

W&L Welcomes Women

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Next week begins a historic year at an institution well-endowed with history.

For among the approximately 410 freshmen participating in orientation activities at Washington and Lee University next week will be about 100 women. The students represent the first undergraduate coeducational class in the school's 236-year history.

The week of orientation, Sept. 9-15, marks the beginning of a new year and a new era brought about by the decision of the school's board of trustees a little over 13 months ago to accept women undergraduates. The 17-7 decision followed nine months of the most comprehensive study ever of the coeducation issue by the trustees and months of controversy.

While the question of whether the trustees were right may continue to be debated by some, at least one argument by supporters of coeducation has borne fruit — the trend of declining numbers and quality of applicants

was reversed following the decision, at least for the first year. The university received a record number of applicants — 2,639 — for the 1985 freshman class.

"Never in the university's history have we been as selective in our admissions process as we have been this year," William M. Hartog, admissions director, said last spring, noting the strong credentials of the class.

The university offered admission to 886 applicants, and 423 accepted.

And while the new freshmen class will differ in its makeup from previous classes, so will this year's orientation activities.

In the past, W&L freshmen have used the orientation sessions for traditional activities such as meeting advisors, registering for classes and generally becoming associated with campus life. While those activities will be included in this year's orientation sessions, other features of non-academic interests have been added.

The idea behind the new activities, says Robert H. Huntley, dean of freshmen, is to "give the freshmen a somewhat more varied experience, less academic."

The freshmen will settle into dormitory rooms on Sept. 8. President John D. Wilson will welcome parents during a program at Lee Chapel that afternoon. Orientation for the students begins Sept. 9 with a welcoming address from Wilson.

For the next three and a half days, the freshmen will follow the traditional rigors of orientation such as meeting with their advisors, taking placement tests and the swimming proficiency test, registering for classes and finding their way around the campus.

The freshmen will take a break Tuesday night with a "mocktail" party sponsored by Gerald Darrell, director of food services. "Mocktails" are drinks such as daiquiris and Bloody Marys, but without the alcohol.

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