

President John D. Wilson
Washington and Lee University
Lexington, VA 24450

December 7, 1983

Dear President Wilson,

On behalf of the Cadaver Society please accept our belated, yet sincere congratulations on becoming President of Washington and Lee. We are impressed with your accomplishments and capabilities and look forward to many years of inspired leadership with you at the helm.

Allow me to introduce you to the Cadaver Society. Cadaver, begun in the mid-1950's, is an organization whose members wish to remain anonymous. Its early history has been that of a social club whose active initiates have demonstrated a propensity for decorating the campus with black C's and an occasional "skull and bones" (this bears no direct relationship to the Skull and Bones of Yale, although our founders might have created Cadaver with that same sort of mysticism in mind). However, in the last ten to fifteen years our organization has made sincere and substantial commitments - both emotional and financial - to the University. Cadaver, for example, makes an annual contribution of \$1,000 to W&L as a Robert E. Lee Fellow, and has paid \$2,500 toward its five year pledge of \$25,000. This \$25,000 is to be used as a faculty salary supplement and is to be awarded at the discretion of the University. Indeed, Cadaver is proud of its commitment to Washington and Lee and looks forward to expanding its role as a booster of the University.

The purpose of my writing at this time is to provide you with the enclosed copy of an open letter which I have forwarded to the editor of The Ring-tum Phi. It will come as no surprise to you to learn that the issue being discussed in the letter is that of undergraduate co-education at W&L. Cadaver wants only what is best for Washington and Lee, yet, as you can see from the letter, the membership is very concerned about the degree to which the rank and file alumni (those who are not chapter officers, AAP representatives, or those individuals who might contribute large sums of money) have been involved in the information-gathering process. We are hopeful that before a final vote on the co-education issue is made by the Board, the University will make every effort to solicit the opinion of as large an alumni sampling as possible. Make no mistake about it, Cadaver is behind W&L all the way; the members simply want to be convinced that a move to co-education (if, in fact, it does take place) is the right one for our school.

Finally, President Wilson, I hope that you will understand that my wanting to remain anonymous in no way reflects weakness of character on my part. The simple fact is that the membership of Cadaver has agreed to this provision. However, I have not hidden behind the cloak of anonymity; I have already written you a personal letter expressing my views on the co-education issue (I think W&L should go co-ed; we can be the best University in the country! Please excuse the outburst.).

Thank you for all your efforts on behalf of the University.

Sincerely,

Cadaver

December 6, 1983

The Editor
The Ring-tum Phi
Washington and Lee University
Lexington, VA 24450

To the Editor:

The members of the Cadaver Society, both current students and alumni, have noted with some concern the manner in which the issue of co-education is being discussed within the Washington and Lee community. Our particular concern is for those members of the University community who are off campus and who therefore usually do not have as immediate access to information as do on campus students, faculty, staff, and members of the administration. This lack of information, of course, makes it extremely difficult to make a reasonable decision on the issue, and often has the effect of making an alumnus susceptible to innuendo and rumor. Although the Cadaver Society is convinced that no member of the Washington and Lee community would intentionally mislead another member on such a question as co-education, we fear that this will be the effect if the forum of discussion is not broadened in the immediate future.

The Society is pleased to note the interview with President Wilson on the issue of co-education in the November 3 issue of The Ring-tum Phi. We are hopeful that discussion of this issue will proceed on the most open and informed course as possible, a course that the Society believes is the only one appropriate for members of the W&L community.

Moreover, we wish to express our hope that a decision to make Washington and Lee a co-educational institution at the undergraduate level - a decision which would, of course, completely change the unique character of the school - only be made for the most compelling reasons. While the membership of Cadaver is actively supportive of Washington and Lee, we believe that before we can support a move to co-education, all available studies must lead to the unavoidable conclusion that Washington and Lee cannot continue to exist as a strong and viable educational institution with its traditional all-male undergraduate enrollment.

For the sake of the future of Washington and Lee, the Cadaver Society urges the University administration, the Board of Trustees, students, and alumni to maintain open lines of communication throughout the consideration of the co-education issue.

Thank you.

Cadaver Society

December 14, 1983

Cadaver Society
Washington and Lee University
Lexington, Virginia 24450

Cadaver:

I find the salutation awkward and abrupt but I know no other way to address the society. "Dear Cadaver" does not quite seem correct.

At any rate, know how much I appreciate receiving the Society's views on the communications problem. It is a very serious one and I intend to do everything possible to insure, in future, the broadest possible consideration of the coeducation issue. The matter made its way into the press in an unfortunate way and we have not managed to get the informal speculation under control ever since.

The current issue of the Alumni Magazine (Dec.) will have some further reflections on the matter (following this summer's issue) and I fully expect, if the Board approves, that a special inquiry will be addressed to alumni in the late winter. We clearly will be aided by having the thoughtful views of the men who worked and lived here during their undergraduate and, in some cases, post-graduate days.

Every best wish. I know little about Cadaver but I do know of its loyalty to Washington and Lee and its unceasing efforts to help make the University even stronger. I am most grateful.

Sincerely,

John D. Wilson
President

JDW/bcb