W&L to go coed in '85

By MIKE ALLEN and BRUCE POTTER

Chief Editors

Washington and Lee University will begin admitting women in the fall of 1985, the Board of Trustees decided July 14 after a two-day special meeting.

The decision ends 235 years of all-male tradition at Washington and Lee and leaves only a handful of all-male, non-military liberal arts colleges.

The resolution, passed 17-2 by the trustees after what was described as a "civil" yet "vigorous" debate, reads as follows:

"Resolved, that Washington and Lee University shall admit qualified students, regardless of gender, to all of its degree programs commencing in the Fall of 1985.

The decision was announced at a 12:45 p.m. press conference in the Commerce School. Nearly 50 media representatives attended the conference. About 100 students and faculty members watched the press conference on television monitors in Reid Hall.

Reading from a statement prepared by the board, which had voted on coeducation at 11:50 a.m., Rector James M. Wilson said, "We are convinced that a stronger Washington and Lee and a stronger society will be the happy result of W&L.

As many as 100 women will be admitted in the fall of 1985, said University President John D. Wilson, adding that the board had hoped the school would have as many as 500 women students within 10 years.

Wilson spoke of the "integrity, honor and character here," as well as "our superior teaching and learning and academic program.

"We believe that these values that are so important to Washington and Lee can and will be enjoyed by men and women equally, and that they will help to contribute to making these as much a part of the future as they have been of the past," he continued.

Wilson also said at the press conference that he had voted in favor of the motion. Although he said he didn't specifically make a recommendation to the board, he was the first member to speak on the issue Saturday morning.

"I suppose that could be construed as a recommendation," Wilson said.

Another member of the board, whom Ballengee declined to identify, made the motion to adopt the resolution.

Executive Committee President Cole Dawson and former EC President Robert C. Jenevein represented the student body in the trustees' closed session. Jenevein traveled to the meeting from Dallas at his own expense.

Looking worn but enthusiastic, Dawson talked with reporters following the trustees' press conference. "It's going to take an effort of the whole student body to implement coeducation in a positive way," he said.

"It was really exciting when it happened. I still cannot believe the course of history has changed right here at Washington and Lee."

Dawson said he was in favor of coeducation. "I didn't come out and directly tell them that, exactly," he said. "I told them at the end that my feelings were toward coeducation.

"I don't think the market is there for an all-male school," he added. "This school's not marketable as an all-male institution."

Charles D. Hurt Jr. of Atlanta, president of the Alumni Association, and former Alumni Association President Peter A. Agelasto III, represented the alumni at the meeting.

Among reports received by the board this weekend was an analysis of an alumni survey conducted this spring by a Richmond research firm. Of the 6,700 alumni who responded to the survey, 58.5 percent said they opposed coeducation, 23.9 percent said they favored it, and 10.6 percent said they had no opinion.

Although Hurt said he did not make a specific recommendation that the board defeat coeducation, he did say the board was aware of the alumni's feelings because "we have had a continuous communication with the board as a whole as well as individually."

Alumni will support the decision, Hurt added. "I think the decision was the right decision, and I think the alumni will accept the decision," he said.

In its statement the board noted that "within the Board's membership itself opinion was divided, and the vote on the resolution's adoption, while strongly in favor, was not unanimous. However, now that the decision is made, the Trustees are united in pledging their full commitment to the successful implementation of the University's new course."

At the press conference, Ballengee said, "We determined in advance that a decision of this magnitude should not be made by what one would call a slim majority or a narrow majority."

He added that the number of votes in favor of coeducation, 17, exceeded the number of votes the board had decided to require, but he declined to identify that number.

Two other trustees, A. Christian Compton of Richmond and Edgar F. Shannon Jr. of Charlotteville, attended the press conference.

Shannon was president of the University of Virginia when it first began accepting female students.

Compton said he voted against coeducation "because I feel that we have put in place at this university a fine-tuned educational machine which is providing a high-quality education in a single-sex atmosphere," and has produced "a body of outstanding alumni who have succeeded eminently in all walks of life."

However, Compton said, "Those of us who love and support Washington and Lee will work just as hard as to make coeducation another positive factor as W&L is concerned.

"There is no appeal," added Compton, a justice of the Virginia Supreme Court.

Shannon noted that the board studied many financial projections before making the decision.

Ballengee described the discussion preceding the vote as "entirely civil, as Washington and Lee gentlemen should be, one to another. There were people with differing points of view."

"All of the issues that you could possibly imagine were discussed. It was a free, full and frank discussion. I never heard anyone raise his voice. On the whole, it was polite."

Asked his feelings now that the debate finally had ended, Wilson said, "I feel exhausted, if you want to be absolutely candid about it. It's been a long and arduous undertaking, (but) frankly, a rewarding time."

"I'm just looking forward to having it all be over," he had said in an interview earlier this week.

"A decision of this magnitude and complexity involves us all in the re-examination of this university and its character. There is a spirit alive on the campus, a spirit of humaneness. "I feel very good about the decision. I think it was the right decision to be made," added Wilson, who, along with Ballengee, were a Washington and Lee tie to the press conference.

Relaxing at Lee House after the press conference, Wilson expressed hope that Washington and Lee now could begin to plan for the future in other areas.

Wilson said at the press conference that the trustees authorized creation of a committee on coeducation, consisting of students, faculty and administrators, "to help guide us in every step of the way." Female law students and women faculty members will aid the committee, Wilson added.

Among planned improvements to the university's physical plant are a $4 million to $5 million dormitory, which has been in the works for some time, and about $150,000 worth of renovations to the gymnasium to provide separate locker room and shower facilities for female students.

"I trust that you're supportive of that," Wilson added, with a laugh.

continued on page 4
No, we're not going to hell in a handbag

By MIKE ALLEN
Chief Editor
"If made history today.
Washington and Lee: The new coeds
- Mondale 

Painful as it was, the time had come to wake up, smell the coffee, and admit to women to the ranks of students.
The "no go" forces have reached their Appomattox. Now it's time for a little reconstruction.
The well-intentioned anti-coed people who fail to see that a well-fought battle is ever welcome to take their marbles and go home; the rest of us are going to attempt to make coeducation the best thing that ever happen-
to us, will try, and I live in the faith that it will not be a permanently disabling condi-
tion.
We have to hope it's right. Dr. Wilson is not, contrary to popular opinion, the Grinch that destroyed people Single sex coed is a person who was willing to be the point man, and consequently to be the object of all the garbage for a change which he, rightly or wrongly, believed was the best path for the institution he'd been hired to serve.
The Board has said what the policy will be. It is now incumbent upon us, through a combi-
nation of respect and coopera-
tion, to assist Dr. Wilson and his administration in implementing that policy as effectively and as smoothly as possible.
The student government will be an important component of that effort. As you study history, it turns out strong leaders ap-
pear when they are most needed. For the W&L student body, such a man is Cole Dawson.

W&L going first class

By BRUCE POTTER
Chief Editor

Last summer, before the ques-
tion of coeducation was placed on the agenda, I was talking with a co-worker who graduated from Williamsburg, Va. Cole, a relatively small but highly regarded coeducational school.

The conversation turned to colleges, and, inevitably, to Washington and Lee coed-
ucation. Although partially in jest, a comment my colleague made that day forever will remain in my mind.

"Washington and Lee is being dragged, kicking and scream-
ing, into the 20th century," he said.

I believed then that his com-
ment was fairly accurate, and since, I have come to realize that it was even more so. Now, after last weekend's decision, we have really entered the 20th century.

And if each of us works at making coed education succeed, Washington and Lee once again can join the ranks of the most il-
lustrious colleges in the land — a position the school certainly deserves.

No longer will we have to be dragged into the 20th century. We can now move into the 21st century with our head held high, knowing that we had the courage to make a decision — in many ways unpopular and in all ways difficult — that will benefit this university.

The many people who love Washington and Lee are quiet during the summer. This is not entirely so. A group of 17 high school seniors known as Summer Scholars — both male and female — were on campus last month, participating in various programs the university offers.

This past week our student newspaper was torn by — again — male and female — from all over the country.

They, too, marveled at the beauty and grace of Washington and Lee, and its history and quality.

We must ask: If they had visited Blacksburg, would they have toured Virginia Tech?

continued on page 3

New student body president reacts to coed decision

To the editors:

The result of this weekend's decision is one that will no doubt be the talk of everyone associated with Wash-
ington and Lee.

With W&L's history has an issue fostered so much controversy and stirred so much emotion. Washington and Lee has a history of success, but the all-male and coed will be another one.

People who have always been a tradition, died under the all-male and coed one by one — W&L's traditions.

It's heartsickening to realize what they had was still worth fighting for.

But the institution is not.

The time is now. The chance is to take a unique and still strong institution and propel it to even greater distinction.

The trustees aren't trying to take our paradise away from us; they're making it possible for us to enhance it.

The pursuit of excellence, both in ourselves and in future students, is the key to the con-
tinued vitality and superiority of the University. The time is now. The chance is ours. The fate is Washington and Lee's.

W&L's traditions have reached a conclusion similar to that of General Lee in April of 1865. It was time to cut our losses while what we had was still worth saving. Lee realized that the losses he was sustaining were unacceptable, that to continue would invite further decimation of his turf, that to continue was a commitment to the cause was waning. The trustees have made a similar decision.

We have the rare opportunity

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Wilson: 'Integrity, honor' make W&L unique

Following are excerpts from an interview with President W. Scott Wilson of Washington and Lee University, following the July 14 press conference.

Q. — Throughout the meetings this weekend, was there ever a point at which you thought the board might not be able to reach a decision?

Wilson: A — Well, we spent a long time discussing the pros and cons of delay, simply to defer a decision until after the current senior class graduates, current students and key alumni all wondering what you were going to do, that it would be better in a problem fitting in.

A — I believe that that's been the feeling all along, over an evolutionary process over time. I had a meeting with my staff on the subject the day of last summer. Of course, I arrived in January. My faculty conversations began then in earliness. There were discussions with staff about various aspects of university life. I have been in the situation when there were not all that many, it was in the next year that I went out to 30 or 31. It talked to people from the admissions. I wrote in October, I started to get feedback. And that's when you start to question yourself. I was very doubtful of success here that is traceable to a heightened sense of mutual caring. I don't want to exaggerate, but the students have a respect for the faculty and vice versa, so that creates an environment, of a respect for the faculty and of mutual trust. That translates still further into an absolute willingness by the faculty to meet with students and to be of help to them, in their personal lives as well as in their academic work, and that, in turn, has managed to contribute to the cultivation of self-confidence, and ultimately it has made a greater measure of success in the world. I think that it is important for so-called university classes with the same human qualities in our women students that we have those two or three years to have represented in our male student population. In other words, I think character and integrity and honor and a desire to learn — all of these things are important parts of an education and it is most anxious to ensure that those qualities are enhanced by our women students.

Q. — Do you think we'll have any problem recruiting women?

Wilson: A — I think the whole admissions area is going to be very difficult for all colleges and universities, when the University of Pennsylvania opened Lee and Oberlin and the whole area of admissions, and Oberlin — I think this is something that the whole country is going to have to be prepared to get through this decade — these are strong, large, prestigious educational institutions — I have no doubt that our work will be cut out for us, but I think that we will find those institutions are going to be very difficult to recruit.
Wilson predicted a $150,000 initial cost for the changes needed within five years. McHenry predicted that additional field space, which he said was needed even if W&L remained all-male, would include an artificial, all-weather field, an all-weather track and one or two more playing fields. The first female varsity sports to be introduced will probably be limited to individual sports, such as swimming, track, golf and cross-country. McHenry said, with five or six sports offered in the first two years and 10 to 12 within five years.

McHenry said these will include dividing the locker room in half, providing separate entrances to the weight room and the old pool, and adding more offices on the upper level of the gym.

Another change required by coeducation will be the addition of female staff members, including a woman athletic director and a trainer.

"I would hope that there would not be an elimination of any of our current coaches and teachers," McHenry said.

Wilson assumed the presidency early in 1983, received criticism from several quarters while the debate and study on coeducation were in progress. Prior to the trustees' meeting, he was asked how a decision one way or the other would affect him as a person and an administrator.

"...There are some who do believe that I came with a settled mind on the question and are in some measure alienated from me personally," he said.

"If the decision is to admit young women to degree candidacy, how soon will the students and alumni members who opposed it reconcile themselves to it? Will they at all, and if so, where? Mixed up in that, somehow, is how soon, if at all, they will be willing to give support to my administration.

The issue of coeducation has been debated frequently in the first two years and 10 to 12 within five years.

The Board of Trustees' decision to begin admitting women to Washington and Lee in the fall of 1985 evoked many reactions from faculty, students and staff who were on campus for the decision:

• Former EC President Robert C. Jenevein, who once vigorously opposed coeducation but says he has since modified his position, looked tired and disconsolate after the meeting, but said he hoped the students would make coeducation work.

"They have to open their arms to the new Washington and Lee," he said. "That won't be impossible by any stretch of the imagination."

• Among those watching with interest was Peter Whitehead, who graduated in May but was one of the leading pro-coeducation students. Whitehead had unfurled a banner at the Mock Democratic Convention that read: "Better Coeds than Deadheads."

"I think the trustees made an unpopular decision, but it was a good one," Whitehead said. "I am pleased. Now I think we'll see better male and female students.

• Another student who came to Lexington to hear the decision was Scott Tilley, a rising senior and opponent of coeducation.

"I was very disappointed," Tilley said. "Up to the last moment, I didn't think they'd do it.

"I think Washington and Lee as an institution is going to thrive and will continue, but I have the feeling that as of today, the Washington and Lee I've come to know and love no longer exists."

• Dr. Louis W. Hodges, a professor of religion and ethics who led a committee which studied coeducation in 1969, called it "just a splendid decision."

"I can't imagine anything that would have done more to improve the education environment," he said. "The board is to be commended. They worked it very carefully, and rendered what is certainly the right decision."

• A faculty member who opposed coeducation and asked not to be identified because he says he plans "to keep a low profile henceforth," said the initial female applicants to W&L are likely to be "young ladies on the prowl."

"Washington and Lee is going to become Fort Lauderdale North," he said. "Most girls are going to enroll here because this is where the Boys Are."

• In the face of all the philosophical and academic viewpoints of the day, some were more concerned about the practical implications of the decision. "Big John" Alexander, who has been a W&L custodian for 10 years, said he opposed coeducation.

"Women are one of the most beautiful things God put on earth, but they're so much messier than men," he said very seriously.

• Betty Munger, who said she advocated coeducation in the 16 years she was the W&L bookstore manager, was amused but not surprised at all the media attention given the vote. "It is interesting that a small college in the backhills of Virginia should be debating whether to educate women," she said.

• As President John D. Wilson exited the news conference, he made a jesting reference to his daughter, Sara, who will be a high school junior in the fall.

"I want you all to know my daughter won't be coming here," he said. "I didn't want to be accused of being self-serving."