

Atlanta Chapter of Washington and Lee University Alumni Association

April 24, 1984

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

Dear Dr. Wilson:

The Board of the Atlanta Chapter of Washington and Lee Alumni has just completed a survey conducted by the nationally recognized Darden Research Corporation in an effort to accurately reflect the opinions of the area's 483 alumni on the issue of co-education. The founder and president of Darden Research Corporation is Claibourne Darden, a 1966 graduate of W & L. The survey was designed in its entirety by Darden Research. Its simplicity was insisted upon by Claibourne as the most accurate way to gauge the general opinion regarding the issue at hand. All the responses were mailed directly to Darden Research. There were no materials mailed by the Atlanta Chapter concerning the issue, and no phone calls placed or meetings held to discuss the topic or influence the outcome. The information available to our members was the same as that which was available to all alumni through The Alumni Magazine.

There are 483 alumni in the Atlanta area. Each received a questionnaire. 302 alumni completed the opinion poll and mailed them to Darden Research where they were calculated. Of the 326 alumni who hold undergrad degrees, 69.3% responded. The overall response level was 62.5% of the total alumni polled in the Atlanta area. Claibourne stated that, based on his experience, the percentages would not have varied significantly with a 100% response. The results are as follows:

	<u>Attended But Not Graduated</u>	<u>Received Undergrad Degree</u>	<u>Undergraduate & Law School</u>	<u>Law School Only</u>
Strongly Favor	16.3	12.3	14.3	32.3
Mildly Favor	14.0	18.5	14.3	25.8
Mildly Oppose	32.6	15.2	21.4	22.6
Strongly Oppose	37.2	54.0	50.0	19.4

Total Response of All Polled

Strongly Favor	15.0
Mildly Favor	18.7
Mildly Oppose	18.7
Strongly Oppose	47.7

Net Graduates
(All Holders of Undergraduate Degrees)

Strongly Favor	12.4
Mildly Favor	18.2
Mildly Oppose	15.6
Strongly Oppose	53.8

Of those who have graduated with undergraduate degrees, 69.4% oppose the co-education.

The Board of the Atlanta Chapter, based on our collective contacts with many alumni both here and elsewhere, has asked that the reasons we perceive for the alumni's thought on the subject of co-education be expressed to the Board of Trustees. We believe that this survey only helps to emphasize the fact that those of us who have graduated from the W & L undergraduate school regard this as a unique experience. While emotion obviously plays a role in our decision making, it is created by the tremendous debt we all have to W & L for having given us this experience. We feel that a full appreciation of the potential and positive effects of this experience eludes all but a few non-graduates.

The specter of a declining pool of students presents a problem for all institutions of higher learning. It is only proper that all concerned be made aware of the possible consequences of the decline. However, as alumni, the solution of co-education came as a rather unexpected and dire alternative to the majority of us. The University had recently completed a successful fund raising campaign of over sixty million dollars which was strongly supported by the alumni. One indication that the school is held in high esteem is found in the results of the recent U.S. News and World Report article. Furthermore, the number of applications for admission in the fall of 1984 was within an acceptable range.

Granted, it is the job of the Board to be aware of and deal with circumstances that could cause the University problems in the future. Now that these storm clouds have been pointed out, we are convinced that there are some alternative courses of action that should be taken to produce the University with the qualified students desired while still providing that intangible experience about which we all feel so strongly.

At this moment, to make a change of this drastic nature would be most difficult for many to accept as necessary and inexorably changing the University. It was not too long ago that Sewanee made this step with an idea of maintaining a 25-75 ratio of female to male as being the stated goal. Sewanee now has a 50-50 student population. The alumni now feel strongly that they would like the opportunity to become more actively involved in the recruitment of students to apply to W & L and also produce among those accepted a higher ratio of enrollment at W & L. Expansion of endowment funds would also substantially broaden the available pool from which to draw applicants.

To those of us who have graduated from W & L, it is hard to believe that there are not 350 qualified male students who would gladly attend if only they knew about W & L. Believing strongly in this view, Atlanta alumni have become actively involved in the process of "spreading the word" with gratifying results. There were sixty-one applicants from the Atlanta area this year of whom forty-two were accepted. Both are records for the area, proving qualified students can be attracted with proper effort by area alumni.

Within a few days of the prospective students receiving their acceptance letter, the Atlanta Chapter gave a party for the forty-two accepted students and their parents. These prospective students were moved by the fact that so many of us thought so highly of our school and wanted them to share this experience. We believe a higher than normal acceptance rate will result from our efforts.

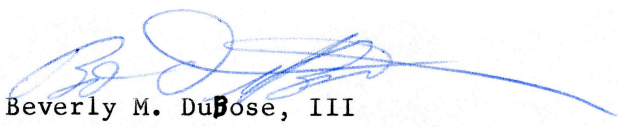
It is our strong belief that co-education should not be adopted without having first presented the alumni with the opportunity to do two things: (1) vastly increase local recruiting efforts to both raise the number of applications and the ratio of enrollment to acceptances for admission and (2) contribute sufficient scholarship endowment to attract additional young men to the applicant pool.

The recruiting and endowment alternatives must be addressed. Unless they are and the alumni are given the opportunity and firm support of the administration and faculty to meet these challenges, we regard the introduction of co-education as grievously and permanently divisive. One result would be the alienation of a substantial portion of the alumni.

The challenges obviously would have to be met within a three to four year period. Should they not be and the well-being of the University continue to be endangered, co-education would remain a viable alternative - an alternative then far more readily accepted by our alumni.

We are confident that this matter will receive the most thoughtful consideration by you and the Board of Trustees.

Sincerely,



Beverly M. DuBoise, III
President, Atlanta Chapter
For the Board

BMD:cgm

cc: Board of Trustees