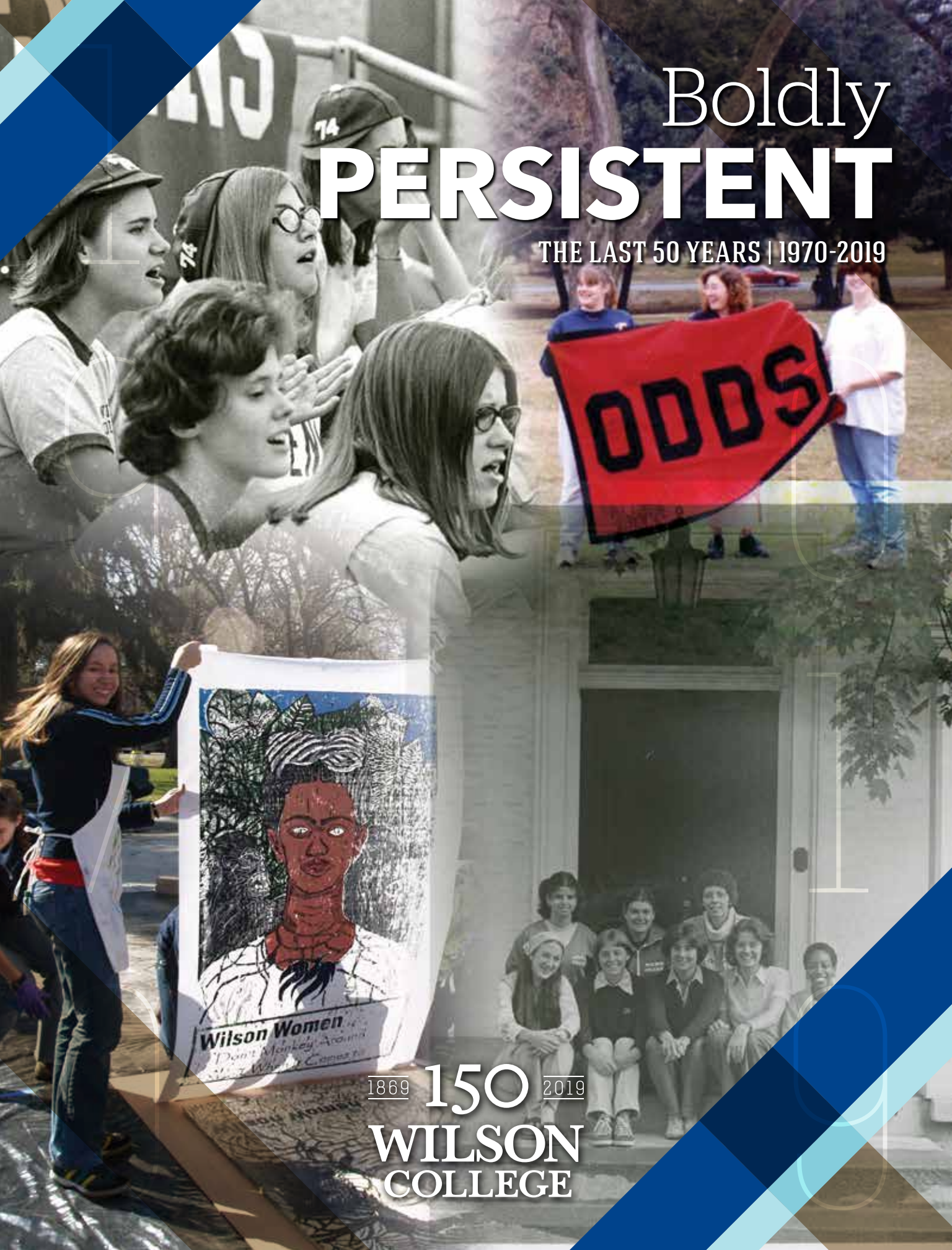


# Boldly PERSISTENT

THE LAST 50 YEARS | 1970-2019



1869 **150** 2019  
WILSON  
COLLEGE





(H12) CHAMBERSBURG, Pa., May 24--PROTEST AT COMMENCEMENT--Four graduating Wilson College Girl students in Chambersburg, Pa. wear protest costumes at end of commencement procession. Mrs. Memie Eisenhower, an honorary degree recipient, refused to receive her degree unless the costumes were removed before the ceremony.





Wilson College's third 50 years, beginning in 1970 and ending this year, has been a period of passionate debate, big decisions, change and evolution into the vibrant institution we have today. It began with enrollment so low that the two new residence halls built on the misplaced optimism of the '60s sat nearly empty. It ended with coeducation expanded to all programs and the College's highest-ever enrollment; a college primed to write the story of its next 150 years.

Of course, the path to where we find ourselves in 2020 was winding and not always smooth, but this small and mighty college, 'mid its pines and maples, boldly persisted, even flourished, in an era that saw the majority of women's colleges disappear.

The two most significant events—the decision to close the College in 1979 and to go coed in 2013—are perhaps the bookends for this period. Both decisions stirred controversy, inflamed passions and pitted sister against sister. However, they also brought people together to fight for the College's existence, and for many alums, they brought home the importance of having a living college to call their alma mater.

In this brief history, we outline some of the forces at play and how they molded the decision-makers and those affected by the decisions. We do not have the space to provide an in-depth or full accounting of what happened over these 50 years, but this timeline does give the reader a sense of what took place and why. It does not address the hurt many felt and some still feel with both decisions, but it does attempt to put them in the context of their era and the larger societal and cultural influences shaping them, including trends in education and the changing roles of women in society.

Not everyone agrees with every decision made along the way, and undoubtedly many things could have been done differently, but whatever the rights and wrongs, Wilson is alive and dynamic. The bold spirit and proud persistence of Wilson alums, students, administration, faculty and staff fueled the fight to keep the College's doors open when so many similar colleges were failing. Thanks to their resolve and effort, the spirit of Wilson will live on in future generations.

This year, as we celebrate the College's 150th birthday under the leadership of a new and energetic president, Wesley R. Fugate, we can look to the future with the optimism of a community that has faced many challenges and thrived. If we were to sum up our first 150 years, it would be the story of a small, bold college that persevered against the odds. Wilson may be small, but she is still mighty and still primed to fight another day.

Amy Ensley  
*Director of the Hankey Center*

Darrach Dolan  
*Managing Editor of Wilson Magazine*



## The College that Refused to Die

### A Shock Announcement

On Monday, Feb. 19, 1979, the campus was blanketed in deep snow, so when the president called an all-campus meeting for noon, most assumed it was to announce the suspension of classes. To the shock of the students, faculty and staff gathered in Thomson Hall, President Margaret Waggoner and Board President Martha Baum Walker announced the closure of Wilson College.

It was no secret that the College's situation had been problematic for some time, but few knew just how bad things were and most didn't expect the College to close.

### Dire Finances

The Board of Trustees had commissioned a panel of experts to assess the College's situation objectively. This panel deliberated for six hours using data provided by the president that showed the estimated

deficit for keeping the College open another year would be \$1 million and would eat up the bulk of the College's \$1.2 million unrestricted endowment.

The experts saw no indications that the College could turn this around and concluded that Wilson's situation was irretrievable. They pointed out that closing the College quickly would preserve much of the endowment and assets instead of "frittering" them away.

The report was presented to the board, along with a proposal to use college assets to endow a foundation that would grant scholarships to students attending other women's colleges. The Trustees voted to close the College and set up the foundation.

### Alumnae & Students to the Rescue

Shocked and angered students established a hotline and printed a special edition of the *Billboard* (available online) to convey information and organize resistance. On March 3, 300 members of the Alumnae Association, students



NASA Aborts  
Apollo 13 Mission

1970

1974

## A DEATH SPIRAL & THE PHOENIX RISES

The 1970s would end with the board voting to close the College and the alumnae, students, faculty and staff fighting to save it. This was a dramatic ending to a decade of stagnation and inaction on the part of the administration.

### DECLINING ADMISSIONS & CULTURAL SHIFTS

Misplaced optimism in the late 1960s led to the construction of the Rosenkrans and Disert residence halls, the expansion of the library and the construction of a new science center. Faculty had grown from 57 to 71 while enrollment stagnated. Tuition and fees steadily increased despite student unhappiness with facilities, majors offered and the lack of extracurricular activities.

While national college enrollment increased by a sluggish 2-4 percent, there was an actual decline in the number of college-age students in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. The most troubled institutions were small, tuition-dependent liberal arts colleges.

By 1970, many single-sex institutions, especially men's colleges, were transitioning to coeducation. Women's colleges with their *in loco parentis* rules often seemed quaint in the era of "the pill" and women's lib. And increasingly, women preferred career training over traditional liberal arts majors—the mainstay of "educated wives." Church-associated schools also suffered as the country became more secular.

### THE LONG-RANGE TASK FORCE

Charles Cole was named president after President Paul Swain Havens' retirement in 1970. He had served as a fighter pilot in World War II and had a doctorate in history from Columbia University.



Charles Cole

Cole established a Long-Range Task Force consisting of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff and students to address the issues. The Trustees reported that the College would accumulate a deficit of nearly \$1 million by the end of the 1970-71 school year. "Our enrollment has dropped to 529 students," task force chair Robert Shively said. "Although the figures are shocking, it does not mean that Wilson is closing."

English professor Doris McCrosson, also a member of the task force, said the College should target the modern woman. "Were Wilson to become more responsive to the increasing intellectual and social sophistication of young women, the College would not only survive but also enhance its reputation."

The board did not necessarily agree. Trustee Emmett Eagan said at a fundraiser that it was "important for Wilson to remain a high caliber girls' school so that Wilson's tradition of 'turning out girls who have the stuff that mothers of great men are made of



Nixon Resigns

and faculty met in Thomson Hall to discuss options. Alumnae representatives then met with the board in New York City, while protesting students sang the alma mater, but couldn't convince the board to reverse its decision. The Alumnae Association established the Save Wilson Committee to raise funds, open an office in Chambersburg and hire attorneys to file suit to keep the College open.

Some 600 alumnae returned to campus to celebrate May Day and on May 7, the hearing to save the College opened with Judge John W. Keller presiding. Five days of testimony from students, alumnae, faculty, Trustees, staff, Waggoner and expert witnesses followed. The Save Wilson Committee raised \$1.1 million before the end of the hearing.

On May 25, 1979, Keller ruled that Wilson College would remain open. His power

to overturn the closing came down to a legal technicality—the board had begun winding down the College without the court's approval. In his decision, Keller criticized the board and Waggoner and said the panel of experts could not have "digested ... the mass of printed material" in six hours and their report was "utterly devoid of merit and value."

The victory was celebrated when 44 members of the Class of 1979 graduated on May 27 and Professor of Political Science Donald Bletz accepted the role of acting president.

You can read more about the twists and turns in a forthcoming book by President Emerita Mary-Linda Merriam Armacost and others, tentatively titled *The College That Refused to Die: The Untold Story of Wilson College from 1979-89*.



Wilson is Saved



Elvis Presley, the "King of Rock and Roll," Dies

1977

1979

will remain unbroken.”

A barrage of editorials and letters to the *Billboard* followed his comments, including this from Professor Eve MacDonald: “To let linger the impression that Wilson is a gentling stable for fine breeding stock (in mini-skirts) is to do a disservice to Wilson students, faculty, Trustees and friends.”

### A DAMNING REPORT

In 1974, *The Moon Report* by consultant Rexroth Moon found: “The College is considered to be paternalistic by both students and faculty and that reputation must be considered when reframing the College’s image as promoting education for the modern woman. The College is out of touch with respect to developments in women’s education.”

The report noted that between 1963 and 1973, the number of women faculty had declined sharply. The criticism continued: “Though most members of the faculty believe the College has problems, few have grasped in any detail the enormity of the problem ... Current faculty is very traditional and may have difficulty in doing anything radically different.”

The report was critical of the Trustees, noting that they were not all highly motivated and suggested: “Those not interested should resign.” The investments of the College had fallen from \$9 million to \$4 million because of deficit spending and the falling stock market. Additionally, “Trustees have projected the image that they are unsupportive of feminist developments.”

*The Moon Report* was a call to arms. But even after four years of extreme cost-cutting, efforts to improve recruitment and retention, and a push to revamp the curriculum, there was little to show for the effort. President Cole resigned within the year.

### NEW PRESIDENT BACKTRACKS

Margaret Waggoner was inaugurated as Wilson president in September 1975. Waggoner had been a physics professor, then dean at Smith College. She announced her plan to backtrack from the recent emphasis on combining a liberal arts education with a strong career focus, despite the numerous studies showing great interest in a combination of the two. Wilson’s enrollment and retention rate fell at a faster pace.

Students and alums appeared more in touch with reality than the administration. A young alumna wrote to the *Billboard* in 1978, warning that enrollment was so terrible the College could not wait for improvement or “there would be no college left.” A 1978 letter from a parent stated, “Parents reading the *Billboard* could hardly think but that their daughters had gotten into a school on the verge of utter collapse.”

The entering class that year was only 55 students. The administration could no longer deny that the condition of the College was desperate.



Margaret Waggoner

## African-American Impact

Throughout the 1980s, Wilson's African-American Society (WAAS) was a political and cultural force on campus. However, the club began the decade with only four members and few activities.

To increase visibility and attract more interest, in April 1980, WAAS hosted "AFRAM," a weekend of events and exhibits showcasing the experiences of black Americans through art. Vinnie Burrows, an actor and activist, performed her one-woman show, *Sister, Sister!*

The club held a jazz concert in Laird Hall. It also organized an admissions workshop for minority students and a series of lectures for AFRAM. Throughout



Sandra Day O'Connor First Woman Appointed to U.S. Supreme Court

the weekend, visiting lecturers spoke to the Wilson community on topics such as "Black Women in Education: A Sociopolitical Perspective," and the stereotyping of black men in visual media.

Perhaps because of the success of the AFRAM weekend, when WAAS held its first meeting of the fall semester, its membership increased to 22. With more members and more energy, WAAS became more active on campus, organizing programs and activities throughout the decade. From talent shows to bringing in entertainment in the form of dance troupes, poets and musicians, the club exposed the Wilson community to a range of black performers and artists the community would otherwise not have seen. In 1981, WAAS put on a fashion and talent show that included dancing and a "soul food buffet." The success of the talent show made it a popular annual event.

First Commercial Portable Cell Phone Produced



1981

1983

## CONSOLIDATION & THE RETURN OF OPTIMISM

After its brush with closure, Wilson began the '80s with hope and optimism tempered by the realities of the financial and demographic challenges ahead. "Like an old lilac bush that must be ruthlessly pruned back in order to bloom again, Wilson College has experienced the pain of a very public pruning, and it is too soon to predict a springtime evidence of bloom," wrote Elisabeth Hudnut Clarkson '47, *Billboard* February 1980.

### IN-HOUSE TEAM TAKES RESPONSIBILITY

The College needed a leader who could steady the ship until a new administration was in place. One of Wilson's own stepped up. Professor Donald Bletz, of Mountville, Pa., had served in the U.S. Army for 32 years, eventually retiring as a colonel. He became a political science professor at Wilson in 1975 and served as head of the business and economics department. Bletz took on the role of interim president to allow the Board of Trustees time for a thorough presidential search.



Donald Bletz

Joining Bletz, Carol Tschop '72 signed on as the acting director of development. Theony Condos became dean—she had been an assistant professor of classics since 1974 and an acting dean since August 1979.

### A YOUTHFUL NEW PRESIDENT BEGINS

Mary-Linda Merriam, whose mother was a Wilson graduate, became president July 1, 1981. She was 37 at the time of

her appointment. "I never expected to actually get the job but I was eager for the experience and when I was told that I had been selected, I was thoroughly frightened," Merriam recalled.

Before coming to Wilson, Merriam had been the assistant to the president of Boston University. While in office, she expanded recruiting and enhanced the College's curriculum. She is best remembered for beginning the Division of Continuing Studies (now the Adult Degree Program), which encouraged students of all ages to return to college for their degrees.



Mary-Linda Merriam

### MONEY MATTERS

Merriam had inherited a college with serious financial issues and she had to divide her energies between the day-to-day struggle to keep things running and the need to modernize the College in an era that saw many women's colleges close or go coeducational.

"There were certainly sleepless nights," Merriam said. "One of my most lasting memories was our difficulty in making payroll. We never missed a payroll but Christmas of 1982, we were \$25,000 short. I had been to a conference that fall and had met the head of a foundation who gave presidential discretion grants. I hadn't as yet asked and he hadn't offered, but on Dec. 27 we received \$25,000! We made payroll!"

### Focus on the Positive

However, WAAS did not lose its focus on community outreach and fostering a greater understanding of African-American culture and related issues. In 1983, the club sponsored a lecture on African art by Elizabeth Hudnut Clarkson. In 1986, Afro-Am Weekend, as the weekend dedicated to the club's programs would be



known for the rest of the decade, showcased student talent with a dance recital and show. In the program for the event, WAAS described its central goal as being to bring Wilson together as a community and to "come to a greater appreciation of the differences in our culture and heritage."

In a program for the Afro-Am Weekend '86, the club stated, "There are many divisive forces in the world today that threaten

unity and brotherhood. We know some of these as racism, apartheid, prejudice, discrimination, sexism, terrorism. This is the ongoing battle between good and evil, ancient as time itself; a conflict that many never reckoned with through

man's intervention alone. Wilson's Afro-Am chooses to accentuate the positive and negate the negative."

Afro-Am Weekend did not continue into the '90s. But the goals and aims of WAAS as a club dedicated to highlighting and celebrating the experiences of black students and addressing relevant issues in a positive way continues today through the activities of Wilson's Black Student Union.



Pro-democracy Protests close Tiananmen Square, Beijing

1986

### DONATIONS FUEL GROWTH

Under Merriam's leadership, the College's reputation, as well as its finances, improved greatly. Wilson was listed in *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the top liberal arts colleges in its region. This remarkable turnaround, in addition to the efforts of the administration and faculty, was made possible by the generosity of the alumnae. "When alumnae giving topped 50 percent and the amount raised in gifts and grants for annual giving topped \$1,000,000 11 years in a row," Merriam explained, "this put us in an elite group of small colleges with remarkable fundraising success."

Changes across campus ranged from relatively minor to profound, from enhancing curricula to establishing new programs, degrees and courses. The atmosphere of renewed vibrancy and progress reflected the quiet revolution taking place.

The art gallery, renamed the Bogigian Gallery in honor of Hagop Bogigian, provided exhibit space for artists within the Wilson community, as well as contemporary visiting artists. An ROTC program was established on campus and a



Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster

military science course offered (ROTC was rare on a female campus). The Division of Continuing Studies was established to provide educational opportunities to adults and shortly afterward, the Child Care Cen-

ter opened. The Teacher Intern Program was established, providing coursework fulfilling Pennsylvania Department of Education teacher certification requirements.

In 1985, Wilson graduated its first male student in nine years.

### CAMPUS BECOMES MORE DYNAMIC

The '80s also brought a litany of interesting speakers and visitors. In 1984, author Madeleine L'Engle lectured and received an honorary degree. Actor Jimmy Stewart visited to celebrate the opening of the renovated library. He had given a gift for the construction of the library's annex in honor of his mother, Elizabeth Jackson Stewart, Class of 1894.

Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, whose daughter was a student at Wilson, spoke at Convocation in 1984. Blackmun, who had written the famous court's opinion in the *Roe v. Wade* case, sparked some heated editorials and letters to the editor in the local papers. Whoopi Goldberg gave the '87 Convocation address and received an honorary degree.

In 1989, more than 1,000 alumnae, friends, students, faculty and staff members came together in Laird Hall to celebrate 10 years of Wilson after its near-closing.

On Dec. 14, 1990, Merriam announced her resignation, ushering in a new decade and generation for Wilson.



Goldberg at Convocation

1989



## The College Farm

The College had acquired a 100-acre farmstead in 1974 but had done little with it. President Jensen approached two members of the biology faculty—Brad Engle and Tom Cheetham—asking them to brainstorm ways to use the land for both economic and academic purposes.

The two professors developed a three-pronged vision for the land as a model of sustainability: use it for small-scale organic food production for the College, create a curriculum in environmental studies and involve the campus community with the land. Jensen presented their proposal to the Eden Hall Foundation, which in 1994 granted the College \$235,000 to establish the center, hire a director and pay operational costs for three years. Additional grants funded a greenhouse.



Steve Moore Tills College Farm

The College hired Rima Nickell as director. By summer 1995, she had established two “kitchen gardens” and was preparing to plant cover crops on 10 acres to help add nutrients to the soil. Steve Moore, a progressive local farmer widely known for his innovations in sustainable agriculture, consulted on the construction of a solar greenhouse and production techniques. He was later hired to manage the farm and subsequently replaced Nickell when she left in 1996, ushering in an era of growth, experimentation and innovation.

The center received a tremendous boost in 1999 when Susan Breakefield Fulton '61 made a gift of \$1 million to endow it, renamed for her late husband, Richard Alsina Fulton.



Nelson Mandela, South African Political Leader, is Freed

1990

1991

## REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS & QUIET PROGRESS

The 1990s were transitional years for Wilson. After leading the College through a difficult decade following the near-closing in 1979, President Mary-Linda Merriam (Armacost) retired in 1991. In her time, Merriam had helped bring the College back from the brink and left it stronger than she found it. However, Wilson’s future remained far from certain.

“There is much to be done,” Merriam wrote in her annual report in the summer 1990 *Alumnae Quarterly*. “We must continue efforts to increase residential and part-time enrollments, improve our facilities, increase our endowment and add to our library holdings.”

### STEADY INCREMENTAL GROWTH

When Wilson’s 17th president, Gwendolyn Evans Jensen, arrived in summer 1991, much like Merriam, she found the College in need of students and funding. But also like her predecessor, Jensen left Wilson stronger than she found it when she stepped down in 2001.

Under Jensen’s leadership, the College added facilities, programs and the first Wilson website. During Jensen’s inaugural weekend, Wilson dedicated the C. Elizabeth Boyd Archival Center, for which existing space on the ground floor of Thomson Hall had been renovated. Boyd ’33, who attended the ceremony, had served the



Gwendolyn Jensen

College as housemother, registrar, librarian, “Save Wilson” campaigner and archivist over the second half of the 20th century.

The College constructed a new equestrian center and named it in recognition of Penn Hall Preparatory School and Junior College, which had allowed Wilson students to use its riding facilities for a number of years. The new Penn Hall Equestrian Center of Wilson College opened for the 1992-93 academic year.

The same year, Jensen reported that the endowment had grown from \$6 million to approximately \$7.5 million over the course of the fiscal year. The College launched an admissions marketing plan under the direction of a new director. Thanks to these efforts, along with a resurgence of interest in women’s colleges during the ’90s, enrollment in the undergraduate residential college grew from 191 in 1990 to 319 in 1999. While good news, enrollment in the continuing education program fell over the same period—from a high of 752 to 481.

In 1993, the Eden Charitable Foundation funded a full-time, Presbyterian chaplain’s position. The gift was made in memory of the late Helen C. Eden ’29, a foundation trustee who had been an advocate of the concept of a full-time female chaplain at her alma mater.



Johnny Carson, TV Host, Signs Off



## Women with Children Program

President Jensen conceived of a program for single mothers that would allow them to take classes and live with their children on campus, while providing them with some support services. She wanted to break down barriers to education for women in poverty, while putting an empty residence hall—Prentis—to good use, housing mothers and their children.

"I was very concerned about single mothers and the difficulty they faced getting into college," Jensen told *Wilson Magazine* in 2016.

The majority of students supported the idea of sharing



President Jensen with Students in the Women with Children Program

their campus, dorms, dining hall—even occasionally classes—with children. Students signed a petition in favor of the Women with Children program (today the Single Parent Scholars program). With the campus community on board, Jensen went to the Eden Hall Foundation for funding. She came away with \$400,000 in seed money. In fall 1996, Wilson launched the pilot phase of the WWC program—one of the first of its kind in the nation. It began with two single mothers and their children and by year's end, had grown to four students and their families.

The College used Eden Hall Foundation funds to renovate the ground floor of Prentis Hall and create eight, two-room apartments with private bathrooms and shared kitchen, laundry, study and recreation areas. The first WWC participant graduated in 1998 and the program, a model for similar initiatives at other colleges, flourished.



Dolly the Sheep is First Cloned Mammal

1997

In 1994 the College celebrated its 125th anniversary and announced plans to develop an old farm on its property into a center for sustainable living. The following year, as part of an effort to make the College appealing to more women, it began what would become a flagship initiative: the Wilson College Women with Children program. And the new Helen M. Beach '24 Veterinary Medical Center was opened to house one of the College's premier programs—veterinary medical technology.

## CANDID ASSESSMENT

If Jensen's tenure was characterized by a series of improvements to facilities and programs, this steady progress does not paint the full picture of what was going on at the College. From the very beginning of her tenure, Jensen sounded a familiar warning: the College was struggling with inadequate enrollment and funding. She called the College's small size one of its key strengths, but also listed a litany of problems. "Our library and computing capacity are inadequate for an institution of Wilson's quality," Jensen wrote in the alumnae magazine. "We need improved funding of numerous 'bread and butter' items, including annual equipment budgets, operating budgets and continued long-term attention to building and grounds."

To her credit, Jensen didn't simply list her accomplishments and duck the difficulties. She was candid about the problems facing the College. "We are significantly underfunded in a

number of areas ... and without greatly increased revenues, a recommitment to our residential college will not be possible."

## DECADE ENDS ON POSITIVE NOTE

By the last year of the decade, Wilson had entered what Jensen called its "transition to information technology," much of which involved the internet, use of email and the College's new website, which was seen as a powerful marketing tool. Faculty were also using technology increasingly in the classroom, including using CD-ROMs and assigning research projects requiring students to use online resources.

By summer 1999, Wilson's fortunes were looking up. The College announced the public phase of the \$25 million *Forever More* comprehensive campaign, for which Jensen had already spearheaded raising \$22 million. Enrollment was rising and



U.S. Women's Soccer Team Wins World Cup

improvements to facilities continued to be a focus. That fall, plans were announced to restore Sharpe House and make it the home of the next Wilson president, while converting Jensen's residence into what would become the Hankey Center.

1999

## Conococheague Creek Restored

In 1875, the Conococheague Creek was dammed to create a reservoir to supply drinking water to Chambersburg. Sixteen years later the borough created a new reservoir upstream and Wolf Lake, as it would be renamed, was purchased by the Wolf Co. to supply its factory with water and to develop the surrounding land as a recreational "resort." With the 12-acre lake as its centerpiece, Wolf's Lake and Park included a ballroom, dance pavilion, shuffleboard and bowling allies, a boathouse and a 100-foot tower with rooms for campers and clubs. The park had areas for picnicking and canoes for rent. The lake had places to swim and was stocked with fish for fishing. At the height of its popularity, it attracted visitors from all over the state.

After the closure of the resort sometime before 1920, Wilson students used the lake for boating and picnics and for a brief period even had a sailing club based there that

hosted competitive regattas. After the Wolf Co. closed shortly after World War II, the lake was no longer maintained and began to fill with silt and weeds. In 1968 Wilson purchased the lake, although the surrounding land was owned privately.



Wolf Lake is Popular Resort

By the 2000s, the lake was too shallow to swim in and had become a liability for the College. The dam was "weak and dangerous and poses a serious hazard," President Edmundson explained. The consensus of the community, the College, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Game Commission was to demolish the dam and restore the health of the creek. By letting the water flow freely, it would improve the environment for native flora and fauna. In 2006, the College had the dam removed and the



First iPod is Sold

2000

2001

2004

## PROGRESS UNDONE BY MAJOR FINANCIAL SETBACK

The first decade of the new century was a time of steady growth for Wilson. The College renovated, updated and enhanced many buildings and facilities, the improvements culminating in the building of a 75,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art science center.

On the academic front, the College offered new programs and degrees, including its first master's degree and several new and interdisciplinary majors. Enrollment in the traditional undergraduate college hovered at just over 300 students for most of the decade

from lows of under 200 in the '90s. Disappointingly, enrollment in the adult degree program decreased to around 400 students per year from highs in the 700s in the '90s.



Terrorists Attack U.S. on 9/11



Lorna Duphiney Edmundson

The College embarked on a series of renovations and additions to improve the campus for all its constituents. Sharpe House was restored and became the new president's residence. The renovated and repurposed Hankey Center was officially opened in 2003 as the repository for the College's archives and a research center for the history of women's education. The same year the newly restored Alumnae Chapel was rededicated.

In an effort to provide the sorts of amenities young women wanted, the College added new student-centered facilities. The Eden Hall Fitness Center was fitted out with modern gym equipment and softball and the Kris's Meadow soccer fields were constructed for the Phoenix sports teams. Thanks to a gift from Marguerite Brooks Lenfest '55 and her husband, the late Gerry Lenfest, a modern, light-filled addition—Lenfest Commons—was built to provide a modern space for students to hang out and where offices for student services could be housed in a single, central location.

### HONORING THE PAST; EMBRACING THE FUTURE

Lorna Duphiney Edmundson was inaugurated as college president shortly after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. She spoke of the need for healing and optimism in the aftermath of the national tragedy, and the importance of Wilson's mission to produce women leaders. The theme of her inauguration was to honor the past and embrace the future—a theme she hoped would characterize her tenure.

### MODERN CURRICULA & DEGREES

In addition to enhancing amenities for students, Edmundson spearheaded the modernization of curricula and majors to better serve the needs of the marketplace. In 2008 the College offered six new majors: business sustainability and environmental management, biochemistry and molecular biology, equine jour-



Facebook Created



lake disappeared as the unimpeded creek followed its original course. Wilson used the newly formed wetland and the restoration of the creek banks to provide hands-on learning opportunities for students. Over the next few years, students, faculty, staff and volunteers from local groups and Chambersburg cleaned the creek banks, planted trees and restored the natural riparian landscape.

Today the Conococheague Creek flows fast and free through the college grounds. With its natural flow restored, the average temperature of the water has dropped by nine degrees, encouraging native trout and other species to return.

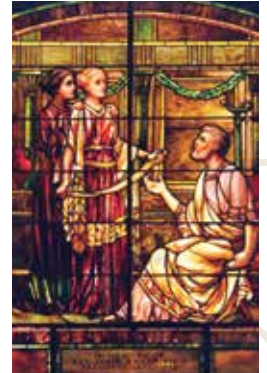
### *John Edgar Memorial Window Finds New Home*

In 1897 Tiffany and Co. created a stained-glass window depicting the "Instruction of Hypatia" for the Alumnae Association of Wilson College in honor of President John Edgar, who had died unexpectedly in 1884.

The image portrays Hypathia, a renowned mathematician and philosopher of ancient Egypt, standing with an attendant listening to a seated philosopher. For generations of Wilson students, the window symbolized the importance of women's education.

In 1955 the window was removed during the renovation of Edgar Hall and put into storage. It remained out of sight for almost 50 years. Then in 2004, the late Mary Stillman '50, who remembered doing calisthenics by the light of the window as a student, agreed to fund its restoration and preservation in honor of her parents.

It took 18 months to restore the window and the work involved separating it into five pieces and refurbishing multiple layers of glass.



2009

nalism, sport management, environmental sustainability and financial mathematics. In response to the shortage of qualified teachers in Pennsylvania, in 2006 Wilson offered its first graduate degree—a Master of Arts in Teaching (later to become the Master of Education).

The new majors and graduate degrees demonstrated the College's willingness and ability to adapt and change with the times. While enrollment didn't improve significantly, and the increase in residential students simply made up for the decrease in adult degree students, the College appeared to be holding its own in an era when many women's colleges were closing.

### **THE FUTURE IS SCIENCE**

The Harry R. Brooks Complex for Science, Mathematics and Technology was, perhaps, a metaphor for the ambition and vision of the College during this decade. The state-of-the-art science complex with advanced laboratories and classrooms equipped with integrated technologies was also an architectural work of art that complimented the surrounding gothic buildings while providing the natural light and airiness of a more contemporary building. It was the first LEED-certified (environmentally friendly) building in Franklin County. As Edmundson pointed out, not only did it function as an elite science complex, but its construction positioned the College



**Brooks Science Center is Constructed**

as a destination for serious students interested in pursuing careers in science. She added that it demonstrated Wilson's commitment to "providing rigorous education that permits women to enter and succeed in professions in which they have historically been underrepresented."

### **CRASH & RECESSION**

The science center was funded in large part by a gift from the Lenfests. However, because the economy was booming and interest rates were low, on the advice of its financial advisers, the College invested the Lenfests' gift and funded the construction by issuing municipal bonds. This was the prevailing financial wisdom and institutions large and small made similar decisions. But the crash of 2008 wiped out over one third of Wilson's endowment overnight and the ensuing recession reduced the returns on what remained. By the end of the decade, the College did not have the revenues to service its debt and had to take from the endowment to make ends meet.



**Barrack Obama Becomes First Black U.S. President**

## Going Coeducational

The Board of Trustees voted in January 2013 to adopt a set of measures designed to make the College financially stable and sustainable, including expanding coeducation across all programs. For many, especially those who opposed it, the decision to go coeducational overshadowed the other important changes. Even for those Trustees and alumnae who agreed with the decision, it was a difficult,

but they felt necessary, pill to swallow.

Wilson had been struggling with financial problems brought on by the Great Recession. The College's endowment had lost \$14 million when the stock market crashed. This loss, heavy as it was, might have been weathered were it not for the added burden of crippling debt incurred from construction of the Harry R. Brooks Science Complex.

Marguerite Brooks Lenfest '55 and her



Osama bin Laden is Killed

husband, the late Gerry Lenfest, had made a \$20 million unrestricted gift in 2007 for the new science center—named for Marguerite's father. The College placed these funds in the endowment and borrowed about \$31 million through the issuance of tax-exempt municipal bonds. The College's financial advisers believed the return on investments would be greater than the interest on the debt. Unfortunately, the crash of 2008 not only wiped millions off the endowment but also significantly reduced the returns on what remained.

Wilson's endowment no longer generated sufficient revenue to service the debt on the bonds. The debt was eating into the endowment and with enrollment stagnating, the College struggled to meet its financial commitments.



Amazon Releases Alexa

2011

2014

## CONTROVERSY, TURBULENCE & CHANGE

The decade of 2010-19 brought transformational change to Wilson. Not only did the College become coeducational, but it also embarked on a series of projects, programs and other initiatives—all aimed at achieving one goal: increasing enrollment. The changes and initiatives succeeded. During the second half of the decade, enrollment soared and by fall 2019, the College had a record 1,620 students.

### MISTICK FACES MULTIPLE CHALLENGES

But as 2010 began, Wilson was floundering. After a one-year uptick in 2009 attributed to the previous year's recession, enrollment was down more than 13 percent to 726 and the College was struggling to service the debt on its new state-of-the-art science center. When the College's 19th president, Barbara K. Mistick, arrived in July 2011, the John Stewart Memorial Library was in deplorable condition after a catastrophic heating system failure had flooded it the previous spring. Mistick made the difficult decision to close the library and temporarily relocate services to Sarah's Coffeehouse.



Barbara K. Mistick

Wilson launched a fundraising effort to restore the original library building and replace a 1962 addition, with the College's new president leading the effort. By spring 2015, Wilson had raised \$11.8 million in cash and pledges toward the estimated \$12 million project and the early success of that initiative set the tone for Mis-

tick's presidency. The College broke ground in fall 2014 and the following autumn, with the project nearing completion, Wilson hosted a jubilant rededication celebration. The restored library and new Lenfest Learning Commons opened in January 2016.

Mistick had other early priorities besides the library, including long overdue capital improvements to residence halls and the campus overall. As the years unfolded, a number of other projects were completed, including the renovation of MacElwain-Davison Hall, widening and repaving campus roads, upgrading Rosenkrans Hall, creating a pedestrian-only academic quad, upgrading the field house, replacing two bridges and opening a new veterinary education center in 2019.

### WILSON TODAY PLAN

Meanwhile, the College Board of Trustees began taking steps to lower the cost of a Wilson education to appeal to students graduating high school in an era of lower disposable income following the Great Recession. In February 2012, the Board of Trustees approved Mistick's recommendation to hold tuition without an increase for the 2012-13 academic year, launching a tuition reset that included eight consecutive years without an increase and, in 2014-15, a \$5,000 reduction.



Library Rededication



## Difficult Solutions and Unrest

In her second year, President Mistick convened the Commission on the Future of Wilson College, which held a series of public meetings to examine ways to increase enrollment. College officials said that “everything is on the table.” It sank in that that could include coeducation. Alumnae who were against expanding coeducation questioned the bleak financial picture they were hearing about for the first time. Some asked whether more could be done to promote Wilson as a women’s college. Likewise, some students questioned the move and criticized the administration. Some even protested in front of the president’s residence at Sharpe House.

On Mistick’s recommendation, in January 2013 Trustees voted to adopt a series of measures that grew out of the commission process. Called the Wilson Today plan, the measures included a tuition reduction, student loan buyback program, new academic programs, a plan to address deferred maintenance and full coeducation.

Unrest over the decision continued. At the May 2013 board meeting, four Trustees resigned. And while many alumnae and students accepted or agreed with the coed decision, about 40 alumnae submitted letters to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, questioning whether the board should be permitted to amend Wilson’s charter. In January 2015, PDE upheld the charter amendment, four alumnae filed suit in Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court seeking to overturn the PDE ruling, but the court dismissed the suit in February 2016, saying the alumnae had no legal standing to challenge the decision.

The expansion of coeducation was phased in over two years. By fall 2019, with Wilson’s enrollment at 1,620 students, 662 were enrolled in the traditional undergraduate college. Of those, 129—or 19 percent—were male.



U.S. President Donald Trump is Impeached

2016

2019

Also in 2012, Mistick formed the Commission on Shaping the Future of Wilson College, a group comprised of members of all campus constituencies charged with developing recommendations for strengthening the College’s long-term financial health. The process led to Trustees adopting the Wilson Today plan in January 2013, a series of measures that included expanding coeducation, adding programs and more.

As part of the Wilson Today plan’s affordability component, the College announced an innovative student debt buyback plan—thought to be the first of its kind in the nation—that would repay up to \$10,000 of qualified students’ federal Stafford student loans. It took effect with students in the incoming fall 2014 class and the first two students to benefit graduated in 2018.

### MORE COURSES & GRADUATE DEGREES

New academic offerings were added, including the College’s second master’s degree program—a Master of Arts in Humanities—that began enrolling students for the fall 2013 semester. Other graduate programs followed, including several master’s programs in education—some with online options—and a Master of Fine Arts in 2015.

The College also added bachelor’s degree and master’s

degrees in nursing for those with certification as registered nurses in 2014, followed in 2015 by a new Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. Nursing has been pivotal in Wilson’s enrollment success in the second half of the decade.

### NUMBERS DON’T LIE

The effects of the Wilson Today plan on the College’s previously stagnant enrollment began to take effect in 2014, when the total headcount increased by 14 percent and the number of new students enrolled in the traditional undergraduate college leapt by 41 percent, producing the largest incoming class in more than more than 40 years. Total enrollment climbed 21 percent in 2015 and by 2016, Wilson’s enrollment had shot to 1,098, the largest in the history of the College at that time—a number which, as previously mentioned, has since been eclipsed.

Expanding coeducation also led to significant changes in Wilson’s athletics programs, with new men’s teams formed in soccer, basketball, volleyball, golf and most recently, baseball. The College held a celebration in spring 2019 that drew many area residents to the baseball team’s new home, Chambersburg’s storied Henninger Field.



VEC Dedication



Chicago Cubs Win First World Series since 1907

# SEVEN NOTABLE ALUMNAE | 19

Because the majority of Wilson alums from this period continue to act in bold and original ways, a short list like this cannot do justice to the many remarkable women and men who are notable recent graduates of the College.



JoAnne Bauer

**JoAnne Bauer '70** is an author, editor, researcher and activist. Bauer earned a doctorate from New York University in communication arts and technology leadership and holds professional certifications in holistic health, education, group facilitation and motivational coaching. She co-authored *Beyond Technology's Promise* for Cambridge University Press, about children using computers for educational purposes at home. She has presented more than 20 research papers at national conferences. While living in New York and leading a successful multi-year environmental justice campaign, she was awarded statewide Citizen of the Year by the New York Public Interest Research Group. Over the years, Bauer has received numerous awards and honors for environmental activism, scholarship and research, mixed-media art, camerawork, poetry, and more. Since 2006, she has helped raise funds for the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) and progressive causes by completing marathons, triathlons, half marathons and 5K runs.

**Bruce Mulvey '75** served as a U.S. Navy intelligence officer in Vietnam then worked in communications at the White House and at Camp David. While there, he applied to study at Wilson, unaware it was a women's college. Mulvey remembers his first day as a Wilson student as the most nervous day of his life. Eventually, he says he was accepted, albeit reluctantly by many. However, not a single day at the College passed without someone asking him when he was going to leave. He persevered and became the second male student to graduate.



Bruce Mulvey

Mulvey appreciated the quality of the instruction but learned first-hand the challenges and isolation of being a minority in an otherwise homogenous group. After graduating, he worked in several positions before joining the financial firm Halsey, Stuart and Co. He has remained with them ever since—his division is now Wells Fargo Advisors. Mulvey is married with two children. Sailing is his passion and he has sailed across the Atlantic four times and around the globe once.



Sharon Salazar Hickey

**Sharon Salazar Hickey '78** received a law degree from California Western School of Law. She is a project manager at the Los Alamos National Laboratory for Quality and Performance Assurance Division, leading and managing the policy office. Her projects involve nuclear safety, environmental protection and endangered species protection. Recently she was appointed to a seat on the New Mexico State Game Commission. Hickey has held positions on many state and community boards. She loves the outdoors and hikes and bikes regularly.

**Lucy Gebre-Egziabher '84** earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in film from Howard University. She is an award-winning, independent African-American filmmaker and educator. Gebre-Egziabher also runs workshops and lectures on film, critical studies and production. An associate professor at Northern Virginia Community College's Alexandria campus, she teaches film and theater studies. In 2015, Gebre-Egziabher received a Fulbright award to teach film studies in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. She helped the faculty at the Rift Valley University develop their curricula and in 2016 taught classes at the university. Her movie, *At the Second Traffic Light*, won the 2000 UNESCO Prix de Tolerance award. Gebre-Egziabher continues to teach and inspire students and works on her own films through her production company, Teret Productions.



Lucy Gebre-Egziabher



# 70-2019



**Barbara Hall  
Kostyak**

**Barbara Hall Kostyak '96** married Brad Kostyak the same year she graduated from Wilson College's Adult Degree Program. Together they started and successfully ran a new home building company. A couple of years into their business, they invented the Ratchet Rake, a multipurpose attachment for loader buckets. Kostyak shifted her focus to marketing the invention. The success of the venture saw the business move to a new office and distribution center in their hometown of Carlisle, Pa. Their product line has grown to include pull-behind Ratchet Rakes (ideal for horse arenas) and snow removal implements. Kostyak was honored with the Alumnae Association Distinguished ADP Alumni Award in 2019.

**Delia Moraru Velculescu '97** is a division chief in the European department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and has been a mission chief for Belgium and France since 2018. Previously, she was mission chief for Greece and Cyprus, leading negotiations for IMF-supported programs with these two countries during the European debt crisis. Since joining the IMF in 2002, Velculescu worked in the European, Western Hemisphere, and policy development and review departments. Her economic research has focused on structural reforms, population aging and pension systems, and intergenerational habit formation. Velculescu holds master's and doctoral degrees in economics from Johns Hopkins University. She received the Alumnae Association Distinguished Alumna Award in 2017.



**Delia Moraru  
Velculescu**



**Janelle Wills**

**Janelle Wills '14** was WCGA president during her junior year and the student representative on the Commission for Shaping the Future of Wilson College. Wills had to find a balance between representing the students' needs and desires and doing what was best for the financial stability of the College. She said she felt the weight of conflicting pressures from students, alums and the administration but was appreciative of the experience it gave her.

After graduating from Wilson College in 2014, Wills went on to veterinary school at Ross University in St. Kitts West Indies. After a year, she transferred to the University of Pennsylvania and received her doctorate in 2018. Since then, she has practiced veterinary medicine in New Jersey and the greater Philadelphia area. In 2019 Wills represented New Jersey as a rising leader at the AVMA Veterinary Leadership Conference in Chicago. She currently works as an associate veterinarian in the city of Philadelphia and is the head of surgery at her veterinary office. Outside of work, Wills is a board member of the Alumnae Association of Wilson College 2016-2020 and is an active member of the Philadelphia Adult League Softball organization.

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Special thanks to the Hankey Center for the History of Women's Education for all the research and documentation it took to write this brief history of the College. For more in-depth histories and Wilson archives, please visit the Hankey Center's website at [www.wilson.edu/hankeycenter](http://www.wilson.edu/hankeycenter). To view a more complete timeline of Wilson's history, visit [www.wilson.edu/wilson-college-timeline](http://www.wilson.edu/wilson-college-timeline).

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