W&L Board Adopts Coeducation

by Anne Couling

Nine months of intensive study, anxiety and emotional upheaval led to a decision at the Saturday afternoon meeting of the W&L board of trustees to adopt coeducation at the undergraduate level, as well as at the graduate level. The decision was approved 17-7 by the trustees, and the result of their "conviction that the educational benefit of the University should be extended to men and women undergraduates alike, and as a result, the quality of the university will be improved," they said in a statement read at a Saturday news conference.

The resolution, announced at 12:30 p.m. in the Commerce School building, came after the board's nine-month study of all aspects of the coeducation issue. The trustees said that the study was conducted by the board's standing committee on academic affairs, campus life, finance, and planning and development, "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 academic program. Further," the statement said, "the study examined the alternative impacts upon the university's curricular 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 implications of the Washington and Lee experience, the traditions and the honor system with draw the loyalties and respect of all students and alumni, strong bonds connecting many generations and all ages."

As part of the study, the trustees also received reports on the opinions of the university's primary constituencies: alumni, faculty and students. Alumni were surveyed through a questionnaire while a sociology class surveyed faculty and student opinion. In their statement the trustees said that those surveys had "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."

James M. Balinger, rector of the board of trustees, said during the news conference that 90 percent of the alumni respondents to the survey, which is considered a high return. Although the majority (90 percent) of those responding were opposed (continued on page 2)