LEXINGTON, Va. (AP) — Washington & Lee University, one of the three all-male private colleges left in the country, decided Saturday it will admit women as full-time undergraduates, breaking a 235-year tradition that was overwhelmingly supported by students and alumni.

The Board of Trustees at the university founded by George Washington voted 17-7 to begin coeducation in the fall of 1985. The school’s governing board had turned down the same idea in 1969 and 1975.

In making its decision, the board considered the declining pool of high school students going to college as well as the opinions of students, alumni and staff, said Board Chairman James M. Ballengee. Polls showed that 80 percent of the faculty supported coeducation, while students and alumni opposed it 2-1.

Students who opposed coeducation have staged a sit-in at the president’s office. Bumper stickers saying “Better Dead than Coed” and “Girls in the Hay, Not All Day” appeared on cars, and a statue of George Washington was dressed in a banner saying “No Marthas.”