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## MISSION STATEMENT

(Approved May 1988)

Washington and Lee University has two preeminent objectives: to dedicate all its resources to developing in its students the capacity and desire to learn, to understand, and to share the fruits of their intellectual growth, and to pursue its educational mission in a climate of learning that stresses the importance of the individual, personal honor and integrity, harmonious relationships with others, and the responsibility to serve society through the productive use of talent and training. Independent, non-sectarian, and privately endowed, it comprises three divisions, one graduate—the School of Law—and two undergraduate—the College and the School of Commerce, Economics, and Politics. With a rich heritage from the past and a history spanning more than two centuries the University has a profound sense of tradition, but it likewise has a firm commitment to the ideal embodied in its motto, *non incautus futuri*, and therefore remains responsive to changes and innovations that contribute to the realization of its aims.

Convinced that it helps to meet a vital need in American higher education by offering undergraduate preparation in the arts and sciences of the highest possible quality, Washington and Lee provides a program that demands both broad exposure to the principal areas of human knowledge and intensive exploration of a single field or discipline. It requires competence in the use of English and familiarity with a second language; appreciation of the values of the human experience as derived from a study of the liberal arts and the social sciences; mastery of the rudiments of mathematical reasoning and understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry; and, in keeping with the ancient idea of *mens sana in corpore sano*, development of physical fitness and dexterity. It further requires completion of a major, in one of more than 30 subjects, designed to enable the student to explore in depth a significant body of knowledge and to grow in mental discipline and the capacity to deal with complex ideas and issues. The curriculum as a

whole is both broad and exceptionally open to applied work, as in business, journalism, and engineering science. Through the regimen of general and concentrated studies the University seeks to encourage originality and creativity and to nurture all the qualities of a liberally educated mind, among them intellectual curiosity and unbiased judgment, critical and analytical power, clarity of thought and precision of language, patience and open-mindedness, and love of excellence and desire to understand the world in which we live.

The University recognizes teaching as its central function. It believes that the personal association of its students with a highly qualified and motivated faculty holds the greatest promise of inspiring in them a respect and thirst for knowledge that will continue throughout their lives. It seeks, therefore, to organize its instructional program in small classes and to encourage personal attention and a close relationship between teacher and student. It recognizes, too, that a faculty of eminent teacher-scholars is essential to the achievement of its educational purposes and to the success of its academic programs. Accordingly it seeks to maintain a faculty of men and women who gladly accept the challenge to teach effectively and whose scholarship and professional development are vigorous and growing, and it endeavors to compensate its teacher-scholars in ways appropriate to their training, skill, experience, and effectiveness in aiding the development of their students. Moreover, because it recognizes research, scholarly investigation, and creative achievement as proper companions to the most effective teaching processes, Washington and Lee attempts to provide ways and means by which its faculty members may pursue their scholarly and creative interests and by which its students may be properly introduced to the tools, techniques, and methodology used to increase knowledge and understanding and stimulated to become involved themselves in the process of generating knowledge.

Washington and Lee is selective in its enrollment of students. It chooses young men and women with the highest qualities of intellect, character, and the promise of future achievement, and it seeks to create a student body that

is geographically, socially, and economically diverse but unified as “an aristocracy of talent.” It imposes no other barriers to admission. For all those qualified to undertake its exacting degree programs the University seeks to render whatever financial assistance may be needed for their enrollment.

Through an effective program of self-government Washington and Lee attempts to involve its students in responsible participation in the affairs of the University. It grants considerable autonomy to them in the governance of their own affairs and the management of clubs and social organizations, and, through such means as Omicron Delta Kappa, founded on the campus and annually recognized at a University convocation, it seeks to encourage the development of the capacity for leadership that traditionally has been a distinguishing trait of Washington and Lee graduates. More important still, it gives to the student body final responsibility for the Honor System, which has been a powerful and central force throughout the University from its very beginning during the Lee presidency which rests on the fundamental principle that a spirit of trust pervades all aspects of student life. Finally, aware of the great men whose names it bears, the University seeks to develop in its students the qualities of mind and spirit they exemplified and demonstrated in their regard for personal honor and integrity, for duty, for tolerance and humility, and for self-sacrifice in behalf of their fellow citizens.

Because it believes that student activity outside the classroom may contribute as much to self-fulfillment as that inside, the University devotes a substantial part of its resources to enhancing the intellectual and artistic life of the campus at large and providing extensive athletic and recreational programs. From both special and general endowments it funds a wide variety of lectures by distinguished visiting speakers, and it supports a rich array of programs and exhibits in music, drama, film, painting, and sculpture. Insofar as its location and resources allow, it seeks to establish itself as a center of intellect and culture extending beyond the boundaries of its campus, bringing

both direct and indirect benefits to the surrounding community and providing a series of summer programs that attract executives, business families, rising high school seniors, elderly citizens, and alumni from all parts of the country. In athletics it emphasizes the development of the student-athlete and maintains a balanced program in a broad range of both intercollegiate and intramural sports and encourages the use of its recreational facilities for individual and group exercise.

To determine how well it achieves its aims the University engages in almost continuous self-examination. The Board of Trustees regularly reviews through its standing committees the policies governing the life of the University, modifying them when there is good reason to do so. At the departmental level, course offerings and major requirements are regularly reexamined for the purpose of improving academic programs. Each year virtually every aspect of the University comes under some form of review by standing and ad hoc committees addressing various questions and making recommendations, or by members of the faculty and administration drafting grant proposals for financial assistance. From alumni both individually and corporately in a board of directors and regional chapters, come comments and suggestions for further strengthening of the University. It is in these alumni, in fact, and in their achievements, their loyalty, and their generosity that the University finds the primary evidence of its success in reaching its goals.

## THE HONOR SYSTEM

Honor is the moral cornerstone of Washington and Lee University. Since Robert E. Lee's presidency, the concept of honor has been the guiding principle of life at Washington and Lee. The commitment to honor is recognized by every student, faculty member, administrator, and staff member of the University. Providing the common thread woven through the many aspects of this institution, honor creates a community of trust and respect affecting fundamentally the relationships of all its members.

The centrality of honor at Washington and Lee is contained in its Honor System, a legacy of Robert E. Lee. In accord with the University's strong and long-standing commitment to student autonomy, the Board of Trustees has granted to students the privilege of overseeing the administration of the Honor System. This privilege includes the responsibilities of (1) defining dishonorable acts (now defined in terms of the categories of lying, cheating, and stealing, and other breaches of trust); (2) investigating and judicially managing honor hearings; (3) writing and revising the White Book, the Honor System policy and procedures manual; and (4) reporting directly to the Board of Trustees on the administration of the Honor System. The sole penalty for an Honor System violation is dismissal from the University. These responsibilities are administered by the Student Executive Committee, a group of students elected annually by their peers.

Academic life is essentially shaped by the commitment to honor. Assuming that students will behave honorably, the faculty grants flexibility in the scheduling of most final examinations, and all are taken without supervision. Take-home closed book examinations are a common occurrence. The pledge, "On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unacknowledged aid on this paper (exam, assignment)," expresses the student's promise that the work submitted is his or hers alone and that no unfair advantage has been taken of peers by cheating. Students' dedication to honorable behavior in all their academic work

creates a strong bond of trust among them and between them and the faculty. This student dedication and the bond that it engenders also provides the basis for the faculty member's commitment to accepting a student's word without question.

The dedication to behave honorably is not confined to academic life. It is expected that students will respect each other's word and intellectual and personal property in the residence halls and the Greek houses, on the playing field, in the city of Lexington, wherever Washington and Lee students take themselves. This principled expectation provides the foundation for the community of trust which students seek to create not only in the academic sphere but also in life outside it as well.

The Honor System has been Washington and Lee University's uniquely defining feature for well over a century. Thousands of students have lived under it while in residence, have been morally shaped by it, and as alumni and alumnae continue to be guided by it in their professional lives. Current students are as committed to it as were those who lived and studied here before them, and they maintain with firm conviction this distinctive ideal of the University.

## PHILOSOPHY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Washington and Lee's curriculum and co-curricular activities are broad and flexible enough to enable students to realize their personal goals and to lay the foundation for a useful and rewarding life.

In the pursuit of these objectives, Washington and Lee, for more than 10 generations of American history, has settled on what it knows to be conditions of excellence. These conditions, listed below, are those which have made Washington and Lee respected as a place of learning, a place unique and apart in the national educational scene.

*Washington and Lee is small.* While there is no virtue in smallness itself, experience has shown that it does encourage close personal relationships between students and professors and among the students themselves. An atmosphere of friendliness and respect prevails throughout the University. No student is lost in the crowd or becomes a victim of "assembly-line" education.

*Washington and Lee emphasizes personal honor and integrity.* No one attends the University without becoming aware of new dimensions of honor and integrity. Accordingly, students are given a large measure of freedom in governing their own affairs and are represented by active membership on faculty committees. A student committee is responsible for student disciplinary matters, and students establish their own rules for the conduct of dormitory life. The Honor System, which is probably the most enduring and distinctive feature of student life, is administered entirely by elected student officials. Students take examinations without supervision; their word is respected. The same code of honor that governs academic life guides personal life. Washington and Lee, in the words of former President Huntley, "confidently entrusts the largest possible measure of choice and freedom to its students and its faculty, requiring conformity

of no one, prizing an environment in which tolerance, integrity, and respect for others tend to prevent misidentifying independence of thought with lack of self-discipline or humorless contempt."

*Washington and Lee strives for intellectual distinction.* Its steady purpose is to be one of the nation's great "teaching" colleges. Research is encouraged as part of the learning and teaching process, not as a substitute for it. Ideally, the University believes, teaching and research cannot, and should not, be separated. Washington and Lee fosters an academic community in which both teachers and students constantly learn—in classrooms and laboratories, in private research, in the informal give-and-take of extemporaneous discussions. With access to extensive collections of books, modern and sophisticated equipment, and expert guidance, students have unusual opportunities for research. Nonetheless, the teaching of undergraduates is the primary function of the Washington and Lee faculty. In short, *all* students are taught by *professors*, not by teaching assistants or graduate students.

*Washington and Lee maintains a strong faculty.* A significantly large number of the University's professors hold the Ph.D. degree or equivalent earned doctoral degree, and all faculty members are active in continuing self-development as scholars and teachers. The retention of a faculty of the highest merit is given priority. A recent report of the American Association of University Professors on the comparative ranking of American colleges and universities in average compensation of full-time faculty listed Washington and Lee among the top schools of comparable size in the country.

*Washington and Lee emphasizes the liberal arts and sciences.* Whatever the particular goal of individual students may be, the University constantly strives to extend their range of knowledge and human understanding beyond the limits of their specialty. Washington and Lee's curriculum stresses the humanities, natu-

ral sciences, and social sciences and their relationship to professional studies. The aim of the curriculum is to free the mind, lead to understanding, create humility and tolerance, and afford a basis for continuing study and learning. Under the guidance of faculty advisers, students are given extensive freedom in choosing courses of study. Breadth is the aim of the first two years of work; mastery of a particular study is the aim of the work of the junior and senior years. Students may also take part in one of the University's special programs that span several academic disciplines.

*Washington and Lee enjoys freedom from outside control.* The University is a privately endowed institution, governed by a Board of Trustees of 30 members. Free of any control of church or state, the University is dedicated to the democratic form of social organization, to the dignity of the individual, and to the ancient freedoms, particularly to liberty of the mind with its attendant right of inquiry.

Hence, the University is free to chart its own course, consistent with the highest educational standards, its traditions, and its aims of service to mankind.

*Washington and Lee is a national institution.* Although the University is located in the South, its student body represents broad geographic, social and economic cross-sections of the nation. The balance between students from various regions of the United States remains fairly equal. Striving to achieve economic and social diversity among its students, the University seeks and admits students of all racial, ethnic, educational, and religious backgrounds. The University has found that the size or type of secondary schools students come from has little bearing on their success at Washington and Lee, provided they are well prepared and motivated. Economic backgrounds of students vary widely, and the University is able to give financial assistance to nearly all students with need.

