I'm sure."

At the Alumni Leadership Conference, the administration gave a presentation which some interpreted as being pro-coeducation.

"I think it is possible that we were not given and have not been presented a totally balanced view if there is an opposing constituency," Norman acknowledged.

Norman said his main concern is that "I want that school to survive. I think the debate that is going on is healthy. All opposing sides should be allowed to present their point of view."

He pointed out that change has racked the institution before. As an example, he cited the dropping of subsidized athletics when he was a student.

At the time, W&L was playing football with such schools as

saying I favor that.

"It would disrupt a pattern of life and living that you folks have out there now. That would be extremely unfortunate. I'm wrestling with that."

William E. Latture ('49), treasurer of the Alumni Board, had originally agreed to express his views on coeducation for publication.

When he was contacted again, however, he said, "Since we talked last, I've received a communication" asking him not to speak with the Ring-tum Phi. He said he would "prefer not to say" who had made the request.

"We are in the process of formulating our opinions," he said. "I don't feel free to discuss it. We will be submitting a report by December. We feel this is what's in the best interest of the University."

James M. Slay Jr. ('65, '71L), chairman of the Alumni Admissions Program for the "Delmarva" (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia) region, said, "I'm not sure there's any way for the trustees to know (the effects of coeducation) short of trying it."

"If they do that, and they're wrong, then it's going to be too late. They're going to make sort of a god-like decision."

"I'm not convinced that there's not a market for an all-men's school," he said. "It frankly strikes me as being change for change's sake."

Slay, who concentrates his recruiting efforts in the Eastern Shore area, brought seven freshmen to the class of 1987.

"We have never had any pro-

blem with boys being turned off by the single sex. They're much more likely to be turned off by geography or the expense.

"In fact, many of them like the idea of not having women around during the week and then having big party weekends. That's the same attitude I had when I went up there from Richmond."

"We are unique," he said. "I have no problem with being one of five schools in our position."

"When I go out and sell the school, I'm selling a spirit, and a lot of that is the spirit that I experienced when I went there."

"Maybe we'll lose that with coeducation. Perhaps coeducation will improve it. I don't know."

Slay praised the Admissions Office for the assistance it gives him, and says his W&L experience has been invaluable to him. "The whole school is like a big fraternity after you graduate," he said.

The contacts are so helpful, he said, that in legal circles, people talk of "the W&L Mafia."

This could be lost with coeducation, according to Slay. "Under the guise of academic

coeducation.

"The Admissions Office can quantify demographic trends. The people who are in favor of coeducation have lots of dry, empirical data."

"The way they respond, the undergraduates trivialize their position. An observer sees it as cold, hard facts versus buffoonery."

"There're a lot of good, sound arguments that could be mustered in opposition to coeducation. A rational defense is possible. But they're probably outgunned in the assembly of data and cogent arguments."

Slay was also extremely displeased by what he saw at the fraternity houses he visited.

"They were given enough rope to hang themselves with, and they did," he stated.

With these actions, Slay said, "The people in the fraternities may have just played into the hands of those on the faculty who want to close them down."

I. Langston Donkle III ('74), Alumni Admissions Program chairman for the South Carolina/Piedmont region, said he "would generally be opposed to" coeducation at W&L.

"I think it's a question of education.

It's awfully hard to keep

the emotionalism out of the argument.

You get that on both sides."

excellence. We could be losing something even more valuable," Slay stated.

One proposal involves increasing the size of the school if women are added. "I'd certainly be opposed to raising the size of the school, whether it's coed or single sex," Slay said.

At the Alumni Conference, Slay said, W&L President John D. Wilson "was careful not to state his views to us. I don't

doubt him, and he says he hasn't made up his mind yet."

Slay was critical of the methods he saw used by undergraduate students opposed to

"I saw them try it at schools like Davidson, Sewanee, Dartmouth and Virginia, and it didn't seem to work out at all as they planned," he observed.

Donkle said that the responsibility for dealing with the shrinking applicant pool lies with the Admissions Office.

"If they'll get out and do their work and meet with the prospective students, they can overcome their apprehension and misunderstanding" about the single-sex environment. "It's something we can easily work with," he said.

"They need to recruit more intensely if we're going to get the quality of students we're accustomed to. We need intelligent, personable and impressive people in admissions."

"I need more help. I frankly don't get the help that I need from admissions...I can tell the difference."

Donkle said he thinks Director of Admissions William M. Hartog "might be a little more cut and dried about admissions — a little less personable" than the previous director.

"I see no reason for" coeducation, he concluded.

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Wilson: 'I didn't bring the issue of c

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The Ring-tum Phi- You've been president of Washington and Lee since January, what are your feelings about the university in general?

President John Wilson- Well, I have a very positive feeling about Washington and Lee. I think it was, from my point of view, a very happy day when I was elected in August...

I am immensely impressed with the quality of the people here. The faculty are superb people to be with. The staff I have inherited I think is full of lovely, decent people. They are also great characters and good human beings. I think that's true of the students too...I think the civility and the decency of our students is impressive. So I am enjoying it a lot, frankly. I am stimulated by it every day.

Phi- During your interviews with the Board, presumably the question of coeducation was raised. What was your initial reaction when the Board of Trustees asked you about coeducation?

Wilson- Well, I was asked about my attitudes in general, not in the particular context of Washington and Lee. I had to say this, that I was a student in a coeducational undergraduate institution, large and public. Then I was a student in an all-

male institution — essentially private — though Oxford University is a very mixed institution in the terms of its support but it was fundamentally a small, private, superior-quality kind of place, all-male. Then I turned out later to be president of a college for women-single-sex (Wells College) and I defended the single-sex institution as vigorously as I could from the perspective of the female as opposed to a male institution. And then I — of course — went from there as you know to a large public setting (Virginia Tech) again where I was chiefly taken up with the academic program and relationships with faculty...So it wasn't an issue at VPI though it had been in the 60s. VPI was also all male until 1963. So I knew a lot about what they had gone through.

Back in the period at Wells, I read every report that was ever published on coeducation by the major private institutions that were then thinking about it. It was necessary for me as a president of a single-sex college to become very much acquainted with the literature and I published a few articles on the question of single-sex (education). I thought frankly in 1982 when I came to Washington and Lee that the question was relatively moot. I didn't think it was a burning question. After all

these decisions were made 10 or 12 years ago in most institutions. The decision was made at Washington and Lee in 1972 or so to permit women to the law school and they were happily accommodated there...

When I had my first press conference I wasn't five minutes into the press conference before that question was asked. I said to the Board and I said at the press conference that I thought that...the success of an institution was certainly to be taken into account as well as how well it had succeeded over the years. How many generations of young people had it prepared to go out into the world they inherited and to succeed in that world? That if there were to be a shift, to play with the characteristics of an institution, the proof surely would rest upon those who advocated a significant shift. I still believe that's true... There were many more concerns expressed by faculty and by some students about the total quality of life at Washington and Lee... Now I could have stopped them. I could have said, 'Look, that issue has been settled. I don't care to take it up.' I was trying to learn about the university so I didn't really cut them off... So obviously I probably — as a new person whose views weren't known, whose views were still being formed in fact — I probably turned out to be more of a catalyst than I realized to this whole process of self-examination.

So I didn't bring the issue of coeducation to Washington and Lee, the Western World has brought it to all of us. When my Oxford College, which was established in 1314, decided that it could no longer sensibly restrict its enrollment to men alone in 1975, I knew that something very serious was afoot...

I tried to say to Lem Tucker (CBS News Reporter) the other day when CBS was up here with the red light on, Washington and Lee isn't Amherst, it isn't Princeton, it isn't Yale, it isn't Davidson. It's its own special place. It has its own great characters in its past and in its present. It has quintessentially Robert E. Lee and what he stood for and the values that he represents and continues to represent here and one has to make, if one can, a calculation of how translatable those values are into a different undergraduate setting... The question is, what is the female presence at W&L? Is it good that it should be strictly social, strictly weekend and mid-week social events where women are present here, where the serious work of the university, its college, is reserved for men? So the people who advocate coeducation here say it isn't to

Pros

Increased and Improved Applicant Pool

President Wilson said that proponents of coeducation believe its institution would "vastly increase the number of young people who are applying to Washington and Lee."

Improved Intellectual Atmosphere

By bringing women to W&L, Wilson said, "the dialogue on campus would be somewhat more enriched."

Current Atmosphere Is Unhealthy

One further problem coeducation proponents see is the limited perspective a single-sex education cultivates, Wilson said. "Inadvertently, we're teaching young men to believe of themselves that they are the serious citizens of society, and that women are only ornaments or social and recreational dimensions of our lives."

increase the presence of women here, it is to change the nature of the presence of women here and therefore to change the environment in ways they think will be constructive and helpful for the young men as well as the young women who are going to be going out into a very different, changed world.

Phi- You have had a chance to observe academic and social life here at Washington and Lee for a year now. Has your attitude toward coeducation changed during that course of time?

Wilson- Well, not my attitude about how the matter should be approached. I think it should be approached in the most rational, intelligent, thoughtful, sober way it could possibly be approached. And I feel a genuine responsibility to ensure as much as I can that that be done. I cannot stop bumper stickers or banners to be flown... that's part of the fun and zest of an interesting, important conversation.

But I do feel an obligation to contrive as objective an assessment as we can of what is to be lost and what is to be gained, what is at stake, what is at risk...So my own attitudes about it, I am going to reserve, frankly... If I don't come through the next few months with some of my attitudes shaped, changed, altered, modified in one way or another, then I will have not been very observant...

So I am still learning about Washington and Lee. There are some people who say 'How dare he, how dare he indeed, with only seven months, come in here

and advocate coeducation?' that's a simplistic way of looking at it.

Phi- Whose decision was it to raise the question of coeducation this seriously? Was it your decision or the Board's decision?

Wilson- Well, the Board at the meeting just concluded — as you know — formally took steps to ask that the matter be seriously re-examined...

I said in the spring at the Alumni Association meeting in Lee Chapel "I do not believe that a serious re-examination can be avoided, much as you would like to hear me say that it can be avoided." So it is certainly true to say that I have recommended that this matter be taken off the table and re-examined...

We cannot go into this decade blithely skipping through the tulips, assuming that all is going to be well and that we'll have our 1,325 undergraduate men. It's just not going to happen unless we cause it to happen... If we decide to remain all male at the undergraduate level, then some very extraordinary things are going to have to happen in order to protect the quality of this place and I don't



"I thought frankly in 1982 when I came to Washington and Lee that the question was relatively moot."



"We cannot go blithely skipping through the tulips, assuming going to be we

Coeducation to Washington and Lee'

know what all those are yet. So it's part of trying to take stock and that's what I am for. That's what any president must do. To try to plan what needs to be done in order to secure a stronger, better Washington and Lee. That's the only thing that is important here. Not me or my feelings or you and your feelings or the alumni's feelings about this. Those are all part of a mosaic. But it's all part of trying to figure out what is in the best interest of this University.

Phi- Eventually you will make a recommendation about coeducation to the Board. How big a factor is tradition in that recommendation?

Wilson- The point about tradition is I think it's silly to say that anything that was here 234 years ago must remain. Because then you would be reading Livy, Suetonius, Herodotus and Thucydides and you wouldn't be remotely connected up with the courses and curriculum. But you have to inquire beneath the label "What is meant by Tradition? What is exactly at stake here? Now when people say "Well, the Honor System." That's the first thing that comes to mind of those who invoke tradition.... Would the admission of women

Cons

Camaraderie
Wilson said that opponents of coeducation believe "there's a strong fellow feeling in the classes that come out of a rough camaraderie of shared experience that tends to be thought of as gender-fixed."

Tradition
From W&L's all-male origination, Wilson said, "there has grown a first-rate institution," and those against coeducation feel "we've had a pattern of success and we shouldn't change."

The Gentleman Ethic
President Wilson expressed a further concern of the anti-coeducation viewpoint. He said they feel W&L to be inherently a male institution.

Loss of Alumni Support
Wilson also added that the decision to go coed in the undergraduate level would result in "the alienation of some alumni."

to the undergraduate degree programs change that?...

You start out with a definition of Washington and Lee as a first-rate university; national in scope, pretensions to the highest quality, successful alums, etc. That's the definition of Washington and Lee. That's the institution most of you applied to. To what extent did you also apply because it was all male? Since coming — whether in spite of that or because of it — you have become fond of the place, you see how it works, and you like how it works, and that's associated with its gender. Can you untangle that in some kind of intellectual exercise to see whether or not what matters most would survive or whether what matters most would in some way be changed.

Phi- When you make your recommendation regarding coeducation to the Board, whose opinion — student or faculty or alumni — will you consider the most?

Wilson- When I make a recommendation to the Board, I am going to have to make it in a way that I can live with it. That's first and foremost...

I would have to say that the faculty who are here now who know the University well and have committed their lives to the University and who are responsible for its chief activity and especially those who were also students here...I am going to pay special attention to the law faculty who were here before and who took their undergraduate degrees here and who have seen coeducation in that context. And I am going to pay

attention to key emeritus trustees as well as the current trustees and I am going to be obviously interested in key donors and alumni who have been responsible and who love the place, who have given money to it. I am going to pay attention to what they have to say. And then I am going to try to tap into responsible student leaders... And then I am going to trust my own judgments.

Phi- You say you are going to consider key alumni. What goes through your mind when you get a letter from Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell?

Wilson- Well, I take Mr. Powell very seriously. He is a thoughtful man. He enclosed in his letter — I don't think it would be wrong to say — a copy of his dissent in the Mississippi Women's College case and made a point about diversity in American higher education and his hope that it would remain a diverse system. I replied to that letter in some length and tried to explain to him some of the things that were being raised here in the Washington and Lee context. He has since replied to me to say that he was grateful for my thoughtful letter and that I had raised some points that he hadn't considered and that dialogue will continue.

Phi- When do you think that this issue will be decided?

Wilson- May may be too early. The Board may judge otherwise. I have said to the Board that I hope that we do not have to carry this over into another academic year. Let's try to work within that framework and see how we come out. I hope I am in a position to take a position in May and don't ask me before the Board meeting.

Phi- How far are you away from making your decision?

Wilson- Well, I am still trying to find out how students truly think about it. We have got to get beyond the bumper sticker. And I have got to get with the faculty and get their considered views... I am half way there in the sense that I believe the matter requires serious examination.

Phi- Are you an advocate of coeducation?

Wilson- No, I am not going to declare that. I am going to be an advocate for what I think is best for Washington and Lee and the Board is then going to have to make a judgment about that and they will then finally make a decision based on what they collectively think is best for Washington and Lee. I am not an ideologue when it comes to coeducation. I didn't come here saying the first and foremost thing we must do is change this institution. I would not have come here. Why would I have come here? I was happy in my work... I came to Washington and Lee because it is a first-rate institution and I wanted to be

associated and have something to do with a first-rate institution and to be president of a first-rate institution with such memorable people who have been here before me. All of that is immensely attractive and satisfying. I didn't come thinking it's deeply flawed in its central characteristic. I have better things to do than take on 15,000 alumni and 1,325 undergraduates and 350 law students — you don't come for that. But you don't shrink from issues that seem to be important to people and that seem to matter...

I have no choice but to look at coeducation seriously and anybody in my position would.

Phi- Is this just an academic problem, or does it become an economic problem?

Wilson- To be sure there are financial implications to the problem of contraction. If you are going to reduce your freshman class by 25 percent, and then over four years reduce the total undergraduate student population by 25 percent, you are compelled to do that in order to keep some modicum of standards. Then you are not able to contract your faculty the same way. Then you have a financial problem to be sure; an acute one, a serious one.

Phi- During your time here as president you have raised such

controversial questions as coeducation, fraternities and housing. Do you feel that raising these questions has alienated you from members of the university community?

Wilson- I don't in any way shrink or apologize for raising those questions. I think that's my job. I do have the human weakness of not wanting to be desperately disliked, and that is troublesome because I think in some cases I am thought to be meddling without license in things I don't understand — either through 'ignorance or inexperience' I believe is the phrase — and that's troublesome...I don't go through life saying that everything I do, say or may be or stand for is going to be universally applauded. Especially in a position like this where I happen to be the focal point of a lot of interests, some of them not entirely compatible...No, I don't like not to be liked. I like to feel that what I am doing is understood and generally approved of, but I fully realize that I will not satisfy everybody. I only hope one thing and that is my motives are not suspect, that I am not thought to have some hidden ideological agenda.

Chief Editors John Cleghorn and Rick Swagler and News Editor Bruce Potter conducted and edited this interview.



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Photos by Eric Campbell

"I do have the human weakness of not wanting to be desperately disliked."

Other coed schools cite improvements

R-MC, Sewanee, Davidson compared to W&L

By TODD SMITH
Staff Reporter

Comparisons between W&L and three similar universities — Randolph-Macon in Ashland, The University of the South and Davidson College — seem to indicate that recent conversions to coeducation have improved the schools and that they have not consequently suffered from a fall of alumni support.

"As for overall impact, it's probably the greatest thing Randolph-Macon ever did," Admissions Director John Konkright of Randolph-Macon said.

The University of the South at Sewanee, Tenn., "has been nicer," Dean of Men Doug Seiters said. "It's a more normal community with a better social situation," he said.

Davidson vs. W&L

The situation of Davidson College, Davidson, N.C., is most comparable to that of Washington and Lee, according to W&L Dean of Students Lewis John and Associate Dean of Admissions at Davidson Gardner Roller.

"We were drawing from exactly the same applicant pool, we had the same quality students," Ms. Roller said. In 1971 the two schools accepted about 60 percent of applicants in order to fill their freshman classes,

although Davidson had accepted a lower percentage throughout the 1960s.

Since coeducation in 1972, Davidson has surged ahead, according to W&L admissions figures. Davidson now accepts 35 percent of its applicants to get enough to fill up its freshman class; because only 41 percent of W&L's accepted students will matriculate, W&L must accept 57 percent of its applicants. In other words, Davidson extends admission to fewer applicants because it knows three in five will accept; W&L can only count on two in five coming.

Another yardstick is SATs, in which Davidson led W&L by roughly 20 points in 1971; Davidson now leads by 100 points, according to W&L admission figures.

Ms. Roller believes that the effect of coeducation "is entirely positive. The applicant pool has increased dramatically and the quality has also improved," she said. "The change has been more rapid in the last five or six years as the concentration of women has increased."

"The world has changed and single-sex education is no longer in vogue," Ms. Roller said. "As a result, students have begun to seek out coed environments."

"If W&L was to make the

decision in favor of coeducation, we would be competing for the same students in a very short time," she said.

Davidson's trustees made the decision to admit women as degree candidates in May of 1972, after a poll showed that a substantial majority of students, faculty, staff and alumni favored the move.

According to Dr. Julius Melton of the Davidson development office, alumni giving did not drop off after coeducation. In fact, the unrelated instigation of an annual giving campaign drove alumni funding up.

Because alumni were in favor of coeducation from the start, and because there would be no displacement of men by women, Melton found little alumni resentment. He has never met an alumnus disgruntled over the issue, he said.

As planned, the admission of women would not have displaced men because total enrollment would have increased from 1000 to 1500. In reality, Melton said declining applicant pools have kept enrollment at around 1400 — 900 men, 500 women.

"I got here about the time coeducation began," Melton said. "We have been consistently going up ever since."

Sewanee's intangibles

At Sewanee, Dean of Men and alumnus Doug Seiters measures the impact of coeducation in less quantitative ways, and yet defends coeducation. "I have always been a supporter of the change. For our isolated community it was necessary," Seiters said.

Coeducation "had a leveling effect. When I was a student in 1965 there were three big weekends when women were here, and otherwise we just sat

around the fraternity house and listened to the juke box, and thought about how miserable we were," he said.

"We liked to think, as you may, that being different was part of the distinctive charm of the school. But the social life is much healthier and less abnormal now."

"There was something intangible that was lost...There was a kind of closeness among students and faculty that's not the same today."

"A lot of it (the closeness) was out of necessity, too. You just didn't go out on a date, so you socialized with your professors more," he said.

Sewanee's applicant pool had shrunk so greatly during the 1960s that in 1968 over 90 percent of the applicants were offered admission. Since coeducation in September of 1969, the number of applications has shown an overall increase.

"It seemed to me that it was a total breath of fresh air," said Oliver Marcus, director of annual giving at Sewanee. "The girls hit the ground running. Within a year or two the valedictorian was a girl...It was a civilizing influence of a serious magnitude."

Marcus found annual giving to increase between 1968 and 1969, despite any chilling effect of coeducation on alumni. "There was no serious reaction that could be measured in gifts at all."

"I think there was a residual regret that the world was moving on and that it was necessary to change in order to maintain quality," Marcus said. But "99 percent of the alumni understood and approved," excluding the "crabby individuals who say, 'I hate change even if it's for the better.'"

Randolph-Macon, Ashland John Konkright, Director of Admissions at Randolph-Macon, finds a similar response. "I am sure the majority of alumni are realistic and saw it (coeducation) was an excellent decision."

Like Sewanee, Randolph-Macon's declining pull on applicants suggested financial danger. The trustees voted in January 1971 to plunge into coeducation the following September.

"The transition was not traumatic at all. Now the women contribute to the life of the college in every way," Konkright said. Most of the students who earn academic scholarships are women, he noted.

Konkright in turn asked about coeducation as an issue at W&L. News that a change may be in the offing has obviously moved through the network of Southern college administrations, especially through admissions and development offices.

"I think the fact that it comes up over and over again (at W&L) means it won't go away," Konkright said.

"The world has changed and single-sex education is no longer in vogue."

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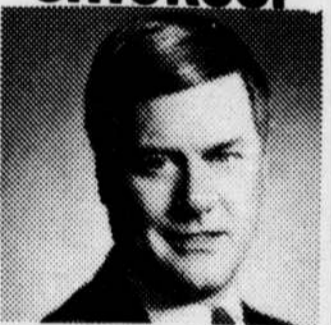
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