

July 31, 1983

Dear Dr. Wilson-

I have re-read your interesting Report to Alumni several times. I found it objective and certainly pointing out some of the needs of the University.

The question of coeducation in undergraduate programs is certainly one I would rather not hear. Let me put it another way, I would deeply feel that coeducation at my W & L would be a breach of our pledge to tradition. The absence of co-education may cause problems. We have endured problems for well over 200 years and I feel our great institution will prevail.

You said it well and I would like to remind you, sir, of your words--

"It cultivates loyalty--by being true to the important principles it has inherited by custom, habit and rule, from those who came before. May it always be so."

You certainly have my deep trust, thoughts and prayers. I am sure you will faithfully discharge the duties of the office.

My very best wishes to you.

Respectfully,

John R. Baldwin '50

August 17, 1983

Mr. John R. Baldwin

Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Dear Mr. Baldwin:

I have just returned from a trip to my mother's home in Michigan and find your good letter--for which many thanks.

I believe the cocoducation question is never entirely going to go away here. I have been besieged by inquiries about it since I arrived. Faculty members, many of whom graduated from Washington and Lee, strongly favor the further extension of our policy (from the Law School to the undergraduate units). Some alumni also are deeply troubled by our reluctance to change, especially those working in admissions. I realize, of course, that most alumni hope a change of this sort can be avoided, mainly in the interest of continuity (as you have suggested in your note).

I promise that I will, in the examination of this matter, use but one focal question: what is required in the long-term interest of a strong, vibrant Washington and Lee? This will necessarily require both objective and subjective considerations. Among the latter must be the question of what strengths in our academic and social lives we derive from being essentially all-male (I say "essentially" because, as you know, we have women undergraduates in residence every year as exchange students). I truly don't know the answer to this, though I keep looking and asking others to help me. Perhaps you could help by sharing with me your perceptions. I know our status costs us good candidates for admissions. I know it is not helpful to have our social life dictated by late-night driving back and forth over the roads. I know fraternity parties have deteriorated markedly in recent years. What I do not fully know is what we owe for all the good things there are here to our single-sex definition.

I mean it truthfully when I ask for your help in this regard. I am staring in the face the most serious decline in college-going young people this nation has ever experienced. It could turn out to hurt us grievously if our numbers and quality decline proportionately. Nothing

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keeps me awake more than that single objective fact.

I've written at greater length than I meant to. Forgive me if you can.

Most sincerely,

John D. Wilson  
President

JDM/bcb