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Phone [REDACTED]

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Mr. Peter A. Agelasto, III

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Norfolk, Virginia 23501

Dear Peter:

As requested by you and President John D. Wilson, this letter is written as a response to his reflections on the question of undergraduate coeducation at Washington and Lee.

His paper is a thoughtful review of the subject not only with regard to Washington and Lee but also with regard to higher education generally.

An examination of his thoughts reveals that the pros for maintaining the status quo at Washington and Lee appear to fall into a category which might be entitled "Tradition" or "Past Social Practices."

In any reference to tradition the appeal to emotion is powerful. Alumni, and to a lesser degree students also, tend to view the past with emotion. Who can fail to be influenced by Lee, that "rare human being who in five years left an indelible mark" upon Washington and Lee?

From my sampling of opinion I would say that alumni would vote overwhelmingly to preserve the present all-male undergraduate program. But "with his eye closely focused upon the future needs of Virginia, the South, and the nation," Lee would favor coeducation today, I suspect.

Given the pros and cons as expressed by President Wilson, I tend to favor making the change.

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The changing role of women in society is not likely to regress and is certain to progress. Women will, and should, have an opportunity to the same uses of the mind in society which have previously been enjoyed almost exclusively by men. Eventually they will participate in every form of activity except those from which physical differences alone exclude them.

Whether Washington and Lee can maintain its position of excellence without admitting women is not of overriding importance. (The demographic projections lead me to believe that it would be unlikely to do so.)

What is of greater concern is that if Washington and Lee remains all-male it may eventually find itself to be an anomaly and an anachronism. Its graduates may cease to be a source of unique pride. It will no longer supply society with people who are special, and Washington and Lee will no longer itself be special.

For these reasons, while my heart votes "all male," my mind votes "coeducation."

Sincerely yours,

G. Edward Calvert

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