

Headline for Admissions Story:

"The Matter of Admissions....."

Subhead:

The Alumni Board of Trustees Met in Its Regular Fall Session on November 6th, Shortly After Newspapers Told of the University Board of Trustees' Reaffirmation of Faculty Authority over Admissions Standards. The Alumni Board Requested That the Next Issue of the Alumni Magazine Carry a Complete Account of the Matter and Its Significance

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On July 25, 1964, the Board of Trustees of Washington and Lee University, after long and thoughtful discussion, approved a statement for entry in the Board's official minutes, one which dealt with the University's admissions process.

The statement said:

"The matter of admissions was mentioned. It was noted that no provision of the Charter, no provision of the By-laws and no resolution of the Board has established a policy of discrimination among qualified applicants for admission. Traditionally matters pertaining to the qualifications of applicants for admission have been entrusted to the Faculty and its appropriate committees, and the By-Laws of the University so provide. The Board of Trustees has no cause to doubt the appropriateness of this delegation of authority to the Faculty and has no cause to doubt the collective wisdom of the Faculty in discharging the concomitant responsibility."

The statement made no mention of the words "Negro," "race," "integration," or "desegregation," yet the issue it dealt with for Washington and Lee is related to the larger, national social issue that is associated with all these terms.

By this statement the Board made clear the absence of any stated policy of discrimination at Washington and Lee, and it also made clear that the Board would impose no de facto policy of discrimination against fully qualified applicants for admission.

Because the action represented, in the Board's view, a clarification of policy, rather than a change or reversal of policy,



the Board saw no need for a public statement. President Cole was authorized to respond to the individual queries of alumni, professors, and students on the matter of admissions policy. As a result of queries from faculty members, President Cole communicated the substance of the Board statement to the faculty at its first meeting in October.

Among students, the question of the University's position on discrimination in admissions has been debated in various ways for several years. When the current academic session opened, the dialogue continued, and the editors of the Ring-tum Phi, Stephen P. Smith of Jacksonville, Fla., and L. Shannon Jung, of Alexandria, La., queried President Cole as to what action, if any, had been taken by the Board of Trustees at its mid-summer meeting. In accordance with the Board's instructions to him, President Cole was able to answer the questions of the editors as individuals, but not as representatives of the student press.

The editors asked President Cole to convey to the Board at its October 23-24 meeting their request for a statement on the matter which could be printed in the student newspaper. The editors mentioned to President Cole that the student body was generally aware that some decision had been reached in July, but in the absence of any official statement, there was considerable conjecture among students. Because of student interest in the matter, the editors requested President Cole to ask the Board to review its position on a public statement.

In the meanwhile, in what University officials felt was an unusual example of student restraint and responsibility, the editors and their staffs refrained from speculation or comment on admissions

matters pending a reply to their request of the Board.

When the Board met, President Cole informed its members of the petition of the Ring-tum Phi editors, and the Board subsequently authorized a statement for release exclusively to the student press.

The issue of the Ring-tum Phi in which the official release was to appear was scheduled for publication on October 27, but because of a mechanical delay in printing, it did not appear until the following day.

The official release said:

"Washington and Lee University's Board of Trustees has reaffirmed the university faculty's responsibility in determining standards of admission for qualified applicants.

"President Fred C. Cole said today that 'The Board of Trustees has no cause to doubt the appropriateness of this delegation of authority to the faculty and has no cause to doubt the collective wisdom of the faculty in discharging the concomitant responsibility.'

"In response to an inquiry from the editors of the Ring-tum Phi, President Cole said the Board considered the University's admissions policy at its meeting on July 25.

"Said President Cole:

"'It was noted that no provision of the Charter, no provision of the By-laws and no resolution of the Board has established a policy of discrimination among qualified applicants for admission. Traditionally, matters pertaining to the qualifications of applicants for admission have been entrusted to the Faculty and its appropriate committees, and the By-laws of the University so provide.'



"A faculty Committee on Admissions at Washington and Lee, which reports to the general faculty, is composed of nine professors from the College and the School of Commerce and Administration and four members of the University's administrative staff.

"Dr. Edward C. Atwood, Jr., dean of students and professor of economics, is chairman of the committee. Its members are:

"Dr. C. Westbrook Barritt, professor of Romance languages; Dr. Sydney M. B. Coulling, associate professor of English; Mr. John M. Gunn, Jr., assistant professor of economics; Dr. Leonard E. Jarrard, associate professor of psychology; Dr. William A. Jenks, professor of history; Mr. John K. Jennings, assistant professor of journalism; Dr. Cecil D. Jones, associate professor of fine arts; Mr. Henry L. Ravenhorst, associate professor of engineering; Dr. Edgar W. Spencer, professor of geology; Associate Dean of Students James D. Farrar, director of admissions; Assistant Dean of Students Lewis G. John, director of financial aid; and Dean, Emeritus, Frank J. Gilliam, former dean of admissions.

(The official release made no mention of this point, but it will be of interest to alumni that all members of this committee are alumni of Washington and Lee except Dr. Atwood, Dr. Jarrard, and Dr. Jones.)

"The committee reviews all applications for admission to Washington and Lee and selects the 330 to 340 students who annually compose the entering undergraduate class.

"A separate admissions committee functions within the School of Law. The faculty there has the same delegation of authority and responsibility for admissions to the School of Law as that possessed by the faculty in the College."

As noted above the official release made no mention of "Negro," "race," "integration," or "desegregation," but news stories written for the daily press by the student correspondents of several Virginia newspapers made frequent use of these terms in interpreting the release and its significance.

These news stories, based solely on the Ring-tum Phi statements, were picked up by the Associated Press and United Press International and distributed all over the nation and the world. They said variously in their lead paragraphs that Washington and Lee "has lowered racial barriers," "will admit Negro students," and "has opened its doors to Negro students."

The wire service stories attributed these statements to President Cole, although in fact he made no comment on the matter other than that which was contained in the official release. Because the stories written by the student correspondents were specific in their interpretation of the Board's statement, no calls were received by the President for amplification or interpretation of the official statement, which was cited only in part in the nationally circulated news story.

One student correspondent based his story upon the official release's point of emphasis, but his newspaper declined to use his account and chose the more positive phrases of the wire service story.

The story received front page attention in many newspapers, including the European edition of the Stars and Stripes, the publication for American armed forces in western Europe. Some editors were moved to comment on the matter in editorial columns. (See Page \_\_\_\_).



The general prestige of the University and its historical association with Robert E. Lee were felt largely responsible for the widespread attention received. Stories dealing with similar matters at other colleges have seldom received mention outside their local areas.

As was expected, reaction by alumni and others followed. In the month that followed, President Cole's mail on the matter reflected a 3 to 1 ratio of those in support of non-discrimination over those critical of desegregation.

What, then, are some of the background elements to the Board's action on July 25?

Members of the Board of Trustees and many others associated with Washington and Lee have known for many years that a clarification of the admission policy would ~~come~~ eventually. *he necessarily* *From the party*

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For various reasons --- economic, social, happenstance --- the University has never had a completed application from a Negro. By a completed application is meant the fulfillment of all the procedural steps by which any student applies for admission. This involves the presentation of College Board scores, payment of a non-returnable application fee, and the submission of an official application form, transcript of high school work, and references from the principal or headmaster and others.

As was pointed out by the Board in its statement, there has been no statement in favor of discrimination in any official document, and the University catalogue clearly sets forth the admission criteria without reference to discrimination other than on the basis of academic merit, character, and promise of success at Washington and Lee. Ostensibly, any application from a Negro student would

have been judged by the same standards as any other student. If he were judged qualified for admission, a clarification of the University's position would have become necessary.

No such application compelled the Board to make its official comment in July. There was pressure, but it was of a kind that has accumulated for many years and from a variety of disassociated sources.

. Virtually all good colleges and universities in the South and elsewhere in the nation have removed any forms of racial discrimination that may have existed. Among Washington and Lee's neighboring institutions in Virginia, only two have not clarified or resolved their positions in favor of racial nondiscrimination. One of these is restricted from doing so by a clause in the will of its founder. The institution is making every effort to remove this restriction through legal processes.

. The task of faculty recruitment, already a critical matter for all colleges, had become even more difficult for Washington and Lee because growing numbers of highly qualified and highly recommended teachers were reluctant to associate with a college which appeared to follow a policy of racial discrimination. The various professional associations of professors in the different academic disciplines long ago ended any racially discriminatory practices. <sup>→ among colleges as well as those</sup> Professors, <sup>↓</sup> particularly the younger ones, have become reluctant to establish relationships with institutions that might handicap their future professional careers and advancement. Also, good scientists and social scientists, dependent as they often are on various forms of corporate, foundation, and governmental support for research activity, are reluctant to affiliate with an institu-



tion which may be denied such support because the school practices discrimination on racial grounds.

. Because Washington and Lee is dependent upon many sources for various kinds of support, it was finding itself more and more excluded from corporate and foundation assistance because officers of these agencies saw reason to suspect that the University was in fact discriminating against Negroes in admissions matters, although there was no stated policy to such effect.

. Although Washington and Lee does not accept direct federal aid through the National Defense Student Loan Program or through construction loans or other assistance, the University does benefit from help from the National Science Foundation, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the National Institutes of Health, and in other indirect, non-restrictive federal assistance. Last summer, following passage of the Civil Rights Act, the Office of Education of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare conducted special regional information meetings to acquaint colleges and universities with the potential effect that Title VI of this bill might have upon them. Because the National Science Foundation and other educational and research agencies do draw upon federal funds for their support, such agencies would be restricted under the act from continuing or granting new support to institutions which practiced racial discrimination. The opportunity to purchase materials and supplies from government surplus warehouses also might be denied to segregated schools, and the possibility of eliminating certain tax benefits and postal privileges was mentioned.

. But not all of the background issues dealt with prestige or financial support or direct benefit for the institution. There

was the ~~moral~~ question that growing numbers of those associated with Washington and Lee found difficult to answer so long as the University's policy was not made clear: Should a young man, fully qualified in all respects to meet Washington and Lee's exacting standards of admissions and performance, be denied the opportunity of the University's influence and education solely because of his racial origin?

Moved by these and other influences, the Board of Trustees acted on July 25th in what its members defined as the best interests of Washington and Lee University and its future.

What, then, is the significance of this action in terms of the future composition of Washington and Lee's student body?

In the absence of any stated policy of discrimination, it is unlikely that the faculty---with its reaffirmed authority---will impose any restrictions based on race. The Committee on Admissions has indicated that it will weigh all applicants' credentials on the same scales. Acceptance for admission will be offered to all students whose qualifications meet existing standards.

Dean James D. Farrar, Jr., the University's director of admissions, has spoken recently to alumni groups in Greensboro, N. C., Louisville, Ky., and elsewhere, and on each occasion he has found alumni interested to know when the first integration at Washington and Lee is likely to occur, and in what numbers.

The assessment that follows is based upon Dean Farrar's description of admissions developments at other colleges, of the quality of secondary school education in the South and elsewhere, and of related factors.

Virtually every Negro student capable of meeting Washington and



Lee's admissions standards is being recruited actively and individually by prestigious colleges and universities throughout the nation. Unless a good Negro student has a compelling personal reason or other special motivation for applying to Washington and Lee, he is more likely to respond to this recruiting by colleges where the prospect of social assimilation seems less of a problem. So eager are some schools to acquire good Negro students that the same qualifications that would commend him for admission at Washington and Lee will often qualify him for substantial financial aid at such schools.

At some colleges and universities across the nation, there often exist either stated or unstated percentages or quotas of Negro students that the admissions program aspires to enroll. In such schools where admissions standards approximate those of Washington and Lee, considerable difficulty has been encountered in filling these quotas. Several Southern schools which have sought to achieve certain ratios of integration have found these levels virtually impossible to realize because of the poor quality of secondary school preparation among the vast majority of Negro students and because of the inclination of those who are qualified to attend schools in other regions.

The two southern colleges most often compared with Washington and Lee---Davidson and the University of the South---have accepted Negro students for several years. The numbers present on their campuses in any given year have been extremely low---one, two or three. It seems reasonable to expect that Washington and Lee's experience will be similar to that of these institutions.

There have been no applications from Negroes as of \_\_\_\_\_.

No one can say when the first will be received. No one can predict when the first applicant will be judged qualified and accepted. No one can tell now when the first Negro will actually enroll. It could be next September, or it may not happen for two, five, or more years. Applications for admission to the School of Law can be expected, as can applications from transfer students. When and in what number no one can say.

The University will continue its visitation and other promotional programs at high schools and preparatory schools which have proven to be good sources of young men for Washington and Lee's classrooms and laboratories. Many of these schools are integrated now, more will become integrated in the future. To this extent the University will be "recruiting" in an area that could bring applications from Negro students.

To those who have written to President Cole he has given thoughtful, individual replies. A paragraph from a letter to a Richmond alumnus is particularly pertinent as a conclusion here:

"The future of Washington and Lee is the paramount issue, and there is no intention of lessening her influence and her position as a leader in the field of higher education. She will always be a center of intellectual excellence, prestige, and culture while contributing where possible to the welfare of those who need educational assistance and who can be of service. In time, I believe you will be convinced of the sincerity of the Board, with whom I am in complete accord, and that the decision to redefine and broaden the admissions policy is in keeping with the philosophy of both Washington and Lee."