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Testimony for PDE Hearing Regarding the Proposed Amendments to the Articles of  
Incorporation for Wilson College

I am testifying as a founding organizer of the alumnae group opposed to many of the changes to the proposed Articles of Incorporation, which was submitted to you by the Board of Trustees of Wilson College for your approval. I am also a current officer of the Alumnae Association of Wilson College Board (Association Board). I do not represent the Association Board, but my experiences on that Board inform this testimony.

As a limited participant, my goal is to acquaint you with the historical and current role of alumnae at Wilson, and the validity of alumnae claims regarding the proposed changes to the Articles.

1) I assert that the future success of Wilson College *does* impact graduates of the college and therefore *requires* of alumnae a response. The Bylaws of our Association hold us accountable to respond. In a similar way, the Pennsylvania Department of Education is accountable to uphold the laws of this state; laws which Wilson College is obligated to follow regardless of decisions made by the governing board.

2) I assert that while the administration and Board of Trustees are tasked for a time with the fiscal and policy-making leadership of this non-profit institution for current and future students, they also have a duty to the donors and graduates who will for a lifetime (not simply a span of employment or volunteer service—no matter how dedicated that service) support the college. This proposed Charter is but one example of a rush to institute change, rather than exercise due diligence for the long term benefit of Wilson College.

3) I will explain how the work of the Commission was presented to the alumnae and Wilson community and how efforts were made to participate in the Commission Process.

4) I will share research into enrollment at other women's colleges which shows that women's colleges continue to be a valuable and valid option for students nationwide and in Pennsylvania.

5) I will highlight some of the activities initiated by alumnae, from September of 2012 up to the recent months, in support of continuing the women's college.

My objective is to clarify the petition of the group of alumnae that I represent today, who oppose the changes to the college's Articles of Incorporation because:

- 1) Several of the proposed changes to these Articles severely weaken Wilson College as an academic, non-profit liberal arts institution. These changes should deeply concern the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- 2) The process by which these changes were adopted was deeply flawed.
- 3) The college administration has ***been operating unlawfully*** by actively recruiting men for a women's residential college at least four months before filing for a change to the Charter, and at least a full year before the Pennsylvania Department of Education is able to act on the request for the changes.

In my role as a Director on the Association Board during the Commission On Shaping the Future of Wilson College (Commission) and decision process, I have been a witness to and participant in discussions that determined the "official" response of the Alumnae Association to the Commission process and decisions of the Board of Trustees. I attended the campus meetings related to the Commission, I organized the ad hoc Task Force meeting and I attended every meeting of the Alumnae Association Board during this period.

I'm here today as well in my role as a concerned alumna, along with still-increasing numbers of my sister alumnae, to insist that the mission of Wilson as a women's college remains valuable and viable. Many concrete ideas and suggestions were generated in opposition to the proposed Commission ideas that would alter the 145-year primary mission of the college to educate women. Many statistics and relevant data from reputable sources (including the U.S. Statistical Abstract 2012, the National Center for Education Statistics/IPEDS, and the Common Data Set) were offered to the Board of Trustees to refute data presented by the consulting firm, Stevens Strategy. I contend that Stevens Strategy provided misleading and incomplete information relied upon by the Trustees and the Commission to justify changing the core mission of Wilson College. Some of that justification was built on a foundation of sand; a poorly designed survey sent to approximately 3000 alumnae, 770 students and 4200 "inquiries" via email. The survey was sent without an explanation and without a context for responders. Many alumnae were baffled by several of the questions that seemed to have nothing to do with Wilson College and offered answer choices that were leading or misleading. The confusion and misunderstanding

about the purpose and context mean that the survey generated inconsequential information about alumnae support/non-support and interest/disinterest in the college. Incomplete statistics and information about national trends in admissions at women's colleges, used by the Commission and the Wilson College administration, were presented as fact to sway decision-making by these two groups. The core of Wilson College's financial and volunteer support (the alumnae base) was not comprehensively informed by the administration or by the Alumnae Association of Wilson College about the actions that the administration and Board of Trustees were taking that would ultimately lead to a decision to introduce fundamental change to the mission of the non-profit institution supported by this base. Demands and requests to compare and discuss alternative ideas in an open way were not honored. Instead incomplete and ever-changing data were presented in commission meetings. I quote the *Recommendation to the Wilson College Board of Trustees* signed by nearly 500 alumnae in December of 2012:

*"If there was a mechanism for incorporating, exploring, and further developing ideas proposed during open meetings, and through letters and emails, it was not apparent. None of the 'public' feedback has been utilized in a discernible way. Obviously, not every good idea can be implemented, but surely the Board of Trustees wants to consider options in addition to those developed by the Commission. Otherwise, why hold public meetings and invite feedback? Why invite communications via email, if ideas offered in those messages are not submitted to the Board for consideration? Also, although the College has issued many communications about the work of the Commission, its deliberations have not been 'open' (Commission members were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement)."*

The concerns of alumnae are not limited to the abandonment of the women's college mission, though I could quote studies that prove the value of single-sex education. I could share the statistics about women in business, law, medicine, government and research who in larger percentages than their co-ed sisters have achieved success and who credit those four years at a women's college as a significant contribution to their success. All of that is relative to our argument that to allow a gem like Wilson College to renege on its mission is a travesty, but there is much more even than that to our objections today. Barbara Jordan said "It is reason, and not passion, which must guide our deliberations, guide our debate, guide our decisions." We have plenty of passion, but today we bring facts and reason to this deliberation.

## **Role and Responsibilities of Alumnae Association of Wilson College**

The Alumnae Association of Wilson College exists to enhance the efforts of the college, but it operates as a separate organization. Though the Association is an integral part of the college through the mutually cooperative Covenant of 1968, it is a separate 501 (c) (3) non-profit with its own Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation. A Board of Directors and officers are elected by the membership to represent alumnae from many decades and constituencies at the annual meeting held during Reunion each year. In 1968 as Wilson was preparing to celebrate her Centennial Year, an agreement was forged with the college to form a mutually supportive relationship whereby membership in the Association would no longer be determined by who paid dues, but would bring all graduates into the organization and encourage broad support of the institution.

### **What the Bylaws say about alumnae involvement in the college**

#### *Section 1.2. Purpose*

*As provided in its Articles of Incorporation (as amended from time to time) the Association is organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Pennsylvania Nonprofit Corporation Law of 1988 and shall be operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes that advance the interests of Wilson College in Chambersburg, PA (hereinafter referred to as the "College").*

*In furtherance thereof:*

- a. to enhance opportunities for interaction among alumnae;*
- b. to encourage opportunities for interaction between alumnae and all members of the College community;*
- c. to preserve the unique traditions of the College;*
- d. to assist in recruiting and retaining students for the College;*
- e. to assist in raising funds for the College;*
- f. to promote alumnae interest and involvement in academic and student affairs; and*
- g. to assist in the development of College policy.*

I elaborate on each of the purposes listed above:

With regard to **Section 1.2 a.** to enhance opportunities for interaction among alumnae, and **Section 1.2 b.** to encourage opportunities for interaction between alumnae and all members of the College community:

It is the role of the Association Board to encourage, as openly as possible, communication and interaction between all graduates of the college. The leadership of the Association is also responsible to foster communication and interaction between alumnae and all members of the College – administration, students, faculty, Trustees. Wilson operates under the structure of shared governance, enhanced by an Honor Principle that becomes a permanent attribute of a Wilson woman's life, even into her role as an alumna. Shared governance at Wilson aims in part to find a dynamic and creative balance of involvement in college affairs between all members of the college community. The Board of Trustees includes a large number of alumnae, for the purpose of ensuring alumnae communication, as well as guaranteed participation in the legal authority of the college. Specifically the Alumnae Trustees who serve simultaneously on the Board of Trustees and the Alumnae Association Board play a unique role on the Board of Trustees. They not only bring their independent and informed thinking to bear on matters before the Board of Trustees, but they are tasked with representing the alumnae body. They bear an extra responsibility as shown in their duty to report to the Alumnae Association Board, and to the Annual Meeting of the Alumnae Association, the activities of the Board of Trustees. That representation also requires determining what the body they represent thinks about matters before the Board of Trustees and using those findings to make decisions. As evidenced in the Bylaws, the leadership of the Alumnae Association is accountable to participate earnestly and respectfully for the good of the whole college community and to share as completely as possible any essential information regarding the college with the larger body of graduates they represent. While the leadership of the Alumnae Association agreed and stated that all opinions about the Commission process expressed by alumnae were valid, the Association Board did not solicit, organize or tabulate those opinions.

Therefore, I am obligated to bring these concerns of the dissenting alumnae to you today. I strongly dispute the legality of the actions of Wilson College to begin recruiting male students in violation of the existing Articles approved by the PA Dept of Education in 1993. The dissenting alumnae, hereby known as Wilson College Women and the Pines and Maples Team, have made every attempt to openly share information about the actions of the administration

and current Board of Trustees with the as many alumnae as possible via mailings and social media. This group has in turn brought its concerns through the proper channels of communication to the administration and Board of Trustees. The dissenting alumnae find the actions of the administration and the Trustees unsupported and contradicted by facts. Accordingly, I am here today to ask for your intervention and to clarify alumnae opposition to and concerns about the intentions of the changes in the Articles we are now reviewing.

In September of 2013 several alumnae brought objections and questions about the proposed changes to the meeting of the Board of the Alumnae Association. Neither the questioners nor the members of the Alumnae Association Board were satisfied with an explanation provided by trustee Liz McDowell (Board Secretary) of the process by which the changes were made. There were many questions still remaining. Following a discussion I was asked to draft a letter [**Attachment #1**] to be sent to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, asking for clarification and reconsideration of the changes as stated in part:

*Based on a discussion at the September 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Directors of the Alumnae Association of Wilson College (AAWC), we request your written response to the questions below about proposed changes to the Wilson College Articles of Incorporation recently filed with the PA Department of Education (PDE). The AAWC Board understands that the proposed revision of the Articles is pending, awaiting a hearing on petitions and complaints filed with the PDE. Thank you for taking time to consider our questions...*

- *Ms. Barnes shared her concern that the proposed change in Section 3 (b) from “to offer its students studies in literature, science and the arts” to “to offer its students studies in arts, science and religion” seemed to be a misunderstanding of the translation of the college motto “ARS, SCIENTIA ET RELIGIO” (which translates from Latin as ARS – skill, critical reasoning; SCIENTIA – knowledge, factual information; and RELIGIO – reverence for tradition, for ethical and moral standards.) What is the Board of Trustees’ rationale for this change in the description of Wilson’s course of studies? The study of religion is certainly a component of a liberal arts education, but why emphasize it in the Articles and delete the reference to the study of literature, which has appeared for the past 144 years? Ms. McDowell explained the change was meant to highlight the college’s affiliation with the Presbyterian Church, but that seemed to questioners as inappropriate in this context because Wilson always has been affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, yet the course of studies always has been described as “literature, science and the arts.” Can the Board of Trustees revisit this issue and vote again about the proposed change to Section 3(b)?*
- *Ms. Barnes also questioned changes to Section 11 of the 1993 Articles (Section 10 in the revised version): “The corporation shall maintain a minimum protective endowment of at least \$500,000 beyond all indebtedness and assets invested in buildings and apparatus for the exclusive purpose of promoting instruction.” The proposed change is: “The corporation shall maintain at all times an unencumbered endowment of no less than five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000).”*

*This seemed to the questioners an insufficient amount to require the College to maintain in its endowment. An educational institution in the current economic climate with only half a million dollar endowment is neither a financially healthy institution, nor a well-managed institution. A related concern about changes to Section 11 (Section 10 in the proposed revision) is the removal of language that defines what the minimum endowment includes and excludes. The proposed revision introduces the term "unencumbered endowment," which is not defined. Also, by striking the language that indicates the minimum endowment excludes "all indebtedness and assets invested in buildings and apparatus for the exclusive purpose of promoting instruction," the proposed change leaves open the possibility that the College could sell all its assets except for \$500,000. The questioners share a grave concern that the revisions of and deletions in Section 11 (1993 Articles), revised as Section 10, leave the door open for "approved" mismanagement by a future Board and administration. The proposed new wording appears to have a very different intention than the words that were struck. Can the Board of Trustees revisit this issue and vote again about the proposed changes to (now) Section 10?*

- *Ms. Hopkins took the opportunity to ask Ms. McDowell about Section 12 of the 1993 Articles of Incorporation: "The Corporation shall maintain a faculty consisting of at least eight regular professors who devote all their time to the instruction of its higher education classes." This language is struck completely from the proposed new version. Alumnae concerns here regard the importance of tenured faculty for the academic integrity and excellent instruction such professionals bring to a college community devoted to study of the liberal arts. It also raises the issue of current practices among for-profit colleges to hire only adjunct faculty who are paid minimal wages and provided with few real benefits. This is a hiring practice that neither builds a strong academic community nor provides a living job for faculty. The discussion at the AAWC meeting raised questions such as, is that an ethical practice in academic hiring? Is it healthy for the learning environment? The proposed exclusion of a statement that defines the minimum number of full-time faculty, it was argued, leaves a door open to unethical practices and potentially lower educational standards whether it was the intention of this revision of the Articles or not. Does the current Wilson faculty know this article has been removed? Can the Board of Trustees revisit this issue and vote again about the proposed deletions to Section 12 of the 1993 Articles?*

Others will speak in more detail about these and other questionable changes to the Articles but I offer the response of Chairperson Gibb [**Attachment #2**] as an example of communication between the Board of Trustees and alumnae that did not allow for thorough debate of legitimate concerns. Chairperson Gibb failed to answer the questions asked by the Association Board; moreover, his letter demonstrates either profound and concerning confusion or deliberate misrepresentation, as he calls the College's Articles of Incorporation "bylaws" and incorrectly describes Pennsylvania law.

With regard to **Section 1.2 d.** to assist in recruiting and retaining students for the College:

From early in Wilson's history, and especially since 1979, alumnae have endeavored to assist with student recruitment. With training, graduates might attend College Fairs in the communities where they live, yet where it is difficult or costly for the Admissions staff to visit. They might host gatherings of accepted students, and answer questions about what life at Wilson is like. In the 1970's the college encouraged a program called One-Plus-One; each alumna was encouraged to talk about Wilson to young women who might be interested in attending - aiming for each grad to bring one new student to Wilson at some time in her life. Alumnae routinely share stories about the Wilson Woman whose encouragement introduced them to the college.

In the four years that I have served on the Alumnae Association Board I have requested and suggested at each appropriate committee meeting that the Admissions staff develop training for Wilson alumnae so that we can be used to augment the recruiting staff. This is very common practice at small colleges and large universities. In fact the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) supports this practice, and provides on their website a fairly detailed training outline that colleges can adapt to their own needs. Still, to date, Wilson's admissions professionals rebuff the efforts of alumnae to help with recruitment—even after a Task Force of willing and capable volunteers was organized at an emergency meeting of the Alumnae Association held in early January 2013 to demonstrate alternatives to fundamental change in the College's mission.

Throughout the Commission process I heard it stated frequently that admissions efforts to recruit women for Wilson College were not yielding the numbers needed to sustain a women's college and that interest in women's colleges in general was declining. There was inconsistency in statistics shared by Stevens Strategy, used during the decision process to support the need for Wilson to become a coed institution, claiming variously that 2%, 3%, 4% or 5% of high school senior students will apply to women's colleges. This is a misinterpretation of information from the preliminary questionnaire filled out by students on SAT test applications created by the College Board. In fact there is no complete hard data about that statistic. During the Commission presentations I heard repeatedly that enrollment at women's colleges was decreasing across the board, when in fact it was mostly holding steady and in some cases growing year by year. I have included information from the Common Data Sets which indicate that women's colleges in Wilson's market area continue to draw smart women to their campuses and are experiencing an increase in applications. In 2012, in Wilson's recruiting



market area, more than 39,000 applications for admission were received by these women's colleges. Smith, Mt. Holyoke and Bryn Mawr (another Pennsylvania women's college) continue to have waiting lists for admission **[Attachment #3]**.

The most recent complete data from the National Center for Education Statistics states that there were 79,099 women enrolled in women's colleges in 2010-11. Moreover the Trustees were told, and the Commission repeated to other constituents, that college enrollment in general is shrinking. The U.S. Department of Education has tracked actual data and projected stats into the year 2021 with full-time enrollment increasing every year and women out-pacing men by thousands **[Attachment #4]**. In addition the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that 4.2% of the bachelor's degrees granted in 2011 were granted to women attending women's colleges. In 2011 (the most recent statistics available) 12,733 bachelor's degrees were awarded to women attending private non-profit women's colleges <http://tinyurl.com/nrq8wlj>. In that same year 302,088 bachelor's degrees were conferred upon women at all private 4-year non-profit colleges. <http://tinyurl.com/qxs9mkj>

This data is significant because it proves, while all but a few women's colleges have enrollments that exceed 3000 students, they continue to be a vital option for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century who desire an education in an academically challenging, women-centered community.

With regard to **Section 1.2 e.** to assist in raising funds for the College:

Fundraising beginning with teas and socials in the late 1800s, has been a cornerstone of alumnae support throughout Wilson's history. Outstanding in these efforts was the generous support provided through 1979's historic \$1.1 million raised in just three months to show that with the help and involvement of Wilson alumnae, the college could survive beyond that challenging decade if the needs were understood clearly by the alumnae base of donors. Alumnae, including the very generous matching campaigns of Marguerite Lenfest, have provided generous financial support to our *alma mater*. Most recently alumnae in support of Wilson *remaining a women's college* initiated the *DOUBLE IT!!* campaign which raised \$81,808 of unrestricted cash in twenty-five days prior to the Board of Trustees' decision.

From a report prepared by the Advancement office in 2012 **[Attachment 5]**, you can see that during the previous Capital Campaign stretching from 2006 to 2012, 2600 graduates of the college for women (from a base of 6459) gave to the college Annual Fund (40%). Of that number, 337 (12%) gave at the Leadership level of \$1000 or more in a calendar year. Many of these donors gave repeatedly during the six-year campaign. The graduates of the Adult Degree Program (ADP) who sometimes have a different perception of their connections to Wilson

(many of them are working, raising families, and so forth, during their years at Wilson) gave at a level of 14% (163 donors from a group of 1163). Of those 163 donors, 6 (3%) gave at the Leadership level. Other than gifts to the Double It!! Fund, the percent of giving showed significant change in 2011, 2012 and 2013 [**Attachment 6**]. Some donors have cited their non-support of the coed decision, while others simply stopped giving. I wonder how this will affect the college's unrestricted donor funds far into the future. According to a **U.S. News & World Report** article from September 26, 2013, written by D. Smith-Barrow entitled *Ten Colleges Where Most Alumni Give Back*, "Of the 1,207 schools that submitted data to U.S. News, the two-year average percentage of alumni donors is 12.8. The average for the top 10 schools is 55.9 percent. "

With regard to **Section 1.2 f.** to promote alumnae interest and involvement in academic and student affairs, and **Section 1.2 g.** to assist in the development of College policy:

As noted by alumna Mary Anstadt Tozer'30 in her 1968/69 history of the college:

*In the Winter issue, 1959, of the Wilson Alumnae Quarterly Dr. Havens, President of Wilson College, refers to the alumnae as "stockholders" who "own" their college.*

*In Dr. Emily Bacon's Alumnae Trustee report in 1936 she says in part, "The Alumnae Association is our institution. Insofar as we are interested in it, and insofar as we work for it we can make it a force for good in shaping policies of our Alma Mater – policies which will help this generation of college students to grapple with modern problems. Every alumna can find opportunity for service...Her financial contributions to Wilson enterprises, her help in guiding prospective students to the College, her influence as a Wilson graduate in her community, her constructive criticism of Wilson policies – all of these are invaluable methods of serving the Association and the college."*

Wilson operates under a long-held policy of shared governance, enhanced by an Honor Principle. The Honor Principle is signed by every member of the community; including Trustees, staff, students, faculty and administration. Each part of the academic community is accountable to participate, listen, and consider respectfully for the good of the whole as a decision is made. The Bylaws of the Alumnae Association make it clear that participation of the alumnae in decisions that affect Wilson is an expectation of the larger community.

### *The Role and Responsibilities of the Association's Alumnae Trustees in Development of Policy*

The Board of Trustees has a strong presence of alumnae. Three, known as Alumnae Trustees, are nominated by and elected to the Board of the Alumnae Association to serve on both boards. The President of the Association is an *ex officio* member with voting privileges.

#### With regard to **Section 5.3. Duties of Alumnae Trustees**

- a. Alumnae Trustees shall serve as the primary liaisons between the [Alumnae] Association and the Board of Trustees.*
- b. Alumnae Trustees shall attend all regularly scheduled meetings of the [Alumnae] Board and of the Board of Trustees and shall be prepared to report on Trustee activities at all [Alumnae] Board meetings. Alumnae Trustees may also be requested to attend special meetings called by either the [Alumnae] Board or the Board of Trustees.*
- c. Alumnae Trustees shall present a written report of the actions of the Board of Trustees to the {Alumnae] Association at the Annual Meeting, which report shall be printed and distributed to the membership.*
- d. Alumnae Trustees shall serve on the Executive Committee of the [Alumnae] Board.*

These four representatives from the Alumnae Association Board are responsible for investigating, actively seeking and analyzing alumnae opinion and perspective in order to bring the input of the body of alumnae to the decision-making process of the Board of Trustees before the Commission's work concluded and the Trustees voted. The widespread community of alumnae was never formally or informally consulted by the Alumnae Trustees to ascertain a true sense of perspective, in order for these representatives on the Board of Trustees to make decisions or to vote on the recommendations brought by President Mistick to the Trustees. Instead of credible information about alumnae opinion, assumptions about the alumnae response were repeatedly described in meetings of the Association Board, at Town Hall meetings throughout the country, and at Commission presentations. Alumnae response was described, in a way seemingly pulled out of thin air, as "about 30% in support of the decision to become coed, about 30% who are unhappy but understand it must be done, and about 30% who are opposed." Since there were no real data or facts that either supported or refuted this assumption, a request for a formal survey, conducted by the Alumnae Association, was made. That request was denied based on the estimated cost of conducting the survey by mail.

Without measurable input from alumnae, these Trustees had no clear authority from the body they are elected to represent to support this fundamental change. Their best choice would

have been to abstain from the final vote. If the three Alumnae Trustees and the President of the Alumnae Association had abstained, the vote to make Wilson coed across all constituencies would have failed.

### *Historical and Current Involvement of Alumnae in Development of Policy and Involvement in Student & Academic Affairs*

Alumnae have responded to the needs of the college in many ways throughout the years. In 1967 and 1968 the Board of Trustees and the Association Board negotiated a new Covenant that brought the two autonomous groups into a closer relationship that would rally all alumnae for the college while bringing the budget for the association under the umbrella of college financing, while respecting the autonomy of the Association as its own corporation. It was a deliberate, reflective process that intended to expand the membership of the association, encourage giving to the college endowment and coordinate the work of the two separate but complementary Boards. As stated in the *Winter 1968 Alumnae Quarterly* in support of the new relationship, "But most important, perhaps, in the consideration of these changes, is an understanding of the element of *trust* [emphasis in original document] involved in the interdependence of the College and the Association."

The role of alumnae in 1979 is crucial to understanding the lengths to which the graduates of Wilson take our responsibility for success of our *alma mater*. I was a junior that year and a leader in the college government association. Alumnae, students, faculty and friends organized to save Wilson in 1979. We began by questioning the decision made by the Board of Trustees in February 1979 to close the college at the end of the academic year. Attempting several times to meet with alumnae trustees to discuss decisions, we hoped to prove that alternatives to that decision were possible with the concerted efforts of alumnae and friends. The Association Board was instrumental to the coordination of communication using alumnae mailing lists to contact graduates and keep them informed, to raise funds, and to solicit support of all kinds. A phone bank was staffed by students and local alumnae around the clock in the early weeks. Eventually a complaint was filed with Orphan's Court of Franklin County leading to an historic decision by Judge Keller to reverse the closing of Wilson. This led to a *decree nisi* that dissolved the existing Board of Trustees and made recommendations about the future composition of a new Board. Following the decision alumnae came to Chambersburg (leaving behind academic and professional careers) to serve in administrative positions, to raise funds, to recruit students, to teach, and to make improvements to the campus infrastructure until others

could be chosen to fill those roles. Without the willingness of alumnae to step in during a critical time in Wilson's history, her story would have ended in 1979.

At no time during the recent Commission process did the Alumnae Association Board initiate this kind of communication, debate, or fundraising. While discussions of varying opinions at Board meetings was not discouraged and letters/emails were sent to describe the process, it was the position of the majority of the leadership of the Association that the Board of the Alumnae Association should publicly support the efforts of the Commission and Dr. Mistick.

In response to the report at Leadership Weekend September of 2012 about the Commission's work, I made an email appeal to the entire Board of Directors of the Alumnae Association requesting that the Association send a letter to all alumnae. I argued that a letter was needed to present a clear explanation of the information presented by the Commission group during that weekend to the larger body of alumnae. They needed to hear that a change to coed was being seriously considered, that misleading assumptions and statistics from the Stevens Strategy survey were being used as a basis for Commission work, that alumnae should make every attempt to attend the forums being held on campus, and should write to the trustees or commission members with their questions and comments. The purpose was to urge alumnae to become informed in order to make their own decisions about the information and potential outcomes so that they could become part of the process. It became evident by the first week of October that many, many alumnae had no idea what the Commission's purpose was and how mission-altering its recommendations might be. The request to send a direct mailing was denied by the President of the Alumnae Association, citing the Association's limited budget and reiterating that the college offered several options for sharing opinions. However, those opinions were not actively solicited and organized *by the Association* in order to quantify alumnae feedback. There were other low-cost options available to the Association to gather alumnae opinion; a broad and earnest email appeal for input sent directly to the Association, a request for Class Correspondents to poll their classmates.

On October 1, 2012, I acted alone on my inner voice to send an informational email to the Class Correspondents (comprised of one representative from each class who is responsible for keeping in touch with classmates) outlining my concerns and encouraging correspondents to share the information about campus meetings with their classmates. The response to this direct communication was swift. The emails and phone call responses I received made it clear that my initial apprehensions were legitimate. Alumnae *did not fully* understand implications of the Commission process from college communications they had already received.

Into this void of debate several projects to share information were launched by small groups of alumnae. They were individual initiatives neither sanctioned by nor supported in any way by the Alumnae Association or the college. Information from the email I'd sent was shared by several of the Class Correspondents on an existing Face Book page. The Pines and Maples team formed to create a website on October 11, 2012 for the purpose of organizing alumnae and persuading the Board of Trustees and President of Wilson College to ensure Wilson's success as a women's college. Two additional Face Book pages were launched to share information and organize alumnae; they continue to keep more than 1400 graduates connected. Since the Trustee vote on January 13, 2013 to make Wilson College co-educational across all programs, the Pines and Maples group has worked independently of the College to keep alumnae informed about events, activities, and decisions that affect our *alma mater*.

### **Specific Actions of the Alumnae since September of 2012**

Graduates from all eras have worked to engage with the College Administration, the Board of Trustees and the Alumnae Association Board throughout the Commission and decision process.

- The Association Board was not given the option/responsibility of choosing representatives to serve on the Commission committees at the outset of the Commission process. Alumnae were hand-picked by President Mistick or the convener of the Commission. In hindsight, it is clear that a balance of perspectives was not a goal. After concerns were raised at the September Alumnae Association Board meeting, the President of the Association chose one alumna to serve as a link between the Commission and the Alumnae Board. She was assigned to one subgroup of the Commission.
- A pledge to support Wilson as a women's college was drafted by alumnae. To date 890 alumnae and friends from across the decades have signed the pledge which promises financial support, help with recruiting, and a special effort to provide for the rebuilding of the library if Wilson remains a women's college.
- The Pines & Maples and Wilson College Women encouraged alumnae to attend the open forum meetings sponsored by the college and Commission, to bring questions and offer testimony. They did come, they did ask questions. They did propose alternative suggestions and write letters to the commission and the trustees. **[Attachments 7 & 8]**
- Two other alumnae and I conducted research about applications to and current enrollment at existing women's colleges which proved that some statistics shared by/with the Commission regarding the enrollment numbers at women's colleges were

inaccurate. We used Common Data Set information and also spoke with several Directors of Admissions. **[see attachment #3 a chart of enrollment at a cross-section of women's colleges 2011 – 2014]**

- An emergency meeting of the Alumnae Association was held in early January to form *ad hoc* Task Forces on recruitment, fundraising, retention and marketing. It was an example of the willingness of alumnae to work with and advocate for the college and to capitalize on the niche of being a women's college for the next 2-3 years before making a decision about the coeducation proposal. Alumnae travelled to campus from nearby and out of state. Those who could not travel participated via live-streaming. Some of the excellent suggestions generated by the Commission were embraced by these Task Forces. Many additional ideas were suggested during brainstorming and discussions with college staff in those four key areas as an alternative to abandoning Wilson's mission as a women's college.
- The Double It! Matching fund was conceived as a good-faith effort to demonstrate to the Board of Trustees that in just a matter of weeks alumnae could collaborate with Wilson staff to show the depth and breadth of their support for Wilson. The campaign was launched at pinesandmaples.com on December 16, 2012, and by January 11, 2013, it had amassed impressive statistics. We were denied access to the alumnae mailing lists and phone numbers. We were not allowed a link on the college website or the Alumnae Association page. We are amateur fundraisers with none of the structural support and information available to college staff every day. However, we were creative and innovative and in touch with the institutional memory of our alma mater. While contributions came in from classes from the 1940s to the present day, particularly notable is that 29 of the 30 classes from the 1980s–2010s (a period sometimes maligned for not giving) donated, and the largest single donation came from a 1980s alumna. Alumnae dug into their pockets for Wilson, and \$81,808 in unrestricted funds was raised in 25 days from 242 donors across 63 class years. By using creative digital techniques to engage alumnae where they “gather” and reviving competitions that resonate with Wilson graduates the campaign connected with new donors.
- A recommendation letter was prepared by alumnae to offer a carefully considered alternative to a vote by the Trustees in January to eliminate the women's college **[Attachment 9]**. From the letter sent to the Trustees:

*“This single recommendation is straightforward. When the Board of Trustees meets on January 13, 2013, to consider the recommendations of President Mistick and the Commission, we strongly encourage the Board to postpone for 3–4 years any decision that would alter the long-standing mission of Wilson as a liberal arts college for women. We understand that instituting transformative change will take time, and certain decisions must be made immediately. We endorse that. However, not all the decisions on shaping Wilson's future need to be made now. In particular, we urge you to table any vote about whether Wilson should become a co-educational institution.”*

The letter to the Trustees made four main recommendations:

- 1- Critical decisions about Wilson’s future should not be rushed. The timeline was very compressed. Neither the Commission nor the Board were given sufficient time to investigate implications of the outcomes of their decisions or create a detailed roadmap for implementation.
- 2- All decisions made by the Board need to be based on valid and complete data. There were many incomplete and/or inconsistent data, which other petitioners will discuss in more detail.
- 3- The Commission “process” did not function as advertised. As noted earlier the meetings of the Commission were closed, ideas generated and feedback offered was not utilized, the community meetings were mostly a time of presentation of pre-determined decisions and their justifications.
- 4- Making a controversial decision that alienates many alumnae and donors is the last thing Wilson College should do. The divisive decision has cost support of alumnae in many ways, not least of which is the usually broad support of the Annual Fund. President Mistick has said many times that she “has the support of the major donors...” but they are less than 6% of the donor base and in order to survive Wilson needs to keep the base as broad as possible. Those \$50 - \$100 donations from other donors add up and keep the percentage of giving healthy.

## **Conclusions**

The future success of Wilson College does impact alumnae. In a very concrete way, our diplomas represent “a brand.” Our connections as graduates of a fine liberal arts college for women will be diminished if the changes to the Charter are approved. The changes weaken the commitment to liberal arts, they endanger the endowment, and they entirely eliminate wording regarding the faculty. (These points are covered more fully in Ms. Behm’s testimony.) They create *on paper* an institution that could be a community college, a training college or a foundation – something very different from the institution described in the Wilson College Strategic Plan 2010-2015 which was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees in 2010, short months before the Commission process began. The institution described in the red-lined Articles under your consideration is divergent and completely at odds with the Wilson College of the 1993 Articles. I certainly object to the change that creates a coed Wilson, because I believe that many of the day-to-day changes implemented to make Wilson ‘attractive’ to male students should have been implemented years ago to strengthen the women’s college. In fact, all of



those changes could have been implemented in good faith without admitting men to the residential college.

As echoed in the testimony of Ms. Van Ness, Ms. Tishok and Ms. Behm, many of the proposed changes endanger the mission of Wilson as a healthy liberal arts college. The evidence and documentation we share indicates not only seriously flawed changes to this legally binding document, but a seriously flawed process.

The engagement of alumnae does impact the future of Wilson College. As evidenced in this testimony financial support of the alumnae has diminished. The efforts described above were undertaken by alumnae who have made it clear they will not support a coeducational Wilson College. We have challenged the changes to the Articles of Incorporation not because we are obstinate about change at Wilson College but because the changes were conducted improperly, undermine its operations as a non-profit institution and were enacted before approval by the state of Pennsylvania. All alumnae cherish the traditions that form a daisy chain from generation to generation, but we recognize that a vibrant, dynamic college will adapt to meet the challenges of its mission over time. Wilson can flourish in its mission as a women's college while adapting to needs of today's students.

What is the role of the Pennsylvania Department of Education – if not to ensure that non-profit boards of private and public colleges and universities follow the laws of this state? Words are powerful – in this case they assign authority, guide decisions, protect investments and donations, make a promise to students, and ensure the proper administration of Boards of Trustees not just in the present but far into the future of this college. I ask you to carefully evaluate our case.

*“The key to genuine shared governance is broad and unending communication. When various groups of people are kept in the loop and understand what developments are occurring within the university, and when they are invited to participate as true partners, the institution prospers. That, after all, is our common goal.*

Olson, Gary A. “Exactly What is ‘Shared Governance’?” *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 7/24/2009, Vol. 55 Issue 42, pA33-A35. 2p.

Thank you for your consideration.