July 16, 1984

To: Alumni, students, parents, faculty and friends

From: James M. Ballengee, Rector

This past weekend my fellow trustees and I met in special session in Lexington. The purpose of our meeting--after a nine-month study--was to decide whether Washington and Lee should admit qualified women as undergraduates as we do now as law students.

Our fundamental question was whether the admission of undergraduate women would help ensure that Washington and Lee will maintain its reputation and heritage as one of the finest institutions of higher learning in the United States.

After the most careful deliberation, the Board decided that the admission of women as undergraduates is best for Washington and Lee. Therefore, the trustees directed the administration and faculty to extend the undergraduate degree program to women beginning in the fall of 1985.

The Board made its decision not unmindful that a large proportion of our alumni would wish that the determination might have been otherwise. But the majority of those who voiced their preference for all-male status said that they would prefer coeducation to the possibility of academic deterioration.

The trustees believe that Washington and Lee will provide an increasingly distinctive service to the Nation by educating both men and women. Women are already achieving some of the highest positions of leadership in business, the professions, the arts, and in government. In the future, Washington and Lee will share in the preparation of some of these outstanding young people for their eventual careers.

I encourage you to read the next and subsequent issues of the Alumni Magazine. We expect to tell you in the greatest detail possible how the decision was reached, the factors that weighed upon it, and what we learned in the process.