

STATEMENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Washington and Lee University

July 14, 1984

The Board of Trustees of Washington and Lee University today approved by a 17-7 vote the following resolution:

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.

Foremost in the Trustees' assessment and the central feature of our decision was the conviction that the educational benefits of the University should be extended to men and women undergraduates alike, and as a result, the quality of the University will be improved. In evaluating the opinions of alumni, students, and faculty on the future course of the University, the Trustees found unmistakable common agreement that Washington and Lee's most precious assets are its reputation for excellence and its long and distinguished history of service to the Commonwealth and the nation. This rich heritage and the traditions which support it are secure and will be as deeply appreciated and as proudly preserved by the young women who come here as by their male counterparts. It is our considered judgment that the education of tomorrow's leaders in the learned professions and in the corporate world will be strengthened by the presence

in our classrooms and laboratories of men and women of talent, ambition, and character.

The resolution of the Board concludes a nine-month study of the University's undergraduate program directed by the Trustees through special efforts by our standing committees on academic affairs, campus life, finance, and planning and development. The study examined the likely consequences of remaining all-male at the undergraduate level, as well as those of becoming coeducational in purpose. It attempted to measure the impact upon curriculum, upon the size and character of the teaching program, and upon the quality and range of the University's applicant pool. Further, the study examined the alternative impacts upon the University's cocurricular and extracurricular life -- upon residential patterns, athletic competition, and the long-established fraternity system. The Executive Committee of the Board assumed the difficult but critically important responsibility of pondering the intangibles of the Washington and Lee experience, the traditions -- especially the Honor System -- which draw the loyalties and respect of all students and alumni, strong bonds connecting many generations and all ages.

The Trustees considered the successful manner in which women have earned degrees in the University's School of Law since 1972. We considered, as well, the gratifying experience that Washington and Lee has enjoyed in accepting limited numbers of exchange students each year from area women's colleges.

In conducting its study, the Trustees were, of course, mindful of the continuing decline in the number of the nation's high school graduates. We sought to evaluate how broad demographic trends were likely to affect the quality and diversity of its entering classes. We sought the opinions of some 400 guidance counselors in the nation's schools and assessed, anew, the

attitudes expressed by high school students considering Washington and Lee. The Trustees paid special attention to the opinions and judgments of current students, alumni, and the University faculty, and we attempted to place those judgments in the larger context of continuing change in American society and in the widening responsibilities assumed by talented women in our time.

In confronting the evidence of divided attitudes among loyal alumni, the Trustees were particularly sensitive to the strong emotional reactions generated by the issue of coeducation. 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. By this success, we believe that we shall achieve a University in which Washington and Lee men of the past, and Washington and Lee men and women of the present and future, come together in mutual respect, admiration, and dedicated support. To this end, the Board's Executive Committee has been assigned the responsibility for supervising and coordinating Washington and Lee's preparations to welcome women undergraduate degree candidates in September, 1985.

As Trustees we are deeply mindful of the significance of the decision we have made. Over the centuries, generations of young men have come to Lexington and have enjoyed the benefits of a very special institution. They have profited from the rigor and intimacy of an academic program of the first rank and have contributed greatly to their families, their communities, and their professions. We have been deeply mindful of this distinguished record of success.

As much as we respect and honor our institution's past, we must, as Trustees, look to the years ahead. The University's coat of arms combines

elements of the heraldry of both George Washington and Robert E. Lee, and it displays the University's Latin motto -- "Non in cautus futuri" -- which translates as "Not unmindful of the future."

Our decision today acknowledges the future of our society, how its institutions will be shaped by men and women, and how Washington and Lee University must extend its influence in this society. We are convinced that women will contribute to and benefit from the Washington and Lee experience in the undergraduate schools, just as they have as students and graduates of our School of Law. We are convinced that a stronger Washington and Lee and a stronger society will be the happy result of the decision we have made.